

July 14th, 2020

"In three words I can sum up everything I've learned about life: it goes on." - Robert Frost

I view my world through words. Here are five words I've looked-up this summer, and their meanings:

Parlous – (as I expected) perilous

Frisson – trembling

Glozing – glossing over

Eleemosynary – charitable, generous

Recrudescence – reemergence

I'm going to use these words to describe what I know about life right now:

The world is in a parlous straight, at the edge of a precipice; the slightest frisson could send it over the brink, and society's glozing of the issue doesn't help. I find myself, and I know I'm not the only one, completely dependent upon the eleemosynary nature of society, which is a parlous situation in itself. If things get better, I will always have the fear of a recrudescence.

Sir Walter Scott has used several words I have heretofore not heard. I'm reading his poem *The Lady of the Lake*, my first epic poem. Now I think I need to write one, it might be fun.

So far, this has been the second most interesting thing this month. The first, of course, is that I'm taking a summer Honors course, which started yesterday, for which this is a project.

To clarify my grammar and phraseology before we go much further: yes, I do think like this. Actually, I often think in Shakespearean terms and sometimes I get a little carried away with quoting him. I don't necessarily speak like this all the time, but this is undoubtedly my writing voice, with which I'm finding myself to be more comfortable.

I've actually been doing a lot of writing since we've been isolating; in April I wrote a poem almost every day, as it was National Poetry Month. I actually remembered that I have a blog, wrote three posts, and promptly forgot again and haven't written in that medium since. I started a play (yes, not only do I admire, but I aspire to be Shakespeare), my first, which is in its fourth act, so I'm almost done with the first draft.

The other thing I've done frequently throughout this time is read. I mentioned *The Lady of the Lake*, but I've also read *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, *Crime and Punishment*, and *To the Lighthouse* (I mainly read classics). I'm currently reading outside of my comfort zone, but I'm greatly enjoying *Spillover*, by David Quammen. A little late, yes, but truly fascinating.

July 16th, 2020

“Perhaps you are not sitting in this room, and I am not sitting by you. These are points in which a doubt is equally possible. Not keep a journal! How are your absent cousins to understand the tenour of your life in Bath without one? How are the civilities and compliments of every day to be related as they ought to be, unless noted down every evening in a journal?” - Jane Austen, Northanger Abbey

I’ve never been able to keep a journal to save my life. I guess that’s not my medium. That’s one of the things I’ve found as writer: one of the most important things is finding your medium. For instance – poetry works, novels (so far) haven’t. My first play is going quite well, songs: not so much. Letters: of course! Journal/diary... well, let’s say I’m trying.

Anyway, this project isn’t really for my babbling thoughts (cue the Shakespearean derailment: *“let not our babbling dreams affright our souls...”*) so what did I accomplish today? That’s something my grandma would ask me. I wrote a poem, I read, I... guess that’s mostly it. I don’t mind living the quiet life though, I do tend to read and write outside.

July 17th, 2020

“I would rather walk with a friend in the dark, than alone in the light.” - Helen Keller

Today I got out in the woods for the first time since the fourth of July. My sister and I went for a walk; actually I walked, she hoverboarded. It was so nice to go out on one of my frequent biking roads – the flowers were so beautiful, and we picked up some rocks for our yard-art project: we’ve been gradually making a Yin & Yang on the ground in the front yard using white rocks (our natural soil is black obsidian sand, so we don’t have to fill that part in), it’s coming along quite nicely. I was more weighed-down on the way back.

July 20th, 2020

“Like the musician, the painter, the poet, and the rest, the true lover of flowers is born, not made. And he is born to happiness in this vale of tears, to a certain amount of the purest joy that earth can give her children, joy that is tranquil, innocent, uplifting, unfailling.” - Celia Thaxter

Today our class had a disease-ecology professor as a guest speaker. I was excited, as I had prepared some questions, which I did get to ask, and it was a very interesting class. I’m the only arts major in the class, but it has such a wide scope, especially as journalism and politics are factors of the way we see science.

