



August—Twenty-Thirteen

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This is not about politics. It's about the level to which our public discourse has descended. Nearly two and a half millennia ago, Aristotle outlined the process for rational thought... It's wrong to call someone who says he's a Christian a Muslim; it's wrong to call someone who says he's a Muslim a Christian; it's wrong to call someone who says he's straight, gay; and in the midst of the Nazi reign of terror, it was wrong to call anyone a Jew whether they were or not. You know that, those of you who are engaging in these scurrilous levels of personal attack. The use of personal attacks prove that, at the core, you know you are in the wrong.

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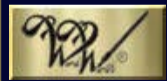
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THE POLITICS OF PERSONAL ATTACK

BY M H PERRY

This is not about politics. It's about the level to which our public discourse has descended. Nearly two and a half millennia ago, Aristotle outlined the process for rational and logical thought and the errors that break down reason. Aristotelian analysis has been the foundation for learning and knowing from that time to this. One of the fallacies in the thought process is *argumentum ad hominem*. It refers to attacking the person holding an opposing viewpoint when it is not possible to defeat the argument with fact or reason.

We've seen an alarming acceleration of *ad hominem* attacks in recent campaigns. While the habit may have generated from hostile talk show hate mongers who ratchet up hostility, it remains foolish and inexcusable. The syllogism of those who cannot prevail by reason, is: "All Muslims are evil. Obama is a Muslim. Therefore, Obama is evil." "It is not indecent to call a Christian, a Christian, is it? Then why is it indecent to call someone who is a Muslim, a Muslim?" That pathetic sophistry is a vain attempt to obfuscate.

It's wrong to call someone who says he's a Christian a Muslim; it's wrong to call someone who says he's a Muslim a Christian; it's wrong to call someone who says he's straight, gay; and in the midst of the Nazi reign of terror, it was wrong to call anyone a Jew whether they were or not. You know that, those of you who are engaging in these scurrilous levels of personal attack. The use of personal attacks prove that, at the core, you know you are in the wrong. The "Christians" who do this need to realize that the same can be done to them. At the core of Christianity is the *Golden Rule*: "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you." —and they are violating that rule. That petty gossips think they have the right or ability to ascribe a belief system to someone other than what the person claims is appalling. That they do so while calling themselves Christians is hilarious. That they think of themselves as patriots when they wish away the Constitutional separation of church and state is pitiable.

When it is pointed out to the perpetrators that the e-mail which they are distributing has racist innuendo, in an amazing turning topsy-turvy of the *Golden Rule* they imagine that others have done unto them what they have so freely done unto others. "You've slandered me!" they scream. Pointing out the racist ramifications of what was said or written is not stating that the speaker or writer has racism as a major part of their character (ignoring, for the moment, the difference between slander and libel). It is possible to be insensitive and ignorant enough to send out and forward e-mails with bigoted slurs and not, at heart, be a bigot. But, "If the shoe fits," as they say, "wear it."

"He's not MY president!" If this duly elected president is not your president, you don't believe in our Constitution, our laws, our government, or our democracy, and you are declaring yourself not to be an American. If this were a sport, anyone with that attitude would be considered such a poor loser, they would no longer be allowed to play.

Meanwhile, President Obama works his heart out and his hair gray for ordinary Americans, a cluster of whom make the job all the more difficult by insisting on foolishly attacking him. Some of these are people who have grown up on the public dollar. Yet in the highest tradition of "turn the other cheek" (remember that injunction, "Christians"?), the president carries on working for our best interests. Who among us doesn't want things like affordable housing?

Watch the video of the Zillow CEO and the president without bias:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=L-XbETvNBvo

After engaging in the politics of personal attack, the perpetrators declare that they are tired of “politics.” No one should dare be tired of politics. *Politics* is the ability to educate your children. *Politics* is giving you a little bit of coverage through unemployment insurance when your job is shipped to China. *Politics* is making it no longer a given that you will lose your home and all of your savings if a family member comes down with a serious illness—the treatments for which are becoming more and more intricate and expensive. *Politics* are the roads you travel on and the ability of farmers to provide the food that you eat. *Politics* is the power to respond when terrorists attack, as in blowing-up the Twin Towers in one of our cities.

Just before the last election, I received e-mail messages attacking the president in ways that bordered on the obscene. It didn’t change my opinion of President Obama in the slightest, but it annihilated my respect for the sender. You can get away with personal attacks slandering the president because neither he nor his staff have the time to hold you accountable, but is that really the legacy you want to leave in the world?

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TAKE TO THE SKY

BY AURELIA PERRY

Artist and business-owner Eryn Leedale-Merwart lives in Ontario, Canada, where her jewelry designs have been garnering much attention. As part of a new series on women and their businesses, Aurelia Perry spoke with Leedale-Merwart about her art and about working in a small business in the 21st century.

AP: When did you begin *Take to the Sky Jewellery*?

ELM: In 1994 I decided to check out a bead store that was near my University. It really was a whim, but I was hooked right away. Making jewellery appeals to my secret need for instant gratification. You get to see the piece emerge pretty quickly as you add each new bead. Plus, it's just fun to play with sparkly, pretty things. I'm mostly self taught, though I have taken classes with some of the premier bead artists in Canada. It's been a long process of learning and creating and making mistakes, and trying to find my own creative voice. I started my business officially in 2000 and have been working steadily ever since. I've taught often, along with all the designing and creating.

AP: Has the internet been useful to you as an artist and business-owner, or have you found that it brings challenges?

