

# Tombeau for L

Peter Lamborn Wilson

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## Introductory note by Sunfrog

People connected with the 'zine and mail art communities of the 1980s or with the rural, artistic, experimental music factions of the anarchist milieu in the 1990s might remember the co-founder of Dreamtime Village, Lyx Ish, also known as Elizabeth Perl Nasaw and Liz Was, who died on February 28, 2004 at the young age of 47.

I first learned of Dreamtime when interviewing Hakim Bey for my free-form Cass Corridor journal *Babyfish* in 1991. Inspired as many readers were by the Temporary Autonomous Zone, I asked Bey if any real-life projects embodied for him the spirit of the book. He pointed me towards Dreamtime, where I would visit every summer throughout the first half of the 1990s.

Bringing together a wide assortment of anarchic artists including the editors of the now defunct Schiz Flux journals *Smile*, *Snarl*, *Squirts*, etc., Dreamtime was quite a magnet for ludic revolutionaries during the early 1990s. In fact, several current FE writers and editors first met at Dreamtime during its late summer festivals.

It's in the context of Dreamtime's innovative and radical vision of a permaculture and hypermedia village that I discovered the genius of Liz Was, later known as Lyx, an astonishing musician, artist, teacher, and friend. Many tributes to Lyx have already been made by people whose lives she touched, but many of us felt that this issue of FE would be incomplete without acknowledging the incredible inspiration Lyx has left us.

## Tombeau for L

How can people exist without making?

Doesn't misery result from blockage of the normal human need to make?

Isn't it strange that most humans cease to make when they leave childhood?

This was not the case in most post-industrial societies so it can scarcely be due to Evolution can it?

Perhaps Progress?

How about this for a scenario: making is the prolongation of play not the content of work.

Play & making constitute modes of production of meaning; "goods & services" signify as little to the maker as wages to the playing child.

The first gardens for example were not created to be work or even to produce food. They were experiments in making, Love affairs with certain meaningful plants such as hemp or grapes or tobacco.

School in the modern universal standardized institutional sense did not exist till the industrial age. Unlike old apprenticeship systems school teaches not making but work, or rather, it transforms the energies of making into the bound energies of work.

The model here was mind/body as steam engine. The more you bottle up energy, bind it & force it, the more efficient it becomes—but also more destitute of complexity. The less complexity, the less meaning.

Replacement of steam engine model by computer model simply speeds up processes of machinization on psychic & physical levels: machines take over production of meaning just as they take over material production—or in the case of computers, control of the means of production (kybernetes, Greek for helmsman).

Production of meaning cannot be synthesized (rendered inorganic) without suppression on a social level of the desire to make.

In the crude early days of industry this programme was realized thru overt repression, control on brute physical level, fordism, time-clock, etc.

Here in the Future however control has gone covert & non-linear. It now operates directly on the imagination thru manipulation of simulacra.

As A.K. Coomaraswamy said, in our modern society the artist is a special kind of person whereas in a normal society every person is a special kind of artist.

The specialness of the artist consists of alienation, that is, a wound or lesion.

The artist refuses to give up playing—the production of meaning—and thus also refuses domestication & “socialization”—which are based on consumption of someone else’s meaning, or rather, everyone else’s meaning: the Consensus.

The artist is seen as an incomplete person, neotenic, one who has never grown up; thus is both despised & envied

The artist will be hurt, or rather, the artist is already hurt, otherwise would not be an artist.

This reality emerges very rapidly in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century as a kind of pre-echo of the Industrial Revolution; visionaries like Blake & Novalis suffer as Cassandras for their foresight.

The final revenge of the average modern non-artist on the artist is to turn art into a commodity & consume it.

In a Gift economy a made object cannot be alienated in this way, only given or received.

Under the sign of the Gift no one “makes a living” but simply lives; no separation between making & life.

Under the sign of money however the axe of separation cuts to the root:

money fills up with meaning while art loses it.

People feel art betrays them because it promises meaning but never delivers.

But meaning lies in making not consuming.

Only a few great connoisseurs can really appreciate art without making it—and in fact such appreciation is itself a kind of making.

And at some moment perhaps everyone has been a knower in this sense, deeply moved & even changed by some art they have made their own by understanding it, understanding it by becoming it.

Everyone has at least one childhood memory of first-hand making.

Everyone has at least one moment of being an artist even if they’re ashamed of it.

Hobbies are often repressed art urges.

Artists who realize this dilemma can try various ways to ease the pain:

for instance by giving away their art for nothing

by teaching other people how to get over repression & make things themselves (poesis)

by cultural sabotage—art as negation & critique—destruction as creation on both conceptual & physical levels—  
attack the institutions

by keeping children out of school

by transforming work into play, e.g., by gardening in a festive & sensual manner

by embracing worldly failure as a sign of spiritual success

by “going out to greet the Sabbath,” by invoking St Monday, by slacking off, by praising revery & daydream  
against the slander of utilitarians & moralists

by founding a rural commune devoted to art & avant gardening—or  
by redemption, i.e., by taking on oneself the burden of misery of the non-artists, by being an Art Saint.  
In short there are many things to do, things that might at least save yr own sanity  
from disintegration burn-out under the good-cop/bad-cop routine of Late Late Capital  
or even worse, assimilation, sell-out,  
apotheosis of the Cyborg  
without necessarily at the same time starving in a garret for want of food or recognition or even the company  
of friends.

Nevertheless sacrifices have to be made: one cannot simultaneously enjoy the comforts (however thin) of Capital & yet live as if the Revolution had already occurred.

Some bets cannot be hedged. Play turns out to be quite serious—just as we suspected—a matter of risk.

In a normal society it would take no courage to make, to create one's special kind of art.

Normal folk test their courage in other ways, say by vision quest, or by hunting dangerous game.

Like shamans artists are usually forced into it by spirits who won't let them rest unless they make art—a kind of possession—

but it's always possible to appease at least some of these devils with a nice job in media or academia.

The result is of course self-repression & misery but many choose sickness with wealth over health with poverty.

In the U.S. the choice of affluence & distraction is made easy because the price in psychic misery is masked by false advertising & consciousness management.

It takes sheer foolhardiness to be an artist in the first place & then on top of it turn one's back deliberately on the Art World & retire to obscurity in some bohemian outback—

but the secret truth is that one year of dreamtime is worth ten of so-called self-appointed Real Life.

If more people knew this secret more & more people would take the risk until bit by bit the map would be erased & replaced by territory.

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