

HI! I HOPE YOU'VE ENJOYED THE FIRST TEN YEARS OF INSTALLMENTS IN ELWICK PARTRIDGE'S HIGHLY ACCLAIMED SERIAL EXPERIMENTAL NOVEL, JOURNAL (ALSO KNOWN AS THE JOURNALS OF NATHANAEAL BONNELL). TODAY I'LL BE DOING A RARE INTERVIEW WITH THE FAMOUSLY RETICENT PARTRIDGE HIMSELF. THANKS FOR JOINING ME, MR PARTRIDGE.

IT'S MY PLEASURE.

AN INDEFINITELY LONG, SERIALIZED NOVEL, PRINTED IN LONGHAND AND EXPRESSING THE DAY-BY-DAY LIFE OF ITS PROTAGONIST IN EXHAUSTIVELY DETAILED JOURNAL ENTRIES TOUCHING DAILY ON THE MINUTIAE OF LIFE, ISN'T EXACTLY A TRADITIONAL FORM OF LITERATURE. YET OVER THE LAST TWO YEARS YOU'VE CARRIED IT OUT PAIN-TAKINGLY, PLOWING THRU SO FAR A DECADE OF YOUR CHARACTER'S LIFE. HOW DID YOU DECIDE TO EMBARK ON SUCH AN UNUSUAL PROJECT?

I HAD FOR A LONG TIME BEEN FRUSTRATED AND ANNOYED WITH THE INVARIABLE TENDENCY IN ALMOST ALL OF LITERATURE TO FOCUS ON THE SPECIAL CHARACTER, THE ONE WITH A PLOT CONVENIENTLY PLACED IN A SET OF BRACKETS IN THEIR LIFE, WHICH A NOVEL COULD SIMPLY AND SEQUENTIALLY DETAIL, AND THEN FALL SILENT.



OUR LIVES ARE NOT MADE OF DISCRETE STORIES WITH DISCRETE INCITING INCIDENTS, RISING ACTIONS, AND CLIMAXES. REALLY, OUR LIVES ARE MOSTLY EXPOSITION AND DÉNOUEMENT. IT OCCURRED TO ME GRADUALLY THAT THE ONLY WAY TO APPROACH A GENUINE FICTION OF REAL LIFE WOULD BE TO GET TO KNOW ONE CHARACTER ALMOST AS WELL AS YOU KNOW YOURSELF, IF NOT BETTER. AND WHAT BETTER WAY TO DO THAT THAN WITH A JOURNAL? IT STARTED A LONG TIME BACK WITH THE "CHILDHOOD" VOLUME I, A ONE-OFF PROJECT I DID FOR MYSELF AS A SORT OF TEST OF CONCEPT. WHEN I STARTED THE DAILY PROJECT, I DECIDED TO SERIALIZE IT IN ANALOG TO FORCE ME NOT TO GO BACK AND EDIT. REAL LIFE DOESN'T HAVE A BACKSPACE KEY EITHER. TO KEEP THE REALISM, I HAD IT BOUND REALISTICALLY BY MIGUEL RIUS AND LETTERED BY MY TIRELESS AMANUENSIS ANDREW PARKER.



AND YET SOME PEOPLE HAVE WONDERED ONLINE ABOUT WHY YOU CHOSE SUCH AN UNUSUAL CHARACTER. DOES THAT IN ANY WAY DEFEAT YOUR PURPOSE?

WELL FIRST OFF, EVERY POSSIBLE CHARACTER IS UNUSUAL IN ONE WAY OR ANOTHER. THE KIND OF STORY THAT WOULD SATISFY THESE READERS IS AVERAGE IN EVERY WAY, AND SUCH A LIFE IS LOGICALLY IMPOSSIBLE, SINCE EVEN BEING SO AVERAGE IN EVERY WAY WOULD BE UNUSUAL. BUT EVEN IF WE IGNORE THAT, THERE'S NO CONFLICT WITH MY GOAL FOR THIS PIECE. I'M NOT LOOKING TO PERFECT THE PORTRAYAL OF AVERAGE LIFE, BUT OF REALISTIC LIFE.



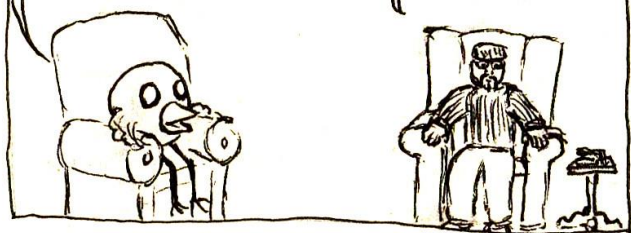
I SUPPOSE THE SAME ANSWER APPLIES TO THOSE WHO HAVE ACCUSED YOU OF BEING TOO FANCIFUL (OR EVEN SELF-INDULGENT) IN THE LAST YEAR AND A HALF OR SO.

