



# Mérida

**The days await...for my to return to the capital of the state of Yucatán. the Cathedral pictured above, draped in early morning sunlight was built in the late 16th century with stones from nearby Mayan ruins, and is the oldest cathedral in all of the Americas.**

**The City of Mérida was named after the Spanish town Mérida because the ruins the Spanish conquistadors found in the settlement of Ti'ho when they arrived, reminded them of Augusta Emerita, a Roman colonia founded in 25 BC in present day Mérida**

**Spain. Over time the Yucatán city acquired the nickname *La Ciudad Blanca* due to the white color of the limestone used to paint the façades of the city's colonial buildings. The city can be seen from outer space as a large whitish area in the midst of an immense green forest covering the Yucatán Peninsula.**



**Folktale however, states that the name, The White City, goes back to its founding when the Spanish conquistadors, motivated by security, given the persistent rebellion of the indigenous Mayan people, decided to allow only white skinned Europeans to reside in the city. your guess is as good as theirs.**

**Mérida is located in the northwest part of the state of Yucatán, which occupies the northern portion of the Peninsula. North is Progreso and the Gulf of Mexico. Valladolid and Tizimín are to the east, Celestún west, and the city of Campeche is located to the**

**southwest. There are many important Mayan archaeological sites throughout the area, including Chichen Itza, Uxmal, Oxkintok, Sayil and Cabah, nearly all of which eli and i visited on our first trip to the Yucatán twenty years ago when eli was only three.**

**The city is located near the center of the Chicxulub Crater. It has a very flat topography and is only 9 metres above sea level. The land around the city is covered with small scrub trees and former henequen fields. Almost no surface water exists, but several cenotes, sinkholes, provide access to underground springs and rivers, throughout the area.**

**The Spanish language spoken in the Yucatán is different than the Spanish spoken elsewhere in the country. It is heavily influenced by the Yucatec Maya language, which is spoken by a third of the population of the State of Yucatán. The Mayan language is melodic, filled with ejective consonants, p', k', and t', and sh sounds, represented by the letter x. Even though many people speak Mayan, there is some amount of stigma associated with it.**

**Being enclosed by the Caribbean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico, and rather isolated from the rest of Mexico, Yucatecan Spanish preserved many words no longer used in other Spanish-speaking areas of the world. Over the years with the improvement of transportation and technology with the presence of radio, internet, and TV, many elements of the culture and language of the rest of Mexico are now slowly but consistently permeating the culture.**

**Mérida's** neighborhoods offer a mix of historic charm and modern convenience, with popular areas including the walkable Colonial Centro with its barrios, Santa Ana, Santiago, and Santa Lucía, all lively and filled with cultural activities. In the North are the leafy, upscale neighborhoods of Campestre, Benito Juárez Norte, and Montecristo which provide security and amenities, and the growing Centro Norte, Garcia Gineres, and Itzimná, blending tradition with wider avenues and parks like Parque de las Américas. Expats favor newer northern subdivisions near Altabrisa—Cholul y Conkal—and areas like Montes de Amé for a more Westernized feel.

The heart of Mérida is Centro, ideal for tourists with historic buildings, museums, restaurants, and the Plaza Grande, known for safety and walkability. Surrounding Centro, are several traditional neighborhoods which offer colonial architecture, local markets, and a strong community feel, and include, Santa Ana, Santa Lucía, Santiago, Mejorada, and San Sebastián. In the North & North-Central Zone is Paseo de Montejo Area, an elegant boulevard with grand mansions, museums, and proximity to amenities, and alongside, Campestre, Benito Juárez Norte, Montecristo, Montes de Amé, upscale areas known for security, modern services, trees, and being close to shopping malls like Altabrisa.

Two other northern neighborhoods are Garcia Gineres, a quiet, green neighborhood featuring the popular Parque de las Américas, offering wide avenues and a mix of older homes, and Itzimná, a charming area with a slower pace, colonial feel, local shops, and proximity to Centro.

**Mérida** offers vibrant events from weekly cultural nights like Monday's Vaquería, Folk Dance, in Plaza Grande and Thursday's Serenata Yucateca, Trova music, in Santa Lucía, to major annual festivals like Mérida Fest, Carnaval, and the spiritual Festival de las Ánimas/Hanal Pixán. There are also seasonal activities like the various Christmas markets, or art happenings, like La Noche Blanca, and local fairs such as Feria Tunich, as well as ongoing music, art shows, workshops, and food events.

### **Weekly & Ongoing Cultural Events**

**Mondays:** Vaquería Yucateca, Folk Dance, at Plaza Grande at 9 PM.

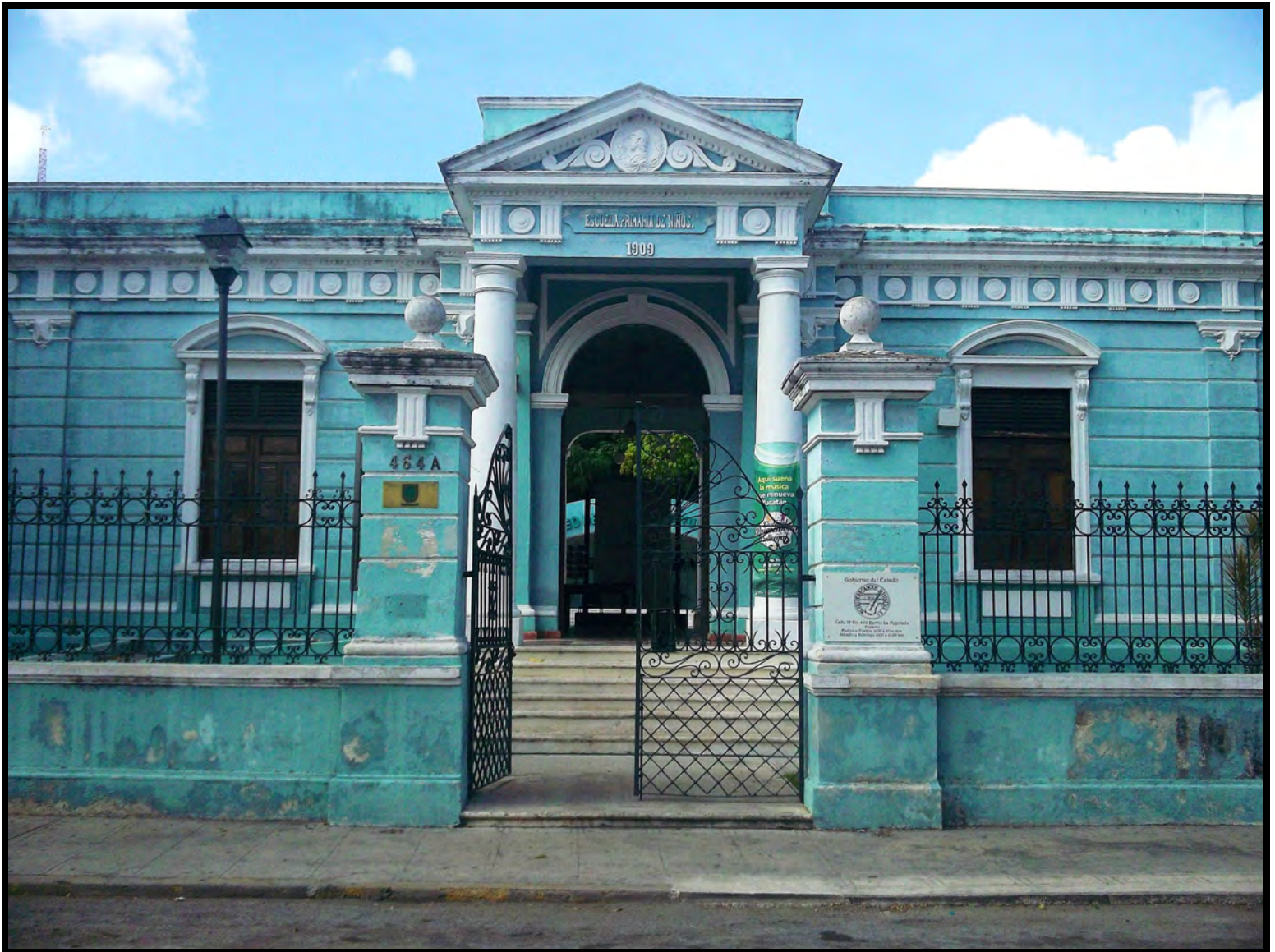
**Tuesdays:** Trova music at Olimpo Cultural Center & Big Band at Parque de Santiago.

**Wednesdays:** Serenata Yucateca (live trova) at Parque de Santa Lucía at 9 PM.

**Thursdays:** Traditional music and performances at Parque de Santa Lucía.

**Sundays:** Biciruta around Pasejo Montejo and other part of the city.

**Nightly:** Various events at venues like La Peni, La Biblioteca Pública, Rosas & Xocolate, and local markets.



## Major Annual Festivals

Mérida Fest: Celebrates the city's founding with music, art, and performances.

Carnaval de Mérida: Huge parades and parties.

La Noche Blanca: Museums, galleries, and venues stay open late with free shows.

Festival de las Ánimas/Hanal Pixán: The Day of the Dead, altars, parades, and Catrina events.

Xmatkuil State Fair: Traditional fair with rides, food, and shows.





## Ciudad de Mérida

*Thursday 4 December 6:15 AM 69°F* ☀️

It was twenty years ago today, Sergeant Pepper taught the band to play. they've been going in and out of style, but they're guaranteed to raise a smile, so may i introduce to you, the act you've known for all these years, Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band. eli was three. we had a superb time and left feeling a strong attachment to the city.

I am here! i am finally in Mexico in the colonial city of Merida where i had planned to spend winter months ago. i have a lovely apartment not far from the main plaza, a colorful place filled with antiques, paintings, many, most, directly on wood, wild, libidinal scenes, large penises, naked women, in the quiet neighborhood of Santiago. Claudio, the owner's son, Claudio, greeted me. magnificent fellow, a year or two older than eli, speaks fluent English, his mother is German, and he attended university in Stuttgart. his father, Jose, is Mexican. the family owns various properties sprinkled about the city, and over the next few days i will see most of them and decide if i want to move or remain where i am. i could use more space, particularly since i'll be here for three months. i explained my situation and Claudio seems to think they can work something out with State Farm. i hope so. it would be a tremendous help.

I arrived late and after Claudio showed me the home, and explained how things work, we parted company. considering what i had gone through over the past 18 hours, i was amazed i was still up, though i was dead tired. i went to sleep soon after the door closed behind Claudio.

My morning was productive. woke at 5:30, organized my belongings, took a shower, made coffee, arranged myself on the couch and fairly well roared through the scene i had begun a couple days before a colloquy between Abraham and Freud. i worked for a couple of hours, then went for breakfast at a nearby restaurant, Cafe Montejo. i had granola with fruit and yogurt and platanos fritos which were delicious. eli would have enjoyed the repaste. returned to my apartment, and continued working, and here i am, another cup of coffee in hand, sitting on the terrace overlooking the street and the gardens beyond. it's a lovely day in paradise!

Took lunch at a quiet vegan restaurant about a ten minute walk from my apartment. so so. after lunch i took a long walk around the historic district, sitting in the Zócalo for quite a while, taking photographs of the buildings ringing the plaza, then returning to my apartment. i sat on the terrace for a while, then got ready for bed. it was not quite 8:00 when i turned off the light, but i was extraordinarily tired. within a minute or less, i was asleep.



*Friday 5 December 4:36 AM 70 °F* ☀️

Slept well, oh yeah, long and deep. woke at 4:15, feeling rested, rejuvenated, and ready for the day. fabulous writing session. my work is progressing. i seem to have the direction required. flushed out the scene i'd begun the day before. it's simple situation, Abraham finds his way with bass under arm to a spot on the stage where he plays the bass solo in Mahler's First Symphony, then speaks about Mahler to the audience.



After work, i took time to create a to do list. i would like to establish a steady rhythm that will allow me to work, dine, and visit the sites of the city, as well as the surrounding area, without surrendering precious time. at the moment i'm feeling lost. i can't seem to find a good grocery store, nor a family run restaurant similar to the place i dined in almost daily when i was holed up in Coatepec a couple winters ago. perhaps it doesn't exist, but i'm still hopeful.

Midday, yet another superb yoga session. i'm enjoying yoga on my terrace. my body appreciates the heat. i'm feeling flexible, but more importantly, capable. my side twists in half lotus were particularly good. afterwards, i relaxed a bit, then, calculated where i should dine, chose an Italian place, Trattoria di Alfredo, a Tuscan style ristorante not far from the joint i had dined in the day before. the restaurant didn't open until 3:00, so there was no rush. the walk was nice. my ankle is giving me problems. i was a few minutes early. the door was open and a fellow was sweeping. his manager appeared and we spoke in English. he ushered me in and asked me what i would like to drink. several minutes later a waiter appeared with my lemonade and we chatted for a bit. i ordered the linguine de la mer. all was well. i had a window seat with a nice view and a much needed breeze.

I was quite hungry and dived into my plate of food. it was good, very good. Jerry, the fellow who had ushered me to my table is married to an Italian woman from Parma which is inland and halfway between Milan and Bologna. i've never been., but eli visited during his winter break trip to Italy a couple years back. the shrimp were huge and tasty. there were also a decent amount of mussels, and the sauce, the key to Italian cooking was excellent. my waiter was lovely. we chatted in English and Spanish. i thoroughly enjoyed myself.



After lunch i seemed to have pep in my step returned to the apartment. relaxed a while, then headed to a gym only a few blocks away. i had to pay in cash so i walked to the Zócalo and found an ATM, then returned with money in pocket. the day pass is 50 pesos, less then \$3. a week pass is only double that, and the month twice more. couldn't be any less expensive. it's an old timey gym and the equipment is ancient, though there's a ton of it spread over three rooms in a rather disorganized fashion, there were only a handful of lifters. everything is in kilograms so i had to experiment to find an appropriate weight. struggled with the shoulder press. all the equipment feels metallic and leaves a residue on your hands. i had trouble with the shoulder press. i was only able to press 20 kilos, which is about 45 pounds, though i probably could have pressed more if i could've found 1 kilo weights. i went through my pull routine without any glitches. mosquitoes, however, plagued my workout and when it was time to leave i couldn't get outta there quickly enough. i doubt i will return. i'd like to check out other gyms and then make a decision. the night air was cool and fortunately the return walk was short. my left ankle has not responded to the shot i received before i left home. wondering if i shouldn't contact my orthopedist.

*Saturday 6 December 4:31 AM 71°F ☀️*

I slept well. went to bed at the usual time, woke only twice, easily taking care of business in the bathroom, then returning to bed. unfortunately some Mexican tenor was up most of the night crooning. his voice wasn't powerful but when the fan suddenly ceased, i hear him loud and clear. i wasn't kept awake, but his singing was not a pleasant sound.

My sabbath was as it should be. i was up early, worked until 7:00, showered, and prepared for yoga on the terrace. the sun was already warm, blanketing me. before long i was sweating. my routine was excellent. it was the left side of my most pyrotechnical routines. after sirvasana i dressed, went downstairs, finished the fruit and yogurt i had taken to go from a couple days before, and left for the Slow Food Market. wandered around. there wasn't nearly as many stands as i anticipated, and the selection was just so so. i purchased bananas, sat outside in the park under shade of tree, and called eli. we talked while i ate a banana. didn't talk long but it was lovely to see my son on the sabbath. he was off somewhere and i needed to go shopping at the market across the street. again, not much, but i did find an adequate package of granola, and purchased some Greek yogurt, and off i went...i started but quickly came to a stop. my PNC debit card was missing. looked around the register, on the floor, through my pack, nada. returned to the apartment rather crestfallen, had breakfast outside by the pool, then headed for the ATM where i last used my card, by the main plaza. i inquired with the folks i thought were associated with the



ATM, but it turns out they only bore a similar name. it was time to accept defeat. i wandered about before heading back toward the market, where i had previously seen a nice coffee/pastry shop. decided to sit a while, and sip a well made Americano. i was feeling much better. in fact, i was ready to do some lifting, so i returned home, got properly dressed and walked to an alternative gym, Armor Gym, in a direction i had not previously ventured.

A couple of younger dudes were at the desk, one spoke English. i made my inquiry in Spanish and that was that. i purchased a day pass. it was exactly double the other gym, but, this place has a/c and there are no mosquitoes; weights were in pounds and they are newer and work much better. i had a kick ass workout, 70 plus minutes, returned to my apartment, cleaned up, and headed to Cafe Montejo for lunch. i had a nice mixed green salad to start and pasta pomodoro as my main. the meal was good, but it was not Italian. i was content however, and sat sipping the remainder of my limonada under a canopy of flowers and shrubs. my waiter was quite nice. in fact, everyone i have encountered at Montejo has been lovely.

As you enter the restaurant, on the left is their shop where they sell speciality products. i asked about coffee, and was told they had several varieties all of which could be ground. bingo longo! the young woman i spoke with instructed the gal which coffee and how to grind it. when i left i was feeling rather ebullient. returned to apartment, hung out, took a brief nap, hummed and hawed and eventually, around quarter past seven, i decided i would go to Monks and have a beer. bad decision. it's a sports bar, loud, with televisions on all the walls. i was not impressed. i had hoped to meet people, but there were only a handful of customers. i had a German beer. it was not good. the prices were high. i had fucked up. i was glad to leave. the night air was delicious and i was delighted. goodnite!



When Mahler was young man his head was full with the sounds of Bohemian bands, trumpet calls and marches; Bruckner chorales, Schubert sonatas, and Beethoven symphonies, like my own, crammed with all sorts of music, from my father's choral work, to the ribald songs my grandfather Nahor sang, all the while throbbing with the problems of philosophy and metaphysics which Mahler thrashed out with his friend Siegfried Lipiner who introduced him to the works of Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Gustav Fechner.

There is something haunting about the way Mahler leans on nature for inspiration. the music is mysterious as if, like us, it cannot provide direct answers to our proverbial questions, but only indicate...offering feelings, rather than ideas...



## **Gran Museo del Mundo Maya**

### **Museums**

- Gran Museo del Mundo Maya, Yucatán's Maya Museum, Yucatán's history and identity.
- Museo de Antropología e Historia Palacio Cantón, Yucatán's history and archaeology Museum.
- Museo de Arte Contemporáneo Ateneo de Yucatán in the heart of the city next to cathedral.
- Museo de la Canción Yucateca Asociación Civil in Mejorada, honors the Yucateca authors, Ricardo Palmerín, Guty Cárdenas, Juan Acereto, Pastor Cervera y Luis Espinosa Alcalá.
- Museo de la Ciudad de Mérida, relocated to the old Post office building, houses important artifacts dating back to the Spanish colonial era as well as the Pre-Columbian period.
- Museo de Historia Natural, a natural history museum.
- Museo de Arte Popular, popular art museum, offers a view of popular artistry and handcrafts among ethnic Mexican groups and cultures.
- Museo Conmemorativo de la Inmigración Coreana a Yucatán.

### **Major Theatres**

- Teatro José Peón Contrera
- Teatro Daniel Ayala Pérez
- Teatro Mérida, Now Teatro Armando Manzanero
- Teatro Colón
- Teatro Universitario Felipe Carrillo Puerto
- Teatro Héctor Herrera



Sunday 7 December 5:08 AM 72°F ☀

As i sit and write, i am sipping the coffee i purchased yesterday. it's tasty, strong, exactly the way i prefer. it's been a rather typical sunday. i woke a little later than usual, showered, made coffee, and got down with my Travelogue. worked until 7:30 when i took breakfast. resumed work afterwards, until about 9:00 when i went downstairs to hang out by the pool and wait for Jose and his son



Claudio, who were going to take me on a little tour of Merida. actually we were visiting their other properties to see if i would be interested in changing to a place with more space and privacy. in the meantime. meanwhile, Ger came out and sat down next to me, and we began chatting. we talked and talked. i was really enjoying the conversation when i realized neither Jose or Claudio had contacted me. naturally, my phone was turned off, and in fact, they had called several time via whatsapp, but i had not heard a thing. i called, apologized and they let me know all was well and they'd be over in five minutes. i sat on the curb to wait.

They pulled up on time. we chatted as we drove. i paid no mind to the direction we were traveling. the properties however, are located in a neighborhood just south and east of Santiago where i am currently, called La Ermita. Jose considers it the nicest neighborhood in Merida and i have to admit, it is cleaner, more colorful and marked by various cafes and restaurants and small neighborhood parks. the houses i was shown, are petite, on the order of Meade Street, but like Corazon where i'm staying, colorful and filled with curios and idiosyncratic art work. of the pair i preferred Sol. neither will be available until the middle of January. i'll need to contact Mike at State Farm about the change and inform him that Jose is perfectly fine following the State Farm protocol, which will save me enormously. the three of us took a long walk around the neighborhood, visited a couple of dining establishments and chatted endlessly about this and that. it was an enjoyable morning. when they returned me to my apartment, i quickly gathered up what i would need for the remainder of the morning and headed to Parque Centenario about the same distance west, as the Zócalo is east.



The walk was quicker than anticipated, but unfortunately, the park is really a place for families and their children. there are all sorts of rides, food stands, a lake for boating, but no grass, which i had hoped to find so i could do yoga. i walked around feeling rather dismayed, leaving from the

opposite gate, and finding my way to a larger version of the Supermercado Aki where i had shopped yesterday morning. i could not believe how bad the supermarket is. there was nothing for me, nada, not a thing. yes, a jar of mixed nuts which i purchased so that i could have something to munch on as i walked back to my apartment. i am having difficulty finding adequate foodstuffs. when i was back at the shack i made a concerted effort to find out all the food shopping options in Merida. it seems everything that is appropriate for me, is far away. the better version of the Slow Food Market is actually north of the city and much too far to walk. it's becoming obvious i will need a bicycle. i can either rent when i need one, else purchase something inexpensive and sell it when i'm about to return home.

The remainder of the afternoon was spent watching highlights of the Steeler-Raven game as it was being played. i watched as i balanced my bank books and paid bills online, taking a short nap afterwards, then catching up with my Travelogue and dats about it. i was hoping i would have the energy to get on my mat, but here i am, writing in my journal unable to rouse the requisite energy for yoga. once again, the plague of Sunday. i don't know what to do to change the situation. i've only managed three sessions over the last eleven Sundays. perhaps next week?

*Monday 8 December 4:34 AM 73°F ☁*

The morning began with niggling and bothersome incidents, none of them not worthy of attention but happening with every passing minute, i was frustrated but hey, i'm persistent and continued on my course. did i have a choice? i suppose i could've returned to bed and spent the rest of the morning scrolling on my phone? when i was seated work got done. at 7:45 i left to take breakfast at Cafe Lave in La Ermita Barrio where the little homes i was shown on sunday, is located. wonderful little place. nice folks. great attention to detail. i had a fabulous breakfast which commenced with freshly squeezed orange juice, followed by a bowl of granola, yogurt and fruit which reminded me of Bea. there were apples in the bowl and they tasted like the sauce Bea made from scratch that i loved so much. next up, a plate of scrambled eggs with frijoles and avocado and tortillas. simply delicious. meantime, i was able to continue working and that was the singular objective in walking twenty minutes to the restaurant. after breakfast i changed tables and sat near a fan to avoid the mosquitoes, sipped an americano and continued my work. i was able to place the finishing touches on the Final Scene. i am delighted by my progress. when i returned to the apartment it was about 11:00 and i felt finished for the day. i didn't want to commence the review of Book One and change direction so abruptly, so found other things to do related to the piece. i am very satisfied with my progress and ability to work while in Merida.

Yoga commenced at 12:45. it was another good session. i was feeling tired to start but quickly summoned the requisite energy as i moved on my mat. it was humid and i was fairly wet from sweat, and when i was finished, showered, shaved, dressed and left for Cafe Montejo, five minutes from my apartment where i've taken two meals already. i had a salmon which was perfectly grilled in some sort of unidentifiable sauce, accompanied by the same salad i'd had saturday. all was well.

Back at the shack i checked in with Ger whose girlfriend had been feeling ill. they are from Holland and we've talked several times since my arrival. she was napping but feeling a little better than earlier in the morning. time for the gym. i purchased a week pass and hit the machines. had a great workout. felt a bit sore this morning. i'll survive and do it again later this afternoon.



*Tuesday 9 December 4:45 AM 72°F ☀️*

The day was very similar to yesterday. i woke earlier and i got started on my work about 30 minutes before my usual time. worked two and a half hours then showered and took breakfast by the pool. returned to my space and worked for another couple hours, then gathered up my stuff and headed to Place & Delirio, the tidy little cafe i'd had an americano in saturday afternoon on my way back to my apartment, before heading to the gym. it got me going and my workout was excellent. today, the americano was not nearly as good, but i was able to continue my work at a little table by a front window, musing about the outside world as i reviewed the shenanigans of Nahor and his family.

Returned to the apartment, feeling fatigued. sometimes coffee has an opposite effect. i never know. regardless, i got on my mat at 12:45, worked slowly and 80 minutes later i was finished, and it was a good session, a very good session. lunch was taken at Rosa Sur 32 just north of the main plaza, on the fringe of Parque Santa Lucia, ostensibly a vegan restaurant, at least according to the listing provided by Majikal who own the property i am renting. i ordered the Tacos de Picana con guacamole y cebolla asada. and the cauliflower frita, along with a limonada naturel. the word picana should have tipped me off, but it didn't ring a bell. two purple corn tortillas were laid out on a platter with their ingredients. i sprinkled the picante sauce over them, used my fork to pull

up an edge so that i could grip it with my fingers and fold it over in the traditional style, and take a bite without the ingredients falling out. nice and tangy but there was an unidentifiable ingredient. it was chewy and fibrous. was it meat? no, this is a vegan joint. perhaps fish? i wasn't sure, but after the next bite i knew it was some sort of meat. i extracted what i could and finished both tacos, then attacked the cauliflower dish which was good, tho a bit too rich for my taste.

When my waiter returned i inquired about the picana, and sure enough he informed me it was carne. i told him i was unfamiliar with the work and he looked it up to show me. the definition that came up was cattle prod. what? and we laughed. i finished my limonada, paid, then roamed around the park taking photographs. into the main plaza and over to the tourist information office to inquire about musical events, back to the apartment to change for my workout, and with the last light of the day, i walked to Armor Gym. my workout began well enough, but half way through i began to feel tired. i persisted, finished the entire routine, felt exhausted, but satisfied. it was time to return to the apartment, sit on the terrace, review the material i had gathered at the tourist info booth and sip that beer Ger had left me.





Wednesday 10 December 5:07 AM 68°F ☀️

Unfortunately, the gift of beer Ger bestowed had a deleterious affect. i was up eight or nine times to pee. several were not in the least pleasant. i wound up sleeping a little longer, though i had gone to bed a little earlier. live and learn.

Even tho i was anxious about paying the toll from the PA Turnpike which was a hassle due to my inability to properly log on to their website, i was able to circumvent the wi fi and use my phone as a hotspot to log on and make the payment. something similar happened years ago when eli and i were stuck in Queretaro waiting on the Acura. i was unable to log on to the IRS website and i could not download a 1040. back then i did not have a phone; the day however proved stellar. i was able to work my way through some of the most difficult passage in the piece; yoga, once again was superb, tho i was running out of steam toward the end of my session and forgot to do a handstand. regardless, it was another 80 minute session; lunch was good and i met the young lady who owns the restaurant and we had a lengthy chat after i finished my meal. her english is good and she is an interesting person. she's young, perhaps in her upper 20s. saturday she has a brunch which sounded nice. perhaps i will go this coming sabbath.

Another robust workout at Armor Gym. quite tired. glad i have tomorrow off, but i will return on friday with a vengeance, of that i'm certain. i aim to raise the bar on every machine or exercise so that when i return home and head back to X, i am ahead of where i was when i left home.



*Thursday 11 December 4:30 AM 70°F* ☀️

Fell asleep after lying, yeah, a few minutes, please, i'm fatigued and i want to rest a bit. pulled the covers over me and that was it. i reckon it was 8:00ish but i really can't recall. shut the light close

to midnight when i took my clothes off. i was spent. i could feel the exhaustion rising from within as i worked the machines, particularly the barbell press. on the way to the gym i walk at a normal pace, when i return i'm moving much...much...slower, so slow it doesn't feel like i'm moving. i would love to gain energy through the course of my workout, rather than feel depleted when i leave the gym. after all, it's barely 6:30 when i head back to Majikal. it would be nice to go somewhere, particularly as the days grow longer, tho in reality, at the moment they are becoming shorter. the winter solstice is around the corner.





*Friday 12 December 4:00 AM 66°F* ☀

I simply had to lay down, i was so utterly tired, but last nite rather than pretend to take a nap, i actually brushed my teeth, removed my clothes and got into bed with the nitestand light on, and read for half an hour, until just after 8:00, when my eyes no longer wanted the stimulation. i turned off the light, pulled up the covers and went to sleep. slept well. woke four times to pee which is two too many but i'll take it compared to a couple of nights ago after drinking Ger's beer when i had to get up eight or nine times. i'm feeling rested, enough to get down with business.

on the terrace but at least my body is draped in dappled natural light. it's been an excellent morning. progress. looks like i'll finish the review/edit tomorrow if i work. i may take the weekend off and resume monday. then again, strike while the iron is hot. it a gorgeous day. nary a cloud, favorable temperature, sunshine galore, even my street is relatively quiet. looking ahead, yoga around a quarter to one, followed by a long walk to Trattoria di Alfredo, then an after dinner perambulation about La Ermita toward the gym, a workout and back to La Ermita for a nitecap at La Cantina.



*Saturday 13 December 4:45 AM 68°F* 🌤️

Woo wee, what a day, prelude to the sabbath. Shabbat Shalom. in fact this week has been extraordinary for my work. i did not envision cruising through the review/edit as swiftly as it's gone. i have a mere twelve pages left, tho one scene will be time consuming as it should be since it is rather pivotal, the scene near the end of Book One, between Abraham and Terah, which is seven pages long. the other two scenes should be intact, more or less and i will attend to them later this morning, isolating the aforementioned scene, for monday, giving me an extra four plus days, nearly an entire week of work sooner than allowed which is exciting because i am really rarin to move along with Abraham's journey to Scandinavia.



The description offered in the last paragraph yesterday about my afternoon and evening, was exactly as anticipated. lots of walking, first to the Trattoria, then to the gym and from the gym to La Ermita Cantina and finally, back to my apartment. i would say, if pressed, about an hour and a half of walking, combined with an 85 minute yoga session and 65 minutes at the gym.

