

Reflections, “Waiting for an Apocalypse”. “Boxed in, Boxed up, Housed, Enclosed... Let’s Forget about Pandora’s Box”. Edward Curtin

By [Edward Curtin](#)

Theme: [History](#)

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“Method, Method, what do you want from me? You know that I have eaten of the fruit of the unconscious.” – Jules Laforgue, [Moralités légendaires](#)

The other day my wife attended an event at a well-appointed home in town where men in dark suits stood around to provide a sense of security that no harm would come to the visitors, even though the angel of death had visited this house on previous occasions, for it was a funeral home, well-steeped in boxing people up for the journey to the underworld. So to call it a “home” is really a misnomer; that might sound cozy, but it is really a way station for the dead. A layover.

Mistakenly thinking that she was attending a traditional wake and the dead person’s corpse would be there in a coffin, I suggested that she check out the casket and, if she liked its wood and the softness of its velvet liner, to inquire whether they had any sales going on, especially if they had a buy-one-get-one-free sale like the local supermarket often has for English muffins and other goodies.

I think she forgot to ask, but she did tell me that the elderly woman who died had been cremated weeks ago and that her ashes were in a box on a table. Boxes, ah, [little boxes](#).

I have long wondered why so many people are enchanted by sunsets, why they travel to see them and gasp in wonder that the sun disappears and night comes on. Colorful yes, but not as glorious as the sunrise, the rosy-fingered dawn of every new day. Why celebrate the death of the day and our journey into the underworld of sleep and the cave of dreams rather than the dawn of our awakening and new life. Jokes aside, morbidity is not life-affirming. The true apocalypse – Greek *apokalyptein*, uncover, disclose, reveal – is every dawn’s epiphany

when we can dream while awake and create.

In Apuleius's *Metamorphoses* there is the story of Cupid and Psyche, the former being a male god and the latter a female human. Psyche, who has lost her lover Cupid but wants him back, is tricked by the goddess Aphrodite who challenges her, if she wants Cupid back, to take the dangerous journey to the underworld to retrieve a box of beauty cream. Psyche goes and gets the box but is tempted to open it since it would enhance her already beautiful human appearance. When she does, she falls into a deathlike sleep.

It's an old story, forever new. Switch the sexes if you wish. Take 200 vitamin pills a day as many billionaires and other assorted crazies do intent on becoming immortal gods. Good luck. Get uploaded or downloaded into a computer, whichever it is, and live forever. Maybe watch the sun set or perchance wake up. And although Psyche is given a Hollywood ending when she is saved by Zeus and made immortal with the other gods in Olympus, that's just an old movie. We live by facts these days, not myths. Ah, boxes.

The Boxer by Simon & Garfunkel

I am just a poor boy, though my story's
seldom told

I have squandered my resistance for a
pocketful of mumbles

Such as promises

All lies and jest

Still a man hears what he wants to hear

And disregards the rest, hmm

Children love boxes within which they often hide their collections for safekeeping. Give a child a box with a lid and it will be filled in no time. Filled with little things that symbolize for children the vast infinity of secret space that is their hold on time. Children are born poets and philosophers who over time are usually dulled by adults around them from whom they learn to hide their secrets and the questions these secrets raise. The secrets often fester and die, only to live on in repressed lives. I knew a man who collected cigar boxes.

They were everywhere in his house when he died. Most were empty. His wife outdid him with her collection of empty boxes: shoe boxes, jewelry boxes, every kind of box imaginable. All empty. Were they waiting to be filled? With what? Secrets? Another woman I knew had a box with an envelope inside marked, "My Father's Magic Envelope - AKA Miracles." It was empty. She pictured herself as a boxer in a sketch she drew, a child without a face with boxing gloves. I can only guess at the secrets she was fighting to remember or forget. The experimental method is based on repetition, but so too is trauma. Internment is not just for the dead.

Boxed in, boxed up, housed, enclosed, trapped, contained, caged, enveloped, bounded,

penned, corralled, trapped: calling from my cell for help? The screen lights up with a concatenation of phantom images that seize the mind, what the Greeks called *eidolon*.

Let's forget about Pandora's box, which was actually a jar in the original story. Its last content being hope. I once knew a girl named Hope. She was very seductive. But I sensed she was trouble and escaped when she started to open up about her secrets. I wasn't very curious, just afraid. So long, Hope, "it's time that we began to laugh and cry and cry and laugh about it all again." Thanks, Leonard.

There are countless political analyses of what drives the United States' ruling forces in their systematic, brutal, and remorseless wars of aggression around the world. The perpetual effort to expand an empire originally built [on the blood of indigenous people](#). The refusal to live in peace within national boundaries. The pushing of NATO expansion up to Russia's borders. It seems insane, which of course it is. But what is behind such madness? The secret may be quite simple. Again the ancient Greeks come to mind as Roberto Calasso writes in *The Marriage of Cadmus and Harmony*, quoting the historian Jacob Burckhardt, when he wrote of the secret of war-loving Sparta: "But the power of Sparta seems to have come into being almost entirely for itself and for its own self-assertion, and its constant pathos was the enslavement of subject peoples and the extension of its own dominion **as an end unto itself**." Power as an end in itself. Realizing this is apocalyptic in the revelatory sense, for it opens the box on the secret nihilism of the U.S. ruling elites.

I am waiting
to get some intimations
of immortality
by recollecting my early childhood
and I am waiting
for the green mornings to come again
youth's dumb green fields come back again
and I am waiting
for some strains of unpremeditated art
to shake my typewriter
and I am waiting to write
the great indelible poem
and I am waiting
for the last long careless rapture
and I am perpetually waiting
for the fleeing lovers on the Grecian Urn
to catch each other up at last
and embrace
and I am waiting
perpetually and forever
a renaissance of wonder

- Lawrence Ferlinghetti, "I Am Waiting," for jazz accompaniment

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