

*JW Burns*

## Marking Turtle Nests

THE EGG CRACKS. BREAKS APART.

The turtle digs out, nourishing a notion prefabbed in the Triassic Period, scampers over the sand toward the bright bronze water. Moonlight real and instinctual fills its shell-shocked skull. With luck, more than a little luck, the turtle lodges in the liquid environment, survives to adulthood, grasps home. During that period of growth the marine-rigged odd fit discovers a presence; learns solid ground lacks the frame to form a familiar world—is only a terrain fetched with obstacles and imbalance. How much of a presence I don't know—how acutely stitched together a consciousness the turtle sports is open to conjecture—whether or not the turtle actually possesses consciousness is also open to conjecture...a presence with or without absence of absence? Can't say for sure.

But this I know: the turtle learns that survival is redemptive in and of itself. I know this because when a sea turtle rests its sweetly cold-blooded head on a rock and stares into your eyes you immediately notice that tears roll in rubbed droplets from those implausible black dots. No thread. No continuity. Only the irregular tears of redemption. Smooth cleft burnish rift. Intervals: dive, arrive, glide, surface, breathe the wide sky, dive; intervals nudging, flapping, flipping, nibbling, each motion redeeming the one before.

Only the lonely hatch like a seed chafing upward. With luck directional, unfettered, unpreyed upon to cross the sand to the water. In the water lucky enough to avoid more predators, pollution, a creature on the outward tide joining fellow survivalists in a gigantic petri-dish made beautiful by light, heat from a minor energy source. But the turtle doesn't seem to give a rat's ass about that. Or much else that consciousness of a certain kind deems worth caring about. More or less in its present form having lived through at least one major extinction space becomes more lived in than time.

Sitting warm-blooded butt on dry land savoring turtles scuffle through the waves up to the shoreline rocks, how they maintain a fluid steadfast balance while nibbling green taffeta growth, I'm stuck by my own lack of redemptive charm. It's too goddamn easy. Then I recall yesterday evening's BBC newscast featuring quick but devastating views of three different groups of stranded migrants in fifteen minutes with a couple of other news bits wedged between. For them it's too hard. Too easy. Too hard. Seems to be all we got. Tenured balance just to eat but nothing like the threat to the turtle's existence wrought by human kind's miss-attentiveness misuse of their natural environment. Watching their precision munching, firm, chew sliding, spinning, bulky elegance in remedial struggle to redeem organic existence.

Too detonatively high-falutin wording? Maybe. Not to undercut the turtle's remarkably long history, but imaginative survival looms, grudgingly juxtaposed with many other life forms. The next dingdong of doom could well include less than that tearful head resting on rock; later, feeling the force, tasting the salt as I body surf a decomposing wave up on the unfocusing beach.