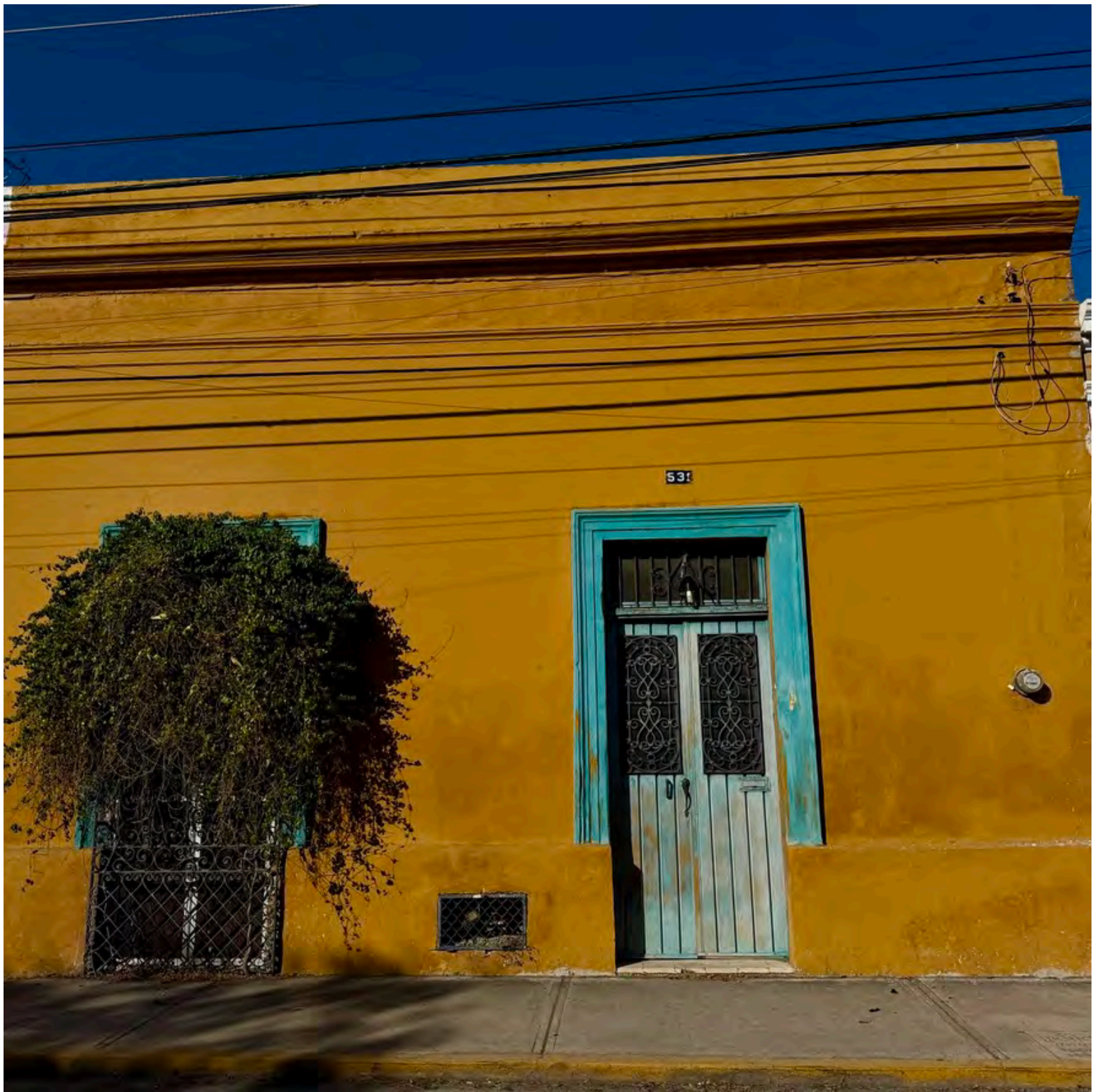
Delighted to be outside walking in the sunshine. it was warm. my camera was in hand and i photographed as i moved along the streets from Santiago to Centro. the restaurant was open and i was greeted as a friend, showed to the table toward the back adjacent a large window where i could view the proceedings in the street. it was essentially a repeat of the previous friday's meal. the fellow that welcomed me spoke no english, but his Spanish was clearly spoken and i





understood just about everything he said. my waiter spoke english. he's lived for a while in the states, in Chicago. he has a bad habit of hanging around telling goofy stories. i laugh. i interject. i engage, even while i'm hoping he will finish and leave me to myself and the view of the world outside. then there's Jerry, whom i thought owned the restaurant, but learned yesterday that he does not. he is married to an Italian as i mentioned last week, a woman from Parma.

I ordered the salad that i had wanted to order last time, but opted against, and i was glad i did because it was very good and i do need my vegetables. the next course was a spaghetti arrabbiata which was very good. it was picante, right on the edge of too hot and i ate heartily. i was quite full when i stood to go to the bathroom. the walk to the gym would do me good.



And so it did. i was ready when i arrived. my routine moved along until i got to the dumbbell presses which have always give me trouble. yesterday was no different. i attempted lifting 30 lbs but i was unable to do more than a couple of reps. i got on the Smith Machine but had the wrong bench, but fuck it, i was in no mood to schlep one so i made due and i was pleasantly surprised that i could handle 50 lbs after not using this machine since my visit to eli's gym. i tried a new machine a chest exercise which was next to the push down machine. i like so i'll weave it into my routine. finished with a couple of queen anne presses, packed and left. it was dark. folks were gathered in the corner cantina, laughing, listening to music, enjoying their start to the weekend. likewise at La Cantina Ermita. a lively scene welcomed me as i pushed the wooden doors open and entered. the music was fun, several gals were dancing, others tapping or sit dancing. i was



amused, nursed my beer and after an hour left. the walk back was tedious. my ankle was feeling sore. i had overdone it. gotta write my orthopedist and let him know in case there's something i can do. back at the shack i hung out on the terrace, listened to music for a while, read a few articles, then got ready for be. lights out at 8:30. goodnite Irene!

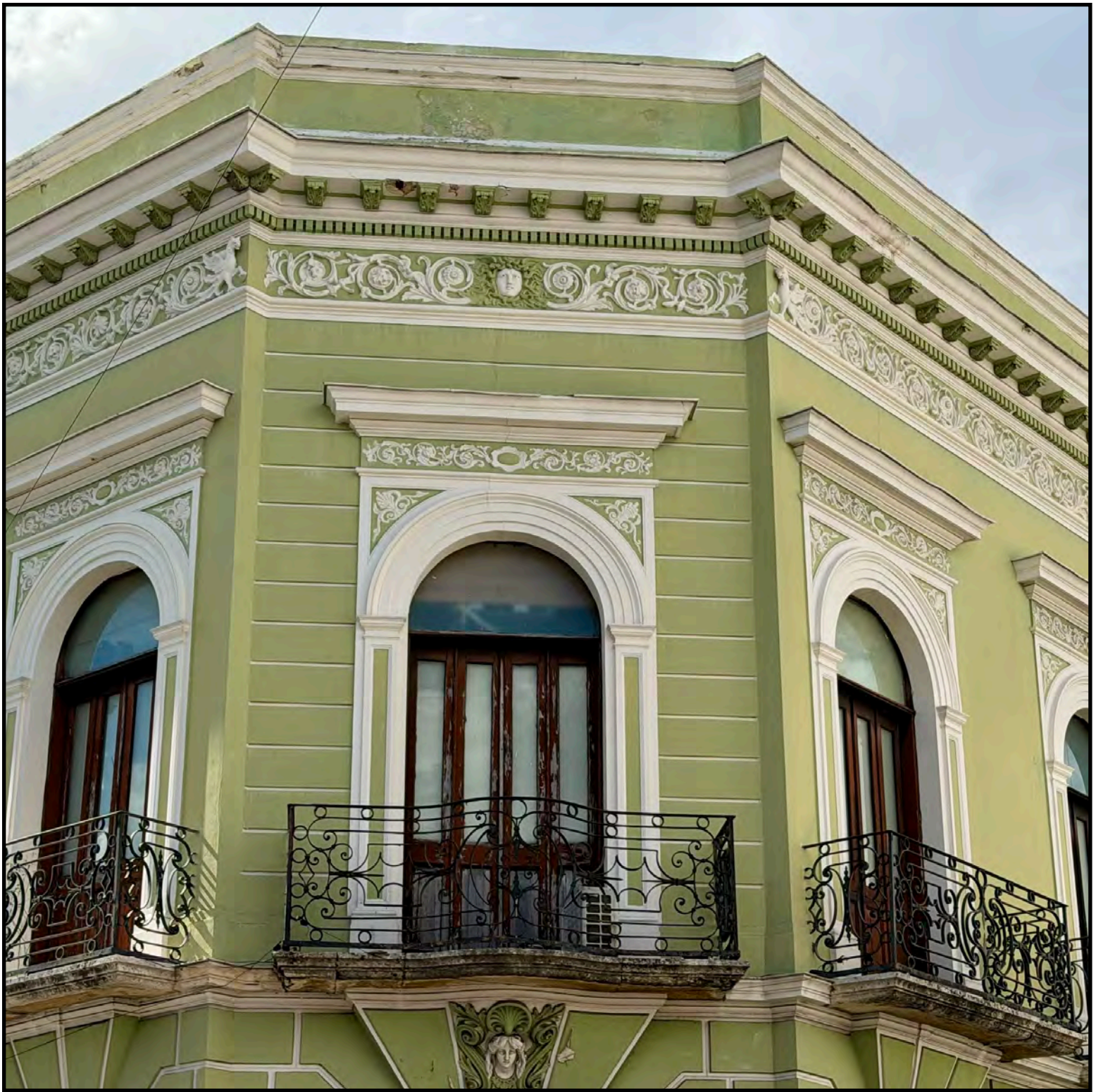
The day is gone. night has come. dawn was marked by rain. at times it was heavy. necessary. too humid. much cooler now. very comfortable on my terrace. bit of a breeze. the arching plants to the height of the railing, bob. listening to some older jazz.

I woke around 4:15 feeling a little out of sorts. seems the single beer i sipped had an adverse effect. only three trips to the bathroom. regardless i was not at the top of my game. showering felt good. my first cup of coffee helped. i did a variety of things between 4:30 and 7:00 when i turned my attention to my sabbath yoga routine. spent some time, as i mentioned yesterday, with An Orchestra of Exiles, the final chapters, isolating, as i had planned, the chapter showcasing Terah and his son Abraham. i'll tackle that monday and review what i did today. wrote in my journal. answered texts, this and that.



Yoga was superb. i was very turned on by the new woman in my life, Deborah, from Lexington. i don't know why i find her so alluring, but i do. we've communicated for less than a week and we are already planning a visual chat.

Showered after yoga. it was quite warm during my session and i was sweating. pleased myself in the shower. clean, dressed, packed up the laundry and headed to Muchas Vida for breakfast, dropping off the laundry on the way. fantastic breakfast. three fat pancakes with fruit, and lathered with agave syrup. i was quite full. my waitress and i got into and extended conversation. we talked about travel, Italy, Morocco, Colombia, narco trafficking, Guanajuato. we covered a lot of ground. she's a smart one, married to a graphic artist who loves all things Japanese. i had a great time. when i left it was half past noon. i headed to the shop where i saw the bicycles. tried to test drive one but it was far too small, and he couldn't raise the seat. chose another but it only had one brake handle. it was then he told me they were going to be auctioned off and most likely purchased by someone who would put money into them, get them lookin and feeling ready for riding. i told him i wasn't that person. returned to the apartment. it was hot. i needed to relax. wound up napping. around 1:45 i headed to Armor for my saturday workout. started slowly but the workout built until i was thoroughly into it. 75 minutes. i was tired and returned to the apartment for a short break before taking lunch. went to Cafe Montejo, once again, and had basically the same meal i'd had the previous saturday, salmon, with a salad, but this time i ordered the Chambray Potatoes i'd had my eye on previously. they were good, tho swimming in butter



which i could have done without. to counter, i sprinkled some hot sauce over them. very enjoyable. i arrived just as the sky burst and the rain came. it poured at times, and those under umbrellas in the center of the restaurant had to move under shelter. a couple of guys i had spoken to at the gym were dining when i arrived. i said hello and they reciprocated but it was clear they weren't interested in getting involved in a conversation.

*Sunday 14 December 4:30 AM 69°F ☀*

It's morning! i slept well. thrice were the trips to the bano. strange dreams. Jim Martin appeared late in the morning. had something to do with An Orchestra of Exiles. not sure what. he was disappointed about something on my behalf, but i don't recall what it was. an otherwise pleasant slumber.

When i returned to the apartment after my late lunch, even tho i had pep in my footsteps, when i sat down on the couch, weariness from deep in my bones surfaced. i couldn't seem to focus on anything, so i cranked up a video of a Grateful Dead concert circa Winterland 1974 which got me into the groove. however, once the show was over, i could feel it was time to hit the hay.

Left the apartment around a quarter to eleven, found a place to eat, a new restaurant for me, Cucu Bistro, not far from the plaza. my meal was good, healthy, clean which is key when traveling. afterwards i wandered back toward the Plaza Grande, and walked through a maize of booths showcasing holiday wares. actually, every sunday vendors set up selling everything from clothes to homemade foodstuffs. i looked for a cafe along the perimeter so i could sit and view the proceedings while sipping a coffee, but found nothing, so hoofed it to bicycle shop over by Soriano's. meanwhile, i read reviews about the shop, and they were not very favorable. regardless, i made my way there and looked over the merchandise, which was none too pretty, then inquired with someone to find out if they spoke english. he did not, nor did anyone else, and i will not conduct business in Spanish, particularly when several reviews mentioned being bamboozled into purchasing the wrong product and when they got home and learned that was the case, they were unable to return it.



Ankle was getting quite sore on my return. opted for a coffee at Placer y Delirio. texted Deborah. read a few articles, one about the recent murders of Jews celebrating the first nite of Chanucha on a famous Australian beach, an annual affair. fifteen people were assassinated by a pipe bomb. on the way back to the apartment i picked up my laundry. took a nap. thought about doing yoga. rolled out my mat. got ready. actually started but i was not into it, so i abandoned the notion. a day off after a very robust week of yoga is healthy. sunday the gym is closed so its become my day of rest, and work on my travelogue.

Along the way to Johannes Restaurant sunday nite after pulling up synagogues in Merida to find out if there is a Jewish population in this town, as i passed the pink house at the five point intersection i go past nearly daily, as i strolled along, crossing the street to make a right, i saw the building above, greeting me, Shalom Avi, and immediately took the shot.



Johannes Restaurant is less than five blocks from my apartment tucked inside a part of Santiago i had been attracted by, but hadn't yet visited. the restaurant resides inside a boutique hotel, Merida Santiago, poolside; the kitchen, open; the food, excellent. they serve breakfast, lunch and dinner, along with craft beer and Mexican wines, homemade ice cream and their own sourdough bread. produce is from the Santiago Market where i made my way the first saturday i Merida.

Engaged in a nice and relaxed conversation with my waiter. his english was superb. i sat along the pool. ordered a taco made with cauliflower and carrot tempura, pickled red cabbage, carrot and onion, and served with a house dressing, which was slightly picante; along with a guacamole made from avocado mixed with tomato, onion and coriander, and served with artisanal corn tortilla chips. the taco was out of this world, even better than a similar taco i'd had for lunch on thursday at La Kombucheria. i'm on a roll. the only meals lately that have been less than outstanding have been at Cafe Montejo which truly, i only go for the convenience.



*Monday 15 December 4:48 AM 68°F ☀️*

Rough nite. extraordinarily burdensome. after sleeping only an hour, and waking for the bathroom, feeling i had slept three or four hours, after returning to bed, i continued to have to get up through the nite. i'm estimating twelve trips between 10:00 and 3:20 when i last looked. i slept an hour and woke, leaving bed for good. as i was waiting for my coffee, i had to make a doody. it was an enormous evacuation which took me by surprise. i'm feeling better, like a long nap, which i will take after working on the scene i left for today, between Terah and his son Abraham. i have high hopes i will nail it.

Miraculously, i was able to work this morning. made a cup of coffee virtually upon leaving bed. tidied up, and by 5:00 i was on the scene. it took awhile, but i kept at it and by the time i took a shower around 7:35 i was finished. i like it. it may require a little editing, but that can come later. i'm satisfied that it accomplished what i intended. my man, Abraham is ready to roll.



*Tuesday 16 December 4:27 AM 67°F ☀️*

Weary to the bone, went to sleep just past 7:30 after watching the first portion of the Steeler Dolphin game. slept until 3:45, five trips to the bathroom. considering the previous nite, a godsend. i'm thinking i have a little something that my bladder has reacted to and whatever it is, it has diminished significantly. i'm confident tonite i will return to my normal pattern, sleeping

seven plus hours, with two or three trips to the bathroom. at any rate, i'm feeling rather exuberant. the Steelers dominated the Dolphins, Rogers looked good. he's become a leader and the team is gathering its concerted energy on both sides of the ball. looking good heading into the final three games. these will be tough as they face the Browns and Ravens, as well as the Lions. it's a tough road to hoe, but i'm thinkin they'll win a pair and finish the season atop the AFC North.

My sleep was deep and lucid at times. i saw an image of a scene, a group of people dressed in traditional costume, talking at once, and individually. as i walked to the bathroom not long afterwards, i interpreted the group to be Scandinavians and they were the chorus of An Orchestra of Exile, and were discussing Abraham's journey to Finland. the second image was aural. it was Abraham listening to someone or more than one person, speaking Finnish, which sounded like gibberish to his ears but it had a musical quality. i'll have to work hard to re create it. i barely heard it myself: padda da padda da padda da. something to that effect.



*Wednesday 17 December 4:33 AM 62°F ☀*

Good sleep. odd dreams. none of which i recall. lately i've managed to drop into a semi lucid state for an extended time, even commenting to myself while the dreams is ongoing. i'm a little nervous about the day's work. i'm on the cusp of a change in direction, so i have to be careful about my choices. i also have time. i do not need to move quickly. i need to allow my character dictate the direction.

After i returned from the gym yesterday, it was still rather early. i putzed around, hung out on the terrace, a little of this and that, leaving for La Sicilia Ristorante, just after 5:00. it's located a couple blocks past Parque Santiago, on 59th. i entered and asked if i could sit in the back, and the gentleman who turned out to be the owner, showed me to the garden. nice space. plants amongst a few tables. the entire restaurant is rather petite. my waiter arrived with a menu. i ordered a small bottled water. he returned with a board listing the daily specials which he explained in English. my eyes lit up when i saw the broccoli in garlic and olive oil. i thought it was a separate dish, but it was an accompaniment to the gnocchi. i explained i don't like gnocchi but would love the broccoli. no problem. have it with your main dish, and so i ordered an arugula salad and a penne arrabbiata with the broccoli. i described my experience at Cafe Montejo. he shook his head. i know. i agree.

The salad was outstanding. arugula with cherry tomatoes, thinly sliced slivers of green apples and slivers of red onion with a balsamic vinaigrette. delicious and refreshing, setting the palette up for the next round which in my case was the penne arrabbiata and the broccoli. it was sautéed to perfection with garlic and olive oil, just as i would make at home. all portions were perfectly sized. lovely people. early on i spoke with the owner. seems the restaurant was actually begun in Belleville NJ by a Sicilian American, and somehow there's a second location in Merida. i neglected to ask the connection.

My waiter was exceptional. he had my interests in mind, providing the kind of love i deserve and require at a restaurant. i am a tourist, yes, and i am far from home and it is in everyone's best interest i am treated not only with grace but with generosity. they have no idea when i sit down, how much i will spend, but if they treat me in a proper manner, i am far more apt to spend more. i left tonite feeling ebullient, uplifted and in great spirits. the night air was cool, and my pace buoyant as i returned to my apartment.



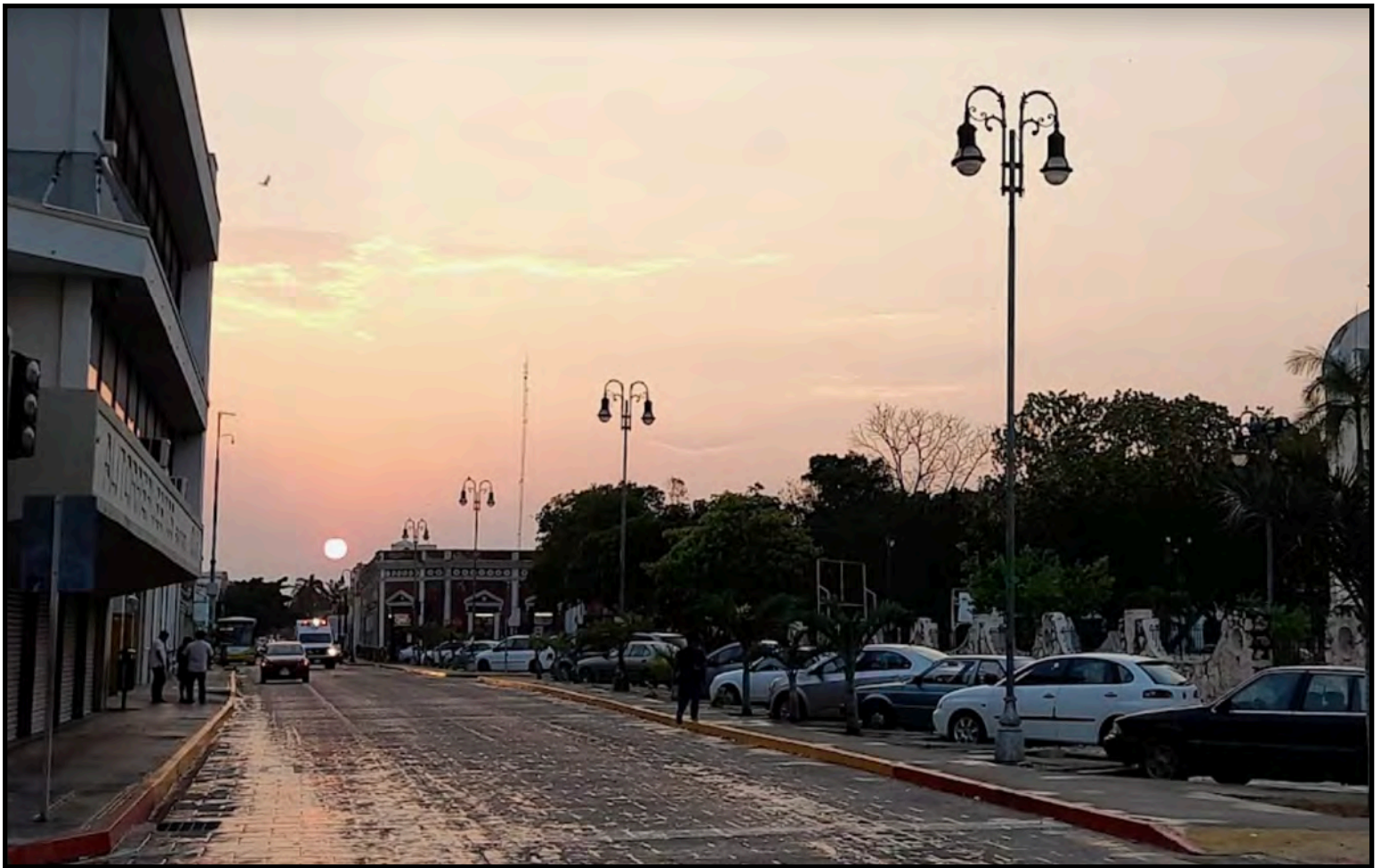
*Thursday 18 December 4:20 AM 65°F* ☁

Productive morning. essentially finished the first chapter of Book Two. explored Abraham's time in Stettin, part of Prussia at the time, now, in Poland near the German border. the chapter ends with Abraham and his brother Joseph hugging. Abraham then boards a train bound for Gdansk.

My yoga session was excellent. it was the most basic routine, sort of a late week keep it simple after several high powered sessions, but it was better than in weeks. while i did not do advanced twists, or the eka padda series, for what i did do, it was as good as it gets. i left for lunch after showering, taking my meal at Muchas Vida, the vegan restaurant i'd gone to last week, run by Scarlet. there were two tables of diners when i entered which was nice to see. i ordered enchiladas. i hummed and hawed about what to order. i had forgotten that the only dish that does not use seitan is the lentil burger, which is why i ordered that last week. i am not a fan of fake meat. at any rate, it was a platter of four nicely rolled enchiladas stuffed with beans, seitan, onions and whatnot. they were good, passable, not at all creative. i dipped them in a picante sauce and ate hungrily. i enjoyed myself. i like the atmosphere, but it is unlikely i will return.



Headed back to the shack for a brief visit. gathered what i needed and hoofed it Armor. took a different route through my neighborhood. seems the homes down Calle 63 are more upscale, though they are still attached, but they are much larger and the architecture is different, less squarish, and often, round elements, many with carports or porches, obviously the homes of a more affluent people. took several photographs, showcased above, before turning onto Calle 65, and heading straightaway to the gym. great workout. i got into it from the first face pull and kept at it for an hour, adding dips which hurt a bit but really felt good to be doing. they will now be a permanent part of each workout.



*Friday 19 December 4:34 AM 70°F ☁*

Too tired the nite before to write about my evening. after i returned from the gym i sat on the couch and wrote, while humming and hawing about heading to this so called jazz club, Dzalbay



Cantina. i sent off an email through the club's website wondering if there was a cover charge. i wasn't really interested in the band scheduled to play. simply wanted a nitecap. around 6:30 as i was settling in listening to music, while reviewing my travelogue, a reply came. no cover charge. i dressed and left, walking through Santiago, past La Sicilia which seemed filled with patrons, turning left and heading north for three blocks, a part of town i had not yet visited. i entered through the same sort of frontier styled double wooden doors as the cantina in La Ermita. one guy was sitting at the bar, and several tables were occupied, otherwise it appeared to be a quiet evening. it was still early. i tried to sit at the bar, but the stool was low and i didn't like the feeling of having the bar at my chest, so i moved to a small round table once i received my beer, a Ceiba Bock Chocolate, unfortunately, in a bottle. somehow, like my experience at Monks, i had the impression it would be a draft. okay, i'm learning. there are most likely no taps in Merida, or perhaps in the entirety of the Yucatan. i can't recall my experience in Mexico City. i suppose bars have draft beers in the capital, but who knows, i'm not in America, or Europe, and while beer has been part of their culture for quite some time, good beer, has not been part of the scene.

Sat quietly checking out the joint. there wasn't much to see. essentially it's two narrow shoeboxes side by side with an opening in the middle allowing passage from one to the other. the bandstand was in the other shoebox, a small square adequate for a band of four, maybe five if they didn't mind standing close to one another. there was no music on the sound system. where i sat however, it wasn't far from the kitchen. they had music playing. i nursed my beer. it was so so. i've had bocks and like them, but this one was not all that good. the chocolate flavor was nice, but after a while, as the beer flattened out, it wasn't enough to carry the beer as it lost flavor. around 7:00 band members began appearing. seems they knew the folks working at the cantina. lots of beef in the band. four women: a drummer, bass player, sax, and guitar, who also sang. eventually they were set up and around 7:30 began playing. i had enough beer left to last a few tunes, and decided if i liked the band, i'd have another.

They were not a blues band, but a show tune band. the acoustics are terrible, and whoever was mixing for the band, was deaf. i could not hear the bass, nor the drummer, except when the music quieted, but even still, the bass player seemed to be timid. all the licks by the sax were the same; the vocals were impossible to distinguish. all in all, i was not impressed and when i finished my beer, i left. i had heard enough. to top off my so so experience, i was charged \$10. i was irate as i perambulated my way through the neighborhood. it's why there's no cover. they make up for it by screwing you on the beer. glad i hadn't ordered food.

Returned, opened Spotify and listened to Brahms Requiem.

*Saturday 20 December 4:22 AM 70°F* 🌤️

Shabbat Shalom! weary to the bone sitting on sofa listening to NPR's Marketplace. placed laptop atop its soft black bag on floor and reclined as best as one can on the short narrow colorful couch. after half an hour i recognized i was not going to summon enough energy to engage in something, so i got in bed, fully dressed, and lay while listening to another program with the bedside nightlight on and the fan blowing over me. i'm not sure when i fell asleep but it was early. the radio was still on and so was the light. my body had reached its limit, between one helluva yoga session and my workout at the gym along with the longish walk to La Selvita for lunch. goodnite, i'll see you in the morning.

Friday morning was only so so. i had been frustrated for most of the morning by google, getting nowhere with my various searches, yet once again, after a short break, i rallied my creative juices, reviewed my work and finished up the scene with a wonderful little piece:

### **Abraham**

“Wo ist der kleine Junge (aus jenem Bergdorf in der Schweiz, der sein Zuhause vor langer Zeit verlassen hat)?”

“Where is the little boy (from that mountain village who left his home so long ago)?”

“I miss my grandfather something fierce...something about this landscape my sweet Nahor... reminds me of you, tho you were no flatlander...no, you were as rugged as the Alpine village where you lived...where have you gone dear one...where have you gone my only true one.”

“On a long-distance train rolling across the plain, tears on the letter i have yet to write, a man i long to touch, how i miss my grandfather...fare you well, fare you well i love you more than words can tell...i will listen to the river sing sweet songs and remember you.”

**Photos of Barrio Santiago** as i made my way to and from La Selvita in the gray afternoon smiling at the sprinkle of rain, the gentleman affront his home staring pointedly at me, and the young gals in front of one of the building's above, who responded with a buenas tardes, while the old man squinched his face as i approached, and left the sidewalk heading in the opposite



direction. i was in a particularly rambunctious mood, not a care in the world, walking down the middle of Calle 74, my street, intent on capturing the colors and charming dilapidation of Barrio Santiago. lunch had not been all that wonderful. i suppose i mistook what the restaurant was all about. regardless, i enjoyed yammering away with the pair of dudes working, chattering in broken Spanish to their imperfect English. wound up with a platter that consisted of a garbanzo bean burger, a small salad topped with avocado and chips, washed down with Tamarindo juice, a tropical pod in the pea family. best part of my meal.



After a brief respite, i scurried over to Armor and hit the machines. excellent workout, the fifth straight day. i'm becoming somewhat of a gym rat. who'd a thought. i'm reminded of the story on NPR about Mohammed Hatem, born in 2004 or 2005, known also by his username Gym Rat in Gaza, a Palestinian fitness influencer, who gained attention airing English language videos of himself exercising in his effort to become an amateur bodybuilder despite the ongoing Gaza war.

Hatem was a first year college student when his education was interrupted by the 2023 war in Gaza, and the destruction of his university and family house. to control what he could, in 2024 Hatem started an Instagram channel documenting his bodybuilding, with what equipment he could find in the rubble. his videos have received international attention, hundreds of thousands of followers, and millions of views. in 2025 he began coaching international fitness clients remotely, even though, due to the Gaza famine he is unable to follow the diet recommendations he provides.

*Sunday 21 December 5:04 AM 69°F* 🌤️

An exceptional day, the very kind of day one would hope for on the sabbath. i woke at 3:45, and by 4:00 i was washed and had a cup of coffee in my hand. within the half hour i had answered texts and emails, viewed the news and began reviewing my script. i worked for two hours in a productive manner, then showered and prepared for yoga. by 7:30 i was on my mat outside on the terrace. another fantastic routine. 80 minutes of joy. cleaned up and dressed, i ran over to Aki to pick up more peanuts and a Greek yogurt. unfortunately there was no yogurt. the refrigerator which housed the yogurt was kaput and they no longer had the Greek yogurt in stock. returned, as Rosalba entered. we chatted while i prepared breakfast. she told me i should take whatever was in the refrigerator since i was the only guest. there was nothing i wanted but the container of yogurt someone had left. i sat outside by the pool and took my morning meal. much better than

usual, with the addition of the yogurt which was loose compared to the Greek version and much easier to mix with the granola. when i was finished i returned to my room, where Rosalba was busy cleaning. i talked to her about her back. emotional stress has begun to center in her lower back. i told her she need to do basic yoga. she understood. i left and as i walked down my street toward the bus stop, i thought how nice it would be if i found her a personal yoga teacher and paid for her to take a private class. found the bus stop. within a minute or two my bus pulled up. i paid, sat and viewed the city from a new perspective.

The bus driver called out to me that the bus had arrived, or was approaching Plaza de Toros where i had informed her i was headed when i boarded. unfortunately i was still about a six minute walk from the Slow Food Mercado. as i walked i realized i probably could have gotten closer if i'd stayed on the bus. oh well, i learned something vital. the morning was certainly pleasant and the walk wasn't terribly long. when i arrived, i was surprised to learn the market was simply a sidewalk affair. i was expecting a plaza with booths similar to a Farmers Market. i walked down the two block aisle checking out the merchandise. there was homemade granola, sourdough bread, various roasted nuts, including peanuts and pumpkin seeds. the second block was clothing and jewelry. i purchased a bag of peanuts and another of granola. the fellow selling the bread didn't accept cards, so if i return i'll need some cash. it was time for a coffee. sat with an americano at a sidewalk table affront a health food store. the coffee was organic but it was not as good as the one i'd had in Naples.

When i left the bus stop was only a block and a half south. i waited three minutes and thar she was. boarded and enjoyed the ride back toward the central plaza. got off at Called 57, took note of a vintage clothing store, headed that way, but it was mostly women's clothing, so i continued toward my apartment. a block or so before the plaza at Parque Santiago, i was drawn by a store selling Mexican crafts. there were small rugs, linen tablecloths, all things handmade. Jose, the proprietor was lovely. he showed me various rugs. i told him the small rug i had purchased in Oaxaca 20 years ago was stole so he showed likely replacements but there was nothing that caught my eye. however, another store where he brings his wares had a larger selection, so today i will head to the Case de Azul on Called 59, where there are large ceramic pieces out front. the shop is inside what seems from his description to be a small arcade of sorts. should be fun.