After class my youngest sister and I tried to finish a hike we started earlier in the summer, but couldn’t because there was someone else at the trailhead. I know it’s a bit obsessive, as outdoor

activities are relatively safe, but we can't take any chances. I'm the healthiest person in my family in that I'm in standard health-condition, but even so, I wouldn't want to take my chances with this virus. I *absolutely* cannot expose my family; if it turns out that I get to attend MSU this fall in-person I will have to self-isolate for at least two weeks in one of my family's rental cabins when I come home around Thanksgiving, so that will be a lonely holiday.

Instead of hiking we wandered in a section of forest, ate lunch, and picked wild flowers. It was nice to just get out of town, where we have almost as many visitors as usual.

July 21st, 2020

"And those who were seen dancing were thought to be insane by those who could not hear the music." - Friedrich Nietzsche

On Tuesdays (now that I have the summer college course on Mondays) we have Spanish class, which is offered through our local library. Our teacher is the best, she really is a great teacher, and also a good friend. We now have classes over Zoom, which the library has allowed us to continue even since things opened up.

On Tuesdays we also have dance-class, via Zoom. The rest of our class has now gone back to in-person class at the Butte public library, which worries me. They don't have as many cases in Silverbow County, but still. It's a bit harder to dance in the living room, especially because some elements of Irish step-dancing take more space than others, those elements were the focus of the first part of dance today. We've been assigned to send in a video of ourselves doing the hard-shoe dance we're currently learning by Thursday.

July 22nd, 2020

"A lake carries you into recesses of feeling otherwise impenetrable." - William Wordsworth

Wednesday is grocery day. Thank goodness I don't have to go out there! Dad goes to the store as soon as they open, which makes a difference in the crowds. The freezers are absolutely full – and there are four of them. We are in a very fortunate situation, in that we have a lot of space for food-storage, and none of us (excepting yours truly) was employed before this; our income is from rental properties. I feel worse than I'm capable of expressing for everyone else. I have to try not to think about it, because thinking about it and not being able to do anything is horrible.

Dad always takes it easy the rest of the day after shopping, I would too, if the sheer stress of it didn't kill me before I made it home. The mask mandate makes me feel a little better, but still. I had class today as well. The guest speaker was Matt Kelley, the Gallatin County Health Officer, who has done a fantastic job. I certainly don't envy him all the problems he's faced, nor those coming with the start of the school-year.

After class my sisters and I went to the beach. Actually to the lake, but we've always called it 'the beach', I don't rightly know if that's, well, right. It was nice. That's the third time we've gone this summer, which is more than I've gone for years, oddly enough. We had lots of fun inner-tubing in the waves, and we built beach houses with sticks.

July 23rd, 2020

"Instead of the word 'love' there was an enormous heart, a symbol sometimes used by people who have trouble figuring out the difference between words and shapes." - Lemony Snicket

Today all three of us had Spanish class. My youngest sister hasn't been taking Spanish for almost a year now, since she started high school last year. My other sister and I have been reviewing the entire course-book we finished back in May, and since we've now reached where she left off, we asked our teacher if she could rejoin us.

We have new Spanish books to start after we finish reviewing the current one, but I'm not going to make it, I don't think. We don't move very quickly, even though we're just reviewing, so according to my calculations I'll be starting more classes at MSU (whether in-person or online) before we're finished. I will continue learning Spanish, of course, but it will be at the university level.

We filmed ourselves for dance class, but there was some angst about the final product (I won't say on the part of whom), which I honestly can't blame her for, but I wish I could help. I still haven't worked up the courage to ask if she sent the video in the end, and I doubt I will any time soon.

July 24th, 2020

"One person's craziness is another person's reality." - Tim Burton

My first assignment for Taking The Pulse of Montana was due today after class. I had my final draft yesterday, but I waited until after class so that I could update based on what we talked about in class today (I didn't make any major changes). This is my first college assignment! I turned it in at about 1:40pm. I walked around and picked up some white rocks for the aforementioned yard mosaic (Yin & Yang), and talked to Dad and my sister, who were taking a break from their stone-masonry project.

