

May 9, 2020

I know things are getting tough, people are getting testy, some people are getting mean, and others are losing it. I get it, I could do any of those things, the idea of not being in charge of my own life is daunting and I can become unhinged and irrational just at the sight of someone approaching me on the sidewalk.

I am surprised at how vile my thoughts can turn.

I like to think that I am above all of that but my own thinking on what in Catholic doctrine we call “original sin” has nothing to do with sex and everything to do with our capacity for violence and self-deceit.

I’ll bet Eve tore the fruit off the tree, she didn’t pick it, she ripped it off in an act of defiance at the limits imposed on her.

We like to associate ourselves with power, I think, even when we think we don’t or are not doing it, we like power, we want to be powerful, we want to be seen by others as possessing no weakness.

I read the book, **Oblivion**, this week, a memoir by Hector Abad of his father, Hector Abad. It is a wonderfully written and honest remembrance of a son of a father by a son 20 years after the father’s assassination by unknown assailants on a street corner in the early evening.

Hector the Elder was a physician/professor of medicine in Colombia in Latin America who became very much involved in human rights issues and challenged the governments and the Catholic Church, both responding with terrible consequences for Hector the Elder and thousands of other people in the second half of the last century.

But the book is not a self-obsessed story of the violence and inequalities of Latin America but almost a love story, widely encompassing the smallest details of life.

Toward the end of the book, the author quotes a poem by Jorge Luis Borges, ‘Epitaph’ which begins with these lines:

Already we are the oblivion we shall be-  
the elemental dust that does not know us  
the dust that once was red Adam and now is

all men. The dust we shall not see.

The poem is considered to assume no God, no afterlife, nothing spiritual or metaphysical, that we are just the sum total of the details of our lives remembered for a few years and then gone, lost in the dust of a universe that takes no note of us.

But if you read the book you will find that roses play an extremely significant but unassuming role in their lives and their deaths.

A rose is a very powerful symbol almost universally recognized and appreciated. A rose has no real power of any kind. A rose has lots of petals that all come down to one point of perfect union.

A rose can be a mystery that sustains us in these times, actual roses, or memories of roses, and a rose can soothe our inclinations to violence with beauty.

Find a rose.