Back at the apartment i relaxed for a while then headed to the gym. i was testing my capacity to workout six days in a row. it was a push day. i kept at it. very few patrons. 70 minutes later, weary as heck, i walked back to Majikal Xolos in the afternoon heat, glad i would be able to sit once i returned. by the way, i took the time to look up Xolos. the other day as i was leaving, a gentleman was standing in front of the house trying to make sense of the word. he asked me about it, but i had no idea, other than it was a Nahuatl word. i had the impression Nahuatl was Mayan but it seems to have originated with the Aztecs.

The term Xolos is a common short name for the dog breed Xoloitzcuintli, which is known in English as the Mexican hairless dog. the full name comes from the Nahuatl, an Aztec, language. Xolotl was the Aztec god of lightning, death, and the underworld, and Itzcuintli, means dog. the name literally translates to Dog of Xolotl. Ancient Aztec and Mayan civilizations revered these dogs, and believed they served as spiritual guides, leading their owner's souls safely through

Mictlán, the underworld, after death. they were considered a national treasure and are a living link to the region's pre Columbian heritage.

I took a short nap, then prepared myself for another yoga routine. in my absence the apartment had been cleaned. i unfurled my mat while listening to a program on New Sounds. considering my weariness, and that i had already done yoga, not to mention a robust workout at the gym, the routine went smoothly. i kept it simple relying on postures i had not done earlier. an hour later i was lying in bed taking sirvasana. what a day.

My evening was a reprise of a dinner earlier in the week at La Sicilia Ristorante. i had the same meal sans broccoli which was not on the menu, tho i began with a glass of the house red, a cabernet which was not bad. in fact as it sat and allowed the wine to adjust to the temperature of the room, it transformed nicely and was rather enjoyable, punctuating a wonderful Saturday!

**Happy Winter Solstice!** later today, at 15:03, the hibernal solstice will occur, when the Earth's poles reach their maximum tilt away from the sun, a phenomenon that occurs twice yearly, a day of equal light and darkness, when the sun is at its lowest arc in the sky.



An Aggadic legend, a legend, parable, or anecdote used to illustrate a point of Law, put forth the Talmudic hypothesis that Adam first established the tradition of fasting before the Winter Solstice, and rejoicing afterward, a festival later developed by the Romans, called Saturnalia.

“When the First Man saw that the day was continuously shortening, he said, “Woe is me! Because I have sinned, the world darkens around me, and returns to formlessness and void. This is the death to which Heaven has sentenced me!” He decided to spend eight days fasting and praying. When he saw the winter solstice, and he saw that the day was continuously lengthening, he said, “It is the order of the world!” He then feasted for eight days. The following year, he feasted for both, and established this tradition in Heaven’s name, tho they were established in the name of idolatry.”

And so shall it be. this idolator slept reasonably well. there were only two trips to the bathroom. this morning i feel an urgency to work on An Orchestra of Exiles and finish where i left off with Abraham staring out the window of the train crossing the Pomeranian landscape, philosophical thoughts marking his reverie.

Left the apartment around 8:30, and headed for this cafe noted for being a hangout for ex pats. turns out it's inside a fancy hotel. i looked around, and decided it wasn't for me and besides, there were very few people and none of them appeared to be ex pats. a block away and across the street was my second option, a Yucatan restaurant serving typical Yucatecan food. i ordered a complete breakfast, explained my choice of eggs, chose a drink but had the insight to also order a freshly squeezed orange juice. i say this because the drink i chose which came with the meal, was Chaya, known colloquially as Mayan tree spinach, a large, fast-growing, leafy perennial shrub in the spurge family, native to Mexico. the plant is cultivated for its leaves which are cooked and eaten like spinach and supposedly have medicinal properties. suffice to say, it was not all that good. in fact, nothing was good, which i find incredulous because the platter included scrambled eggs, refried beans and platanos, but not a single thing had much taste. the orange juice was delicious and refreshing. while i ate, i located a nice cafe for coffee, which turned out to be across the street. bingo, i was up the stairs pronto. it's located in a library of sorts. not sure what type. perhaps a children's library. didn't inquire. i was there to work. i had Abraham on my mind.



The space was cold, the blinds were pulled, and the ambience was not at all what i expected—the morning was simply out of control—and somewhat severe. i pulled the blind up enough i could see the street below, ordered an americano, and what they refereed to as a parfait—fruit, granola and yogurt—opened my laptop and went to work. the coffee was so so, but the parfait, oo la la, out of this world, by far and away the best bowl of granola, fruit and yogurt i have had. the granola in particular was the real mcco, properly toasted and crunchy like it was meant to be. i was happy. my work went well. when i finished i was anxious to return. been at it ever since.




*Monday 22 December 5:24 AM 70°F ☀️*

Last nite bedtime was 10:00. after i returned from my second breakfast, i worked for almost two hours, which was followed by my usual sunday early morning endeavor, balancing my bank books. these days it doesn't take very long. i also haven't been doing it at the normal hour, and yesterday was no different. when i was finished it was roughly 1:00 or a little after, and i turned my attention to year end donations. i logged on to the Doctors Without Borders site and attempted to make a sizable contribution, but i encountered difficulty entering my charge card information. i fiddled attempting this and that until finally i was able to get the job done. minutes later i received an email from the World Animal Organization thanking me for my \$1,000 donation. i

couldn't believe what i was reading. it seems the two sites were somehow intertwined. all my fiddling had somehow placed me on the WAO site without my realizing. not long after, a text message came from PNC fraud and i wrote N, replied to the WAO email explaining what had happened, then called eli to have him call PNC fraud so that i would not have to ring up an excessive fee for a call through T Mobile, since i was unable to use Whatsapp for such a call. he and i discussed the ramifications, but unfortunately that part of the bank is closed over the weekend. he will call PNC later this morning to officially dispute the charge and have it removed from my card. very nerve wracking.

Decided to resume working, so i made a cup of coffee hoping i would not suffer come bedtime. the remainder of the day was spent working on *An Orchestra of Exiles*, watching the most amazing Steeler - Lion game, an ending for the ages, taking a quick dinner at Johannes—i just love their cauliflower tacos—and talking with eli for two hours about his finances and the options at work with his retirement plan. i was wound up after our conversation and unable to get to sleep which is why i went to bed at 10:00. slept well enough. only two trips to the bathroom. mucho gracias!

*Tuesday 23 December 4:31 AM 68°F* 

A good morning yesterday, even tho i was not able to focus as intently as i'd hoped or the material required. nonetheless, progress was made. i should wrap up the scene tomorrow late morning. excellent yoga session, even tho i began feeling sluggish. i was stimulated midway through by a woman on spiritual singles who had a picture of her out in nature doing a twist. she looked gorgeous.

Went to lunch at a new place, a cafe i've passed frequently, Meriland, on Calle 59. had an avocado toast, an open face sandwich of avocado, salad greens, cherry tomatoes and slivers of red onion, with a sauce i couldn't quite identify, but it may have had a base of pesto. it was quite good, but extremely messy. i was not at all happy about that. i don't really appreciate being treated like a pet or a two year, neither of whom care about messy dining. there weren't enough napkins and what i had were flimsy. i had to go to the bathroom to wash up so i could do something else with my hands besides hold the sandwich while it fell apart. however, the sink was a real pisser. it wouldn't work initially, and then all of a sudden it worked. i had no idea what was going on, but i was grateful i could wash up. decided to go for another platter, this time enchiladas. not as good. they too fell apart, but no as extremely as the avocado toast. not sure if i'll return. we shall see. at the moment i'm concerned about dining on Christmas Day. there may not be anything open in which case i should stock up tomorrow and wednesday, else fast. that would be novel.

After lunch i wandered over to the azul casa which was still closed. i'm wondering if i have the correct building. at any rate, i didn't much care, because i was looking forward to taking a nap. and it was a good one. woke after twenty plus minutes feeling a bit disoriented, but managed to rouse myself enough i was able to saunter over to Armor. along the way i spotted a gentleman from my gym walking on the opposite sidewalk wearing a Detroit Lions shirt. i hailed the fellow and offered condolences. he wasn't quite sure what i meant until i motioned with my hand across my chest, and then the proverbial nod. quite a game. we chatted a minute, introduced ourselves and continued on our way. i had a kick ass session at Armor after paying for the next month. i'm on a nice roll of late. another 70 minutes.

Back at the apartment eli and i texted as he walked to the gym. by 8:00 my mind stopped functioning. i put on church bell music and laid down. what a sublime experience drifting off to the sound of bells..."bells...chiming bells from the many church towers...and as i walk my feet keep pace with the sound of bells...it is a pastoral sound creating a moderate and natural rhythm...church bells have been a fundamental and vital part of cultures for centuries, and for good reason. they have a soothing and calming effect on the mind and body. listening slows the heart and reduces stress and anxiety, promoting relaxation, peace and a sense of mindfulness and presence to the moment, allowing you to focus and be more aware of your surroundings."



*Wednesday 24 December 3:49 AM 71°F* ☀️

Yesterday was a fun day. i enjoyed my work. i was able to get a good start early in the morning. the sun was shining. around 9:30 i decided to head to a coffee shop i'd never been before, Ki Koffee, located a block past the turn to Johannes Restaurant, a part of the barrio i'd never before been. the cafe is a large, open, airy space. i sat in the front room where there was more natural light. got into a nice energetic conversation with the fellow working. good music, wonderful ambience. i felt at home, and i was rewarded as the scene i had been working on all morning, came together. when i was ready to take my leave, i inquired about beans. they did not have a dark roast, but Kiko, the barista, said he would order a kilo for me and contact me when it





arrived. couldn't ask for better service. i was delighted and returned to the apartment draped in sunshine, with a bounce in my walk.



Another great yoga session on the terrace. sunshine and heat on the street, greeting me as i made my way toward Centro, picking coffee at Montejo to tide me over until my order arrived. walked through the plaza, found the natural food store, picked up a bag of granola to get me to the weekend and the Slow Food Market, then headed to La Kombucheria for lunch. Luis greeted me with a smile. sat in the lobby while the restaurant was being cleaned reading a magazine article about a Brooklyn based artist. lunch began with a salad, always a nice way to commence a meal. unfortunately the burger was not available, so i opted for the avocado sandwich which i did not

like. the bread was good, a crusty sourdough, but the sauce that held the ingredients, the avocado, onion, etc was not to my liking. i'm not even sure what it was made from. it was messy.

Long walk to Armor...i was full, filled with laughter at the bizarre interaction i'd had with Luis as i paid my bill. we chatted about gyms and he assured me that most of the big guys with bulging muscles at the local gyms were male strippers at clubs around the Yucatan. i couldn't keep from laughing imagining the large dudes at Armor in low riding skimpy briefs gyrating their hips,

Great workout. began slowly with lateral raises. left shoulder hurt, so i eliminated the fourth set and only did ten reps rather than the usual twelve. next up, barbell press. after the first set i bore down on the next three and from then on through the remainder of my routine i was focused and giving it my all. the final dips were torture and i had to eliminate one set, but rather than ten reps each set, i did twelve, but i was extremely low, nearly touching my rear end on the floor.

Exhausted when i left Armor. couldn't walk any slower. plopped myself on the couch unable to do much of anything. napped for fifteen minutes, but weariness had the upper hand, and by 8:00 i prepared myself for bed. i was asleep by 8:30. woke only twice, the last time at 2:40. couldn't fall back asleep and after twenty minutes decided to get up and begin my day!

It was a reasonably successful morning considering the ridiculous hour i left bed. the letter from Abraham to his mother took the majority of my time, but i feel good about what i wrote. tomorrow, i will continue with his journey from Konigsberg to Reval. by the middle of next week, Abraham should be dockside in Helsinki.

Numerous aggravations through the morning instilled a feeling of frustration by midday, i needed to vent, so i called eli to vocalize. who else will listen? we wound up having a great conversation about other things, and after half an hour i felt much calmer. yoga followed and i really went at it. it was an 85 minute session plus slightly over 5 minutes of dips, since i decided against going the gym. my body needs a day of rest. Armor is closed tomorrow, so i will have two days of rest. better yet, and since the gym is closed for the holiday, i've scheduled a double yoga for tomorrow Christmas day is a perfect time celebrate via meditation and yoga.



Thursday 25 December 4:19 AM 68°F ☀️

English speakers borrowed noel from the French word Noël which is also used for both the Christmas holiday and a Christmas carol. It can be traced further back to the Latin word natalis which can mean birthday as a noun or, of, or relating to birth as an adjective. The English adjective natal has the same meaning and is also an offspring of natalis. Noels were being sung in Latin and French for centuries before English speakers start using the word to refer to Christmas carol in the 18th century. An early use of noel to mean Christmas can be found in the text of the late 14th century Arthurian Legend, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. Merry and Happy!



Went to bed at 8:00 to make up for my lack of sleep the previous nite, laying in bed while the sound of caroling bells rang, speaking of Christmas and noels. i found slumber rather quickly..

Worked until 6:30. meditation session from 6:50 to 7:20, then the first of a pair of yoga sessions. i did my sabbath routine to start the morning and later this afternoon i'll do a more advanced routine. breakfast was good. met a gentleman in the kitchen from Quebec City, Livy. seems nice. we talked a bit. he and his wife, whom i did not meet, are in the apartment on the second floor. at the moment i'm ready to re engage with my work for a while. later this morning i will take a walk before my second yoga session . it's a relatively quiet day.

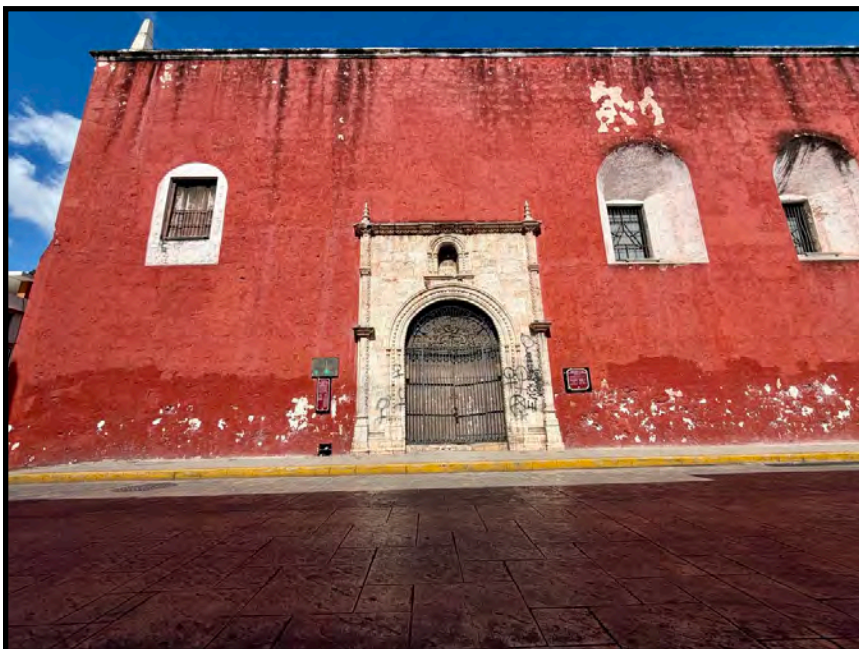


*Friday 26 December 62°F* ☀️

Took that late morning walk. it was a warm day, but i felt good. i stayed in the shade as much as possible so that i could take photographs that would not get washed out by the sun, otherwise i enjoyed basking in its warmth. headed north, past Parque Santiago for a few blocks before turning eastward toward Parque Santa Lucia, which is only a block and a half from the main Plaza. i had been on some of these streets during other sojourns, tho mostly at nite. the closer to the plaza area, the more people there were and more establishments that were open. i sat here and there observing people, hopeful there would be some interesting shots, but that was not the case. what was interesting was the backside of the main Cathedral of Merida, and another church, Cathedral de San Ildefonso, a 1500s cathedral with stark Renaissance architecture, partially built with stones from Mayan ruins, along with some other old buildings which i assume are some the original structures of the city, all of which are showcased above. the reddish building directly above was taken by ducking inside a department store directly across the narrow street, whose doors were open, giving me the proper perspective for the shot. i used the opportunity to browse for a pair of shorts, but nothing stood out.

Later in the day i ventured out to locate a place to take a late lunch / early dinner. along the route i passed La Sicilia and took note that it was closed which eliminated it from my short list of potential candidates. i continued down Calle 59 in search of Restaurant Amate. it too was closed. in fact, i learned it closes every year just before Christmas and doesn't open again until just after the New Year. directly across the street was Casa Azul which i had been hunting high and low for since Saturday last. i was greeted by a young man whose job is just that, to greet customers at the door. its a rather cavernous shop divided into several distinct areas each one devoted to a particular line of merchandise. i informed the young greeter i would like to view carpets, or rugs, tapes, in Spanish which is not really rug in English, but a tapestry. alfombra seems to be the word for rug. regardless, he introduced me to Jose's partner, the fellow i engaged with last Saturday at their shop further up 59th, closer to Parque Santiago, and he brought me into a special room where there were piles of carpets, reminding me of every other carpet shop i've been in,. we rummaged through a stack of smaller carpets suitable for the landing at the Manse. i was not bowled over. there were several that might suffice, but i would really prefer purchasing something that stands out and speaks loudly to me. eventually Jose appeared and took charge of the conversation. he's a salesman and relies on tried and true tactics which he will learn, will not work with me. i do not respond to generalities. i am more than happy to purchase multiple products from someone if they understand who they are dealing with, and engage with me a more authentic and personal manner. i will however, have Cody measure several areas around the house, but i'm not so sure i'll be making any purchases.

It was time for dinner, and too late to be looking for a place. along the way i'd passed a Pasta y Pizza joint, so back i went. i was seated. ordered a house Merlot, a fusilli pomodoro and a caprese salad. nothing was good. nothing was Italian. the caprese salad was the best part of my meal and i am not a big fan of caprese salads, but there was nothing else on the menu without chicken. the pomodoro was Italian in name only. i struggled to finish, two forkfuls short of a clean platter. the wine was so so. thankfully there was no price to be paid during the nite. i woke only twice, but on the first trip to the bathroom i was attacked by noseems. after that i carried the spray and let 'em have it before standing to pee.



*Saturday 27 December 65°F* ☁

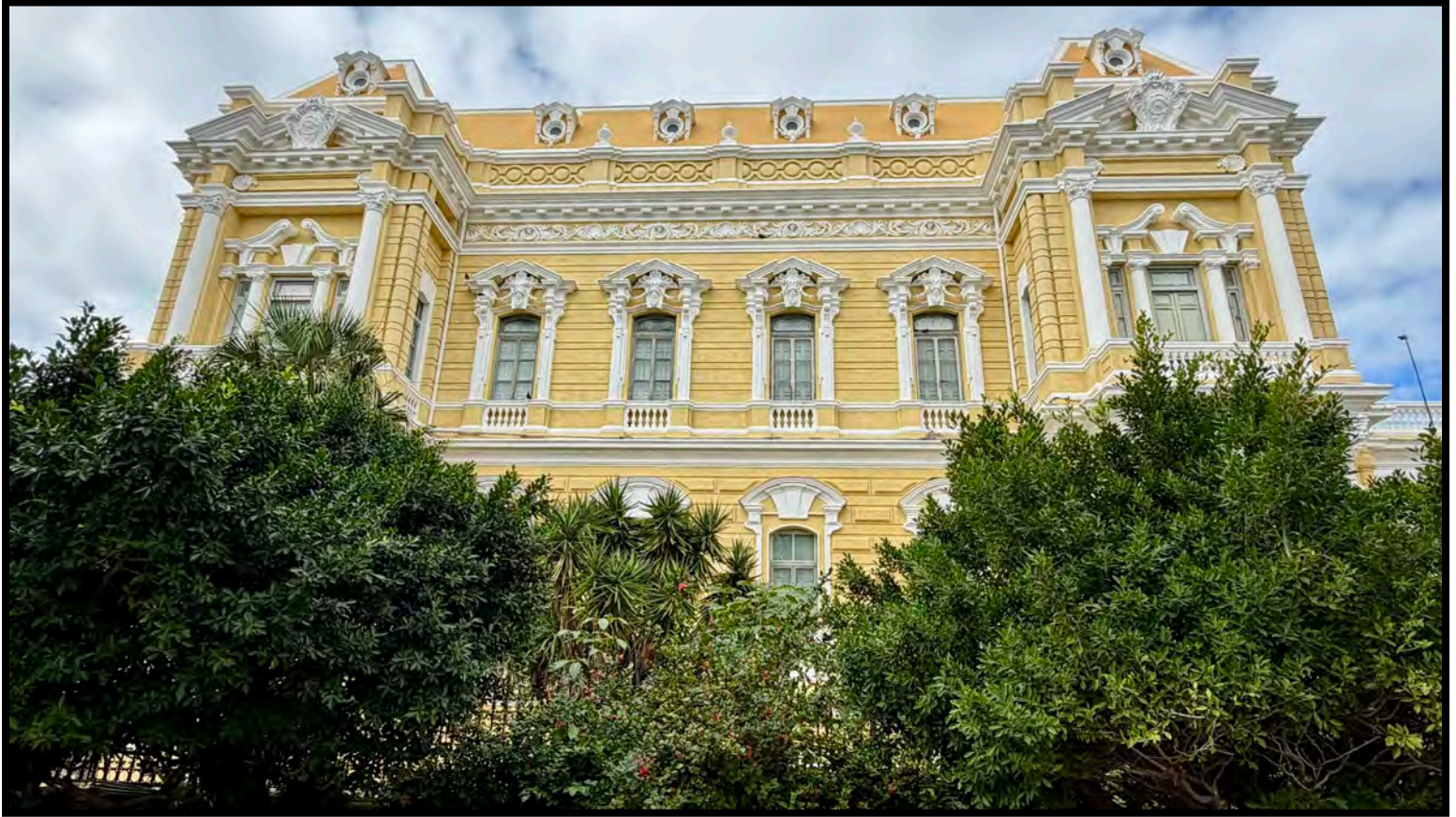
Shabbat Shalom!

Wrote a long letter to Elaine, a woman i met on Spiritual Singles. when we began writing, the first thing she was interested in was my chart. we soon progressed to emails and she ended up doing my chart, and lined hers up with mine. well, it was an extraordinary read, a very accurate description of me, and the comparison of our charts was marked by great intensity, passion and intimacy. it looked like an excellent match. we scheduled a whatsapp call for late afternoon.



Got on my mat at 7:35 and it was a good one. oo la la, i was filled with energy coursing through me bones; the sun was shining and my near naked body and mat were draped by the sun. such a delight. t'was a highly technical routine but i was up for the challenge. afterwards, made a simple, but delicious breakfast, a blend of the granola from the health food store and the best available granola from the nearby Super Aki, slices of banana, lathered in Greek yogurt. hit the road with my bag of laundry.

Dropped off the laundry and continued down Calle 59 to the Palacio Musicales to purchase a bus pass, forgetting that i could have done that at the Super Aki. the machines at the museum were not working, so i walked up Paseo Montejo, a tree lined boulevard with upscale restaurants and shops, along with a slew of official looking edifices.



Along the way i stopped at several ATMs to get cash, but not a one accepted my card, yet did not offer a reason for the rejection. i was stymied, nee, livid, in disbelief, once again confronting Mexico's lack of services common in first world countries. i had no issues with my Mastercard last winter traveling through Italy. i continued up the promenade which is closed for several hours sundays for bicycles. there is a dedicated lane in each direction however, tho i saw no cyclists. at Avenida Colon, another prominent avenue, i turned west and headed to the Slow Food Market.

It was not as crowded as the prior before. purchased a larger bag of granola than i had, made another attempt to buy a loaf of sourdough, but i was met with the same story as the week before, no machine. i wandered a bit, but frankly, there isn't really much available for me, so, unlikely i will return simply to buy a bag of granola. hopefully i will be able to get cash before long and locate a true bakery rather than the Mexican equivalent of a patisserie. a good thick loaf of crusty and hearty bread is not part of the Mexican culture, and rather hard to come by.



Waited for a bus, but after a minute or two decided to walk since i had no bus pass, nor cash, and would have had to feign paying with my mastercard in the hope the driver would allow me to ride without paying. charge cards and debit cards do not work. the walk was long but it went quickly. once back in Centro i found my way to Ki Koffee. Kiko was working; the place was more or less empty; the music was good, and i was able to sit and relax, weary from my sojourn. in between sips Kiko and i chatted. he's a very affable young man. he owns the shop. in a previous life he was

an IT specialist. we talked about a variety of things including Narco trafficking. i spent an hour. when i left and returned to the world, i was revived and decided to walk directly to Armor, it was an opportunity to discover yet another part of Barrio Santiago.



Zig zagged my way to Armor. it wasn't very crowded. i got into my routine immediately. took my time, focused, and had a superb workout. there was a young woman working near me on the universal, who i've seen a few times. she seems attracted my way, and i certainly am attracted by her. she's young. she may even be the gal of one of the big boys who was not there yesterday. i often see them together. not sure how to make her acquaintance. when i left she was on the universal, and i nodded to her as i walked past. she returned the gesture, then i waved goodbye. who knows. i may be pleasantly surprised as time moves along. i could certainly use a friend.

Back at the shack i ate the last banana and finished up the peanuts. i was one hungry man. it was getting close to the appointed hour for my call to Elaine. at 3:45 i texted to find out if she was ready. it was on the early side of our scheduled time, but, she was ready, so i called...i was immediately disconcerted as she appeared before me. yes, she looks like her photographs, but they were clearly from the past. in fact, after our lengthy conversation, i found her profile on Facebook, and all her photographs are from 2019, or earlier. not a single current shot. she is 76, in good health, as far as i know, and attractive, for a 76 year, but not for a 70 year old. she has aged and it is obvious. we talked for over two hours. toward the end, perhaps the last half hour, she asked about the Manse and i went on and on. i texted her later in the evening to let her know i had enjoyed our colloquy and her reply was, it had been more of a monologue. i was stunned, not because she was wrong, though her comment did not really describe the entirety of our time together online, but it awakened me to the deceit of her photographs; the fact she resides in Asheville, where i have no interest in living and i mention this because she has no interest in re

locating; she has little travel experience; and she continues to work full time, with a very tight weekly schedule. regardless of how good a match our charts are, i don't believe there is any merit in pursuing a relationship with this woman. the end!

Took dinner at Johannes. so so. had papas with a garlic sauce, nothing more than french fries lathered with a sauce which was hardly outstanding; and a salmon carpaccio, again, only so so. it's becoming increasingly clear i need to commence cooking for myself.



*Sunday 28 December 64°F* 🌤️

The day is ahead of me. sunshine, occasional car passing. bit of a breeze, seated on the couch, windows and door open, dappled light, searching for expat groups in Merida, finding quite a few, tho unable to view a single one. puzzling. wondering if it has to do with my connection or that i am not a member and in order to view the group one needs to join first? it isn't that important. on the other hand i need to meet people and engage socially. hoping to do some work in a bit. i also have a reminder about re doing the maps with more precision. found a website that walks one through the process of manipulating google search and creating individualized maps. haven't had time. budget is finished. investment portfolio requires attention. travelogue is up to date, though i need to edit yesterday's entry. call with Cody scheduled for 10:30 went smoothly.

Shortly after i left the apartment and walked over to Calle 55 and down, toward Parque Santa Lucia where i sat for a while on a shaded bench weighing the restaurants in the area. checked several menus at the restaurants on the periphery of the park, but nothing appealed to me. decided i would stop at Cucu on the way home. while i was heading that way, i spotted Meriland, and decided i would order the avocado toast i had had a few days before, and request a top slice of bread. sat at the counter. they agreed to my request. as i waited for my sándwich, i sipped a smoothy of fresh fruit. it was so so. could've used a banana. the sandwich was much better than the open face. not only did it hold everything together, but the extra bread gave it more body. i mentioned this to my waitress who spoke English, but i don't believe she understood.

*Monday 29 December 66°F* ☀️

Wonderful conversation with eli last nite, which remarkably, lasted two hours, even tho i was on the verge of falling asleep when i called him. we covered a lot of ground in our typical fashion, from finances, to my recent work with An Orchestra of Exiles, and his pedagogical rant on Christian history. he's a smart one, cut from the same cloth as his father. it's amazing how much we're alike. he's better educated than i was at his age, while i had more street savvy, tho he is pretty damn street smart, and i wasn't a dummy at that age. we're a great pair.



La Calle 59 fue la primera calle pavimentada de Mérida y el tramo al que nos referimos fue, desde finales del siglo XIX, una calle aristocrática. En 1906 por esta calle dio un célebre paseo el Gral. Díaz, cuando visitó el Estado. Desde entonces hasta bien entrado el siglo XX, todos los domingos, de once de la mañana a una de la tarde, las familias acomodadas de la ciudad daban unos paseos por la calle 59. Justo en el parque Hidalgo los hombres jóvenes se arremolinaban para ver pasar a las damas en sus carruajes, ataviadas con sombreros de ala ancha, con joyas traídas de Europa y resguardadas con los largos abanicos de raso y plumas. La calle 59, en este tramo, se desliza hasta uno de los suburbios coloniales de la ciudad: La Mejorada.

La Calle 59 was the first paved street in Mérida, and the section we're referring to was, from the late 19th century, an aristocratic street. In 1906, General Díaz famously strolled along this street during his visit to the state. From then until well into the 20th century, every Sunday, from eleven in the morning until one in the afternoon, the city's wealthy families would take walks along 59th Street. Right in Hidalgo Park, young men would gather to watch the ladies pass by in their carriages, adorned with wide-brimmed hats, jewels brought from Europe, and carrying long satin and feather fans. In this section, 59th Street leads to one of the city's colonial suburbs: La Mejorada.



*Tuesday 30 December 4:13 AM 66°F* ☀️

I could not resist lying on the couch, stretching as best i could, closing my eyes and listening to the radio program. at the moment i can't recall which. might have been The Daily, could've been Market Place, might've been both. eventually i fell asleep. when i awoke i believe Fresh Air was on. i was barely able to get up and walk to the bed. somehow i managed and lay down. once atop the bedding i continued listening to the show, tho i did fall back to sleep soon thereafter. eventually, perhaps an hour later, i managed to rouse myself enough, i was able to rid myself of my clothes, shut the light and get under the covers. i think this was around 9:45. slept until 3:30, two trips to the bathroom. hung out in bed for fifteen minutes trying to make sense of the dream i'd had toward the end of my slumber. apparently i was part of a group and we were traveling, tho i'm not certain about that, but i was in charge of the communal money and it had been missing for a while. after we arrived i was able to locate my suitcase and there it was in an envelope with a paper accounting wrapped around it. the dream was complicated by my family's presence. my mother remained in the background, while my brother and i interacted, but not with the sort of brotherly love i would have expected, tho we were not fighting, but he was engaged in an activity

with a power tool of some sort and i was concerned about his safety, so i was a little testy. my father and i were distinctly at odds with one another. i don't know the issue that divided us, but it created tension and discomfort. altogether, it was an uncomfortable dream, and part of the dream was me, the dreamer, wondering if it were real; had this really occurred; and relief i had located the money that had been missing causing me anxiety.



Yesterday was a mix of emotions, which most likely contributed to the spectrum of emotions in my dream, running the gamut from elation to a feeling of disconnection. i worked until breakfast which i took a little earlier than usual. and after, left for Ki Koffee, vacating the apartment for Rosalba. the bulk of my work was done at the coffee shop. i more or less finished the scene i had

been working on through the weekend, which gave me relief but this was tempered by a sense of detachment from the world around me. when i left, i was stunned by the abundance of sunshine. it was bright and very warm. returned to my apartment. Rosalba was putting the finishing touches on her cleaning, so i sat downstairs in the common living room and continued my work. i was happy to gain the space when she gave me the okay. it felt fresh and i was comfortable sitting on the couch where there were no mosquitoes, reviewing the morning's work. there remain several odds and ends that will require further attention, but at the moment, reads pretty well, accurate to the times and what was going on in Eastern Europe at the turn of the 20th century.