It's a surprise that they're working on said project, it hasn't been touched since I was about seven years old. Dad started building a house on the property about twenty-odd years ago, and off and on since then. It really is quite nice, what with the plaster which he's quite proud of, and indeed he should be; the lacquered wood pillars around the porch, which bring to mind something between an old country mansion and Frank Lloyd Wright's *Falling Water*, miniaturized; and the proposed stonework that is now just getting started.

Anyway, I was picking up white rocks, I stopped to talk to them, we saw an orange dragonfly (correction: an enormous orange dragonfly), and then I continued with the rocks. I know it's a bit odd, but I've never been afraid of doing odd things, crazy things, extraordinary things. I take that back, I was afraid when I was twelve and I thought too much about being a teenager, and what people thought of me. I've since discovered that people don't think of me, so I shouldn't worry.

The rock-collecting is a calming mechanism: I tend to garden, weed, or do some other menial task after class so that I can mull over what I learned, and also because I'm always so excited afterwards! I started doing this unconsciously, but I've now developed that habit into something useful. Picking up rocks is not particularly useful, though.

July 26th, 2020

"Men have called me mad; but the question is not yet settled, whether madness is or is not the loftiest intelligence— whether much that is glorious— whether all that is profound— does not spring from disease of thought— from moods of mind exalted at the expense of the general intellect." - Edgar Allen Poe

I didn't know that July 26th was Small Animal Day. This morning after breakfast/prayer (we can't go to church, even though they're having services, and everyone wears masks) I was reading in the backyard. I sat near the glass table, facing the greenhouse, and read chapters seven, eight, and nine, I think, of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, by Oscar Wilde. I forgot to mention that I finished *The Lady of the Lake*, which was splendid. So far I'm greatly enjoying Mr. Wilde's writing style, and I've been adding lots of words to my list, which is three unlooked-up pages currently, because I'm lazy.

While I was reading I was apparently very still, because a mouse began making a nest in the grass against the fence, not three feet away from me. I admit to being utterly distracted from my book, I just watched it for about fifteen minutes. Is it not strange that a mouse can fill me with an ineffable happiness? I'm sure it is.

After a while my sister, the movie-lover, ran out to tell me that *Arsenic and Old Lace (1944)* was playing, so I went in to watch it with everyone. I hadn't remembered a lot of it. It was hilarious, which I had remembered.

After watching the movie I ventured out to the hammock to continue reading. I did so for a while, but was distracted by my thoughts. Sometimes the afternoon light gets to me, and I think somewhere in the world of Magical Realism. Something about those golden afternoon thoughts is different, sort of melancholy, but still glowing. There I go, crazy-talk again.

While in the hammock a chickadee came over to have a look at me, and the Richardson's ground squirrel that's been plaguing certain plants in the yard was surprised to see a human there, whom he didn't notice until he was two feet away, perched on a cinderblock. Anyway, that's what I meant by Small Animal Day.

I was retrieved from the hammock to move furniture in the living room. My youngest sister has been looking for a permanent place to store her two ukuleles, two guitars, and her newly acquired cello, and finally decided on the corner behind the music cabinet, oddly enough. We had to move the TV (an old monster, very heavy), which took all three of us, and then straighten the music cabinet so that it faced the rest of the room squarely. It wasn't as hard as I had anticipated.

After dinner the three of us played tennis, which we had been hoping to do for some time, but there were always other people at the court. I think I can safely promise that this will be the busiest day in the duration of this journal, so there it is, my eventful life.