RIGHT. IT'S NOT THAT OUR LIVES DON'T HAVE ANYTHING YOU COULD PICK OUT AS A PLOT. IT'S JUST THAT THEY'RE NEVER SO TIDY AS IN MOST FICTION. LOOSE ENDS JUST DANGLE; CHEKHOV'S GUN STAYS ON THE WALL. AND THE PLOTS DON'T COME ONE AFTER ANOTHER — HENCE WHY I DELIBERATELY AVOIDED ANY BUT THE BAREST OF STORYLINES FOR THE FIRST SEVEN WHOLE YEARS OF THE STORY.



JOURNAL STARTED OUT AS AN UNPOPULAR, OCCASIONALLY CRITICALLY DERIDED, LARGELY IGNORED PROJECT, BUT IT QUICKLY AMASSED AN UNEXPECTED AND HIGHLY ACTIVE BASE OF SOMETIMES ALARMINGLY OBSSIVE READERS. HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN THIS FOR A NOVEL THAT INTENTIONALLY SETS OUT TO BE LESS CONSTANTLY ENTERTAINING THAN ANY OTHER NOVEL?

PEOPLE ARE ALWAYS LOOKING FOR SOMETHING TO BE OBSESSED WITH, AND A PROJECT THIS UNUSUAL AND DETAILED I THINK JUST FITS THAT BILL PERFECTLY. BUT I THINK IT'S ALSO DUE TO THE INNATE CURIOSITY WE ALL HAVE TO SEE WHAT IT'S LIKE IN ANOTHER PERSON'S



MIND — THE ONE REALM THAT, EVEN IN THIS AGE OF NO LIMITS, IS STILL OFF-LIMITS TO US. I'VE BEEN TO THE ONLINE FORUMS. THOSE WHO LOOK FOR CODED MESSAGES IN THE PATTERN OF SCRIBBLED-OUT WORDS, THOSE WHO HAVE MAPPED OUT NATHANAEL'S TRAVELS TO TRY TO FIND A GEOMETRICAL SYMBOL — THEY ARE THE ONES IN IT FOR THE PURE OBSESSION. BUT THOSE WHO DISCUSS WHAT NATHANAEL WOULD DO IN SUCH-AND-SUCH A SITUATION, WHO TOSS DICE TO CREATE ALTERNATE VERSIONS OF SOME CERTAIN ENTRY, TRYING FOR THE ULTIMATE REALISM IN CAPTURING HIS VOICE AND PERSONALITY —

THEY ARE WHO I WRITE FOR, THE ONES OBSESSED IN A DIFFERENT BEAUTIFUL WAY.



IS NATHANAEL BASED ON ANYONE YOU KNOW OR HAVE READ ABOUT?

NO, OR AT LEAST NOT INTENTIONALLY. I TRY TO PULL HIS ESSENCE OUT OF THIN AIR, BUT OF COURSE WE ARE ALL SHAPED BY THE EXISTENCES OF ALL THE PEOPLE AROUND US, AND MY IDEAS ARE NOT MY OWN, JUST AS MY PERSONALITY ISN'T. IT'S SOMETIMES DIFFICULT AND RESEARCH-INTENSIVE TO WRITE FOR SOMEONE WITH SUCH ODD, DIVERSE INTERESTS, BUT STILL REWARDING IN THE END.



CAN YOU TELL US ANYTHING ABOUT WHAT'S IN STORE FOR THE NEXT TEN YEARS?

I KEEP THAT A SECRET EVEN FROM MYSELF BUT GIVEN THE WAY NATHANAEL'S LIFE IS GOING SO FAR, I'D HAZARD A GUESS THAT HE'LL HAVE SOME PRETTY ENTERTAINING PROJECTS AND PROBABLY LOVE INTERESTS IN SWING, OR GETTING THAT WAY.



ALRIGHT, AND ONE MORE QUESTION THAT I THINK MAY BE ON A LOT OF PEOPLE'S MINDS: HOW CAN YOU BE GETTING INTERVIEWED BY ME, A CHARACTER TWO LAYERS DEEP IN FICTION OF YOUR OWN CREATION?

IT'S A LOOP! I'M SECRETLY BOTH ZERO LAYERS AND THREE LAYERS DEEP IN FICTION! I'VE EVEN MANAGED TO HIDE MYSELF BODILY AWAY IN THE PAGES OF MY OWN BOOKS!



OR WAIT. IS THAT IT?



HANG ON...



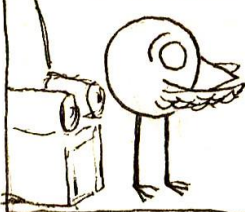
OH. OH RIGHT.



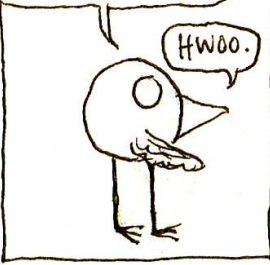
DAMN.



AM I...
OKAY I'M STILL HERE

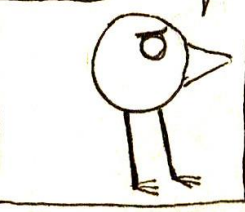


WELL I GUESS I DODGED THAT.



HWO...

WAIT A MINUTE. IT'S DEFINITELY GETTING SMALLER IN HERE.



TO BE CONTINUED

And for reading through all that, you get a
Stupid Pun Two-fer

