

Step Right Up

by [Louis Faber](#) (November 2023)



The Disappointed Souls, Ferdinand Hodler, 1892

Step Right Up

They were lemmings aligning,
ever impatient, always seeking.
For some, it would be rejuvenation,
for others rebirth, a recapture of youth.
He was no mage, not Merlin, but
they gathered around his table
a lazy susan of desires, pleas, entreaties.
All he could offer was snake oil, but they
gladly took it as hope, an abiding faith
in a cure for their existential condition.
They were always willing to wager it all
in another bet against the house,
against all odds, desperate for what they
imagined they might receive in only they
were worthy of his favor, his beneficence.
And he stood proudly before them,
dispensing a nothingness that filled

their voids, and he knew that a promise,
even a false one, when married to hope
and faith might be exactly what would
get them through yet another day.
He was an angel and a charlatan,
but he knew that they gave him meaning,
a purpose that life and religion had denied him
for that was the symbiotic hand
that the capricious gods had dealt them all.

Unboxed

They thought they had him
boxed in, contained, constrained,
but he would not be truncated, cast aside.
He would make a quiet escape, proceed
carefully so they would not realize,
until it was too late, that he was free
of their control, their rejection, their spite.
They wanted him in their psychic morgue,
one more corpse sacrificed on their altar
of conformity, but none of them wanted
to play a ram-less Abraham, and so he
would be a latter day Isaac free to come down
the mountain of their solitude.
That was all he desired, freedom to think,
to ponder, to reflect, to meditate
on the state of his mind, his world.
He was never a rebel, needed no revolution,
but in their view anyone who deviated
from their singular group-thought was a danger,
ideas were weapons that could
bring down their sense of one great self.
He cared nothing for that, for them,
for he knew that no prison short of death
could mute his fertile mind, and ideas

would well up and percolate freely
and they could never hope to dam their flow.

Hagar's Son

Did you so fear being Hagar
that you deemed me Esau, stole
my birthright, my name, my past
and cast me off into a wilderness?
I knew nothing of this, your secret
taken with you to the grave as you wished.
Did you consider that I might be
Ishmael, never knowing my father,
adopted into a culture that would
never be mine, a child who would
become another when theirs arrived?
It matters little now, for I have
found you, watered your grave
with tears of joy and loss, imagining
the touch of the woman who bore me
crossing finally into the promised
land of my family and my heritage.

Here at Last

For how long had he been staring?
He didn't know, didn't need to,
time had ceased to matter,
carried off on the gravitational tide.
He had been walking for days
to get to this place, each step
a new beginning, each going nowhere.
He knew he might seek solace here,
knew he could never leave,
here, now, was his ancestral home.

There was a succulence to the sand,
the stones, the odd plants
that, like him, had taken shallow root,
seeking the succor of a rain
that was always on the horizon,
a mirage, a delusion, a desire.
So he stood and watched and waited
and knew that was the place, this
would never be the place. Time
flowed back over him, bathing him,
and the encroaching dawn drew
him away from the world of dreams

[Table of Contents](#)

Louis Faber is a poet, photographer and blogger. His work has appeared in *The Whisky Blot*, *The Poet* (U.K.), *Alchemy Spoon*, *New Feathers Anthology*, *Dreich* (Scotland), *Tomorrow and Tomorrow*, *Erothanatos* (Greece), *Defenestration*, *Atlanta Review*, *Glimpse*, *Rattle*, *Midnight Mind*, *Pearl*, *Midstream*, *European Judaism*, *The South Carolina Review* and *Worcester Review*, among many others, and has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize. A book of poetry, *The Right to Depart*, was published by Plain View Press. He can be found at <https://anoldwriter.com>.

Follow NER on Twitter @