July 27th, 2020

"I felt dumb and subdued. Every time I tried to concentrate, my mind glided off, like a skater, into a large empty space, and pirouetted there, absently." - Sylvia Plath

Monday is a good day: I have class. My fall schedule includes only one class on Monday morning, so I'm hoping that will work out like an extra day added to the weekend to refine assignments and do some reading. That's really all I anticipate doing with my weekends, but I digress; I was saying that Monday is a good day because I have class. Today our class met the Gallatin County representative in the state legislature.

After class I went about weeding in the yard, or at least I was *going* to weed. I was waylaid in that pursuit however, by Dad and my sister, and I talked with them for a while. By the time we finished conversing my youngest sister had occupied the area I was going to weed, so, being myself, I put aside the weeding idea and read in the hammock for at least half an hour. My book, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, is coming back to the storyline I sort of know already, after starting much differently than I had imagined, but there's something about the hammock (perhaps the fact that it *swings*) that completely derails my focus: I'd better make a note of that.

I played catch with my youngest sister in the afternoon, washed dishes (and listened to music, which I never, hardly ever do), and then went for a drive with my youngest sister to get nighttime hours in before she takes her test on August 3rd.

July 28th, 2020

"The end of THE END is the best place to begin THE END, because if you read THE END from the beginning of the beginning of THE END to the end of the end of THE END, you will arrive at the end." - Lemony Snicket

Today is Tuesday, you know what that means. This morning we had Spanish class, and this evening we had dance. Our Spanish teacher sent us an absolute boatload of homework: ten pages. I don't mind homework, no matter what the quantity is, but it's the technological hoops I have to jump through that get to me. At least I learned how to take a screen-shot on my laptop – I

had to take a screen shot of each page so that I could print them, because otherwise they would have been half-size and sideways.

I realized that I only have two more dance classes after this. Won't it be strange? I've danced my whole life practically, and I will always dance, but it will be different. So many things are that it shouldn't surprise me, and yet... I have spells of this melancholy, the thought of everything changing occasionally asserts itself this way. It's exciting too, but I guess my poetic side can't resist the opportunity to feel as many emotions as possible at once. Everything comes to an end, or is it that everything leads to another beginning?

July 29th, 2020

"It is a great thing to start life with a small number of books which are your very own." - Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

Wednesday. I was awake in time to wash all the fruits and vegetables dad brought home. Last week he threw me off because he went earlier, so today I was ready.

In class today we got to talk with Senator Daines, and I got to ask the question I had submitted to ask him. We were joined later by the dean of the Honors College, Dr. Ilse-mari Lee. We had a very interesting discussion about the questions we'd asked, and our expectations.

I spent the better part of the day reading, of course.

July 30th, 2020

"I sometimes believe as many a six impossible things before breakfast." - Lewis Carroll

Especially when breakfast is very late.

Dad and my sister were late to breakfast today, whatever they were working on took longer than they thought it would. Of all the days to be late to breakfast it had to be a Spanish day. We ended up eating at ten to ten, giving us ten minutes to eat – a nice, round group of numbers. I'm glad I remembered to fix my tea ahead of time.

Spanish was mostly spent *en repasando la tarea de la clase pasada* (Spanish: reviewing the homework from the last class). Reviewing the review, a good use of the time. I hope we are almost done reviewing the book by the time I leave, but it's alright if we're not. I'll try to stay in practice, I'm sure I'll take a Spanish class at MSU, but then again, I could stand to improve my French.

My youngest sister and I stretched this afternoon (she's coaching me), and afterwards we went to the southwest shore of the lake. We found the most beautiful spot, and spent at least an hour and a half walking on the shore and collecting rocks. It was wonderful to spend time with her, I hope we'll be able to do more things next year, but who knows if I'll be able to be here, work, etc..

July 31st, 2020

"Your countenance perfectly informs me that you were in company last night with the person, whom you think the most agreeable in the world, the person who interests you at this present time, more than all the rest of the world put together." - Jane Austen

In thought, yes. I tried not to think about that person because I know better, but went back to thinking about them. I actually thought about lots of things, more on that later.

