

Three Poems

JOHN BALABAN

Cibolero

During this time Castillo saw, on the neck of an Indian, a little buckle from a sword belt, and in it was sewed a horseshoe nail. He took it from the Indian, and we asked what it was; they said it had come from Heaven. We further asked who had brought it, and they answered that some men, with beards like ours, had come from Heaven to that river; that they had horses, lances and swords, and had lanced two of them.

—*The Journey of Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca (1542)*

It's 7:00 a.m. in Tecolote, N.M.
and the local news on the Dish
is going on about some woman high on dust
crashing into kids at a crossing. Meanwhile,
out on the edge of the high prairie,
up by I-25, the inmates are rising off
their roosts at San Miguel county jail
where the jail log reads like catechism:

Criminal Sexual Penetration in the first degree. Assault with the intent to commit violent felony. False imprisonment. Extortion. Unlawful taking of a motor vehicle. Conspiracy. Burglary of a structure. Contributing to the delinquency of a minor. Kidnapping. Conspiracy to commit Aggravated Battery. Aggravated DWI (7th offense). Possession of drug paraphernalia. Driving on suspended revoked license. Probation Violation: Possession of marijuana, Possession of Methamphetamine. Aggravated stalking. Aggravated battery on household member, resisting, evading, violation of a restraining order, obstructing an officer. Vehicular Homicide, Aggravated DUI, Open Container, Reckless driving. Assault with a deadly weapon. Assault with intent to commit a violent felony, with intent to commit mayhem.

The key word here is mayhem, spreading through the Ethernet and airwaves across the vast Llano Estacado where mountains break into mesas and scrub, dotted with pinon, cut by arroyos and twisty creeks and a web of old footpaths made by ancestors.

And where the Dish, with its thousand channels, is offering its social contracts, so whether you are watching from prison, or at home in your double wide, or in the sleep cab of your semi, or in your townhouse at the city's edge, or at Urgent Care, the local laundromat, or in a bar that never closes, wherever you are watching, you are probably just sitting (and doing this a lot) tuned to hucksters selling vacuum cleaners and Jesus, channel by channel:

#9012: Puppy Pooping in the House?

#9013: Thick Hair Guaranteed

#9014: Rev. Run's Sunday Suppers

#9015: Suffer From Lower Back Pain?

Mayhem being confusion turned to violence or lassitude.

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