

## **The Mud Pit of Your Own Making**

Sean Scully 10.26.14

You put yourself in a hole that you have to climb out of. The impulse to destroy, through alcohol, the sense and control of reason: causes the impulse to regain it to rescue yourself, from the mud pit of your own making.

Around midnight I stood on the edge of the road, next to another even drunker than me. We were next to the famous South Kensington subway station, featured in magazines and on record covers, when there was vinyl, and the pictures were big enough to matter. Indeed, inside the building there was and is an arcade, and in that arcade of small shops is a carpet shop. The owner of which, who was called 'the face' because he was so ugly, would sell you drugs, if you wanted him to. I loved to dance at 4am, with my head colonized by cocaine. But I would never buy it. I am too stingy, and besides I would rather spend the money on paint.

I come from extreme poverty, so even though I have become successful, my extravagance is selective. Alcohol though, is another matter. Alcohol has assisted writers since I don't know when, and in Pompeii they used to leave the bars open all night. They left beautiful paintings.

So the two of us, not knowing each other personally, stood side by side on the edge of the road, waving as distressed flagpoles, in the hurricane of our own design. He vainly holding up his flag: the flag of Francis. Me with mine, hoisted with heroic effort.

I was drunk, but my parallel companion was even drunker. He was Francis Bacon. I knew him since he was the older distinguished artist, and I, then, was the

younger undistinguished artist. He was, I believe, oblivious to my company. Every battalion, every sleeping soldier in his own inner army, had been called to his war front: with orders to stop him, at all cost, from falling over.

He advanced a half step, retreated a half step, advanced a half step, and retreated a half stumble. His army held him up, in his personal war, and the demons raining down on him from the army of alcohol, were powerful but unable to clinch victory. He could not be toppled. He was unable to move his forces forward either. But he would not be vanquished.

My flagpole wavered less than his I think, though I am not sure. At least I had the advantage of youth, and the alcohol assault I had made on myself, seemed less dangerous. To another however, I may have looked like a wretched clown, wobbling around in my amazement. And the study of my kindred soul.

We both came from Dublin, and we both spoke with English accents. Our madness was tempered, by discipline. We were, you might say, strapped in. Battened down for the big ride. In a museum called the Hugh Lane Gallery, in Dublin, where we came from: we both have rooms dedicated to our work. There, we are considered cultural icons.

Yet standing on the edge of the road swaying with our wrecking balls, which we were swinging at ourselves: we were as ragged as Vladimir and Lucky in *Waiting for Godot*. The big difference being, that they spoke. We did not. We were fully engaged with combat. The thin line of our resources, stretched to their utter limit. There was no dialogue, a simple two syllable word such as hello or goodbye, may have toppled either of us.

I would love to have said, I will help Francis. With my arm around his shoulder, escorting him to a point somewhere near his house. His battle though, was too magnificent to interrupt.