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Mission Statement: The purpose of An International Journal of Exploratory Meta-Living is to provide a resource for the dissemination of creative works relevant to the subject of meta-living. The journal welcomes both academic and artistic exercises expressed in any medium capable of being transmitted through the physical mechanisms of the journal. Due consideration also will be given to submissions that do not conform to these mechanisms. The journal explicitly forbids the establishment of a regular publication schedule.

Meta-Living: One useful avenue leading toward an understanding of the term meta-living is through analogy, particularly by considering meta-fiction. Wikipedia, the oracle of all contemporary knowledge, defines meta-fiction as “the literary term describing fictional writing that self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artifact in posing questions about the relationship between fiction and reality, usually using irony and self-reflection.”¹ By straight-forward analogy, meta-living is the existential term describing a manner of living that self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artifact in posing questions about the relationship between existence and reality, using irony and self-reflection among other devices. These other devices include, but are not limited to, scientific inquiry, ontology, various theologisms, sophistry, rhetoric, tomfoolery, transcendental perspectivism and, of course, the omnipresent specter of post-existential relativism.

¹<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metafiction>, accessed 2014 April 16.

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A Note on the Font: This font is Dax Compact Regular, designed by the late Hans Reichel, musician, instrument maker and font designer.

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Sisyphus ver. 2.1

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Abstract: This document provides a commentary on the changing perception of Sisyphus and the futility that he represents. It focuses on how the human institutions of our modern society have created a new interpretation of Sisyphus. It seems especially relevant in this current climate of corporate efficiency and political partisanship.

In Book XI of *The Odyssey*, Ulysses recounts, "And I saw Sisyphus at his endless task raising his prodigious stone with both his hands. With hands and feet he tried to roll it up to the top of the hill, but always, just before he could roll it over on to the other side, its weight would be too much for him, and the pitiless stone would come thundering down again on to the plain. Then he would begin trying to push it up hill again, and the sweat ran off him and the steam rose after him."¹

Approximately two thousand seven hundred years later, in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Albert Camus invoked Sisyphus again as the example of finding dignity in performing tasks of breath-taking futility in order to counter an inherently meaningless existence. Of Sisyphus, Camus concludes, "The struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy."²

Much less time passes and we enter a new era, in which an unforeseen dilemma arises. Having accepted as a premise an existence devoid of absolute meaning, one does one's best to assemble a philosophical framework guided by personally meaningful goals (though arbitrary by any external scale). Within this framework, one attempts to occupy an existence in a reasonably comfortable

manner, until one discovers that there have appeared, seemingly out of nowhere, a host of individuals who now object to Sisyphus' activity. Never mind, that for millennia he has engaged himself in a private endeavor. He has done no one harm through-out the ages. Some have adapted his public story to suit their own ends, but of his own accord he has kept to himself, a model of discretion. Now, Sisyphus finds himself surrounded by a throng of people. Many shout at him with contradictory orders.

One righteous spectator commands him to set down the rock immediately. "You demean all men with your pointless labor. The futility of humanity is magnified through your example. It lessens the worth of all men who have had the misfortune to either lay eyes on you or yet hear of your pitiable plight. For shame!"

Another ostensibly well-meaning bystander says, "Sisyphus, cease your labor immediately! You did not receive the proper regulatory approval to perform this work. We have devised other purposes for this hill upon which you tread. Its gentle slope appears an ideal surface upon which one might lay and participate in such pleasant activities as cloud-watching during the daylight hours and stargazing

at night. If it turns out that this incline is not well suited for such noble recreation, we might yet pave it with black asphalt and let it bake in the sun, for no reason other than we have a momentary surplus of asphalt, with which we wish to do something potentially, nay eminently, useful. Moreover, you have no claim to the rock you have for so long borne. Set it down. Let it be. By what right do you claim that rock as your own?"

A third voice calls out, "Sisyphus, set down your rock and step aside. You have had far more than your fair share of time in the limelight. Many others, laboring under a meaninglessness no less profound than your own, wish to take a turn redeeming themselves through the task of honest labor. In fact, I myself wish to be next. Give me your rock! I want my turn!" This call is echoed at first by one additional voice, shouting, "I want my turn!" One by one, more voices join the chorus. Soon a thousand voices are yelling a discordant refrain, "I want my turn! I want my turn!" All wish to walk, if only for a moment, in the footsteps of Sisyphus the damned.

If one were to visit this version of Sisyphus in the underworld, there would be no wisdom in returning to share the tales of one's exploits, as Ulysses did. Nor is there in this iteration of Sisyphus a message of happiness to be drawn from the exercise of the sheer force of will required to persevere in an absurd struggle, as Camus advised.