Yoga was good, tho not the stellar routine i've grown accustomed to these past couple of weeks. afterwards, i headed out the door headed for a new place to take lunch, Casa Maya, a block from the Grand Plaza, inside a building with small shops selling Mexicano wares, occupying the courtyard of an old and venerable edifice. it was nice. i felt comfortable. my waiter was bit goofy. i spoke in Spanish and he replied in broken English. the food was not exceptional but it was good. i began with refried beans which came in a huge bowl which disarmed me. i was expecting a small side dish. once i doused it with picante sauce which enlivened it, i ate heartily. my main platter was enchiladas vegano mole style. again, pretty good, but not great, and way too much. there were four large enchiladas. i ate two, and took the others back with me. i made a bit of loop through Centro, visited a clothing store, and a gallery, but i was focused on a nap. returned, hopped on the couch and slept for twenty minutes.



Once revived, off to the gym i went. it was slow going initially. i was still digesting lunch, but i got deeper into it as i moved along. chatted with a Cuban fellow in between sets. a new face. he spoke English fluently, tho i began by speaking with him in Spanish. all in all, seventy plus minutes and weary as i shook my new friend's hand and wandered into the night. it had been an odd day, and proved to be a strange night, but i slept knowing i had laid the foundation for some solid work today.

*Wednesday 31 December 4:15 AM 65°F* 🌞

Not a good sleep, not at all. between the numerous trips to the bathroom and my shoulder pain, i did not have a restful sleep. i suppose i woke eight times for the bathroom, tho i stopped counting, or forgot, after the first several. i'm actually in a good mood. why, i've no idea since my sleep was so bad. it was like a series of naps.

After my workout i returned to the apartment and relaxed for a bit, then headed to Cuerno de Toro, Bull's Horn, a taproom on Calle 55 that was recommended by Kiko. along the way i stopped at La Sicilia to make a reservation for dinner tonite. i was giddy as i skipped out the door and down the street heading toward he taproom. sat at the bar. i was regaled by the bartender about the beers and other taprooms around town some of which were on the list Kiko and i drew up, those that had darker beers. i was surprised to learn how many there were after my bad experiences earlier in the month. i had a Stout laced with Mescal. it was good. i would return. i enjoyed the company of the bartender. there were few customers and those there, couples, were at tables spread around the two rooms. i nursed my beer and texted with eli when i wasn't chatting with the barkeep.

When i left i headed back to the apartment along Calle 55, my new favorite street. it has a different vibe, even at night. a little more upscale, quieter, nicer homes, more floral. while i was sipping, it had rained. the night was still young. people were out and about. i walked hurriedly. not sure why, but i was feeling that same sense of giddiness when i departed La Sicilia. when i arrived home i had to pee. sat for a while and doodled on my laptop, then got ready for bed. peed once more. fell asleep almost immediately but work with a start for the bathroom. i had slept less than an hour but i had gone into a deep slumber. it felt like several hours had past. and that was the routine for the most of the night.

What was my day like?

Woke earlier than usual, found my way around my travelogue and by 5:00 i was reviewing *An Orchestra of Exiles*, preparing the next chapter. made great headway. i am rather fond of what i've done with Abraham's time in Kaunus. breakfast was good. afterwards i continued my work, took a short nap and at 10:30 left for Blue Bag Roasters on Calle 55, recommended by Kiko, for their dark roast beans. it was a lovely morning and i was thrilled to be out. unfortunately, Blue Bag is taking a holiday and is closed until next monday, 5 January. thankfully i had come along a street where i noticed a coffee shop, so i backtracked and entered what appeared to be a renovated garage which opened to a courtyard and another building which i assumed was housing.



ordered an americano and made myself comfortable. spent the next hour listening to Latvian folk music trying to decide which song would best fit the material i had written. Abraham is on a train bound for Riga and the landscape is being described by the Chorus via song.



Back at the apartment i continued my effort. i'm close to wrapping the scene up. the song i chose is perfect. i need to edit the text. at this point i was on the fence about yoga. i was feeling tired, and i was unable to visualize myself on my mat, but i persisted. i put away my work, put the radio on, began massaging my scalp and face, all the usual ministrations i enact before gaining my mat. once i applied tiger balm to my hands, i felt ready and sure enough, as i began i could feel positive energy surfacing. in the end, it was quite a good session. i headed to Johannes for lunch. had an avocado toast and as i had at Meriland, requested a top slice of sourdough and the cauliflower tacos. the sandwich came with a salad which was dressed with a honey mustard vinaigrette. everything was delicious. i saved half the sandwich for this morning's breakfast, and one taco for tomorrow's lunch to accompany the enchiladas i took back from Casa Maya a couple days ago.

Returned to the apartment. the weather had turned dreary. it had drizzled while i ate. took a nap, then headed to Armor. worked my ass off, but i felt good as i walked through the darkness. it was an excellent workout. however, i had overdone it and my shoulders were letting me know.

It's been a pretty good day. i was able to finish the scene with the Chorus singing about the landscape of Lithuania and Latvia, what Abraham was seeing from the window of the train he was on heading to Riga Latvia. breakfast was good, and not long after i went over to Ki Koffee and spent the remainder of the morning doing research on Riga, creating the first part of Abraham's second letter to his mother.

When i returned i was feeling rather overwhelmed by the coffee and took a short nap. got started with my yoga routine later than expected, took longer breaks, and wound up on my mat longer, all of which reduced the time i could spend at the gym, since they were closing early today, tho in truth, i wasn't terribly interested in working out. my shoulders are both still hurtin. decided i would do a double session friday. i've never been to any gym first thing in the morning, so it will be a bit of an adventure. looking forward to dinner at La Sicilia to celebrate New Year's Eve!



**Thursday 1 January 2026 4:52 AM 58°F** ☀️

*Feliz Año Nuevo! Mucha suerte para ti. Que tus sueños se hagan realidad!*

I am happy! even tho my sleep was only so so. i did get up several times, but managed to return to sleep without difficulty. still feeling giddy from last nite's dinner. it was the best culinary experience i've had at La Sicilia. when i made my reservation the other evening, i'd hoped it would be a lively and communal experience. perhaps i was too early? while not as lively as i had anticipated, i was not the only diner. i sat in the garden where i usually sit where there was only one other customer when i arrived. he appeared to be an American. he was stuffing his mouth

with what appeared to be tacos, yet La Sicilia doesn't serve tacos, so i have no idea. he was a rather boorish looking fellow and i was glad when he left. a couple of families arrived soon after, then two gals who appeared to be sisters, a couple of Mexicano lovers, and finally an older couple, Americans, whom i overheard telling the sisters, they had just arrived. the garden was filled but the atmosphere was subdued.

My evening began with a glass of Cabernet. soon thereafter, i was presented a large ceramic bowl of lentil soup. excellent. there were small macaronis in it which i had never experienced before, but assumed was an Italian tradition. delicious. hopefully it will return. it was on the specials menu. the pace of the meal was perfect. i was able to sit and digest and appreciate the taste and culinary experience at a leisurely pace before my next course arrived. as the young gal whisked away the empty bowl, i was presented with a garden salad, which i've had a time or two. it is always fresh, marked by olives, slivers of red onion, a variety of spring greens, cherry tomatoes and yesterday, cucumbers, doused with a piquante balsamic vinaigrette, a true palette cleanser. again, i was able to sit and digest, view the scene, have a few sips of wine, and settle in for my final dish, pasta con vongole. it is a simple dish. i chose spaghetti. there were plenty of clams. the sauce had a nice garlic flavor. i was delighted. the meal was great. i sat and finished my wine, then surprised myself, and ordered a limoncello. excellent. tasty, but not overpowering, a nice blend of juice and alcohol. as patrons left, others arrived. i paid, and as i got up, a young woman entered ready to take my table, wishing me a good night. i was stunned by her appearance as my feet carried me past the threshold and down the narrow corridor to the main part of the restaurant which had filled up and was noisy compared to the garden. out the door i was greeted by a cool fresh breeze and summarily returned to the apartment with a lively step. Happy New Year, one and all!



Friday 2 January 7:17 AM 67°F ☀️

Began the day early, waking around 3:45, taking coffee and catching up on my travelogue, amongst other things. at 5:00 i sat. my minute meditation session was deep and left my feeling buoyed. i dressed and left for the gym. it was rather chilly at 5:45. below 60 degrees. i wasted no time at the gym. my workout was superb. vigorous. i challenged myself with each exercise. 80 minutes later invigorated, i returned, showered, dressed, organized the space, then left for breakfast at Johannes Restaurant, one of my standbys. i had a large breakfast: two scrambled eggs and toast, a platter of fruit with a small bowl of yogurt and and even smaller bowl of granola, with freshly squeezed orange juice to wash it all down. afterwards i sat nursing an americano. i find their americanos to be the best in Merida. i worked while drinking my coffee for about forty five minutes, then returned to the apartment where i continued where i left off in the script. around noon i began to prepare for my midday yoga routine. it was another very high level, superb session. even i was surprised by the intensity. 85 minutes. yes, the old man still has it!




I found this photo in an archive online, taken in 1913 during the rainy season, looking down Calle 61 where i walked after my yoga routine stalking a variety of stores on my shopping list. the first place i hunted down was Suburbia, a clothing store, hopeful i would find a pair of shorts. lucky me. not only did i find a pair that fit and will work perfectly for workouts, but they were 30% off. it was an \$11 purchase. imagine. next up, the natural health food store where i've been purchasing a higher quality of granola than the Super Aki sells, more or less on par with the Slow Food granola, certainly a closer walk. last up, Soriano's Supermarket which i actually only happened upon as i made my way to Trattoria di Alfredo. i looked left, and there it was. went in and picked

up bananas and a Greek Yogurt. as the cash register, the fellow checking me out began speaking to me in English. i was taken aback, since i did not expect it, but he simply wanted to practice. i was more than happy to oblige.

Off to Italy, para mi. had to orient myself but once i did it was only a ten minute walk. once again, there were no other diners. i had the house salad which was adequate. somehow my memory of their Casa de la Ensalada was better than the taste i experienced yesterday. nevertheless, i ate with gusto. next up, spaghetti con pesto. as i was walking to the restaurant i was thinking how nice it would be to have an arrabbiata. when i arrived i was informed they did not have that sauce, which is why i chose the pesto. i was a hesitant, but nothing else appealed to me. i was pleasantly surprised. their pesto is quite good. nonetheless, i find the restaurant over priced tho the food is good, but La Sicilia is as good, if not better, and the ambience is more to my liking, befitting a trattoria, more so than Alfredo.

I walked back to the apartment. relaxed for a bit, then returned to Armor for my second workout. i began slowly with lateral raises, trying to work around a knot in my forearm, around my left elbow. did only three sets of twelve, followed by a nice quartet of barbell presses finishing up with a 21 which i didn't think i would do when i began, but i put as much energy as i had in the tank into my workout and i was on a role from the presses through the delt flies, and then i got on the rowing machine. once again, the knot became a factor. i did three sets however, the last, lowering the weight a bit which put less pressure on the forearm, and allowed me to do about 16 reps. upstairs i went. finished strong with a series of hip abductors, followed by four sets of dips. 65 minutes. a robust day of exercise and a pretty creative day on my script. after all, it was Avi and Eli Day!



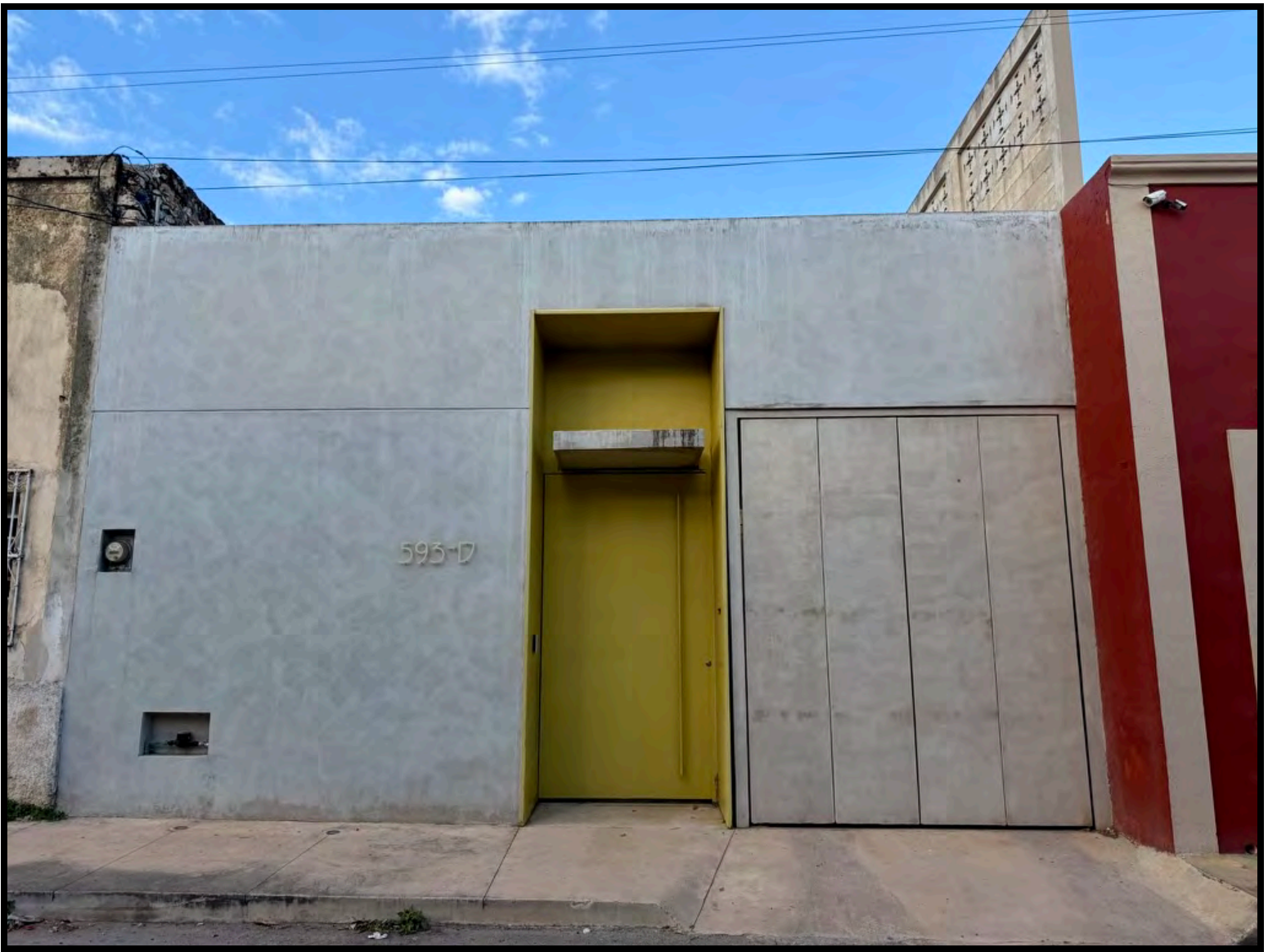
*Saturday 3 January 5:01 AM 59°F* 

Most of my morning was taken up with reviewing, editing and pushing the last scene i worked on, to its completion, preparing myself for monday's work when Abraham arrives in Reval. while i don't believe it is finished, it is flushed out and should be easy to make edits.

At 6:45 i was on my cushion, the very couch where i work, serving as meditation zabuton. excellent session. insight about the piece in the form of stage directions which punctuate the scene and create a vague perception about whether it was a dream, or really took place, teasing some of the psychological threads, specifically Abraham's understanding of his Jewishness which has not been discussed heretofore. i may have to return to this scene as i give more thought to its ending, and provide a more solid look at the question of Abraham's Jewishness, or simply begin to weave this thread into the script as time rolls on. i will know better on Monday.

Yoga was on a new level altogether. since i've arrived in Merida, my Saturday early morning Sabbath Yoga routines have become the highlight of the week. it is the most intense and pyrotechnical routine, a wonderful extension of my meditation session, reflecting yoga's position as preparatory for meditation. i finished with a few dips and ended the session at the 85 minute mark, enthusiastic about taking my breakfast. the foodstuffs were the same, but i mixed some of the remaining strawberry yogurt with the new natural Greek yogurt i'd picked up which provided a looser cereal. most of the Greek Yogurt i've had down here is extremely thick and difficult to stir. i think i'll continue using this formula. at any rate, i took my breakfast on the terrace enjoying the warmth of the sun. it was well after 9:00 at this point.

Teeth brushed, bowl and spoon cleaned, over to the gym i headed. when i arrived a large crew was futzing with the new machines they had been delivered the previous afternoon, some sort of Nordic walker. i didn't really have a good look, but they had moved most of the benches and mats and life in the part of the gym i was working was disrupted. i went about my business walking around the piles of mats, securing one of the remaining benches for presses, but i was not entirely happy about the situation. i could not understand why they had not done their work after hours so as not to disrupt people's workouts. they were in the way, plain and simple and between this disruption and the never ending battle to locate dumbbells, the general chaos of Armor Gym, i became rather pissy. i did my workout grumbling about the circumstances to myself. nonetheless, i was focused and the routine was moving along in a positive direction. in fact i wound up working out for 75 minutes. when i was finished i was delighted to be gone. it was just after noon, warm and sunny and i felt good. i returned to my apartment and as i was preparing to take a photograph of the building, Claudio called. i went inside so i could hear better. we talked for half an hour about my recent indecision about moving to Ermita. he understood my concern about adequate services, such as laundry, food shopping, restaurants, coffee shops, places i've discovered in Santiago which are all quite close and convenient, while in Ermita, these places are spread out or there are fewer choices. i elucidated the discussion by indicating that Armor was a five or six minute walk from Casa de Xolos, while a twenty plus minute walk from Case de Luna. this was true for a proper supermarket as well, even tho Super Aki is not all that good, they still have what i need. we ended the discussion with me telling him i would return to Ermita and have a closer look, and by Wednesday i would let him know. he was as accommodating as one could be. i have had nothing short of stellar interactions with both he and his father.



It was time for a coffee...

Slung my pack across my shoulder, and headed out the door. the walk was pleasant. i was giving a lecture, about what and to whom, i no longer recall. when i entered Kiko and his girlfriend were seated having a bite to eat. i told him not to get up, finish your meal, and i'll join you. for the next two plus hours the three of us chatted away, laughing heartily, charmed by each other's presence. i did end up having an americano. we spoke about Merida; music; galleries; food; real estate, meandering across a fairly wide open map. lovely people. i would like to express my delight in our friendship by taking them out to dinner at La Sicilia where they've never been, though it is on their list of restaurants to experience. she expressed enthusiasm for Italian food, which prompted me to remark that she should visit Italy and have Kiko take her. in turn, they told me about a taco place near Santa Lucia Park where i had lunch one day at Rosa Sur, and i told them the story of the picana in my taco. when i left i took down Calle 57 hunting for the galleries on my short list. i was ebullient, and, a little caffeinated, happy to be out taking photographs.



It was a glorious afternoon. the sun was warm and i was feeling exuberant. moments after i took a photograph of a house which drew me, tho i have not included it here, a gentleman walking toward me hopped off the sidewalk and came toward me jabbering away as though we were old friends, explaining something about the house but i had no idea what he was talking about. we smiled and laughed and went on our way. i thought perhaps he lived in the house. i stopped, and turned to see if he entered, but he passed the house giving it a look, thinking something, though i've no idea what. it was that kind of day.



Further along i passed along the northern end of the Plaza de Santiago. Muchas Vida was closed, and so was the Monk Bar. i took this photograph of what appears to have once been a movie theatre, though it seems closed for business at the moment. throughout the city one unexpectedly comes upon these architectural treasures. i have been through this plaza numerous times and never noticed the Rex Theatre. it is clearly an Art Deco style edifice. there are many sprinkled throughout Santiago and Centro.

Began heading east along Calle 57, but wiggled my over to 55, past the Blue Bag Roasters and some other familiar buildings. i'm getting to know Merida by its colors and shapes. it's one of the quieter streets until you reach the commercial area around San Lucia Park which seems to began around Calle 64/66.

I've walked past these buildings, down each of the streets where they sit, numerous times, but they never drew me as they did yesterday afternoon. it was all about the lighting, the sky and clouds, the reflections, details catching my eye, shapes and colors, the juxtaposition of the different building. rather stunning.

Calle 55 has become my favorite street. there are far more houses of interest than other east west streets, and the further along you go, many lovely shops, even though, at the moment, i have no interest buying anything, but i do enjoy their presence and the wares they showcase in the windows. i found my way to Santa Lucia and walked around the park. people were out and about. several restaurants had lines along the sidewalk. i was interested in the place Kiko and his gal recommended, Taqueria de la Union. they insisted i try the Chaya Taco, Chaya being the green leaf, native to Mexico in the Euphorbia family, most frequently used as an herb with supposed medicinal benefits, though of these i have no idea. i found the restaurant easily. it's only a block down from the hubbub around the park, a hole in the wall, two rooms, one for the kitchen, the other with tables, seating about 20 people. taciturn crew. they arrive, take the order, and leave barely moving their lips. the tacos were good though. mixed crowd. Mexicanos and turistas. i ordered a Chaya and a cauliflower taco. seems cauliflower is a popular ingredient in Merida. and a limonada naturel. all was well. when i was finished, i ordered another Chaya taco. it was as good as the first.

I was high from the energy of the day, particularly the palaver with Kiko and his girlfriend. i really need to get her name and commit it to memory. at any rate, when i left the Taqueria there was a great deal of bounce in my footfall. returned to the apartment, hoping i would run into the new lady in the place next to mine. the evening before, after my workout, she was watching me through a crack in the door. i noticed her, and said 'hey there,' but that was it. i was dead tired and needed to sit and relax. at any rate, i went outside to take a photograph of the casa and i saw her on her terrace. i waived but she offered a rather perfunctory response. then i saw she was entertaining a man, another guest i assume, tho maybe she had not arrived alone, as Claudio suggested during our phone call.



At 6:45 i hoofed it back to Santa Lucia and the Apostol Taproom which the barkeep at Cuerno de Toro had recommended. there were several people gathered at the wooden bar which was two sides of a square. i was helped by one of them. asked if i could sample a couple of stouts. no problem. one of the gents then let me know that one of those stouts i was about to taste was one of the best beers he's ever had. an Australian fellow. that was enough to get us into a lengthy conversation, he and his

wife and i. they were on a six week junket that had begun in Costa Rica, and from there they went to Mexico City and Oaxaca. Belize will be their last destination before returning. our chat, like any good conversation, meandered, taking us hither and yon. they were nice folks to converse with. had sense of humor. they left a little before i was ready to hit the road. when i left i thanked my patrons, then took a brief walk around Santa Lucia. it was filled with diners, and a group of skateboarders. the night was young, tho not for me. i hoofed it back in a hurry and i was in bed and lights out by 9:10.

*Sunday 4 January 5:16 AM 59°F ☀️*

Slept a little later than usual. several trips to the bathroom contributed, but i also went to bed later than usual. after washing up i worked on my travelogue, but by 6:20 i was out on the street on an early morning photography walk. as i approached Calle 59 i saw a group of runners passing. the closer to the intersection i got, the more i realized it was a pretty large group of runners. in fact, there were police officers keeping traffic from using the street. everyone had a paper across their chest advertising the Merida Half Marathon. i had no idea. wasn't it a bit early for a marathon? the route was past some of the very shots i had planned on taking. i crossed the street where there was a gap in the crowd, walking past Super Aki, intent on getting on Calle 55, and awandering i didst go.





I was on familiar terrain, but the light was entirely different than previous treks down the streets north of Parque Santiago, as i wiggled my way from one to the other intent on locating interesting and undiscovered buildings, older places, well maintained, or newly renovated. unfortunately, i took a misstep and aggravated my ankle. i was having a time of it walking, unable to focus on the architecture. i thought about turning back but realized i was pretty close to the University and i wanted a shot of its main building without anyone in the shot, so i persisted. see below.

I was now back on the route of the Marathon which had gone east along Calle 59, then took a left turn heading north along Calle 62. i managed to stand in the middle of the street, out of the way of the runners and take several shots. i didn't have to concern myself with traffic because there was none. i returned via Calle 57, turning south a block and making my way back to the apartment along Calle 59. runners were still coming. alongside the park they had set up a water system so runners could run underneath and get refreshed. it was a very smart setup.

Back at the apartment i turned my attention to my yoga mat. i had a subdued session, but it felt good, and my ankle felt much better afterwards. thanks for asking. breakfast followed. i wasn't feeling very peppy so i decided to check out Manifesto Cafe and have an americano. i'd passed it numerous times and it sort of beckoned. runners were still coming down the street. by now it was 11:00, nearly five hours after i first encountered the race, and the street remained blocked to cars.



I had brought my laptop and finished the work i had begun on the travelogue. i was not impressed with the cafe, neither its ambience, nor its coffee. they roast their own, but i find the coffee at Ki Koffee more to my liking. i did manage to work up a hunger, so i walked down the street another five minutes to Meriland and had their signature avocado toast which is request served as a sandwich. service is tediously slow. the food is quite good, at least those dishes that are so called, fan favorites. returned to the apartment, dropped off the laptop, the went on a walk, ostensibly to La Ermita, on a photo shoot. i walked several blocks and not a single photograph was taken. south of Santiago is simply not photogenic. i think i understood this in the back of my mind, but i needed to honor it, and so i walked and walked and nothing presented itself. the vicinity around La Ermita Park is nice, but i decided against walking all the way there simply to take a couple of pictures in the middle of the afternoon when photography is most difficult. i returned, and i was glad i did, because it was nearly time for my chat with Sharlene.

We talked for nearly two and a half hours. afterwards i ran over to Super Aki to pick up a jug of water, nuts and granola. i kept tabs on the Steeler - Raven game for a while, but by 8:10, i was gone. goodnite me laddy!



Merida, Yucatan 1975 - Ermita de Santa Isabel

*Monday 5 January 4:45 AM 61°F* ☀️

We're talkin now, Zaza from Geneva...oo la la, what a gal. gorgeous photographs. she moves and shakes her way across the water, a lovely apparition. i stand atop a dune and view her dance.

The new kid on the block is a woman from Lake Geneva in Wisconsin, west of Lake Michigan and half way between Milwaukee and Chicago, forming what appears to be an equilateral triangle. i'm inspired by the photographs of her online, as well as her smile.

Slept well. only two trips to the bathroom. slept a little longer than expected, by about fifteen minutes, necessary i suppose. i'm ready for my work. as for re capturing yesterday, i believe i left off with my on Calle 55 walking toward Santa Lucia Park. i will pick up from there later in the day as i have time. i needed to write Zaza this morning, as i promised.

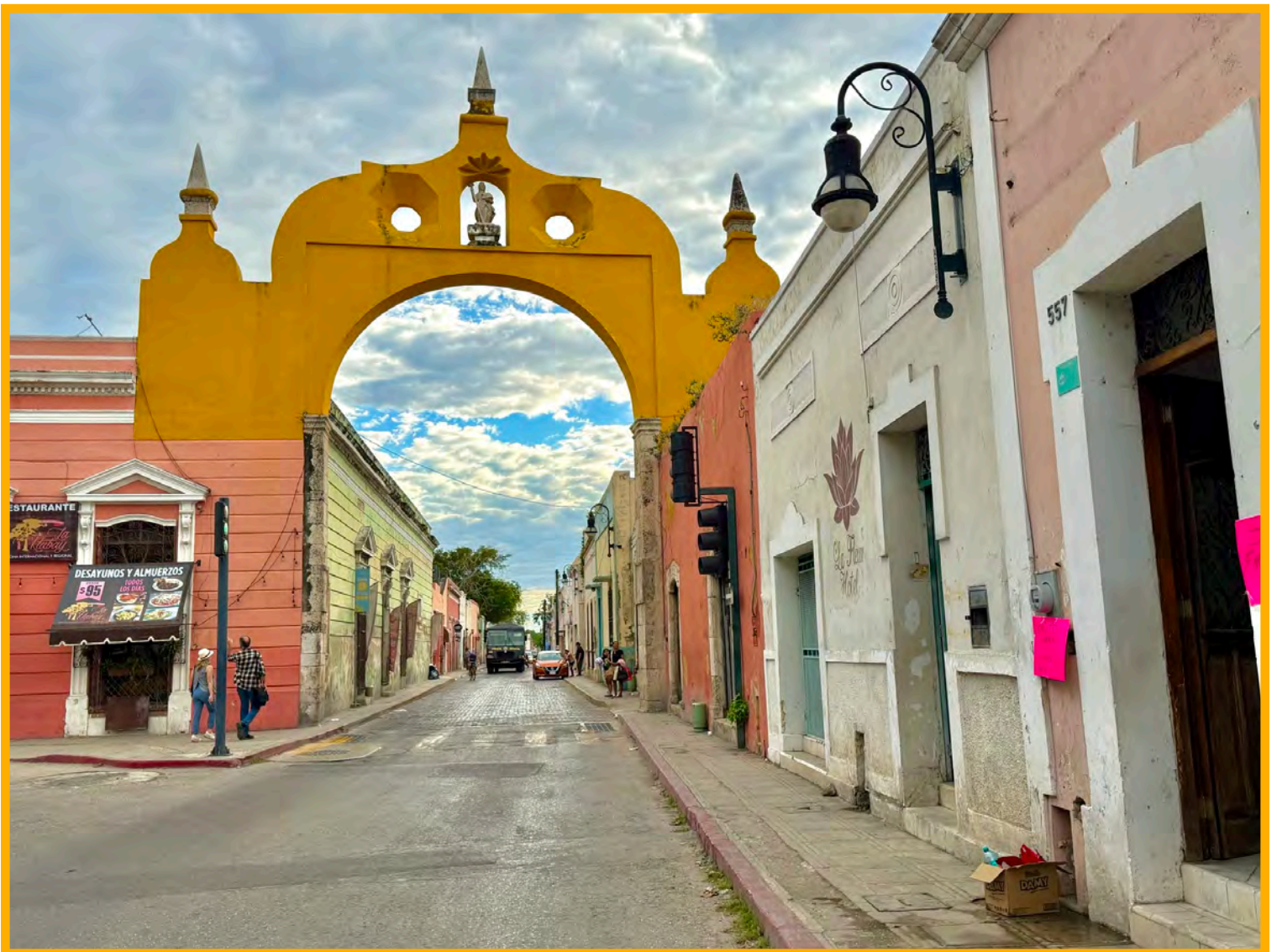
*Tuesday 6 January 4:08 AM 63°F* ☀️

Tired as heck after talking with eli for an hour and a half. actually i was weary to the bone earlier when i returned from Aroma. it was only a quarter past five, but after an intense yoga session and a strenuous workout, i was beat. took a fifteen minute nap ahead of my phone call.

The day began early, tho is didn't seem to pick up steam until after breakfast which i took earlier than usual, having come to a place in the script where a break was necessary. by then it was sunny and warm. the weather has heated up again, after several days of cooler temperatures. work continued after breakfast with more gusto. Abraham is no aboard a steam ship heading across the Baltic to Helsinki. i chose to have him go directly from the train station to the dock and catch an evening ferry, rather than remain in Reval. there were no threads to tease from what i read about the city, its musical history, nor the history of Jews in the city, and i was reluctant to write another descriptive section about the city, more or less repeating what i had done elsewhere. and besides, he was carrying and still digesting all the antisemitic and revolutionary tropes, particularly his experience on the train from Riga. as i begin this morning, Abraham is arriving at the dock in Helsinki.

As mentioned, yoga was intense, in a good way. i was particularly focused. there were a couple of kinks i was intent on working out. lunch followed, which i took at Johannes, reluctant to venture far. gorgeous afternoon. i sat in the dappled light next to the pool. i had gone for the cauliflower tacos, their signature offering, which were tremendous, as usual, particularly when accompanied by the guacamole. excellent meal. i felt great. returned to the apartment, relaxed a bit, then headed over to the gym.

It was an outstanding day which i am hoping to repeat today.



*Wednesday 7 January 3:56 AM 67°F* ☀️

The day began as any other, waking early, washing up, preparing coffee, writing a bit in my journal, using the couch as my cushion for meditation, then focusing on my work. i began with a review of the previous chapter, then moved to a new chapter. research was required, so i engaged with Google. pulled up a map of Helsinki and got myself familiar with the terrain, working between the map and questions about where things were located in 1895 when my character arrived at the dock. i took breakfast, resumed, then gathered what i needed and headed to KiKoffee, leaving the apartment for Rosalba to clean, whom i saw as i left and spoke with for a short while. i was in good spirits, and so was she.