My second assignment was due today, I couldn't find a single helpful statistic to aid my point, so my paper rests on the support of Roald Dahl, not a bad support if you asked me. I think I did better than on the other assignment, this sounded more like me. Then again...

I picked-up Quammen again today, after not touching it for a week. I'm in the habit lately of calling my books by their authors' last names; odd, isn't it? I think it comes from my list of words, since I annotate where they come from using the author's initial and the page number. This month I've developed the best note-taking system I've had yet, I only need remember to carry my notebook with me. I've found lately that it is the most important thing I own.

Anyway, about my thinking. I occasionally (see: *often*) fall into these bouts of thought. Last evening it dawned on me that I'm actually going to college. I know that could change, but the amorphous future is starting to become a solid shape, I'm seeing lines, anyway. I'm a little more scared than I'd like to admit, not only due to the pandemic situation, but also about being by myself. I'm a worrier, that's certain.

August 1st, 2020

"People say nothing is impossible, but I do nothing every day." - A. A. Milne

I woke up at six thirty. Lately I haven't needed an alarm clock, I'm always awake before it is. Today I can't honestly say I've done much, maybe I've done nothing; nothing of significance anyway. My youngest sister and I filled-in the Yin & Yang a bit more, and I sat in the yard and thought. I suppose I watered the greenhouse, but I'm continuing to put-off working in the garden for some reason.

August 2nd, 2020

"Let us read, and let us dance; these two amusements will never do any harm to the world."

- Voltaire

My sisters and I have been learning/recreating a dance from a movie for almost a month, and today we filmed the final product. We showed mom and dad, and they loved it. They wanted us to send the video to people we know, but this is really just our thing. I won't even go into details here, but it has been a part of my life this summer. It sort of started as something to keep us from getting bored in the yard over the 4th of July, and became something that I think will mean a lot to us in the future.

We played *Catan* this afternoon, one of our usual family games. I have only won twice, if that. I like to think of myself as an "economic maintenance officer", basically, I sit there, buy useless roads, and trade with whoever wants something I have. Mom won.

August 3rd, 2020

"If things start happening, don't worry, don't stew, just go right along and you'll start happening too." - *Dr. Seuss*

My youngest sister went to Bozeman to get her driver's license today, but the state lost the signed paperwork from her doctor. She doesn't have to go back, though. The lady at the DOJ-MVD (Dept. of Justice, Motor-Vehicle Division) took her picture, gave her the eye exam, etc.. She was a little disappointed, but not as much as I expected.

After they called us to say they were coming home, we heard that there was going to be a massive hail-storm north of Big Sky, and Dad spent the evening worrying – something he caught from me earlier in the day.

Earlier, I had one of my little nervous break-downs. Dad and my sister brought me outside to ask if I had any use for six buckets of Idaho soil, of which my father has unending reserves. I managed to mention some financial organization I'd been working on, and that led to a conversation about my college finances. Bad idea.

Mom and I have been working on our current plan since May, but now he wants to be involved, and I doubt he'll listen to me at all. I'm worried about the family finances, because *in that wise* I'm in the best shape. I have held a job. I have personal savings and an investment fund from my grandma. I could hold a job in the future.

My sisters have never held actual jobs, my youngest sister has worked for tips in a coffee shop our half-sisters owned and been a babysitter. The other helps our dad with all his various projects, so he had better pay for her college, wherever she wants to go. Neither of them will be able to work until they're not living at home now. I might not be able to live at home, because I'm going to need to work.

Since I'm in the best financial situation in my family, I don't want to be a burden. I became slightly hysterical about this, after I went back inside and tried to organize my school supplies into a bin. I went back out and tried to reason with dad about it, but only succeeded in bringing their work-day to a halt.

I scrounged up some hangers from my grandma's closet to take to college with me, and finished organizing. We watched *Jeopardy*, and then I nearly ruined some chili for dinner. Mom and my youngest sister got home around seven-thirty, and we all went to bed pretty soon after that.