ELM: Being able to have a sense of community has been important to me. To go online and learn from a vast number of artists, have access to and be inspired by their work, across all media, has allowed my own growth as an artist. To be able to have access to all this knowledge, and all the kind people who share it, without being held back by my illness has been sanity-saving. Of course the internet is also a valuable business tool which allows me the opportunity to share my work with a large audience. To really be good and successful at promoting yourself takes a great deal of energy, physical or otherwise. The drawbacks of the internet, in the handmade jewellery business especially, is that it is very difficult to get yourself seen. Places like Etsy actually take a great deal of daily work and energetic self-promotion, which is difficult for someone with my issues.

AP: You have mentioned that you have fibromyalgia, which is a diagnosis that more and more people are living with. Has having fibromyalgia helped shape how you work in any particular ways?

ELM: For me, my work is a way of not only expressing myself but making something that will hopefully create a smile. I know from much experience that the little things matter. Something as small as a new pair of earrings or a cute necklace can change the way one sees herself, and thus the way she presents herself in the world. I want the wearer of my work to feel 'cute' and confident and easy with herself. I hope my pieces reflect that; I know from experience that wearing something that makes you smile changes the way you approach the world. I believe in wearing your jewellery, too. So many times a customer would say, "Oh, I love it—but where would I wear it?" I say, wear a tiara to the

grocery store if it makes you smile. Wear my fancy necklace with a plain white t-shirt and jeans. Why not? Living with chronic pain is not only draining, it's boring! I create because it's fun, and I hope that gives my work some life.

AP: Jewelry is a very special form of art: it's art that people do indeed wear, and therefore art to which the owner will often have a strong personal connection. Do disparities ever arise between your vision, as artist, and the client's vision?

ELM: I have spent the majority of my career designing for someone else. Whether it be a gallery or a shop or an art show jury, I have made my work according to the market to which it was being directed. I find myself at an interesting place in my career in that I no longer wish to spread myself so thin; I came to a point where I was exhausted, creatively as well as physically. I want to take what I've learned and what inspires me, and create a line that really speaks to who I am and what gives me strength. I'm interested in making pieces that reflect things that fuel my soul and my brain on days when my body is not at its best. I've started a blog [<http://taketotheskyljewellery.wordpress.com/>] called *Clipped Wings—Meanderings of an Artist*. I'll be talking about the development of my new pieces, living with fibromyalgia and depression and what it's like to be an artist in spite of it.

AP: Your jewelry has evolved through several stages since you began creating; how would you describe these stages?

ELM: Baby steps! What I do might seem undemanding, but it comes from years of learning and experimenting and work; it is complex. There is a difference between what I do and "playing with beads".

AP: And how would you describe your work now, in the collection you've recently been creating?

ELM: My family has a cottage in Muskoka, Ontario, Canada. I spent my summers there with my Dad, swimming in the lake, traipsing in the forest and soaking in all the beauty. It's really my soul's home and a place from which I draw strength. My new collection will reflect the nature and colours of the place which inspires me: water lilies, the way the sky reflects off the lake, twigs dripping with dew, the bright red of the humming bird. I'll be chronicling the process on my blog and my Facebook page. I'm not sure where it's going yet but I hope people can relate, and will be interested in what I have to say.

In terms of materials, labradorite has been especially enjoyable to work with—the mineral doesn't always photograph well, but it's a clear mossy gray with brilliant flashes of blue. It's the exact color of the sky reflecting on the lake. Labradorite is also mainly found in Canada; I like that, too.

AP: Do you try to evoke a particular feeling, with your work?

ELM: I want my pieces to be classic and simple but whimsical. That's what I try to evoke.

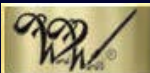
AP: The current economic climate hasn't necessarily been friendly to small businesses; has it been difficult to be an independent artist in these times?

ELM: Well, Canada is overall supportive of independent artists, and I feel lucky in that. There is an innate respect for the artisan in the culture. The other thing about being an independent artist, however, is that you have to wear all the hats—you have to be an accountant, a website expert, photographer, marketer, public relations person—you have to do all these things, and each one requires a learning curve. And doing everything yourself can be difficult, particularly if you're

temperamental to work with.

We are featuring some of Eryn Leedale-Merwart's designs on the Arts page, this month. More of her work can be seen on her website, www.taketothsky.ca.

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ARTS

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Eryn Leedale-Merwart

Jeweler Eryn Leedale-Merwart has been creating wearable art since 2000. As Eryn says, "My art is about improving one's sense of self. A sparkly necklace or bracelet can change the way a person feels about herself and how she presents herself to the world. Each and every piece I make is created in the hopes that the wearer will feel beautiful and empowered."

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Sterling silver and blue-glass pearls

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Branch Droplet Sterling Silver and Garnet Necklace



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Sterling silver and Swarovski-crystal earrings

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"Barefoot sandals" created in Swarovski crystal and sterling silver

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Sterling silver and crystal bracelet

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Tree branch necklace in sterling silver, with Swarovski crystals

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Water lily necklace in sterling silver, with crystal and labradorite

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Blossom earrings in sterling silver, with lavender crystal pendants

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Bracelet of freshwater pearls

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Picture pendant from Eryn's "Silent Stars" series.
Framed in sterling silver, with freshwater pearls and crystal.

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Modern necklace in sterling silver, with pink-glass pearls

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Art nouveau-style water lily earrings. Sterling silver with Swarovski crystal.

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