The day was beautiful, warm and sunny. the walk was nice. i gathered my thoughts. at the cafe i spoke for a bit with KiKo, asked him his thoughts on search engines. he turned my on to a group in town who can help in that regard, and he suggested keeping my searches simple. i took his advice and immediately pulled up useful information which i had somehow been unable to ascertain previously. the man is my good luck charm. i continued looking for Abraham in St. Petersburg, then Lodz and each search gave me confirming evidence of his presence. i started to go down a rabbit hole, and had to stop myself, and focus instead on Helsinki which is where he is in the story. came up with some brilliant dialogue which buoyed my morning. it was time to return.

It was later than usual, almost noon. i would have to begin yoga a little later as well. however, when i went upstairs, i realized Rosalba was not finished. okay, i'll wait downstairs and continue working. she did not finish cleaning until half past twelve, or a little later. i was not particularly happy when i returned to the apartment, though i thanked Rosalba profusely. sat on the couch to gather myself. tidied up the script. caught up on email, then got ready for yoga, but i was actually feeling strange, halfway between energetic and tired. the coffee had had an odd effect. in the end, i got started at 2:00, and only did 40 minutes, then took a 30 minute nap. by then it was time for lunch. i decided i would walk to La Kombucheria to take my lunch, walk through Ermita on the way back, return to the apartment, relax a bit, then head to the gym. good plan. made my way to the restaurant. when i arrived i was greeted by Luis. he immediately informed me of the bad news. the chef was sick and the restaurant was closed. oh boy. he recommended i go to Cigno Hotel which he and i has discussed on a previous visit when the topic of vegetarian restaurants in Merida was broached. i had also reviewed their menu, and knew there were several suitable options. it is not exclusively vegetarian but there are a few dishes. it was another five minute walk and in the heart of Ermita. turns out, it is directly across the street from the Majikal Office which is an antique shop. naturally it was closed since they are in Puebla.

The restaurant is on the first floor in the back part of an upscale boutique hotel. i was ushered in by a young lady. lovely place. well appointed. the restaurant sits in front of a pool reminiscent of Johannes, only this place is far more tropical and upscale. the staff is not adorned in everyday clothing with ballcaps in reverse. they have a distinct Cigno uniform. actually the name of the restaurant is Cocina Vidente. i ordered the Beet Ravioli and the Tacos with Tuna and Avocado. it was now close to 4:30. i was hungry.

So were the mosquitoes. they were eating me alive. i was taken aback. how could they allow customers to become prey inside their hallowed restaurant? after a rather long wait, the dishes arrived together even tho i had specified primero and secundo. no matter. i began with the beet dish. delicious. thinly sliced layers of beets stuffed with a creamy pistachio, mint, basil and rosemary paste, served with an orange and honey vinaigrette. all true, however, the beets were not swimming in sauce. they skimp on the stuffing and the vinaigrette. i was pleased with the taste of the beets since it has been awhile, but i was not delighted by the dish. they missed their mark. next up, Tuna Tostada Tacos. handmade corn tortillas, served with pico de gallo, radish slices and pickled onion. it was the opposite of the previous dish, an oversized corn taco piled to the sky with the listed ingredients, all of which fell onto the plate as i attempted to take my first bite. i had to scoop with fork and place on taco, else simply take separate bites. i was not eating a taco. not even close, so the effect they were after was really only visual because it was impossible to eat the dish as a taco. again, pleased by the taste, but highly disappointed in the dish. at that point, i was anxious to leave. my legs had been ravished. i was shown the bathroom.



As i attempted to close the double door, i was immediately reminded of Apple. the doors were perfectly designed, and had to be closed in exactly the right manner so that the clasp, which was also perfectly designed, would work as intended. well, i had to go to the bathroom and i was in no

mood to calculate the perfectly designed door and clasp. nothing in the world of Apple is utilitarian even tho the phone has become the most utilitarian device in most people's lives. the food was about presentation and i was stuck, as i often feel working with my I Phone or laptop, in a world that does not include me. i paid, left and walked through the neighborhood of Ermita trying to figure out its allure because truly, it is run down and shabby with only a few exceptions, and cannot compare with Calle 55 and 57 and perhaps others in Santiago.

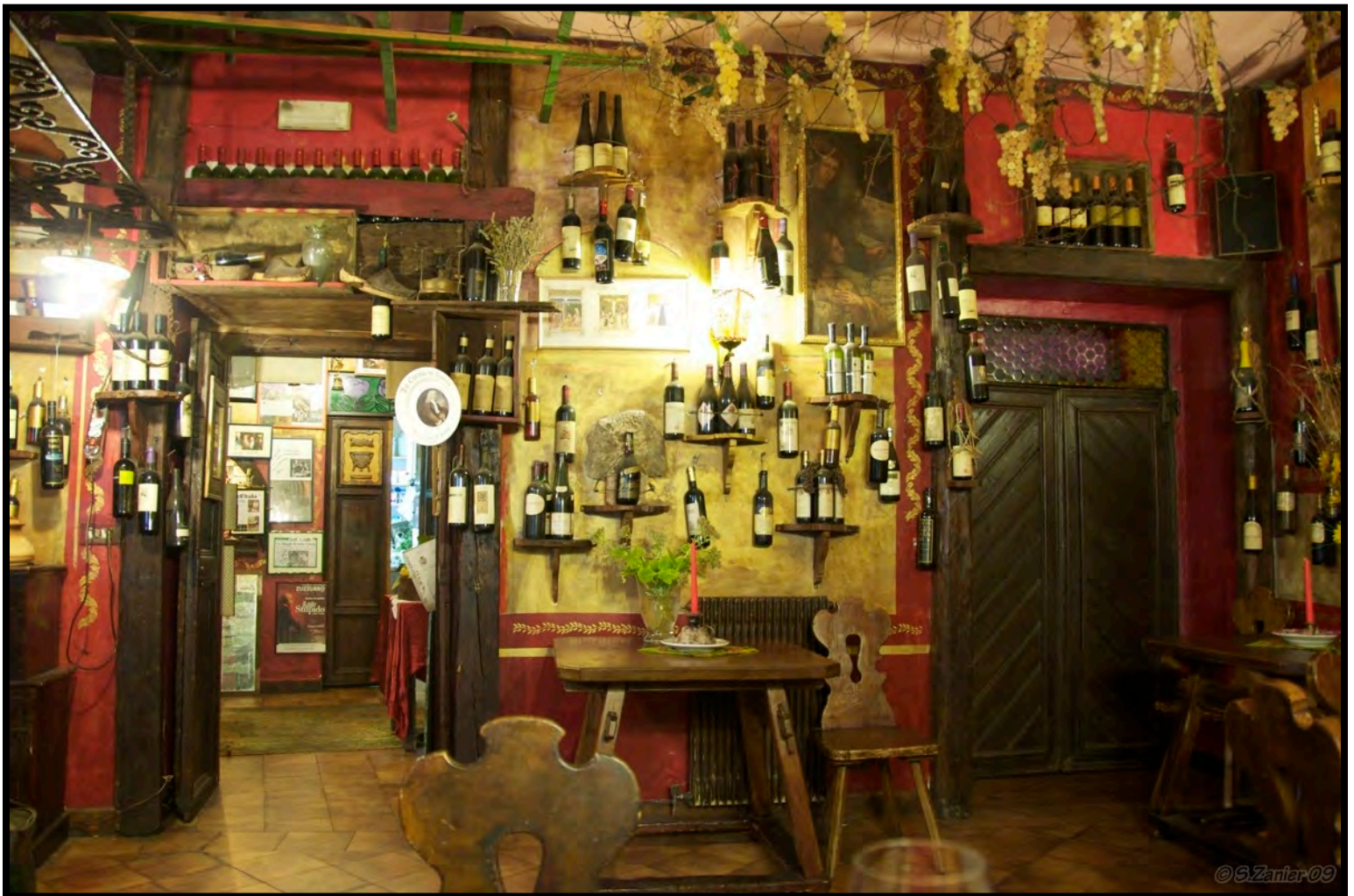
Along the way i decided i would skip the gym and continue with my work.



*Thursday 8 January 4:01 71°F ☀*

Most of my day yesterday was spent at the apartment, wandering from interior to terrace and back. i worked from early morning until late morning, taking a break for breakfast. i had no need to leave. i had all the provisions necessary. i made my way deep into the script. i wasted little time narrating around the storyline. i went straight from the dock to Market Square, his serendipitous meeting, and on to an audition with the conductor of the symphony orchestra. it was later in the morning at this point and i got bogged down on research, trying to find proper material for his audition. naturally, something by Sibelius and of course, Mahler, but what else i pondered. i will need to consult with John Moore, my righthand man on these matters.

As a consequence of my early start, i was able to begin my yoga routine at noon. it was out there. excellent session filled with all my pyrotechnical friends. i relaxed afterwards then headed to Armor. workout was very good as well, and when i returned to the apartment i was quite tired. it was still rather early, so i busied myself with this and that until about 5:15 when i headed to La Sicilia. excellent meal. i began with their garden salad which is fresh and filled with a nice mix of greens, along with olives, cherry tomatoes, slivers of red onion and thinly sliced cucumbers, doused with a balsamic vinaigrette, accompanied by freshly baked bread. next course, penne arrabbiata. all great. wonderful conversation afterwards with Victor, my waiter. nice man. he and the owner grew up together in Mexico City. he also spent ten years in America. nice man. i love the ambience. as i told him, it's a true trattoria: A trattoria is an Italian eatery, generally less formal than a ristorante but more formal than an osteria, rooted in tradition, typically, is without a printed menu, with casual service, wine sold by the decanter rather than the bottle, low prices, and a menu of modest but plentiful offerings that follow regional and local recipes rather than haute cuisine, and often, food is served family-style, at common tables.



While this is not a photograph of La Sicilia, it looks quite similar, and could be a stand in. i left feeling ebullient, once again, a lively step as i perambulated my way back to the shack. i was jammin along the avenue, skirting traffic, hummin tunes. of course, once i was ensconced in my digs, the day caught up with me and i began to feel weariness creeping up through my body. i took a short nap at around 7:00, and by 8:15 it was lights out amigo!

Friday 9 January 4:14 AM 73°F ☀️

Avi y Eli Day! i'll be heading to the gym later this morning, having opted for a double workout today, rather than drag a weary body to the gym yesterday afternoon, which in the end i should have done, but after my second yoga session which was quite energetic i was not feeling like more physical exercise, but less, and walking about Merida felt like the most exertion i was willing to tolerate, and even then, i kept it to a minimum.

The day began as most days begin, working on my journal, and travelogue, sprucing it up, adding photographs or whatever is necessary to complete the entry. i sat at 6:00 for half an hour, then turned my attention to yoga. the first session was a normal routine, tho i was frustrated by



certain arm balances and after that the routine when to hell in a hand basket, though i did manage 65 minutes. breakfast followed, after which i gathered what i needed and headed to KiKoffee.

Kiko and i spoke for a bit. i extended an invitation to he and Denise to join me at La Sicilia saturday for dinner. i expressed my desire to treat them as a way of thanking them for all they have done to make me comfortable, feel at home, and steer me in the right direction when i've posed questions. he was delighted by the offer, checked his calendar, and gave me the go ahead, speaking for Denise who typically fills their social calendar. they are such a lovely couple.



Work proceeded though the music was beginning to interfere with my ability to focus on Abraham's audition and the pieces he would be playing. i worked around that for an hour then returned to the apartment, shut the door and the window, cranked up the air conditioner and fan, and begin listening to renditions of the selections i had made. meanwhile, John Moore returned my email and provided wonderful technical information for each piece. lots to decipher, a struggle i welcomed, rather than the empty handed feeling i'd had earlier in the week as the audition approached. i think i'm set.

Had to pry myself from my laptop, so that i could get ready for my second yoga routine, and truly, i'm glad that i was able, because it was a good one. i was focused, worked steadily, paying attention to each movement, every pose, filling the routine with as much energy as i could muster, and 85 minutes later and several dips, i was in the shower. it had been warm on the terrace. the afternoon had turned steamy and humid. i relaxed and that's when i declined to go to the gym. i was comfortable and did not want to disrupt the feeling. i checked on restaurants for lunch, and settled on a beer and comidas at Apostol. they didn't open until 5:00 which gave me even more time to hangout. when i did leave, i was whistling dixie. i suppose that was more prophetic than i realized.

My initial choice for lunch was a vegetarian place to the north, a few blocks further than La Selvita which i tried several fridays ago, which is why i opted for the closer walk to Apostol directly across from Parque Santa Lucia. i will head north this afternoon. in fact, i'm excited about the prospect of learning about the neighborhood and taking photographs.



Arrived in good spirits, the only patron, and promptly took a seat at the bar. the barkeep recognized me, and asked if i wanted to try the Bock. i did, but did not enjoy it and ordered the Imperial Stout i had had saturday. we chatted a bit. a young woman arrived and sat next to me. she was eli's age. we spoke at length about her stay in Merida. she had come to learn Spanish. she was cute, wet under the ear, but cheery. i ordered potato wedges. my mistake was relying on Apostol for food. the menus online were old and they were no longer serving hummus, and i learned that all their tacos have meat. that was not clear on google. i was crestfallen, tho the beer, which was good, buoyed me. i should have gone to the gym and then the other taproom, Cuerno de Toro, which has a more extensive menu, which is not exclusively bar food. live and learn. i returned home via Super Aki where i picked up this morning's breakfast, tho i'm thinking i will want more to eat than i have on hand and might go elsewhere for breakfast, but where? oh where oh where shall i go? do i dare return to Cafe Montejo?

I was in good spirits walking back. played the bass nearly the entire time, a full repertoire. i was infused with all the music i have been listening to these last few days. regardless, as soon as i was in the apartment, weariness surfaced, and by 7:20 or so i took a short nap. by 8:15, it was lights out. my dreams were punctuated by Abraham's bass playing. i'm inching my way closer to a full blown description of the audition in Helsinki. good morning!



*Saturday 10 January 4:06 AM 69°F* 🌤️

Shabbat Shalom!

Woke early yesterday, got into my journal and travelogue from the get go. didn't sit, and at 5:30 left for the gym. good workout. tired when i returned. showered, revived, relaxed, took breakfast. i had intended to eat out but Claudio was coming over to run my card through their mobile machine, and i didn't want to miss him. as it turned out he came later than expected. for me, opportunity to work longer without disruption. i didn't get much done on the script per se. i ended up reviewing the music i intend to use for Abraham's audition, editing down the technical descriptions, tightening what i have written, to get it ready for the script. once Claudio arrived i got into a lengthy discussion with him and his father. suffice to say, when they departed, it was time to get ready for yoga. i kept my routine simple, thinking i would be returning to the gym later in the afternoon, and did my sabbath routine, since i've enjoyed the more pyrotechnically demanding routine saturday mornings.

It was warm, tho there was a breeze. my yoga session was quite good. i had enough energy to push the postures, tho simple, to their extreme. after sirvasana, i had a brief review with Cody via whatsapp, regarding mail and bill payments. i assessed my options for lunch. still early. i decided i would walk to the much heralded Calle 47 and check out the scene, take photographs along the way, and make my decision about lunch in situ. i enjoyed the walk, but began to flag as i neared Parque Santa Ana, where most of the restaurants are clustered, a park that is very similar to Santa Lucia, tho there is a small mercado similar to Santiago, which Santa Lucia does not have. the scene is overrated. the single restaurant advertised as vegetarian was closed, even tho Google listed it as open. i was not happy about that. i walked up and down the street reading menus. nada, very few with even a single vegetarian option. anywhere i have been where there is a scene appealing to a younger crowd, and Calle 47 is certainly that, every restaurant has vegetarian options, and not just to pay lip service, but several bonafide dishes so that a vegetarian will feel at home, and return. unhappy, i performed yet another search and found Casa Ritual, a bit south, closer to Centro. at least i wouldn't be walking out of my way. i figured if it didn't work out, i could go some place familiar, like Sempere, or Meriland.

I'll let them speak. in their own words: Casa Ritual is a unique space in the heart of Merida fusing art, gastronomy and community. Our Concept Store, Gallery and Cafeteria are designed to celebrate creativity in all its forms. In our cafeteria, we offer a selection of ancestral drinks and specialty coffees, accompanied by dishes inspired by traditional indigenous cuisine with a contemporary twist. We use fresh, local ingredients to give you an authentic and comforting experience. In addition, in our Concept Store and Gallery you will find unique pieces by artists and artisans, with a focus on Mexican cultural roots, but always open to creators from around the world. and so it is. they rely on cactus, corn, chili, and cocoa, and lean on Nahuatl recipes. i had the huevos rancheros which is a typical Mexican dish, but i wasn't in the mood for the more exotic dishes, most of which had meat. i saved enough room for dessert and i'm glad i did. chose the Mango Cream, a dessert that honors the sun-kissed sweetness of mango, a sacred fruit in many Mesoamerican cultures. its smooth texture and fresh flavor evoke the tropical spirit and a deep connection to the fertile southern lands. a ceremonial closing that celebrates abundance and the warmth of seasonal cycles. out of this world!



I purchased a bowl, the style of the one the mango cream was served in, a simple piece, a minimum of decorative flourishes, allowing the earthy tone of the glaze to speak for itself, which i found attractive. in fact, i may return to buy other pieces. i liked the plate as well, in which the huevos rancheros were served. chatted with the proprietors a while, inquiring about a style of pottery found in a village east of Guadalajara, where i purchased coffee mugs on the last trip to Mexico eli and i took, which have all broken over the last twenty years. they knew the style but were not selling it. when i took my leave i wandered through the area toward Santa Lucia. rather than turn toward the park, i decided to head back to my apartment in the off chance i would have the requisite energy for a trip to Armor, knowing full well, as tired as i felt, there would be no second workout. in fact, the closer to Majikal Xolos i got, the more tired i felt. when i arrived, i plopped myself on the couch and that was it. i reviewed my options for the evening, but i was too comfortable to leave. there is an anniversary festival in progress which began monday with events scattered throughout the city, most, musical which i'd love to catch, but last night was not in the cards. i'm hoping tonite i will be able to find my way to one of the outdoor venues, perhaps prior to my dinner with Kiko and Denise, or maybe after?

Sunday 11 January 4:06 AM 69°F ☀️

Yesterday's morning meditation session was sublime; yoga, perhaps the most fluid of the entire trip. out for breakfast. Sempere. avocado and accompaniments on sourdough bread. very nice way to begin my meal. second dish, their parfait, granola, yogurt, fruit. just delicious. refreshing and a wonderful way to finish my meal. had a grapefruit juice and an americano. i was high when i hit the street. returned to apartment, rested up and at 11:45 walked to Armor. what a workout, 80 minutes of intense grind. felt really good. however, when i returned i realized i was rather fatigued. getting ready to leave once again. take my laundry to Blue Woo and pick up supplies at Super Aki. might head further, and go to a museum.

Never made it to the Super Aki. left Blue Woo and headed toward Parque Manuel Cepeda Paraza. sat a bit, hoping once again, something would appear that was photogenic. nada. wiggled my way through and up the avenue past Parque de la Madre, to Calle 55 where i made a right turn and headed down the street ostensibly to have bite to eat at Taqueria de la Union. however, along the way i was struck by the bicicleta outside Bari Coffee. my hesitation allowed me to take in the shops adjacent, one of which was Pita Mediterranea. i hesitated a second, considering it unlikely a Mexicano would know much about preparing Middle Eastern food, then opened the door, bid everyone tardes, and took a seat in the garden.



Didn't have to think, as the waiter showed me my table, i ordered the falafel and a jamaica. i was alone amongst a sea of white plastic tables. the sun was bright, tho i was shaded. my drink arrived. i sipped. it was a pleasant place, a joint, a gathering spot perhaps for Middle Easterners, tho i have no idea how many of them there are in Merida. my plate arrived. the falafel was huge. it was accompanied by a small salad. i was delighted by the dressing. the first bite was the best bite. it was the real McCoy. my eyes lit up. how could they know from falafel, i wondered as i rapturously chewed. the owner, so i assumed, gravitated my way to check on me, and i asked him, *how?* his son in law is Israeli. nu, of course. i asked for picante.

A happy camper, i was. the falafel was good to the last bite. it was loaded with balls of falafel, far more than one would get in Israel. i was quite complimentary, hoping the chef would show his face, but he didn't. his wife, the owner's daughter, however, took my card when i paid. i attempted to make small talk, but she was not having none of it. not sure what that was all about, but i remained in good spirits.

When i left i walked about the area feeling increasingly tired. it had been a long day and a highly physical one. i sat in Santa Lucia for a while, then moved along to the Grand Plaza where they had set up a bandstand for performances during Merida Fest. a band was playing. the music was not very good. rather insipid in fact, saccharine, melodramatic and emotionally manipulative,



music i detest. i wandered through the plaza, sat on a bench, waiting for the concert to start inside the cultural center at one corner of the plaza, a flautist and pianist playing the music of female composers. i'm not a fan of the flute, but i thought perhaps i'll be pleasantly surprised. at the appointed hour, people were allowed inside. i checked out the sculptures in the rotunda, then took a seat in the theatre. they began on time. soon enough, i learned it was less about music and more about talking about music. it was a lecture with musical accompaniment, though for the first twenty minutes not a thing was played, other than a couple of illustrative examples of the baroque style. i was fed up and left, thinking, if i had wanted to know about these women, sonata form, the Baroque Period, i could look it up on Wikipedia after the concert. i had come to hear music, surrender to the pleasures music provides, but that was not happening. i walked to Cuerno de Toro and had a Tiramisu Porter, sipping while watching the Rams beat the Panthers, when i learned of Bob Weir's passing.



Goodbye Bobby! i took this photograph with Weir in mind, symbolic of his transition, passage to another state, in this case, the Arco was the traditional eastern boundary of Merida, and there are several, though they are not connected. the old arches were at the entrance to the city and were built to separate the residents of Merida, who were largely Spanish, from the Indigenous communities beyond. the first arches were commissioned in 1690, almost 150 years after the city's foundation. the arch of San Juan and the one on 59th street marked the beginning of roads to Campeche and Izmal.



Rose around 4:45, working, largely on my journal and travelogue, until 7:15, when i left Xolos, taking a left out the door, then a right down Calle 61 which i took to the Gran Plaza and beyond before taking another right turn, which i think was Calle 58. regardless, i wandered around the neighborhood southeast of the Plaza, which i believe is known as San Cristobol, hoping to arrive at Soriano's Supermarket by 8:00 when it was due to open. along my morning perambulation speaking to my new friend from Spiritual Singles, Zaza, who had replied to my email last night after i retired, in between shots. this morning's talk was in response to her expressed fascination about my current writing project, which continues to enchant me, reviewing the piece, my interest in it, the structure i've evolved, my process, and rationale, and the philosophical themes being discussed. it was a fine walking meditation, a quodlibet of sorts. i'm looking forward to our initial video chat.

My wandering took me to the park i had pranced through the other day en route to Kombucheria, Parque de la Mejorada, fronted by the old adobe church above. from there it was a short walk to Soriano's. i picked up a Greek Yogurt, bananas, granola and toothpaste, then headed back Santiago and my apartment. it was a good morning.



*Monday 12 January 11:24 AM 80°F ☁*

Sometimes i am overwhelmed by the sheer beauty of my own work. it comes from deep within, a place we all share. i was prompted to read and excerpt from I Am The Frontier, after viewing a friend's website, who is a dancer.

**I paddled into the womb of the land where it was quiet, and in the tranquility that enshrouded me i could sense a faint echo; the beat of a drum, i could smell the recondite trace of an unknown people, those who resided in this area who were often assumed affiliated**

with the Illini Confederacy, even as they were mistaken for Myaamiaki, a tall and slender people who lived alongside the rivers, streams and lakes throughout the valleys of the Wabash and Ohio rivers, placing their villages in natural meadows where they planted their prairie crops, a proud people who held themselves as such, moving their long lean bodies through the tall prairie grass with lithe articulations, working together, cutting in consort as they moved in a 'dance of the garden', a fecund choreography, men and women in tandem, children in tow, picking up the downed gay feather, purple liatris, and the various grasses—Big and Little Bluestem, Sorghastrum nutans, the yellow Indiangrass, prairie flowers mixed in—Ironweed and Culver's Root, or Wild Bergamot, and Rattlesnake master—elegantly moving from their hips rustling about their fields casting seed. my long, steady strokes allowed me to hear the natural music of an endless expanse of meadow, wind, and silence. in the swaying rhythms of the tall prairie grass i could almost see their movements. they must have been breathtaking as they moved in the glimmering sunlight, lissome bodies, like the touch of a blazing star, concomitantly expressive of some inner feeling of weariness they ineluctably carried, not in the least consuming, or burdensome, but a history of forced movement throughout the Ohio Valley and Great Lake prairies, which had no doubt created a weariness in them which was expressed as an alienation from their circumstances, though there's was a profound understanding that things were the way they were for a reason, and they did not have to succumb to the encumbrances, nor have their personal history become a millstone around them. instead, they could move like dancers, casting seeds. they were the Wea.

*Tuesday 13 January 4:31 AM 68°F* 

After a nice poolside lunch at Johannes Restaurant i returned to my apartment, thinking i will soon be speaking with Zaza. it was closing in on the appointed hour, but when i arrived i found her note letting me know she was running late, and it would be closer to 3:30. i sat on the terrace allowing the dappled sunlight to wash over me, feeling my way toward a nap, and when it was almost lights out, bingo, the phone rang. Zaza! great voice. a real Jewess. we talked for nearly two hours. we were all over the place. it was stunning to hear her inform me about her significant connections to Pittsburgh. i told her about the underpinnings to my writing project. i was nearly in tears as i finished up. she gave me insight into experiences that led her deeper into dance. it's been a very long time since i've met someone with such connections. we talked while she drove from her home in Lake Geneva, to Madison, and her dance class. our conversation ended at her arrival. i scurried to the gym.

My workout was very good. i was plenty tired afterwards. returned, prepared for the Steeler - Texan game. watched the first half. very tight defensive battle. numerous mistakes by the Texans that the Steelers did not capitalize on which did not portend well. toward the end of the first half the Texan defense began to get the upper hand. the score however, remained 7 -6 Texans at the half. there was hope. i went to bed. when i awoke, i took note the game had ended, 30 - 6, yes, the Texans. they had smothered the Steelers in the second half, an unrelenting display of defensive prowess, ending the Steeler's season. the offense was so inept, and the Steeler defense absolutely gassed, there was not much they could do. what a lousy way to go out. hours later, Mike Tomlin resigned as head coach.



*Wednesday 14 January 4:25 AM 61°F* ☀️

Yesterday i began my morning determined to work my way through the audition, and when the dust settled late in the morning, i realized i had done just that. i took a break attending to other things, then returned for a review. not bad. took another break and began a review/edit from the top of the chapter. when i got to the audition it was getting late and i decided i would begin there this morning. yoga was aborted at the forty minute mark, similar to last tuesday, when i simply had little mental energy to sustain my routine another forty minutes through far more difficult



asanas. i lay on the bed and fell asleep. when i awoke twenty minutes later, i dressed, and went a wandering, on the lookout for a bakery, which i found, but not a one sold European style bread. i found myself close to the Mediterranean joint where i'd taken lunch on saturday, so i decided to do it again. ordered another falafel which comes with a salad, and a Jamaica without ice. the falafel was not as good as the previous version. there was a paucity of tahini. i mentioned this to my waiter. he felt for me, but there was nothing to do.

Left for breakfast provisions, purchasing a bag of granola at the natural food store i've been going to, then down the street, to Soriana's where i picked up more bananas and another Greek yogurt. it was a long walk back, and when i arrived i was tired. rested up, then got myself ready for my late afternoon workout.

Armor was crowded but i began on the dip machine where there was no one. good start to my routine. both dips and pull-ups went well. i'm making friends with the dumbbell press even tho i'm still only pressing 25lbs, rather than 30, but i'm doing far more reps and consistently, so i'm not terribly concerned. queen anne went well and rather than the barbell press, i switched it with the press downs which has become my favorite. there were a few other machines including a hip abductor, finishing with dips. it was an 80 minute session.

Back at the shack my fatigue simply overcame me. by 8:00 i was done for, and headed to bed. no pretense about staying awake and listening to the radio. at 8:10 it was lights out, and good nite!



*Thursday 15 January 4:15 AM 66°F* 🌞

And a good morning to Merida. yesterday was quite similar to the previous day tho i accomplished more. i woke at the same time, worked as long, finishing the Audition which felt like i had removed a huge weight from my shoulders which i had been carrying the past week.

took myself to Ki Koffee mid morning, leaving the apartment for Rosalba to clean, but they were closed, so i headed to Manifesto which is a poor backup, but i prefer working there rather than at Johannes who has the better americano. the sun felt good. my gait was slow.

Worked on the follow up scene to the audition. it's coming along, shaping up to be a monologue with musical accompaniment. returned to the apartment thinking Rosalba would be putting the



finishing touches on her work but she had not even begun. i immediately called Claudio and had a lengthy conversation about Rosalba's scheduling, my needs, etc. while i was seated on the terrace preparing for my yoga session, she appeared out of thin air. we chatted about when she could work and i let her know i would be doing yoga soon and at 2:30 i would be finished. she could commence then. i would go to lunch and from there, the gym, and would not be back until after 5:00. voila.

And so i got on my mat and began what became a wonderful yoga session. i skipped a couple of deep back bends from a forearm position in honor of my sore lower back, but that was it, ending with dips. 85 minutes. i seemed to have aggravated my lower back from excessive bending either monday or tuesday, in combination with lifting.

Headed to Muchas Vidas for a lentil burger. it was earlier than usual and there were many more patrons. it's much nicer to dine around others. the burger was good. it is really the only thing on their menu i like. left for Santiago Park. sat about ten minutes under the a tree soaking up the dappled light. the afternoon felt good. i strolled down Calle 59 to the gym, a section i had not previously walked. there are some spectacular homes along that part of the avenue, a couple that need tender loving care, eh Avi?



My workout was superb. returned to Majikal. the door was open and the garbage man, Jose Martin himself, was dragging a can to the curb. i helped him. we chatted a bit. made a tentative date to have a beer together next week. he left and i went up to my apartment. as soon i entered fatigue began to overtake me. it was still rather early. i didn't accomplish much over the next couple of hours and by 8:00 i'd had enough. when the show discussing the Greenland issue was over, lights were out and i was under...cover, eyes shut, ready to drift off..

*Friday 16 January 4:10 AM 58°F ☀️*

Woke this morning, to a reply from the gal i had written at the Helsinki Philharmonic, letting me know she passed my inquiry to the proper person in the education department. a sign of good tidings. i was hoping this would be the case as i fell to sleep last night listening to the introduction to this wonderfully bizarre program from New Sounds, called Ancient Words, epic poems, like Beowulf, The Iliad and The Odyssey, but more importantly, for me, the creation story Kalevala, from Finland, all of which were originally sung or chanted, re done by contemporary musicians, using the original ancient texts, some accompanied bardic style with a single instrument and some with a full blown band. i will have a listen later this morning.

Meanwhile, my morning yesterday was filled with new music of another type, quintets written with double bass in mind, else two cellos, one of which could be replaced by a bass. and whose name should surface, Ethel Smyth, the young woman who had studied at the Leipzig Conservatory. her name came up during the scene Rahel invites suffragettes to her home. Ethel was not one of them, but in a subsequent conversation with Terah, he bemoans the fact she left the conservatory disappointed with her studies with Carl Reinecke. circles continue to be drawn.

I was able to finish the scene between the one above and the audition, Abraham alone in his new apartment considering his solitude, and Exile. the piece is moving along.



Finished my morning's work with a visit to Ki Koffe. another wonderful chat with Kiko. he and Denise will be able to meet for dinner saturday at La Sicilia. i was in high spirits when i left. it was warm and sunny. i returned forthwith to my apartment and finished listening to the music i have tentatively chosen for the quintet's rehearsal, which consists of Abraham, Anton Sitt, and three others, another violinist, a violist and a cellist, the names of whom i am hoping to learn when, and if, i receive a roster of the Philharmonic's personnel via my correspondence.