Instead, this Sisyphus continues to carry his rock up the hill. The voices of his critics clamor in his ears. An anxiety—soon they will crowd so closely around him that he will no longer be able to continue the only exercise he recalls how to do—sets in upon him and adds a weight to his shoulders, far in excess of the mass of the stone. The eternity laid out before him, which others once mistook for torment, is revealed now to be far preferable to the ephemeral alternative, namely engaging for a few years in a struggle that culminates in being prematurely forced to abandon one's work, being stripped of even the dignity of the absurd, so as to sit idly in inescapable poverty of the mind and body. This Sisyphus is

bereft even of inutile struggle, and remains fully cognizant of the fact that he exists without meaning, without recognition, without myth, not at the hands of a universe intrinsically indifferent to the interests of man, but rather due to the interests of the institutions of man himself.



About The Poison Pie Publishing House

The Poison Pie Publishing House³ is an independent publisher specializing in post-existential fantasy generated through a non-idiomatic improvisational writing process. In addition to serving as a publishing house, PPPH hosts an arts blog³ and "An International Journal of Exploratory Meta-Living".⁴

References

1. Homer, *The Odyssey*. 800 B.C.E.: "rendered into English prose for the use of those who cannot read the original" by Samuel Butler in 1900.
2. Camus, A., *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*. 1955: Alfred A. Knopf, Originally published in France as *Le Mythe de Sisyphus* in 1942 by Librairie Gallimard.
3. *The Poison Pie Publishing House*, <http://www.poisonpie.com/publishing/index.html>, accessed Feb. 5, 2015.
4. Staff, *An International Journal of Exploratory Meta-Living*, <http://www.poisonpie.com/IJEML/index.html>, accessed Feb. 5, 2015.

Wouldn't the Wood Weird

or

Impractical Prayers from the Spindle of the Void
by David J. Keffer



Lake View
Arboretum



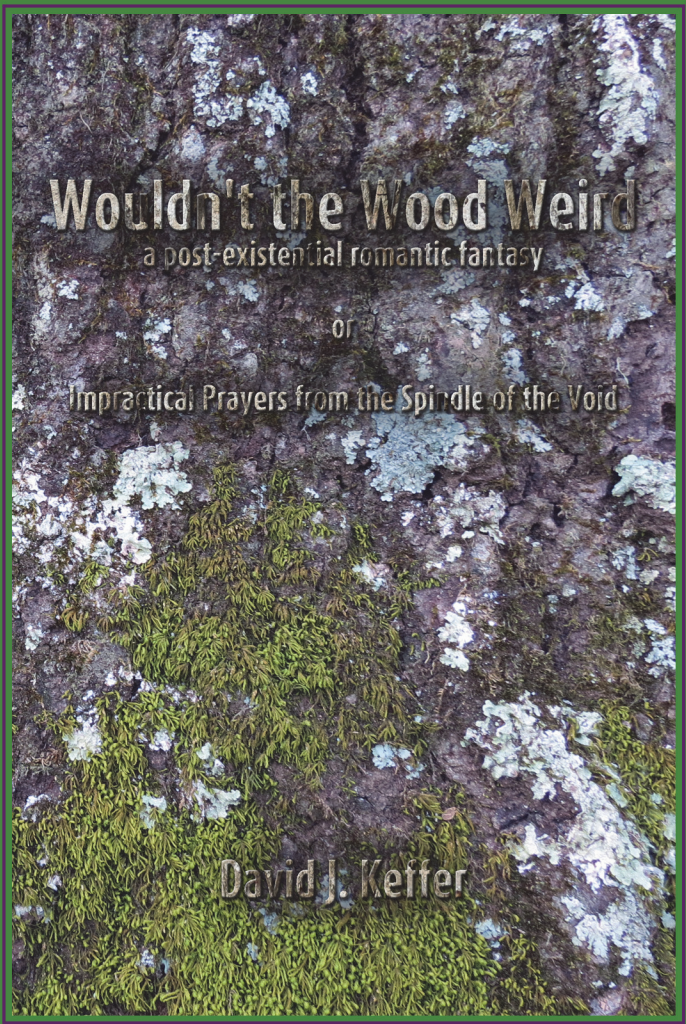
Reality is defined reluctantly by common consensus. Each of us participates in the process in a unique way and contributes our own idiosyncratic slant to the reality that emerges. *Wouldn't the Wood Weird* follows four individuals--a drowned woman, a psychic, an astronaut and Wouldn't himself--each of whom spent some time in the care of the staff of the Lake View Sanitarium, where they were recuperated and returned, ostensibly whole, to society. Having conquered their inner demons, they join forces to participate in the externally directed enterprise often described as "making the world a better place". This short novel follows them on their first adventure in this arena, the search for the astronaut's missing wife.

Wouldn't the Wood Weird is a post-existential (romantic) fantasy generated through a non-idiomatic improvisational creative process.



About the Author

David Keffer is a professor at the University of Tennessee and an autodidact in the realm of world literature. He has currently published 19 novels, 6 illustrated books and 2 prayer books with the Poison Pie Publishing House.



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