August 4th, 2020

*"Two roads diverged in a wood, and I -
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference."
- robert frost*

This morning before and after Spanish I helped move firewood that had already been split to the stacking staging-ground. Basically, I fill a wheelbarrow with halves, quarters, or whole logs, and then I take them to dad so that he can stack them. My younger sister and I each had a wheelbarrow, so we outpaced him. On Thursday I'm hoping to finish moving this batch of split wood.

This afternoon my sisters and I played *Rumikub*, (a tile/number game, not unlike the card-game *Rummy*) well, we started a game. We stopped to watch *Jeopardy*, and then dinner and dance class took over.

August 5th, 2020

"I love people who make me laugh. I honestly think it's the thing I like most, to laugh. It cures a multitude of ills. It's probably the most important thing in a person." - Audrey Hepburn

Today nine out of seventeen people in the class presented their journal projects, in an overview of what was most important. It was an amazing class! Everyone's journals are so different and interesting. I have to talk tomorrow.

After class the three of us went to the Rendezvous Trails to play folf (frisbee-golf). We have two good frisbees and one absolutely lousy frisbee, so we switched every "hole" to keep everything fair. I fell behind at first, as I always do, but I rallied at the end, and was only one point behind my youngest sister's winning score. It was fun.

I had a webinar about campus health and safety at three-thirty. It was mostly the same information we've covered before, because I've been watching most of the webinars to date. Basically, it looks like they're doing their best, and if we don't let our guard down maybe things will work out. I guess it's a chance I'm willing to take, I'll do my best, and I hope everyone else will. So far, I think the rest of the people in the HONR 200 *Taking the Pulse of Montana* course with me will do their best.

We continued our game of *Rumikub*, but after three rounds we were hardly sensible any more. We were like *The Mad Tea Party*, from *Alice in Wonderland*. We stopped and went to bed.

August 6th, 2020

"I can only note that the past is beautiful because one never realizes an emotion at the time. It expands later, and thus we don't have complete emotions about the present, only about the past."
- Virginia Woolf

We finished moving the wood I was hoping we would. Would wood be good if it could? Sorry, sometimes I can't help it. I was going to delete that, but I rather like it. Anyway, we moved all of the wood to the area where it will be stacked, and now we have two withes in the main woodpile. There's a little extra, but I don't know if dad will want to use it, or split more first.

We were supposed to have Spanish today, but our teacher needed to change that. I don't think we've decided on a new time, either tomorrow or Saturday. I'm excited and nervous for tomorrow, this is of course my final entry, because tomorrow I'll present it, and turn it in by tomorrow evening.

After breakfast, since we didn't have Spanish, dad and I went huckleberry picking, in my favorite place. We ended up with half a gallon of huckleberries, which is pretty good, in my opinion. We also saw Segoe Lillies, the most beautiful flowers ever (also a matter of my opinion)! We picked a few, so now they're on the kitchen table.

Dad and I talked about what we always talk about when we're alone: the way of the world. We've been talking about it for almost two years now, so I'm pretty prepared *information-wise*. I'm not really emotionally prepared, so I'm glad that mom helped me with that part today. She said it's alright if I call her and just cry. I told her that that's a dangerous offer, I'll definitely do that.

This evening we watched *Jeopardy*, of course, and my youngest sister was supposed to have Confirmation class (also online), but guess what, that was cancelled. Her teacher cancels quite often. We played another round of our game, but we didn't finish. And now I'm finishing this, a project that has pushed me forward, into a new format.

I'll end with a few words, of course:

Acrimony – bitterness

Flaccid – lacking force or effectiveness

Heuristic – enabling a person to discover or learn something for themselves

Inchoate – confused, incoherent

Argot – slang

I feel no acrimony towards the world, only towards our failure to do anything *not* flaccid. This brave new world is a bit heuristic, especially in some of the opportunities I've had because of it (this course). I hope this doesn't sound too inchoate, and that my argot is understandable, but at the same time I hope there's room for a little madness in the world.