Yoga was excellent tho subdued. i rested a bit then headed to the gym. my session at Armor was also excellent, finishing with a flurry of dips. i returned to the apartment and changed into nicer clothes, then headed to Sicily for an early dinner. i was not disappointed. began with a glass of Cabernet, their house wine, which was followed by the garden salad which i love, and lastly, an arrabbiata con spaghetti. simply divine. i was feeling quite full as i returned to Majikal Xolos.



*Saturday 17 January 4:04 AM 59°F* 🌤️

Shabbat Shalom! make it bring peace to your heart and wisdom to your head.

Yesterday was completely turned on its head. around 5:45 in the morning, i phoned John Moore from the Symphony, and we spoke for an hour plus about Abraham's audition, and the upcoming scene in which i've chosen Edith Smyth' Quintet. it was an exhilarating conversation. after our phone call, i immediately set my sights on editing the scenes i had been working on, while thinking ahead to scenes necessary to flush out issues and topics John and i had spoken about. i took breakfast a little later than usual, worked while eating, listening to the music that will be played during the Second Book's performance. as the time approached to leave and visit the

Museum of Art, i chose to remain at the apartment and continue working. i suspended everything on my calendar for the morning working furiously until it was time for yoga, which i wound up doing later than usual. however, it was an excellent routine. i cleaned the terrace, my mat and the area inside close to the door to the terrace. it was particularly noisy, which is frankly, getting on my nerves. the Helsinki Philharmonic was broadcasting their friday evening concert, so i had that playing while i did yoga. it was an interesting mix of music, from Beethoven's 7th Symphony to a recently composed Cello Concerto. the first piece i couldn't hear. it was short and there was far too much noise. the Concerto was wild and otherworldly and the cellist appeared possessed at times.

Around 3:00 i was finished. it was intermission in Helsinki. after sirvasana i listened to the first movement of the Beethoven, then left for La Kombucheria. i took an alternate route and several photographs. my pace was brisk and i arrived around 3:45. i was able to order the Burger, finally, after three failed attempts. Luis and i joked about that. it was pretty good. a bit soggy from all the wet ingredients, like the aioli and who knows what else, but it did not fall apart, which is certainly a criteria of mine. i suggested making the paddy a bit more firm. Luis agreed. the burger was accompanied by a salad, and i had a Jamaica to help wash everything down. afterwards, Luis and i had a lengthy and humorous discussion about politics. we were laughing as i left.

Meandered about the neighborhood finding my way to Soriana to pick up another yogurt, then over to the Natural Health Food store, for more granola, disappointed they did not have the brand i normally purchase, nor any dates. i bounced my way back to the apartment. it was still early. i believe it was 5:45. the remainder of the evening was filled by an NPR news program, a segment from New Sounds featuring Klezmer music, odds and ends, a nap, and by 8:30, lights were doused, and i was asleep, with An Orchestra of Exiles on my mind.

*Sunday 18 January 6:36 AM 68°F ☁*

It was the oddest sabbath since my arrival, tho it began as all the others. i woke early, worked on my travelogue and journal, sat for half an hour as the new day began, closing the thick drapery to keep the light from penetrating. however, different from other meditation session, at about the twenty minute mark as i returned my tongue to its place in my upper palate, Darlene entered my meditation, the silhouette of a white woman against a black background. while i understood she was sitting on a bed, i could not see this. with my tongue against the soft flesh, my breathing slowed and my perspective was now from behind the bridge of my nose, my body relaxing with each and every breath...each and every breath...without any stimulation my phallus began to grow as i saw myself making my way to Darlene. there was no interruption to my breathing, or perspective. it was a straightforward as i describe, as if it was a dream, but it was not, nor was it a fantasy...Darlene was apparently naked, tho i could not make out her nakedness, as i moved toward her with an engorged penis. as i was about to enter the garden of her body, i suppose i became more involved than i should have and the sequence i've described disintegrated. i also had to go the bathroom. when i returned, and resumed my meditation, Darlene was gone, my penis was flaccid and i was sitting on the cushion of the couch as i always sit.

Yoga followed. another excellent sabbath routine, the traditional routine replaced by a more pyrotechnical display, which in this case, accompanied by dips at the very end, lasted 90 minutes. i was in no rush to leave, so i did not forget sirvasana as i had the previous saturday. rather than

La Calle 61 entre 62 y 64, ayer e hoy



go out for breakfast as planned, i opted to dine in the apartment, reviewing my work while eating my bowl of granola, which is a different brand and much nuttier. i like it, particularly with the

yogurt i've purchased which seems creamier. after breakfast i packed up my laptop and headed to Blue Bag to purchase a pound of ground dark roast. they seem to be the only roaster in town that carries a dark roast. Kiko recommended them. i sat, sipped an Americano, working with the machine whirling in the background and the smell of ground coffee wafting through the dark atmosphere of the coffee shop. a couple of Americans own the place, husband and wife i presumed. he was hard of hearing but nice. i had no interaction with the woman. i worked on Abraham's letter to his mother informing her of his acceptance into the symphony orchestra.

When i returned and began to gather what i would need for my workout, i began to balk. i was not feeling like working out. i took a short nap thinking my perspective would change when i woke. it did not, but i left anyhow. i walked in a square around Majikal and returned to the apartment, giving myself permission to skip the session and allow my body another day of rest.

The remainder of the afternoon was devoted to work, another yoga session, my traditional Sabbath routine, another short nap, then checking out the lineup of football games as the playoff season begins to pick up steam. watched the Broncos overcome the Bills in overtime, then left for La Sicilia and dinner with Denise and Kiko. announced myself, then sat outside wrapped by the cool evening air. received a text around 7:40, ten minutes late, letting me know they were on their way. i took the opportunity to ask the owner to open a bottle of Chianti and allow it to breathe while i waited. he graciously complied. took my seat outside, keeping tabs on the second playoff game of the day, the 49ers v the Seattle Seahawks. Seattle took the opening kickoff and returned it 95 yards for a touchdown. minutes later they scored a field goal. it appeared they were beating up on the debilitated 49ers. it continued in this fashion. the final score was 41 - 6.



Kiko arrived before the clock struck 8:00, but without Denise, informing me her uncle, or brother, perhaps a cousin, not sure, arrived in Merida without notice surprising her and off she went to spend time with relatives, so he came alone, reluctant to cancel or reschedule for a second time. i was glad. we had a great time. our dinner was filled with conversation, wine, a margarita pizza and garden salad and separate plates, lasagna for Kiko and pesto pasta pour moi. i was happy. i think he enjoyed himself. we walked back together, and parted company, shaking hands, as Kiko returned to his cafe and his car, while i returned to my apartment. i stayed up for a short while longer, catching up on the football game, reading a note from Darlene, this and that, before going to bed at 11:30. imagine, i stayed up an extra three hours. how unusual, but not extraordinary.

I slept well. only got up three times, maybe four. strange dreams accompanied my slumber after the first trip to the bathroom. Kiko was involved, as well as several others, whom i did not recognize, nor the circumstances. the one thing i do recall is the car accident. i was driving Kiko's car, following someone, whom i did not recognize, tho it might have been my housecleaner, Favio. at any rate, the person driving began to change lanes, so i moved to the right to pass, but at the last second, he veered back to the right, leaving me less room to get around him, and as i attempted to skirt his car, i hit a telephone pole. Kiko and i were jettisoned from the car as if it was a video game. the impact was certainly not enough to catapult us, but there we were, seated in the grass talking. there was more tho i don't recall anything. had to make a doody around 6:00. stayed up, taking a shower after my trip to the bathroom, making coffee, and returning here, to etch these notes.



*Monday 19 January 4:18 AM 62°F* ☀️

Not much to report. wasn't a great night of sleep. up quite a bit, six, seven times. very unpleasant. strange dreams. Kajanus was part of several iterations of a dream i had which i no longer recall; his name was repeated as though part of a call and response. i don't feel particularly rested and i doubt i will go to the gym this morning as planned. i am however hopeful the day will turn in my favor and work will be a joy. by the time afternoon rolls around, i should be ready for Armor.



*Tuesday 20 January 4:31 AM 58°F* ☀️

Re read yesterday's entry, and the day did turn around. midday yoga was superb. i scampered off to lunch at Johannes. had my usual cauliflower tacos and guacamole. the tacos were filled beyond their capacity and began falling apart almost immediately. everything was tasty tho, and i left in good spirits. dawdled a bit at the apartment, then headed to Armor. as i walked i could feel a slight discomfort in my digestive tract. this worsened through my routine. i worked out for an hour, feeling overcome, and by the time i returned and settled on the couch i realized i would not be able to meet Martin for a beer at Apostol. i wrote him, but he didn't respond, so about twenty minutes later i called to explain. he was understanding. i took an hour nap on the couch, then went to bed. i was sick. i could feel the tacos trying to come up and at one point i did vomit a little on my pillowcase. between the nausea and having to go to the bathroom repeatedly, my



sleep was a nightmare. the nausea vanished sometime in the middle of the night, but at that point i was getting up every ten or fifteen minutes for the bathroom. i drank a lot of water, but my experience was beyond intake.

As i write, i have showered and made a cup of coffee. i'm feeling more my self, but not one hundred percent. i will not go to the gym this morning as i planned, when it became clear i would not be able to complete my routine yesterday. perhaps by afternoon i will be stronger and Armor will become attractive?

Unable to summon much strength to do anything but sit and work. made great progress on the scene i began this morning. no yoga. and there will be no gym. looking forward to a hot lentil soup at La Sicilia at 5:00. took a couple of naps. drank a lot of water, and consequently, peed a lot. had a successful doody after my first cup of coffee. had to struggle a bit but once i evacuated i felt much better. energy level is low. waking is about schlepping. hoping i can get to Sicilia. colder today. haven't changed out of my thermal underwear, and midway through the morning donned a long sleeve shirt. i'm a little sensitive to changes in temperature. sure hope this is the last of it.

Wednesday 21 January 4:28 AM 59°F ☀️

I think i am back to normal. i feel pretty good. had an excellent nite's sleep, only two trips to the bathroom. i'm felling rested. i have a robust cup of coffee next to me and i am more or less ready to roll. yesterday was a productive day even tho i was not feeling well. i'm glad that is behind me. i hope to be equally productive today while feeling much better.

Didn't do much yesterday beyond work and nap. my space was cleaned and feels good. i had to negotiate with Rosalba to come in the afternoon, when she arrived mid morning. i was simply not prepared to move. when the apartment was cleaned i hung out downstairs on the living room couch and continued my work. after an hour i simply had to lie down. there was no yoga, nor gym. i never left the house. it wasn't particularly warm. i wasn't able to shuffle anywhere, tho i did have a hankering for La Sicilia's lentil soup. i checked online and it was no available for delivery. i wasn't about to walk all that way and be told they weren't serving it tonite.



I had been hopeful i could resume my usual activities. no such luck. perhaps tomorrow? at least a morning workout. looking forward to my yoga mat! didn't happen. as the day progressed my energy level plummeted. numerous naps. didn't get much done. stuck to formatting issues, sprucing the script up. no lunch. mid afternoon i'd had enough. Jose Martin texted to find out how i was doing, and i explained, and asked about a clinic. he recommended Dr. Ivan Najera two blocks away. i walked rather than call. it was warm. the sun felt good. hadn't been out since monday afternoon. only had a forty five minute wait. nice man. gave me an exam and wrote scripts to have tests done at a nearby lab. i am exhausted for having done nothing, not a thing.

Thursday 22 January 7:38 AM 69°F ☀️

Woke this morning feeling tentative, every part of my body aching. early on, during my sleep, i was up quite often to pee, but as the night went on my trips to the bathroom became less frequent. i woke at 6:30 after lying down twelve hours earlier, and had to move my bowels. it was difficult. very hard stool, but i prevailed and made my doody into the empty peanut container, having nothing else on hand, dubious i would be able to produce a stool later at the lab.



Friday 23 January 4:37 AM 67°F ☀️

Took a couple of Ibuprofen before bed. several trips to the bathroom, though i can't recall how many, but not at all obtrusive. went, returned, then drifted into dreamland. i feel better than i have since this bizarre incident began. i'm beginning to get to the bottom of it. seems my implant is loose and there is some discomfort around it. i believe i may have an infection which has once again, as in October, travelled into my urinary tract. however, the Ibuprofen seems to have stabilized the situation. the swelling has gone down in my testicles and my body no longer aches. sleep was restful and i am grateful. perhaps i can resume my days without travail? probably not. if an infection it will need to be rid of i with a regimen of antibiotics only a doctor can prescribe.



Had a coffee yesterday morning, then left for the lab. it was a slow walk. the day was lovely. the lab was a zoo. i went from window to window until a man handed me a paper with a number and i sat, waiting to be called. finally my number came up. first thing she wanted was ID which naturally i had not taken, but she allowed me to write the necessities down. a minute or so passed and she informed me it would cost 725 pesos. i showed her my card, but she told me they didn't accept cards, i would need to pay in cash. i stiffened and issued a complaint, pointing to the various machines for cards atop the counter. she called someone who spoke english, and he reiterated what the woman had stated. they do not accept foreign cards. crestfallen i made my way to the street. the warmth of the sun felt good as i shuffled to the plaza ATM. the first machine did not work, while the second which i have had trouble with, did. i gathered up my money and card and returned to the lab. rather than allow me to simply resume where i had, she made me take a ticket and wait. very inconsiderate and i told her as much. at any rate, the wait was short as the place had quieted considerably. i went through the entire process again, as though i had never been there. it was shameful, frankly. i paid, moved to another area, and once again, waited.

I was called and went back to the testing area. i presented her with my plastic package. she wasn't certain she could accept it because of the nature of the container, but she went and asked and it was fine. she drew blood; i peed into a vile; and i was told at 2:00 i would have the results on Whatsapp. i have yet to receive notification from them. i will need to show up in person. they would like to see themselves as modern and efficient, but that is far from the case. is Mexico a first world country?

Returned to the apartment, exhausted. took a nap, woke, had a late breakfast, and for the remainder of the day worked a little, texted, read articles online, taking several more catnaps, listened to music, NPR, and at 5:00 left for La Sicilia. naturally, they were not serving the lentil soup. i had a garden salad and an arrabbiata with spaghetti. i ate with gusto. apparently i was quite hungry. i had to calm myself. i thought about going to the lab to fetch the results, but frankly, i did not want to disrupt the equanimity of the day with the potential hassle dealing with them, so i returned straightaway, resuming where i had left off, listening to several NPR shows, all of which dealt with Greenland, which i looked up on Wikipedia to get the lowdown on the years since the Vikings occupied it, where my knowledge was frozen, then music on New Sounds, a tribute show to Ralph Towner who had recently passed away. i learned he, and his bandmates, the group Oregon, were largely responsible for the name New Sounds. John Shaffer, the host, began the show in the early 80s influenced by the spirit of Oregon's style of music, a collection of sounds from around the world within the rubric of jazz.





*Saturday 24 January 5:27 AM 69°F* ☀️

Shabbat Shalom! may your struggles come to an end.

I deciphered my condition yesterday. without any doubt two teeth are loose, one of which is the implant, dental work finished after my hip replacement surgery, two and a half years ago, far too early for the current experience. on the other hand, without an X Ray, it is impossible at the moment to determine which tooth is causing the infection. there is no doubt one of them, if not both, are, and the results from the extensive blood test i received late yesterday afternoon, indicate this. i took my results to La Kombucheria and reviewed them over lunch. after my meal i headed straight for the doctor's clinic. i thought i would have the fellow at the desk copy them so i could leave, but he insisted i wait only a few minutes and he would let the doctor know i was present. ten minutes later, or less, i was greeted by Doctor Ivan Najera. we reviewed the results together, and he agreed with my assessment, writing prescriptions for the dental infection as well as the urinary tract infection, along with an Ibuprofen and the same medication i used back in october to open up the urinary tract and allow a larger stream of urine to pass around the enlarged prostate muscle. we talked while he prepared the script. very nice man. most likely works long hours. when i left it was dark. i needed to return to the apartment before heading to a pharmacy, since i was carrying leftovers from lunch, but once i returned, i was in no mood to head back out. later this morning i will go to a pharmacy and commence my treatment.

Most of the day had been devoted to work which i had postponed since monday due to how i had been feeling in the interim. i returned to the scene of Rahel's arrival which opens with Abraham playing a bass excerpt from Mahler's Second Symphony, the third movement. the scene quickly evolves with his return to the dock to greet his other, and their taking a tram to a cafe near his apartment where they sit and talk. as their conversation develops an upcoming chamber concert surfaces and naturally i went down a rabbit hole listening to music that would be appropriate which lasted the remainder of the morning, and into the evening when i returned from the doctor's clinic, as well as early this morning, listening to a variety of pieces, hopeful of finding something innovative as well as appropriate, meaning the work either includes a bass, or is a two cello quintet, so that one cello can be replaced by a double bass, as well as fitting the date, composed around 1898 or slightly before. i settled on Dvorak's American Quartet, though it is not score for a double bass, but i will have it transposed. it is far too good and highly appropriate given Abraham's thinking, to avoid. his quintet, also composed in America simply doesn't have the same impact, while neither can be said to expose direct influence by American music, the quartet's third movement is redolent of Stephen Foster.



*Sunday 25 January 5:00 AM 70°F ☀️*

I cannot decipher if i slept well, simply slept, or something else. i did wake more than my share of times, tho not an unreasonable amount, which is due, at least i assume, to the medication. i am experiencing October in January. nearly the same symptoms. the biggest difference was how this episode began which was via a lunch that did not sit well, while in October, as i recall, it came on suddenly as a bladder issue, not disguised as a digestive problem. it wasn't until a day or so into this thing that i discovered the loose implant and began piecing the arc of how i felt together as it changed from digestive to unknown and then distinctly urinary.

After my sabbath morning meditation i went tromping through the streets of Merida, dropped off my laundry, and continued down Calle 59, turning at Calle 58 and heading one long block south to this cozy pharmacy. there was no waiting. everything was already packaged. all the medications the doctor prescribed come packaged. it took five minutes and i was back outside heading back along the same course to Cucu Bistro for breakfast. i was hungry. i sat at a small table in front of the bar where drinks are prepared. ordered the granola, fruit and yogurt bowl, a freshly squeezed orange juice, and what they call hash browns, which are nothing more then round potatoes balls that have been stir fried, accompanied with ketchup. i took a couple of pills and sat back, waiting for my food. he has me on an antibiotic to kill the dental infection and



another to kill the infection in my urinary tract, along with a regimen of Ibuprofen, 400. he also prescribed the medication used to dilate the tract and allow a better stream of urine, which i did not fill since i still have some from before. i'm not fond of that particular drug. i'm not fond of any of this, but what choice do i have. i am not living in a naturalistic community and my situation surfaced out of the blue and suddenly, something needed to be done. it also remains to be seen how effective natural remedies are in this sort of situation.

The granola, fruit and yogurt bowl was really good, tho the granola was a bit lumpy, requiring careful chewing to avoid the loose implant. the potatoes were also good, tho slightly salty. i am strongly considering returning home early, but rather than going back to Pittsburgh, holing up in NYC so that i can spend time with eli. getting an apartment, having access to organic produce and all the foodstuffs i like, cooking, having my son over for dinner; going to museums.;leaving here in the middle of february and spending four or five or even six weeks in the City. i bet that's what i end up doing!

Left Cucu feeling a little strange. definitely from the medication. walked in the sunshine which felt divine. it was still early and still saturday morning. i returned to my apartment thinking i would remain only a short while. when i arrived i took a nap. when i awoke Wait Wait was on which i listened to through the guest, then shut the radio and opened An Orchestra of Exiles, ostensibly to flush out the scene i had been working on, but i found every reason in the world to do other things, related to the piece, but not to the actual work. what i needed to do, emotionally, if not intellectually, was go to the beginning and work my way forward. i did not feel what i had felt after my review of Book One, and i wanted that feeling, else i would have an issue. from 11:00 until 2:45, i reviewed the entirety of Book One. i made a couple of significant edits, one of which was moving a chapter to a different location and once that was done, simply highlighting the name in red for future work. the previous feeling returned and i was able to cease my busywork, and prepare for yoga. i wholeheartedly believe the piece is in great shape, and while further editing is required, i can proceed, as before, with this fundamental belief in what has been created.

There remain two scenes that require intensive editing: Terah & Freud and Terah & Rahel, in their new Zurich apartment, which is the scene i moved for a better 'musical' flow and chronological reasons, in addition to the overarching question of musical choices throughout Book One, and how to redefine it as an Opera without pandering to the concept and structure of Operatic Theatre, particularly any notion of Wagnerian Opera.

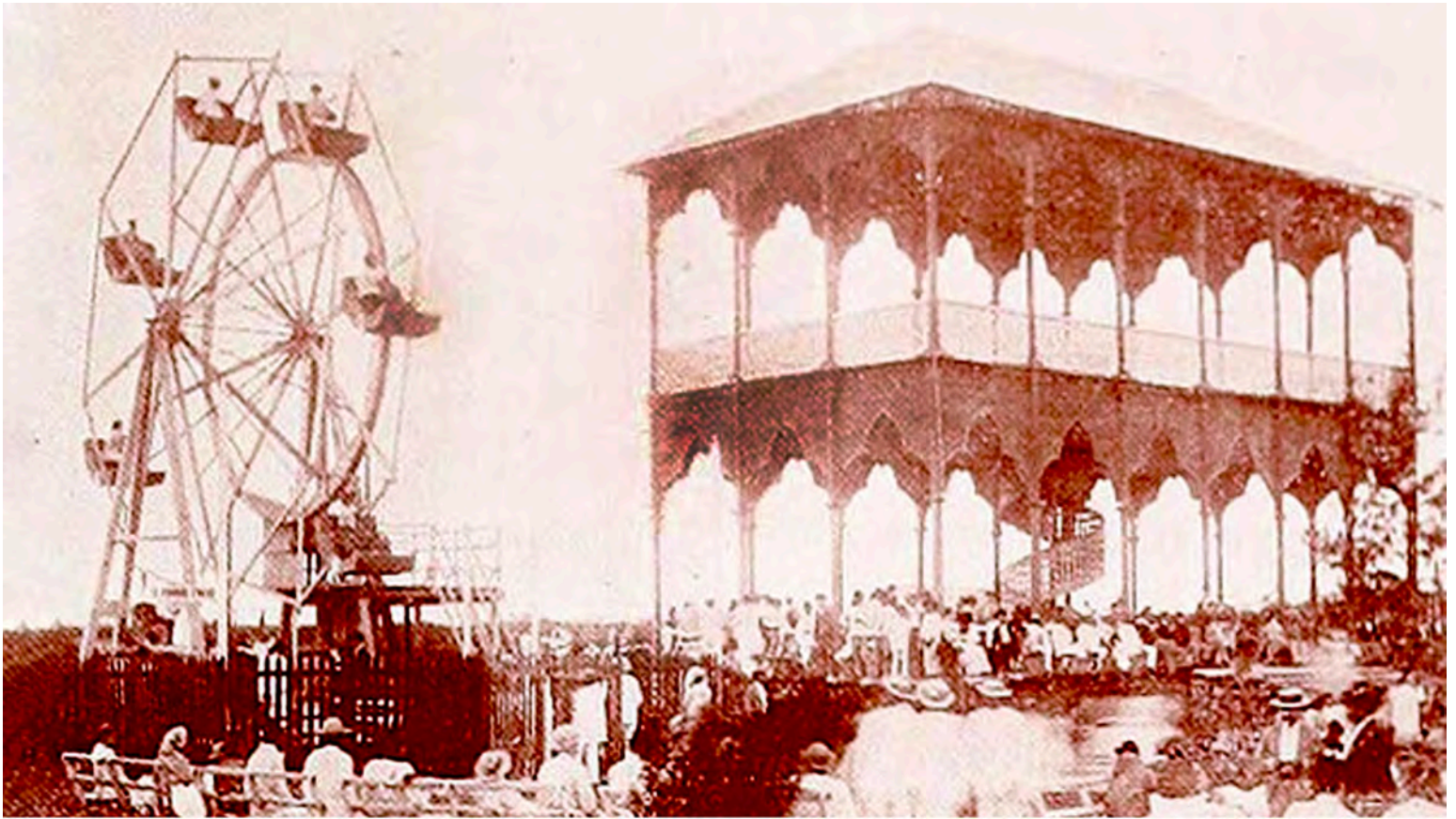
Yoga began well enough, though i was fighting fatigue from the get go which did not dissipate, and after forty five minutes i was simply too exhausted to continue, sat down, nee, laid myself down, and in no time i was gone, sleeping for thirty, forty minutes. i felt better afterwards, somewhat refreshed but not enough to take leave of the apartment and get a bite to eat as i had planned. earlier in the day i had looked forward to an evening meal at La Sicilia, but as the afternoon waned, i lost interest. instead, i began a review of Book Two.

Worked an hour, perhaps longer, and brought myself from the opening scene, to Abraham's arrival in Helsinki. i doubt i will continue since i recently reviewed the scenes associated with his time in Helsinki. i need to get up with John and his review of the Smyth piece.

At around 6:30 i began hunting for a movie on Netflix which i was surprised to gain access to. it had been quite a while. i took advantage of my good fortune, reviewed several choices and wound up making the wrong decision for what i thought was a good reason: a Matt Damon, Ben Affleck film about Miami drug officers. predictable and not very good dialogue. i watched to the end, and went to bed. it was 8:45. here i am, at 6:00 a.m. wondering if i will leave the apartment on my scheduled Photo Walk Around Merida. i am not feeling robust enough to traipse about the pavement. perhaps in half an hour, or forty five minutes i will feel differently?

*Wednesday 28 January 4:30 AM 63°F ☁*

Another bleak day. color it gray. overcast and cloudy, slightly cooler temperatures. surprising really. i had no idea the Yucatan suffered such weather. had a reasonable sleep. i was up rather often which was disruptive, but i was able to fall back to sleep rather quickly. a strange assortment of dreams accompanied me, influenced i believe, by the upcoming scene about Verklarte Nacht. last evening, after returning from lunch and listening to a round of NPR, i focused my attention on the piece, listening to it once again, then reading about it, a lengthy review and viewing a young scholar's assessment from some music school in England. nothing revelatory on any count. i had already done some of this work, but i dug a bit deeper. when i was finished it was time for bed, or shall i say, i was ready for bed. it had been a rather long day. i had wakened at 3:45 and went at it almost from the moment of my waking, taking a break around 5:45 to sit, then again at 7:30 for breakfast.



Midday yoga was excellent. got started a little later than usual, 1:00, and kept an eye on the clock since i had decided to take lunch at Muchas Vida, and they close at 3:30. i was there with plenty of time to spare. the burger was better than usual, accompanied by a small salad and Jamaica. only one other patron. i texted eli until my food arrived. shopped at the Super Aki after lunch and

went directly back to the apartment where i took a nice nap. no Armor. i may not go to the gym at all this week. my eyes are really on home. i sent a message to CRS to provide me access to their website so i can begin viewing available apartments, both in Pittsburgh and New York City. we shall see. i'll need to send a similar email to Mike at State Farm. and da dats all folks!



*Thursday 29 January 4:13 AM 59°F* ☀️

Work went extremely well yesterday. i cleaned up the last several scenes and finished the one i had been working on related to the Ensemble Performance which is hinted at, but never takes place live, tho the music from the performance forms the background to the conversation between Abraham, Hilda and Rahel.

Had several bouts of diarrhea during morning. i've no idea what's going on. methinks it is the medication. they are strong and very disruptive tho this morning was the first indication of a side effect. one of the pair ends in a couple of days. i'm not sure which is the stronger, but i have a feeling it's the one ending soon since i took it a good forty five minutes after the first. a not very scientific assessment, but the best i can offer. i am getting rather fed up with my situation and an increasing desire to leave and return to the States, holing up in an apartment in Brooklyn and continuing my work.

Regardless, the morning has been good. i allowed myself to fall into a working meditation and work through the scene between mother and son. it is rather abstract and in keeping with their previous conversations. i am at an impasse, reluctant to create a new scene, tho i'm not in the mood for a review.

*Friday 30 January 4:40 AM 58°F* ☀

As i was ending my writing session yesterday, around noon, i felt a chill. within minutes i had to lay down, shut the window and door tho i was still unable to warm up. retrieved the blanket from the closet, but even still i continued to feel chilly. eventually i got into bed and kept myself covered. i think it took nearly two hours to reduce the chill. meanwhile, i had missed my phone call with Cody, too fatigued and achey to care.

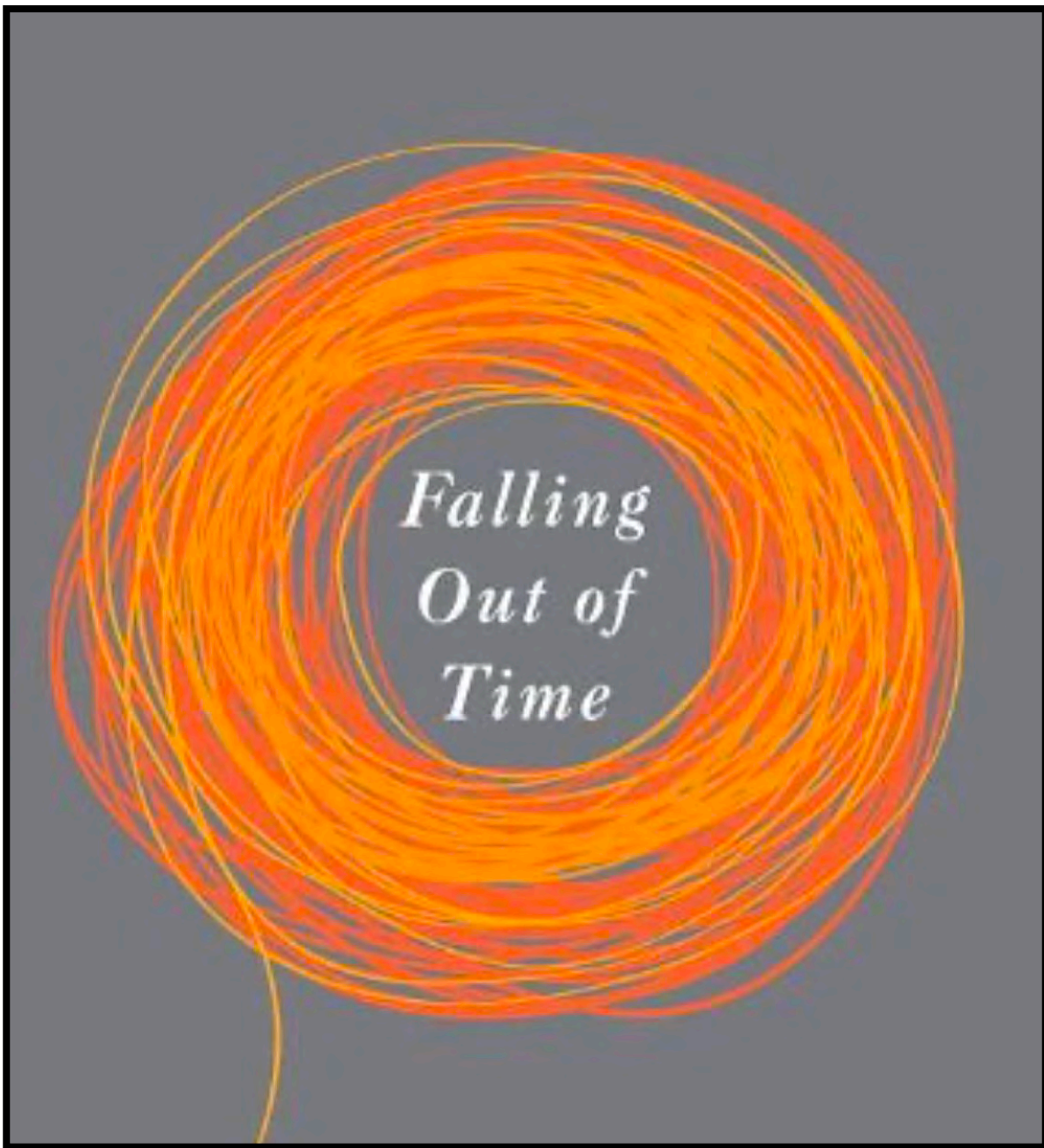
Eventually i connected with Cody. he got me caught up with everything related to the house, then i phoned Dr. DeFusco's office to review my situation and the medication. he was unavailable but i spoke at length with the front desk.

eli and i began a series of texts. he was worried about my situation. i need to make it back to the States. spending time around him will do us both a world of good.

