

As the World Warms...A Word About Whaling August 20, 2013: I suspect it is

because I've lived such a charmed and protected life, but I've always embraced the tragic as an essential part of the beauty of life. The second cut, Mercury, is the driving force of the mix. Yes, it's sad, worse, it's bleak. It's a voice I've found in other things too, like in Mike Davis's prose and in virtually everything the Wrens have ever done. Sure, it's bad, I hear that voice saying, but there's joy in understanding it. I know it in all its pathetic stupidity and cruelty. I understand it, I know I am part of it, and I will take what's coming to me. That's what the voice says to me. And I love it, to quote a song on the mix.

Voice has been on my mind a bit recently (the last thirty years). I sound so angry in my writing, the cover of this mix, for example. Perhaps I can convey the tragedy of life, a bit, and surely I exude the struggle, maybe even the sturm und drang, of life. But I seem unable to communicate the joy I find in life.

On a related note, I made thirty years of marriage tonight. Not an insignificant accomplishment. Not what I had in mind (to paraphrase another song here), living apart, and I will always carry a burden of failure from it. But there is joy in what happened as well as pain. Of course there was someone else. But you have to factor love in. Even if you don't need love yourself, you can't assume it won't be around. I'm glad love is a force. I wouldn't want to live in a world without it. Hence the first and last songs that frame the mix.

The rest of the mix is about pain and joy too, but less personal. The first side is about our increasingly bleak prospects in an era of environmental collapse and political reaction. After a delightful intermission, the second side tries to invoke the joy, the exhilaration of it all, the lusty feeling of just being alive and trying – against all odds - to steer things the best we can. My (provisionally) loyal listeners will, no doubt, find something suspicious about my new found love for a band called Phoenix, but they are Frenchies so I'm broadening my musical tastes to include whiney French boys.

As the Mercury Rises 1. they'll need a crane – they might be giants; “Some things gal says to lad aren't meant as bad/But cause a little pain/They cause a little pain” I loved this song way before I knew the lyrics but then the lyrics blew me away. They sing it so sweetly too, and on Letterman even: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KZgsHi7wAil>
2. mercury – the heligoats: In regards to taking what's coming to us: “So curl me up in your coils/Spin me inside of your heat/Hold me until my blood boils like mercury”: And, of course, the mix needs some watery references 3. paddle forward – yo la tengo “SOS/ We've come unmoored/Riptide pullin', pullin' away from the shore” (second verse, SOS becomes “Ship of Fools”); our first seafaring reference 4. Better off dead – the wipers: this one has been growing on me, but the first hook was Ypres, Belgium (“wipers,” to the poor tommies in WWI), and so I thought trenches when I heard it. And since it was from a mix Andrew gave me, I figured it was British. But actually, it's early and influential Portland punk; Cobain loved these guys. 5. unexplainable stories – cloud cult “I swear I

fought the good fight/always waiting for the coming of morning” – a good ethic, what else do you want to do between here and the grave? "Activate your force-fields and just keep going..." Another ship reference, though this seems to be a spaceship. 6. end of freedom – wilderness; the mix actually started with this deeply dark and chilling cut; conjures for me, the military-suburban-petroleum-industrial complex getting a meaner face as things go to hell (been going on for forty years now); the lyrics are quite simple: “the hand/the fist/the hand over the fist/the end to all this/what is in the end of freedom/the end of freedom” **Intermission:** 7. north – phoenix (isn’t this lovely? I just love the electric guitar); so I read something about this band of Frenchies from a random web search when I had my (ongoing) obsession about Phoenix, Arizona, and almost bought a cd but then found that I’d had a mix of them from John Whitaker (former student, long-time friend and benefactor) and, my god, I fell in love with them; the cd also had an A. C. Newman on it, see below 8. lalibela – caribou ; a holy city in Ethiopia, and an Ethiopian restaurant near Dupont Circle in DC that I’ve had two good and, coincidentally, emotional meals **Ode to Summer Flings** 9 I love it (I don’t care) – icona pop: “You are from the seventies/but I’m a nineties bitch.” Ouch! Polly pointed this song out to me. Hmm. Anyway, have I changed the mood? 10 courtesy laughs – phoenix: “I had a fever to empty your closet now/I didn’t think it would so that hard” – ah, summertime and the living is easy. “I found out it was Egyptian” – that sold me. 11 port of call – beirut : one more obligatory sea reference in my ship mix; seems buoyant but, in the end, it’s about being part of the flaws in the universe: “And you, you had hope for me now/I danced all around it somehow” 12 one time too many – phoenix: really, how do you slow down your tan? 13 come crash – a. c. newman: who doesn’t like a car crash song? Especially one sweetly done 14 lost and found – phoenix “That wasn’t what you had in mind,” oh so sweet, “heh, you don’t know what you’re doing” then later and sweeter yet, “I’ll tell you what I have in mind” 15 rabbit heart (raise it up) – Florence and the machine: “this is a gift, it comes with a price, who is the lamb and who is the knife” – probably doesn’t fit on this side, I just like it 16 they’ll need a crane – the wrens: how great are these guys? They have my number.