As the evening arrive, DeFusco finally called. it seems neither antibiotic is standard. after reviewing them online, either, or both, could be responsible for precipitating the symptoms i experienced. taking both together, even if separated by thirty minutes, in my mind, is far too overwhelming. i decided to continue the one prescribed for the dental infection and suspend the other or take only one per day, rather than two, and when the first runs out Saturday, resume the other by taking two a day.

Finished viewing *Train Dreams*, a slice of a life as lived by a lumberjack/ train crew hand. while away on a work crew, his wife, and their daughter perish in a fire. the second half of the film revolves around grief. prior to my viewing i listened to *What Is The Sound Of Grief?* by Osvaldo Golijov who puts to music in his newest work, *Falling Out of Time*, what we experience when grief settles upon us, exploring the painful subject, the death of a child, inspired by a unique literary work by Israeli writer David Grossman who lost a son during combat. the pieces work together and during my viewing of the film, i was reminded of the scene of Nahor mourning the loss of his youth, a death of sorts, having squandered his opportunity for a career in music. the decisions we make are powerful and effectively change our lives.

*Falling Out of Time* is about accompanying the isolation of grief. "David Grossman said to the Silkroad and to me (Osvaldo Golijov), even the father and the mother grieving the same child are each of them in their own island of exile, right? So we are alone. And yet the rest of us, I think it is our duty to accompany."



*Saturday 31 January 5:34 AM 65°F* 🌤️

Shabbat Shalom!

Worst night since i don't know when. it didn't begin well and it ended just as poorly. i stopped counting the number of trips i made to the bathroom. i got a free pass for the first hour and after that, between 10:10 and 4:58 it was every twenty to thirty minutes. around 2:00 i took the antibiotic for the tooth infection and that worsened the situation. not only did i have to pee, but i had two bouts of diarrhea. thankfully each was relatively painless and went quickly, so that i was back in bed in less than five minutes, but it was nevertheless disruptive. i hope i last through the day. i'll be done with the later mentioned antibiotic tomorrow and i'm ending the other tuesday morning. i can't take the discomfort or disruption any longer. he overprescribed. from what i can determine online, a ten to twelve day regimen is sufficient, not fourteen. i'll suffer the consequences, but i believe all will end well, since the problem tooth will be extracted later today.

Otherwise, yesterday was a good day. i worked through the morning, skipping a visit to the Art Museum, feeling there was a chance i could have a relapse and that was not where i would want to be if that was the case. around 10:00 i visited KiKo's Cafe, chatted, worked, planned on beers after my regimen of medication, then returned, only to get caught up in a lengthy conversation with some of the other tenants, one of whom, David, from Michigan who's arrival has been anticipated for a while now, informed me about his dentist in Merida. i returned to my apartment, prepared myself for yoga, got on my mat, had one of the best sessions in recent memory and after, phoned the dentist's office and scheduled an appointment for the absolute best time today. the gal at the desk suggested 12:30 and i was elated to hear, the very time i had in mind. off to a good start.

Left for Dr. Ivan's office to check in with him as he had requested but he was not in, so i returned and resumed talking with whomever's ear was available, in this case Claudio. at 5:00 i went back to the doctor's office but he was still not in, so i wrote i note explaining the situation, and left for dinner at La Sicilia. sat in the garden, chatted with Victor, had a garden salad, which was good, though it seemed slightly smaller than usual, and certainly had fewer olives which is no matter, but nevertheless enjoyable. my main course was shrimp and pasta in a marinara sauce rather than the white wine sauce listed. the shrimp were huge. the dish was good, but it may have been tastier had i gone with the white wine sauce. when i arrived i noticed a grilled salmon risotto but the were already out of it. i think the table of three Americanos ordered the last slices.



*Sunday 1 February 6:28 AM 58°F* ☀️

Where to begin? these last few days have been blown about by the wind, up and down, sideways, all over the place. am i better? am i still ill? i cannot even tell. my sleep was terrible once again, so perhaps that is contributing to my inability to feel my state. i seem to be better. let's put it this way, i woke, evacuated, showered and made coffee, and as i write, i sit on the couch listening to the church bells ring as the sun completes its morning rise. i'm in good spirits, tho perhaps i am suffering a slight lack of sleep. i was up an inordinate number of times, as i had been the night before, tho this past evening, i caught a bit of a reprieve and the time between visits to the bathroom lengthened as morning approached which i took advantage of by remaining curled under the warm bedsheets. between the two nights my average amount of sleep was a normal night's rest. i'll know better as the day unfolds. meantime, breakfast is on my mind. i feel empty and would like a repeat of yesterday's breakfast.

Woke early, tho slightly later than i normally do on Shabbat Saturday. organized my day, wrote in my journal, and at 6:30 *sat* on the couch for half an hour, during which time, the images/lines i penned yesterday, came to me: passing light, shadowy, scenes from the past, turning the pages of a book....when my meditation was over i prepared for my mat. it was a bit chilly, so i began with my thermal long johns and a t shirt, but the sun was high enough by the end of my first round of sun salutations i was able to work in just my skimpy underwear for the remainder of what became an exceptional yoga session. it was 90 minutes in duration and a 9 at least out of 10 in degree of difficulty. my body felt extremely fluid and flexible. i was ready for breakfast. unfortunately it wasn't around the corner. in the meantime i went to Super Aki, purchased a box of peanuts, inquired about a bus pass which they do not sell, and went on my merry way. i missed one bus, then another, and by that time, i was at least half way to the Slow Market, so i simply continued on foot. i arrived, purchased a loaf of sourdough, a bag of granola, found a table at the restaurant i had in mind to take my morning meal, ordered eggs with potatoes and a freshly squeezed orange juice, all of which was accompanied by a bowl of frijoles and chips. i ate until there was nothing left to eat. my egg dish consisted of eggs with potatoes, a salad with slivers of beets and carrots and more frijoles, sprinkled with some sort of granulated cheese, tho not Parmesan. i mopped up with a slice of sourdough. ordered a coffee, three times, and it never came, so i paid and left.

Wiggled my way to another part of town where the dentist was located. it took only twenty minutes. it was a lovely autumn day, sunny, slightly windy, periodically overcast, the sidewalk littered with stiff curled leaves. checked in with reception, then headed to the closest cafe for an americano. as i sat and sipped eavesdropping on the animate conversation between three men next to me, my fatigue settled with me. the coffee however buoyed me. i returned to the office, waited perhaps fifteen minutes and was then ushered in and shown a reclining chair. Dr. Alfa Oliver is the dentist's name. lovely woman. looked me over, and recommended x rays. i switched chairs and became the patient of a Barbra Griffin, an American from Houston, living as a permanent resident in Merida the past three years. nice woman. she wore a mask. took the x rays and sure enough the molar was on its last legs and infected. the implant however, looked good, so it seems the top portion with the ceramic tooth which screws into the implant, may simply be loose. i agreed to have the tooth pulled. i was given a pre numbing by a cotton swab, then shot up with novocaine, four needles worth, which i thought was a bit excessive. she was not taking any chances. a twist and a turn, et voila, molar begone.



Everyone was gracious. we thanked one another profusely. i paid, received instructions for after care and headed just a few blocks to the bus stop. i was not interested in walking. peed in the bushes, the bus arrived, i boarded, attempted to pay via mastercard, which did not work. the driver wouldn't accept a cash payment, and as he nodded for me to simply board, the gentleman seated behind the driver used his bus pass to pay. i thanked him and found a place to stand on the crowded bus heading south toward the Gran Plaza. we began on Avenida de la Reforma, but turned, heading slightly west to Paseo de la Reforma, the wide European style boulevard lined with mansion, shopping, museums, etc. which i had walked up a few weeks previously when i went to the Slow Market. i was happy to be aboard the bus. when the bus stopped at Calle 57th, at the Museo de Musica, i got off and began walking down a pedestrian walkway taking photographs, which i continued to do as i wiggled my way toward the main plaza. the sun felt great. i sat on a bench and ruminated about the remainder of the afternoon. eventually i decided, a smoothy was in order, and then a nice long nap. i headed down Calle 63 and realized Gatto Gordo was up ahead. it was time to finally acquaint myself with the interior of the cafe i have had an interest in visiting since my arrival, nearly two months ago.

It did not disappoint. after some discussion with the lovely barista i settled on a red fruit frappe made with water rather than milk. divine, simply sublime, and exactly what i needed and had desired. i sat on a couch and sipped, texting eli, catching him up with the day's activities. apparently he had slept in. had a friday nite day which i'm anxious to hear about. i was satisfied and ready for that nap. i thanked the gal, paid and added coins to the tip jar, leaving with the sun draped over me as i walke down Calle 63 once more reminded of fall days back home, the weather teetering between warm and cool, sunny and cloud covered. back in the apartment i fiddled for half an hour the fell into a deep sleep.

When i woke it was still early, certainly early enough to return outside and locate a place to dine. noted my German neighbors were at home, and i wondered if they would be interested in accompanying me to a taproom. instead, while i was in the kitchen, Wolf appeared and we got into a lengthy conversation which lasted well over an hour. i had to pee and he opted to return to his room. at that point it was too late to go out. i wasn't exactly a ball of energy. i decided to watch the remainder of the McConaughey film, A Time to Kill. i'll save a review for later. suffice to say, when the film ended it was after 9:00 and time for me to get ready for bed. it had been a rather long and for the most part, energetic Saturday. i was tired. i fell asleep quickly.

This morning, after showering i caught up in my journal and travelogue. finished, i was ready for breakfast. thought about yesterday's experience and looked for a place nearby that would approximate it, but largely came up empty handed, so opted instead for Muchas Vidas and their sunday brunch special, pancakes with fruit and honey. it was the correct decision.



The day felt cool as i walked through Parque Santiago. vendors were already gathered, tho the park was not at all crowded. when i arrived the doors were opened and a couple of tables were occupied. i placed my order and checked my phone for texts. eli was not up yet. the pink lemonade arrived. i had forgotten order without ice. fortunately it was not yet cold, but it was refreshing. when the pancakes arrived, i dug right in. delicious. i'm not big on pancakes. i only make them infrequently, no need when someone else can prepare them as well as Muchas Vidas. breakfast hit the spot. on the way back i stopped at Super Aki to replenish my cupboard. no mixed nuts with raisins, but they did have the Greek Yogurt and bananas.



*Monday 2 February 4:38 AM 51°F ☀*

Chilly cold! i cannot believe what i'm seeing. 51 degrees in Merida. ho la! no wonder i overslept. my body knew it was cold and had no interest in leaving bed. my body didn't allow my natural alarm clock to go off at 3:45 as planned.

Went to bed at a quarter past eight, after the final credits of *The Client*, another John Gresham novel made into a movie. you would have thought i'd learned my lesson, but i chose the film without knowing it was based on his novel. once again, too far fetched and Hollywoody for my tastes, but, as before, i chose it for the actors, this time Tommy Lee Jones and Susan Sarandon. the best scene had both of them along with Ossie Davis.



*Tuesday 3 February 4:31 AM 53°F ☀*

Another chilly morning. another lousy night. probably ten trips to the bathroom. and on top of that the area where my molar resided which was shot full of novocaine is in quite a bit of discomfort. seems the oral surgeon did a number on me. the entire are, gum included, is aflame. swallowing isn't fun. perhaps i added to the tenderness by eating, tho i do no recall irritating the area one bit. i have been far more careful with my chewing than Ms. Griffin was with her jabbing.

Cold Mountain was the next film in my line up. watched the first hour. it's a film i had meant to see when it first showed up at theatres, but never seemed to get over to one. the film tells the story of a wounded deserter from the Confederate army close to the end of the Civil War, who journeys home to reunite with the woman he loves.

Cold Mountain where the film is set, is a real mountain located within the Pisgah National Forest of North Carolina. however, the film was shot mostly in Romania, with numerous scenes shot in Virginia, South Carolina, and North Carolina. the film was one of an increasing number of Hollywood productions made in Eastern Europe, in this instance, Transylvania had less visible infrastructure, and was much less marked by modern life than Appalachia.

*Wednesday 4 February 3:53 AM 56°F* ☀️

Lord of mercy, i had me a fine sleep. only twice were the trips to the bathroom and right back to my warm bed. it's chilly once again. i'm lookin forward to the days when it's warm when i wake and warmer still as i work, hot in the afternoon as i wander, cooling some by night. had me a beer last nite. first time in two weeks, more maybe, an oatmeal stout. was pretty good. prior, a huge meal. started with a garden salad, then came the margarita pizza. had two slices. held off cause my grilled salmon was on its way. it was a huge slice of salmon, thick and covered with a basting sauce ovetop risotto. i was filled to the brim when i pushed my chair away from the table. i needed a meal like that, needed the protein and all the nutrients salmon offers, to replenish my healing body. i do believe the infections are gone and i'm back on the road to recovery.



*Thursday 5 February 4:28 AM 59°F* ☀️

as expected, after the third trip to the bathroom—there were ten in all—Agua de Jamaica, hibiscus tea, is a well-known, natural diuretic frequently used in traditional Mexican medicine to reduce water retention, bloating, and support kidney function. it is made from dried \*Hibiscus flowers which act as a mild diuretic, assisting the body in eliminating excess salt. i had a large glass with my lunch and i was peeing ever since, even before bedtime. ten times over the course of slightly less than eight hours is an average of every forty five minutes plus. the last couple hours were better than the previous six, thankfully, but naps will be in order.



Lunch was taken at Casa Maya where i had taken lunch once before. they have several vegano options, one of which is vegetables wrapped in tortillas lathered with a mole sauce. it's a bit much. i had forgotten i had been there until i walked in, and then it was too late to hunt for another place. while i didn't exactly suffer through lunch, it was barely passable. i was in the mood for Mexicano. i should have hunted a bit more carefully. i was also in the mood for a beer at Apostol, but it was too early so i headed home, but once there, i wasn't about to leave and walk to Plaza Santa Lucia. instead, my evening was occupied by the news, a chat with Cody, the last twenty minutes of Cold Mountain and the first episode of a Netflix docudrama about James Garfield's presidency and his assassin, Charles Guiteau. only three episodes, so i thought i'd give it a shot, since the period interests me.

The morning went reasonably well, most of it caught up listening to music relevant to the piece as it makes its way to the turn of the century. i flushed out the parameters of a bridge scene—between Rahel's leave taking, Hilda's summer in Italy and the symphony's European Tour, culminating in performances at the Paris Worlds Fair—during which Abraham devotes his energy to various musical activities.

Yoga began with promise but after an hour plus, i began to feel exhausted and simply had to stop. not sure why, tho i think it might have been the coffee i had had late in the morning at Cosmo, a new cafe i tried, taking myself there while the apartment was being cleaned.

While the day had its moments, i did not feel highly productive. it was warmer than of late and i thoroughly enjoyed the walks i took, but when work causes problems, they color the day. hoping John will be available this morning for our overdue conversation.



Friday 6 February 4:27 AM 57°F ☁

Avi y Eli Dia. i slept well. there were several trips to the bathroom, but nothing outrageous. the night was cool. my stomach was full. i was weary after a day of great mental exercise. haven't been to the gym since that fateful monday two and a half weeks ago. couldn't for the first week, but the last week and a half my interest has seemed to wane considerably. i would like to return, but i don't feel like returning to Armor, and there isn't another place close by. i would go to Planet Fitness if there was one within walking distance, but those sorts of gyms are to the north in Gringolandia. even if i don't return until i'm back in the States i will not be terribly out of shape. the push-ups and dips keep me more or less fit.

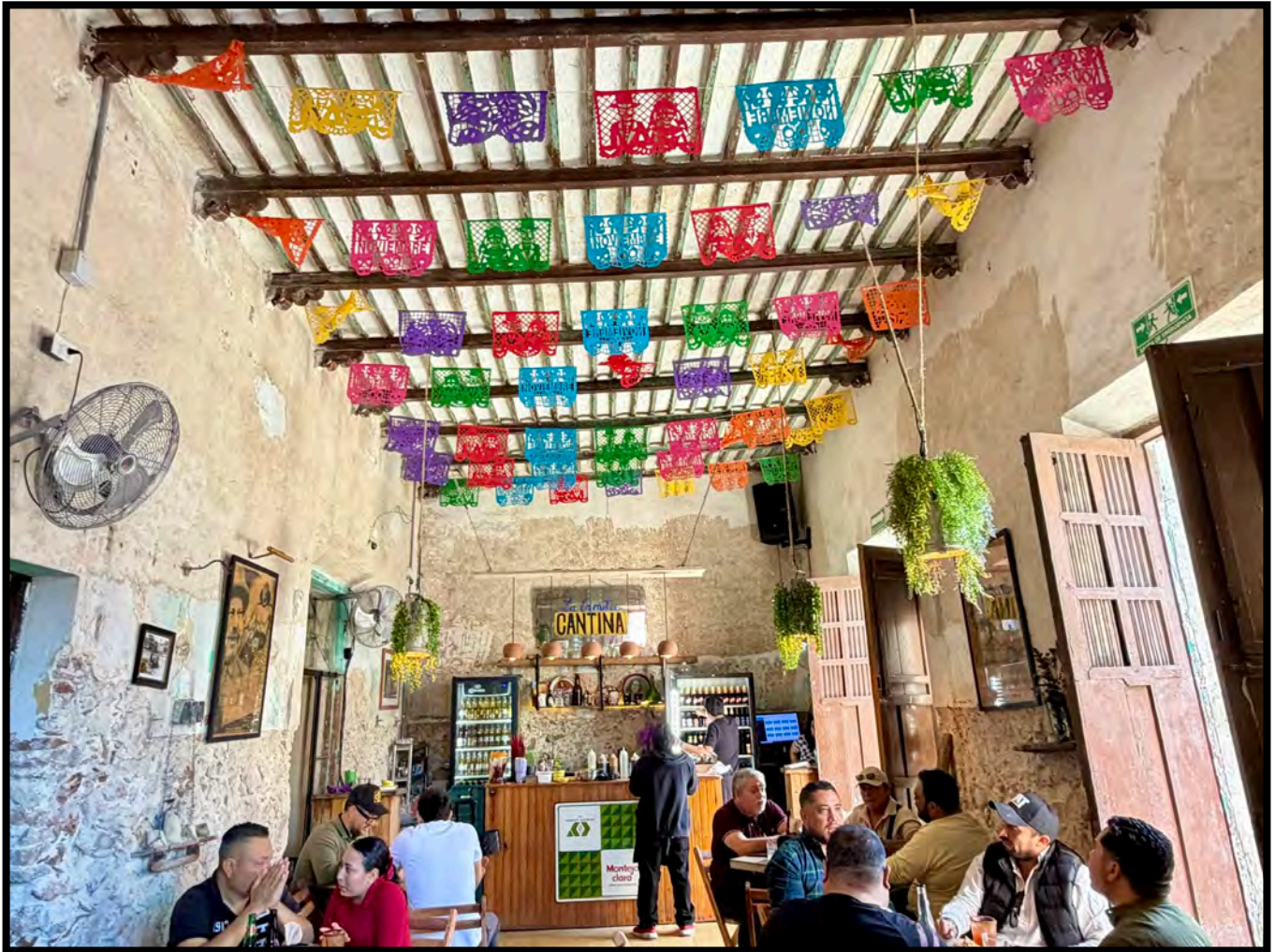
Saturday 7 February 5:54 AM 51°F ☀

Shabbat Shalom! rough nite. twelve trips to the bathroom. partially my own fault for having a second beer. i met up with Martin and his children at Apostol across from Parque Santa Lucia. he brought a surprise guest, Mario, introducing him as his wife. lovely man. conversation was lively. the Porter i had was delicious. i regaled everyone with a bizarre story of an incident that had occurred less than an hour before, in the Gran Plaza.

After my visit to the Majikal Antiques shop where i paid my rent for the month, at Martin and the kid's suggestion, i took lunch at La Cantina. the walk was warm. it felt good to be outside. i walked through the swinging wooden doors and entered, pausing to have a look. the best table was the first table inside the doors. i motioned to a waiter and he nodded. i sat.



The place was bustling. i was surprised. it was still early, but they do a brisk food business as well as drinks. everything is inexpensive. it was loud. there was music playing, barely audible for the din. people frequent the Cantina so they can be loud, expressive, laugh heartily, tell wonderful stories. for me, lunch was almost beside the point. watching the people interacting, the flow in and out, the movement, was far more interesting.



While i captured the physical attributes, i failed to capture the ambience, the people engaged in conversation. i suppose, it was one or the other. i wanted the best shot possible. i would have had to walk around and take several photographs to do justice to the gatherings at the various tables. the other rooms were busy as well, but the lighting was absent. i ordered vegetarian tacos and an order of thick cut potatoes, and a limonada naturel to wash lunch down.

My morning was marked by some strong scenic work, finishing Chapter: New Season, and the following Scene: Abraham and Hilda. at that point i wandered over to KiKoffee, tho i had intended to go to Blue Bag Roasters, but as i crossed Calle 59 i realized i had forgotten the bag for the coffee. i checked the time. ii was much later than i realized. i had taken a nap earlier and lost track of time. okay, manana. i chatted with Kiko for a bit, then resumed work on the new scene, a rehearsal in preparation for the Paris Tour. i kept hearing Kajanus, *let's take it from the top*, first in English, then in Finnish, Swedish, German and Russian, exhausting the members of the orchestra, driven by a will to perform Sibelius' Finlandia perfectly. it is a complicated piece symphonically, delicate in its changes, entrances, etc, an excellent example of the relationship between conductor and orchestra. the scene is far from finished, and will require a conversation

with John to iron out the details, but i'm satisfied with its presence in the piece. the previous scenes are powerful. all in all, it has been superb week of work. once again, yoga was wonderful. afterwards i walked through Santiago to Ermita. it was a lovely afternoon. after all, it was friday, and my son was present, accompanying me through the barrio.

After lunch i wandered around Ermita, taking a different route toward Centro, marked by the photographs i took. the light was exquisite, odd, considering it was still afternoon, but in Merida, as in most towns throughout Mexico, one side of the street is sunny, while the other is marked by shade. that was the case yesterday. delicate shadows lying across cobblestone. fantastic contrast between architecture and sky, one building to the next. i was in heaven. i felt joy surge. i paid no mind to the cars passing me as i stood in the middle of the street to get the perfect photograph.



I left Ermita through Arco de San Juan, and wandered into the park nearby to sit and review my work. it was still late in the afternoon, and i had plenty of time before my rendezvous with the Martin clan. i was in a familiar place. i have sat in Parque San Juan several times, most recently in the middle of my *Photographs At Dawn* jaunt several weeks back, the sunday prior to my falling ill when i found my way into San Juan purely by accident. the city streets look different depending on the time of day. on that occasion it was still quite early in the morning.



After my respite, i resumed my walk, heading more or less, straightaway to the Gran Plaza where i found a bench splattered with sunshine, the last of the day. i luxuriated in the warmth watching passerby's, reviewing my work, simply sitting. after perhaps twenty five minutes, as i stood, about to leave, four gringos past, all four of them simultaneously turning their heads to look at me. the woman of the group asked, "are you from Pittsburgh," and i replied that i was, and asked how they knew. we see you bicycling around town. you used to bike with your son, and then the younger of their children, a boy, about eli's age, said, "i recognize you from Dynamo." i was incredulous. i told him we played only a short while. he replied he had as well, but he recognized





me because eli and i always rode bikes to the Oval where Dynamo practiced and played their games. we continued in this fashion for several minutes before i was able to make inquiry about why and where and what. naturally they were there to extract themselves from the bitter winter weather and relax in sun and warmth. i gave them several tips about Merida, and the Yucatan. Max, their son, and i chatted at length as i tried to glean who he knew that eli might also know. i was astounded as i parted ways, and drifted through the park and over to Calle 60 where i walked north three blocks to Apostol. it was still early so i texted eli about the experience i had just had, and called him for a five minutes update as i sat in Parque Santa Lucia. who'd a thought the phenomenon of being recognized would accompany me to Mexico!

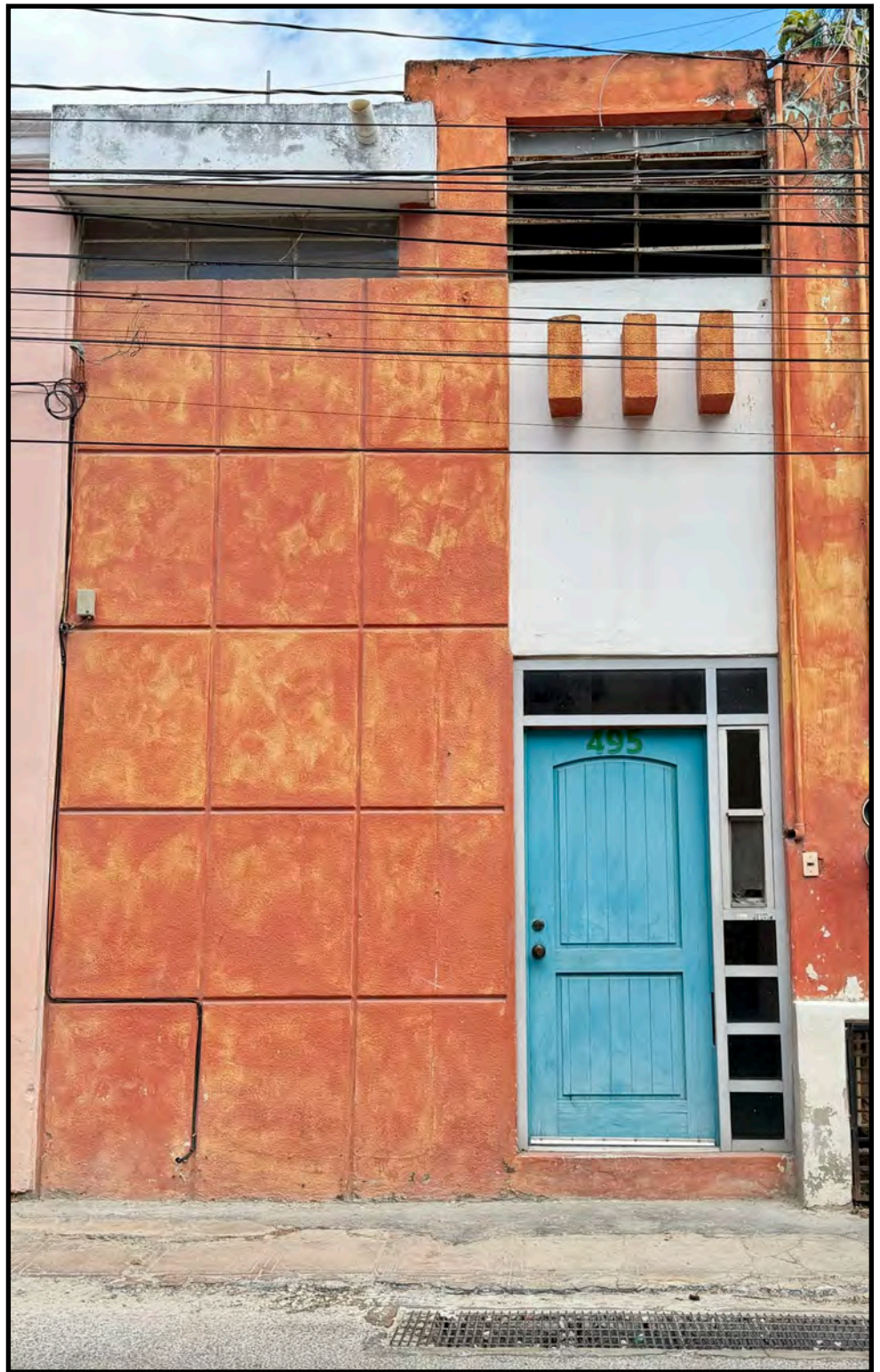


Sunday 8 February 54°F ☀️

Yesterday..i was thrown off my schedule though i made an effort to retain parts of it. i could not muster the emotional energy required to do yoga early in the morning. instead, i left the apartment earlier, picked up coffee from Blue Bag, then hoofed it to the Slow Market. the granola lady was not there. i did purchase a sourdough bread, looked for a nice bar of hand soap, but saw nothing, then took my breakfast where i had taken it the previous week. same routine. chips and frijoles arrived, then the eggs with potatoes, the salad with shaved beets and carrots and more frijoles, but yesterday i got some warm tortillas. it was good, but it isn't delicious enough for the effort, so unlikely i will return. even the granola is not outstanding, nor the bread.

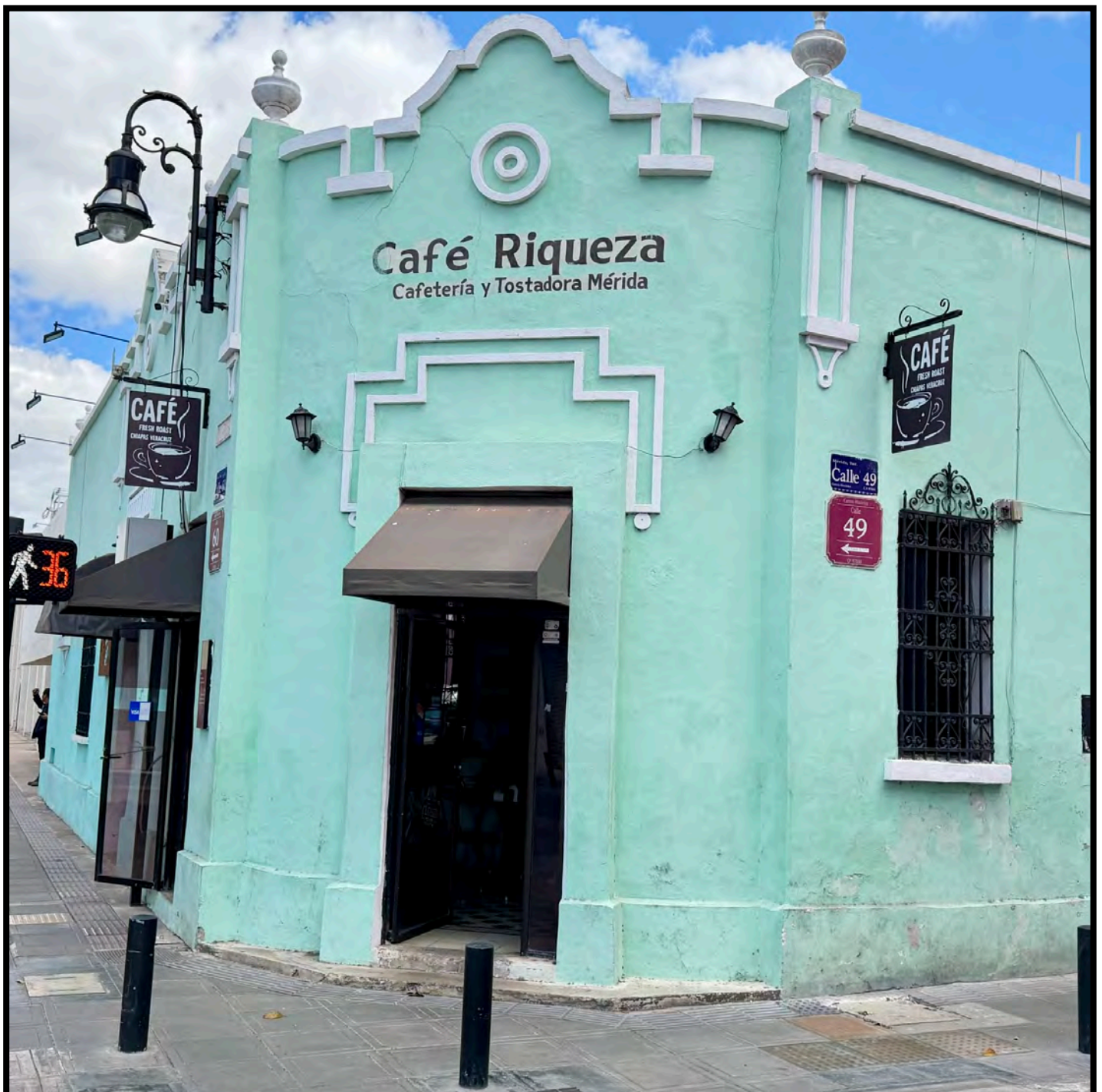
Wandered a bit then returned to Centro down Paseo de la Reforma. the return felt long. i suppose that was because as i left Blue Bay for the Slow Market, Cody called. we talked nearly the entire trip. i let him have it. i've been burdened by Austin's lack of communication, with me and with Mike from State Farm, everyone up in the air about scheduling, waiting on Austin, while i'm trying to secure lodging which has time stipulations, and additional funds for lost income which Mike has agreed to review, contingent on a bonafide schedule.

My feet were sore. i sat a couple of times. it was warm and i removed my shirt. when i reached the end of Reforma, i began looking for a coffee shop. i rejected several then noticed the bicycle out front of the place i had photographed on my way to Taqueria de la Union, so i went there. took the coffee to go, and sat in Parque Santa Lucia on a bench warmed by the sun. it felt good. texted eli. set up a phone call for the evening. finished my coffee and went looking for the



Museum of Contemporary Art. found it, but it's closed. permanently? yes. all for naught. returned to Majikal Xolos, chatted briefly with Martin who was working, then took a forty minute nap. when i awoke it was my intention to get on my mat. toward that end i cleaned the terrace and most of the apartment floor. in the midst of my work i began feeling my hernia swell. i was rendered physically incapable and had to sit, then lay. by the time i felt better and could move it back into position, i was fatigued beyond what is required for yoga. i had a bite to eat, worked on the concept of the Narrator/Lector, then ended up watching News of the World, the Tom Hanks movie of the reader traveling through Texas. unfortunately, it became a story about the little girl he comes across and his role as Reader becomes secondary.

At 6:30 eli texted and i called him. we talked for two hours. i love my son like there's no tomorrow. bedtime was promptly at 9:00. i averaged one trip per hour which was not terribly disruptive, but certainly not enjoyable. not sure why. vestige of the infection perhaps? today i will attempt to duplicate a typical Sabbath Saturday.



Monday 9 February 5:28 AM 59°F ☀️

Woke at 4:10, give or take, thinking i would sleep another twenty minutes. wound up waking at 4:58, surprised i had overslept, but evidently i was still tired enough to sleep an additional forty five minutes. only two trips to the bathroom. lots of insane and inane dreams, none of which i recall, some, super bowl related. it was an odd day, yesterday, to say the least. i woke at a reasonable hour, earlier than this morning, and realized if i were to have a sense of accomplishment, i needed to treat sunday as a regular week day, even tho it didn't feel as such. i persisted. worked with the script until i came to a natural pause, then turned my attention to balancing the books. sometimes i marvel at the incredulity of extremes and truly, naught is more extreme than turning attention from something creative, to budgetary concerns. regardless, it didn't require much time and soon enough i was headed out the door and into the sunshine and Muchas Vidas, for pancakes and limonada rosa. they are good, i must say, and rather signature. unfortunately, half way through my meal the glass of lemonade slipped and hit the table sideways spilling most of the rest of my beverage on the floor.

After breakfast purchased several items at the Super Aki, picked up my laundry across the street and returned to my tidy apartment. it was still rather early. i picked up where i had left off in my work. at some point i took a short nap. listened to music. got into the Dead's iconic Cornell University concert from the late 70s which i took outside to the terrace. yoga was wonderful, nice and slow, deep but yielding, not pushing, surrendering, breathing and then resuming. i am trying to regain the facility i had prior to falling ill, a plasticity and flexibility i had acquired on the mat during the first couple of months here. warmer weather will certainly help, and coinciding with my infection has been a cold spell. this week appears warmer weather is on the way.



Yoga was over at 3:45. i fiddled for the next hour, formatting, musical considerations, my investment portfolio, this and that, handfuls of peanuts stuffed into my mouth, a slice of sourdough bread. watched the Super Bowl, it was an excellent game, a defensive slog through the first half, during which three field goals by Seattle defined the scoring. the second half was a different story. where the Patriots were worn out, Seattle bore down. they dominated them on both sides of the ball and ran up the score, 29 - 13. i went to bed a few minutes before the end of the game when it was obvious who the victor would be. it was 9:00.



*Tuesday 10 February 4:13 AM 60°F* ☀️

Morning yesterday went smoothly. while i didn't get a lot done, i am inching my way closer to the end of Book Two. i'm satisfied. a great deal of editing certainly awaits, but that will be after Book Two is complete, during the first couple of weeks after i've returned home and made my way to Brooklyn for the month of march.

Yoga began a little on the late side but it was a very good session. i began running out of steam toward the end. not sure why. nonetheless, 80 minutes of mat time. i did not go to the gym, nor will i the remainder of the week. i am however, hoping to return next monday and continue through my stay.

Lunch followed, at Meriland once again. i was formally introduced to the staff. Andres, the young man who works behind the counter and takes orders, seemed interested in me, so we chatted for a while. he went to an english speaking school in Merida where he grew up, but his english is not all that good. perhaps he simply had a hankering to practice? he introduced me to the others working. everyone is young and cute.

The day was warm and there was plenty of sunshine. i should have remained outside, and i did sit in Parque Santiago for a bit, but i returned after a short while leaving plenty of daylight left for others. my ankle was not in a good way. walking has become an issue. unless i have something specific to do, or some place to go, i prefer hanging out at the apartment and resting my ankle.

As darkness set in, i grew less interested in walking and more intent on viewing another film. i began with a British mystery, *The Good Liar*, with Ian McLellan and Helen Mirren, but i wasn't drawn in, so i switched to *Good Will Hunting*. watched about half before retiring early. far more dynamic. after all, it's early Matt Damon and Robin Williams.



Wednesday 11 February 3:58 AM 63°F ☀

I had a very good sleep. felt buoyed by the movie, *Good Will Hunting*, delighted by its end, Matt Damon driving an old gas guzzling jalopy he received from his boys on his 21st birthday, heading across the country to San Francisco to catch up with Skylar, the gal of his dreams, on the road to recovery. the film follows Will Hunting, played by Damon, a troubled but self-taught mathematical genius working as a janitor at MIT whose talent is discovered by professor Gerald Lambeau, Skarsgård. To avoid jail, Will agrees to study under Lambeau while attending therapy with psychologist Sean Maguire, Robin Williams, which forces him to confront his past and his relationships, including with Harvard student Skylar, Minnie Driver.

Surprised myself becoming interested in the potential plot after the movie's ending. might have something to do with my being alone an excessive amount of time. i found the movie invigorating, tho i had little difficulty falling asleep after it was over. based on my dreams, it seems i simply took it with me.

After lunch at Pita Mediterranea, i batted around the idea of having a beer. first things first tho, and a nap was in order, so headed back to the apartment, and curled up on the couch sleeping for about twenty minutes. i was slightly discombobulated upon rising, but got my bearings soon enough. listened to NPR for a bit, then switched to music, hoping to find a choral version of Kaddish that i could use in the piece. at the moment the chorus enters after a blackout which ends the deathbed engagement between Terah and Abraham. i see their entrance as a procession, torn garments, barefoot, talitzim covering them, perhaps playing small percussion instruments—bells, a tambourine—but their voices are what makes the scene haunting. at the moment i cannot hear the vocalization which is why i went hunting for examples. came up empty. overtop their chorale, the Narrator ends the scene with verbiage about who shall take over the Farm/Academy using the biblical tone from above, prior to the deathbed scene.

Yoga was good. once again, slow to get going, but once on my mat, i felt fluid and strong. i worked slowly to get the kinks out in my lower back and by the end i was feeling pretty righteous. lunch became a bit of a trek. i headed to Muchas Vidas for their burger, but they had run out, so i left, and headed to Pita for a falafel. i didn't mind the walk. it was warm and sunny.

All in all, it was a good day. i began early, worked for a while, then conversed with John about the rehearsal scene which i will attack this morning. we spoke far longer than i had anticipated which threw me off. breakfast was late, and once finished it was time to leave the apartment for the cleaning gal. i headed to KiKoffee, chatted with Kiko and set about working.



Thursday 12 February 4:29 AM 66°F ☀️

One beer is all it took. had a nice dinner at La Sicilia. the garden salad was particularly good. opted for spaghetti pesto rather than my usual arrabbiata. after dinner, sauntered over to Cuerno de Toro for a beer. they didn't have near the selection they usually do, but the Brown Ale was a good one, so i ordered it and sat at a side table with a view of the street. the place was relatively empty. it was still early. i caught up on all the sporting news from around the world, texted eli, and then, my beer drinking experience was over. walked back along Calle 55. the days till i leave are numbered. i haven't done much around town, though i have walked a fairly sizable area, but i have not set foot in a single museum, nor hiked up to Parque La Plancha, this and that, and instead have focused on my work and accomplished an enormous amount in a relatively short amount of time. i can't think of another large project that has gone so quickly.

Back at the apartment i reviewed several scenes and chapters i had given thought to while sipping my ale, then hunted for another movie, but i came up short, and at that point i was feeling incredibly tired. i laid down, and i was out like a light. i don't know what time it was but it couldn't have been much past 7:00. eventually i moved myself to the bed and called it quits.



The day was well spent. i reviewed, moved forward, edited, all toward shaping the script to my liking. midday yoga was outstanding, though by the end, i was feeling tired, too tired to do dips, tho in fairness, my right shoulder was tender. took a walk after sirvasana, checked in at the Super Aki. still no nuts. sat in the park watching the pigeons. returned to the apartment and listened to music. around a quarter past 4:00 i headed to La Sicilia along Calle 63 thinking there would be a photograph or two, but no such luck.

*Friday 13 February 4:14 AM 66°F* ☀️

Another installment of Avi y Eli. how wonderful, though my son is 1,500 miles away. today i'd like to spend wandering around a museum. last night i returned to the garage at the corner of Calle 59 and 70, for an opening. while it wasn't a gala affair, it did bring our several women who thought it was, none of whom were star attractions. the old parking garage was more interesting than the exhibition, though there was a series of sunflowers, a la Van Gough which i found interesting. i had a glass of wine and sat on the steps leading to the second floor gallery, watching people come and go. when i emptied my glass, i returned to my apartment and listened to music.



*Saturday 14 February 4:45 AM 66°F* ☀️

Shabbat Shalom! and Happy Valentine's Day!!

Distressed about the worth of my work, as well as its length, i decided to work on Book One, initially those sections that were in red, but wound up giving the entire book a once over, finishing before it was time for my yoga mat, feeling really good about the piece once again. i didn't edit hard, but i made several difficult decisions and in the process wound up reducing the book by about eight pages. i think there's more i can eliminate through a hard edit, and additional formatting. we shall see. at least i can move forward feeling good.



Yoga was outstanding. finished about a half hour before my scheduled call with Cody and Austin, dressed and rushed over to Super Aki. they still did not have either granola or nuts, but i spotted some nice avocados, so quickly decided to purchase an avocado, a nice plump tomato, a head of garlic and a carrot. scurried back, toasted the last of the bread and made a wonderful avocado sandwich, which i brought upstairs and ate while waiting for the group chat to commence.

Everything seems to be in order at the Manse. i was surprised to learn from Austin that he believes i will be able to take occupancy at the end of April. i find that difficult to wrap my head around considering the setbacks, but even if it's some time in May, i'll be happy, and if i can rent the third floor apartment starting 1 June, so much the better.

In the meantime, i found an apartment in Brooklyn. my only concern now is when do i return and where do i go? do i use my original ticket, fly to Pittsburgh, stay a couple of days, then drive to Brooklyn, or do i get a new flight, a one way ticket from Cancun to NYC? the flights are much less expensive and they are direct, but the bus to Cancun from Merida might take four plus hours and cost an additional \$50. this is a factor. though, that said, i would still arrive late in the afternoon. i need the weekend to think this through.



Dinner at La Sicilia, simply superb. started with a glass of Cabernet, then the garden salad arrived. i ate slowly and toward the end, my margarita pizza showed up, and i had a couple of slices with the last of my salad. next to arrive, the penne arrabbiata and it was piled high. had another slice to accompany the pasta. i was unable to finish the penne and there were also four slices of pizza left. i will have another wonderful visit to Sicily this afternoon.

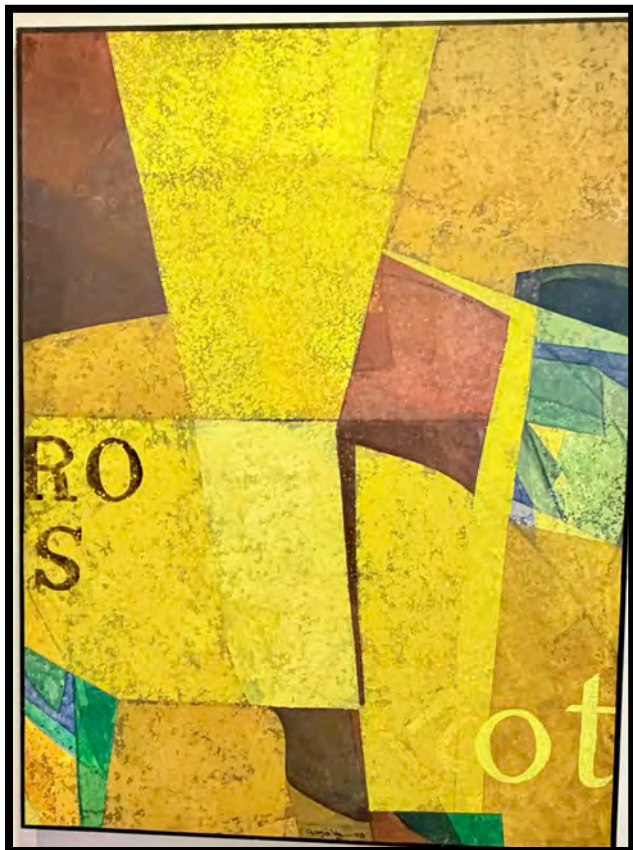
Returned to the apartment and listened to Mahler's Fourth in its entirety, a Swiss orchestra conducted by Claudio Abbado. he has a very strange style but he is effective. it was a wonderfully lyrical rendition. i brought it to bed with me. asleep by 8:30.

At some point during the night, in the midst of this strange dream, i turned and a light was shining in my eyes. it was the outer hallway light. my door was ajar. i had no idea how it opened. i got up, went to the bathroom, looked about the apartment, everything seemed in order, closed the door and locked it, and returned to bed. very strange.



## **Museo de la Ciudad**

**is home to artifacts and archeological pieces of historical relevance to the development of the city, from pre Hispanic to contemporary times. The building in which the museum lies is also of historical importance, since it dates back to the period of the Porfiriato. It was the Federal Palace at the turn of the 20th century.**



**I was pleasantly surprised to find the MACAY temporary exhibition on the second floor. I had attempted to gain entry a their building last saturday, only to learn it was permanently closed without any indication of where the art might be located. While the work shown at the City Museum of Merida was more than likely only a partial exhibit, nonetheless, it was a welcome discovery.**

**I took quite a few photographs, wandered slowly, enjoying myself immensely, thinking how much more interesting smaller scale art museums are, reflecting on my experience with Suzanne last winter at the National Archaeological Museum in Naples which was absolutely overwhelming. We wandered for hours but after the first couple were unable to properly focus.**



### **Salas de exposiciones**

**En el museo se exhiben alrededor de 150 piezas de forma permanente, tanto de valor histórico como arqueológico. Se distribuyen en cuatro salas principales. En el primer piso del Museo se ubican seis salas para exposiciones temporales, con lo que se abre un espacio más para la expresión de los artistas visuales locales.**

### **Mérida prehispánica**

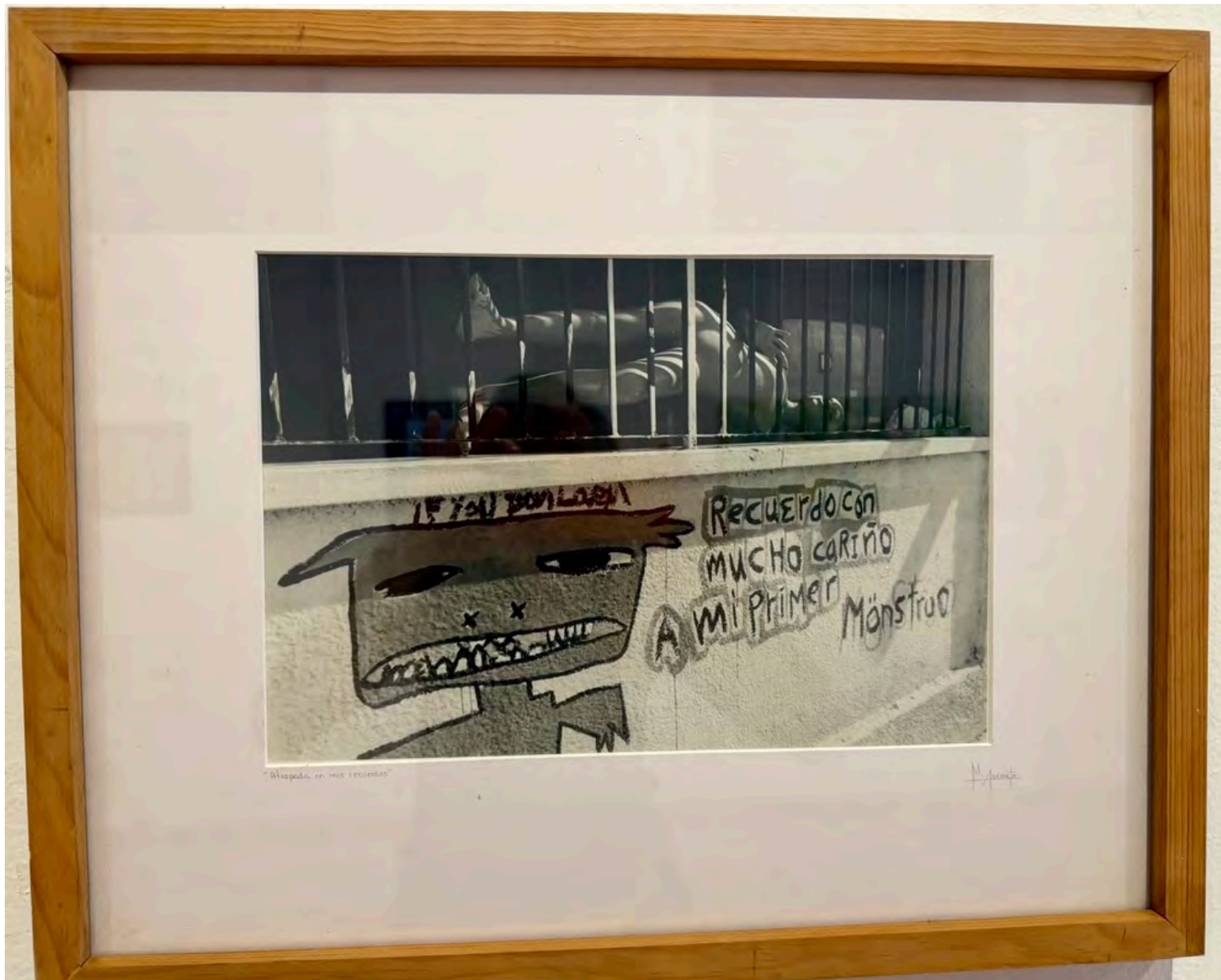
**Presenta piezas de la antigua Mérida en la época anterior a la conquista de los españoles. También alberga piezas que datan de la cultura maya.**

### **La colonia o Mérida novohispana**

**Esta es la sala en la que se presentan objetos de la época de fundación de Mérida, así como otros de la vida cotidiana, armamento y otras piezas que muestran a Mérida durante la Colonia, la fundación de Mérida, educación y evangelización, entre otros.**

### **Mérida en el siglo xix y en los albores del XX**

**En esta sala nos encontramos con artilugios que nos hablan sobre el desarrollo de la ciudad y su crecimiento económico, junto con otras piezas de la época de las haciendas, referentes a la educación y política de ese tiempo.**



## **Siglo xx**

**Objetos y piezas artísticas relacionadas con la Mérida moderna, movimientos culturales y sus representantes, deportes, arquitectura y tradiciones. El ex palacio Federal de Correos de la ciudad de Mérida a principios del siglo xx, es la nueva sede del Museo de la Ciudad de Mérida, desde el 29 de junio de 2007.**

## **Salas temporales**

**Las exhibiciones temporales generalmente tienen lugar en el primer piso del Museo. En estas presentan las tendencias referentes a las artes visuales a través de diferentes móviles como pintura, dibujo, grabado, fotografía, escultura y video. También se realizan exhibiciones temáticas que muestran más sobre la historia de Mérida.**



**This image displays a 1998 triptych titled *Sin título* from the *Fernando* series by artist Humberto Hau. It is an acrylic on canvas, and part of the Colección MACAY temporarily on exhibit located in the Museo de la Ciudad de Mérida.**





*Sunday 15 February 4:34 AM 66°F ☀*

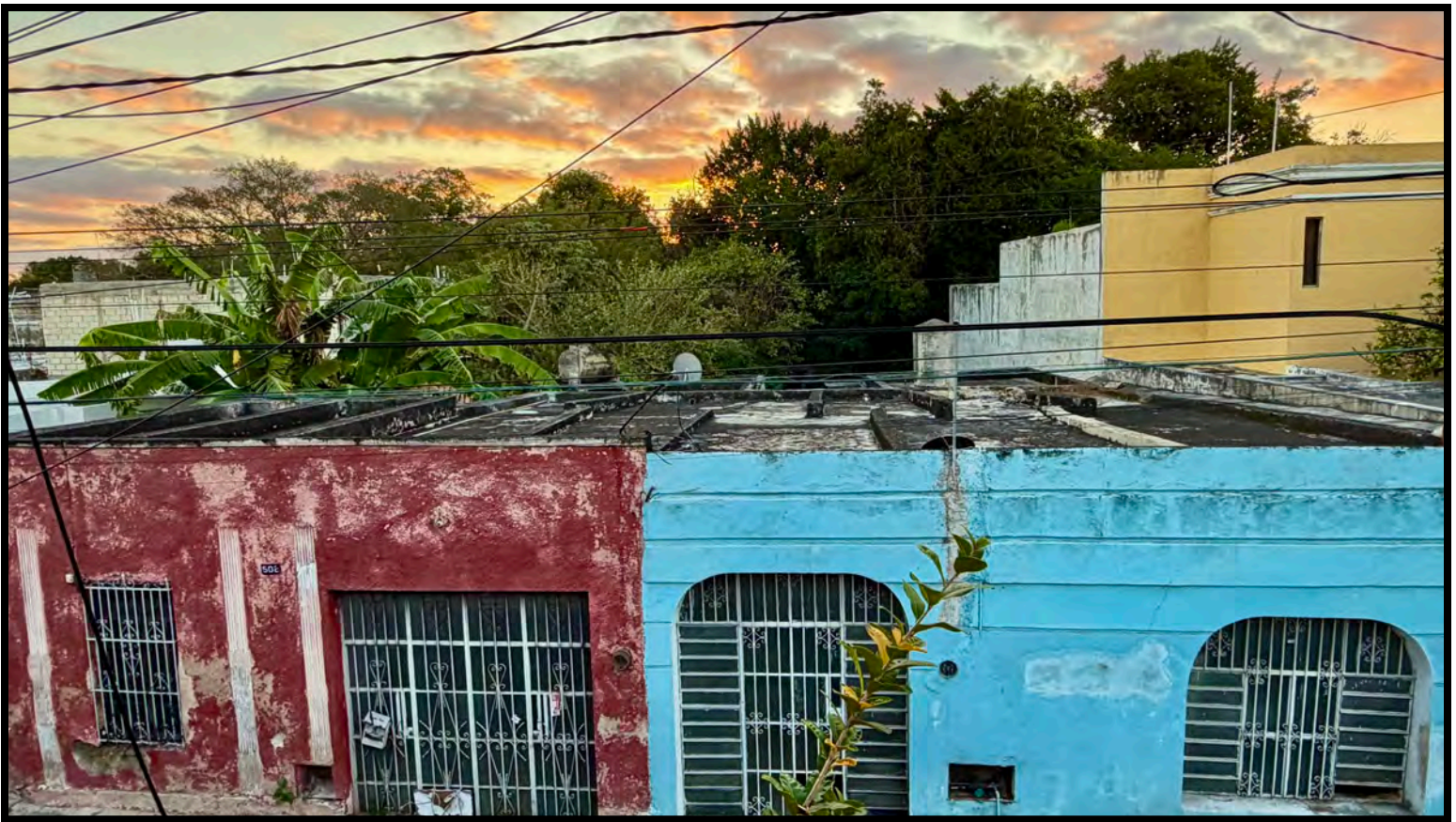
Work began soon after waking. i continued tidying up the script. listening to music, Jewish music, hoping something would excite me and allow me to tie two scenes from Leipzig together and showcase Terah's compositional work, even if i had to use someone else's.

At a quarter to eight i left for breakfast at Cucu Bistro. had their version of granola, yogurt and honey. i like it. the granola is crunchy and there is a nice variety of fruit, just the right amount of fruit. the honey ties all the ingredients. had a freshly squeezed orange juice as well. my second course was scrambled eggs and hash browns. too much salt. i left feeling ebullient. the day was warm and sunny and my walk to the museum a happy jaunt. Merida was just beginning to stir.

Took note of the bakery where they sell loaves of bread. i would return after my visit to the City Museum of Merida. the building was the turn of the century Governor's Palace. it's located over by the square where Soriano sits. i've passed it many times without realizing what it was. i arrived just past nine. it were open. i entered. my visit is free.



The view from the second floor balcony was wonderful. i could see the Governor standing on the marble terrace waving to his followers. instead, there is a market below. it was becoming more crowded by the minute. the sun felt warm across my body. it was a delicious sabbath. the produce was piled high. for the first time since my arrival i saw the yellow mangoes i love. a couple of women were seated alongside a long table, peeling them with a sharp paring knife and cutting sections to place in plastic containers, reminding me of the market in Raleigh years and years ago, where elderly black folks sat alongside their wares, shucking corn, or preparing beans and sugar peas in like fashion. busy hands...



I took my leave of the Museo after about an hour, winding my way through the neighborhood, taking Calle 62 north into the Gran Plaza, then over to the bakery, purchased a loaf of sourdough which they placed in an oversized paper bag and stapled shut which i found humorous, paid, and thanked them, leaving as i had entered, through the swinging glass doors, and into the morning



once again. the walk back was a bit difficult. my ankle was quite sore. i was anxious to return and continue work on the scenes i had left dangling.

Made a cup of coffee and got down to brass tacks. within forty five minutes i had what i had been imagining. it needs a bit of adjusting, but for the time being it fits the bill. i was happy as heck. i moved along cleaning up as i went, doing some re formatting, adding this and that. and by noon thirty i declared the work done for the day. i'm tickled pink.

Prepared myself for yoga. on the mat at 1:40. all was well, tho my ankle was still sore. i tried to work the kinks out as i moved. i had some success, but after an hour, between my ankle and my hernia, i was simply overcome and had to stop. i will regain the mat later today and do the routine i had hoped to do yesterday. i'm satisfied.

Took a short break. listened to NPR for a while, then went to the kitchen to prepare lunch. i had a couple slices of pizza and i finished the penne arrabbiata. it was quite good, even reheated. cleaned up, took a short nap, decided not to go anywhere for the time being. my ankle was stable and i didn't want to disrupt any equilibrium i had achieved. instead i hunted for a movie. eli texted. i suggested a phone call. he is visiting his mother's in York. he was alone in the spare bedroom. we talked for nearly two hours. after we said goodnite and goodbye, i clicked on a Wes Anderson flick, Darjeeling something or other, Owen Wilson and Adrian Brody. after an hour i'd had enough. it was 8:30. i got ready for bed. it was an odd day, but satisfactory. i went to sleep feeling good about my script.



*Barrio Santiago* I walked joyously from Majikal Xolos down Calle

63 heading west immediately drawn to the homes across the street, which i've passed numerous times on the way to Armor Gym. the light was perfect; the shapes and their juxtaposition, simply





marvelous. i began snapping immediately, framing for later when i returned and uploaded them to Photo where i could crop them as i saw fit. the further along the street i went to more delighted i felt. there seemed to be no end to the wonderful shots awaiting my lens.

As i approached a cross street shadows began to stand out, drawing my attention. once again everything i was looking at was appealing and interesting in particular ways. the relationships between shadows and shapes was highly attractive and inviting. i pursued my prey walking down the middle of the street. still early, there wasn't much traffic. when there was, i ignored them.

After a while i came to a cross street and had to decide straight, or turn right. i chose the wall a block ahead. along the way i met several homes that drew my attention. at this point i was close to the Centenario Park and the super duper Super Aki.

Even the shabby became fascinating when aside certain design features. the photograph to the side exemplifies what i'm referring to. the building is in





much worse shape than the photograph indicates, but its shabbiness becomes part of the interaction between the stark shadows along the street and the repetitive design along the facade. my morning sojourn was truly remarkable and i thoroughly enjoyed myself tho my ankle began to feel the pavement after a while. once across Calle 59 the irresistibility of the homes began to go downhill. the homes were more of a kind and there was far less diversity or design work that attracted my attention. i was curious about this since the streets i was traversing were Calle 57 & 55, both of which are favorites of mine, but beyond Calle 70 neither are picturesque. i'm sure given certain lighting conditions that may not be true, but once i crossed Calle 59 the sun was more of an issue and the architecture was fairly washed out. no matter, i was heading to Muchas Vidas and their fabulous pancakes and fruit!

# A Few of the Bicycles in Merida





**The Gran Museo del Mundo Maya is best known for its permanent exhibits highlighting the beauty of contemporary and ancient cultures.**

**The architecture of the Gran Museo del Mundo Maya has always been divisive as well as striking.**

**But a new temporary exhibit delving into the history and cultural significance of bicycles in Yucatán has recently opened to the public. “The exhibition is designed to raise awareness of the historic importance of the bicycle in Yucatecan life,” said Noemí Villanueva of Yucatán’s culture ministry.**

**A large metal dome adorned with bicycles and a map of Mérida’s bicycle infrastructure cover the floor of a large section of the exhibit.**

**The exhibit is titled T’ íinchak’ balak’ ook, which in the Yucatec-Mayan language translates to “push with the foot to make it turn.”**

**Nobody knows when the first bicycles came to Yucatán, but by the late 19th century they had become a popular transportation method, work tool, and recreational gadget — and quite advanced for its time!**







**Every Sunday morning, the streets are closed to traffic from the Ermita de Santa Isabel to the Monumento a la Patria at the top of Paseo de Montejo. Rent a bike, walk or skate to leisurely explore Downtown Mérida, including the various market stalls along the way.**

**Bicycling in Mérida is a popular way to explore, featuring a flat landscape and improving infrastructure like the scenic Paseo de Montejo, the La Plancha park, and the expansive *Los Paseos* linear parks. Sundays are best for cycling, featuring the popular BiciRuta event.**

KiKoffee 12:06 PM 88°F ☀

Today, i have more or less repeated yesterday's schedule. this morning i woke, showered, found my way to my journal, then worked here, on the travelogue and afterwards, my script. all is well on all fronts. with time before heading out, i balanced my books. i am as ready as ready can be, to saunter about the Barrio de Santiago and take photographs before settling in at Muchas Vidas for breakfast.

All was well on my walk, as noted above, and the meal could not have been better. doused with honey, the pancakes, as thick as they are, simply melted in my mouth, the fruit providing a fresh taste, not to mention the Rose Lemonade. refreshing. refresco.

By the time i was finished and back outside. it was warmish. the sun was high and there was naught to break its light or diminish the heat. i stopped in at Super Aki and there was nothing, not a thing for me, no peanuts, no granola, and no mixed nuts. they now carry a high end peanut butter, but it contains a high tech sugar substitute, so forget that. i simply returned to the apartment and took a short nap, then uploaded the photographs and went to work.





*Monday 16 February 4:19 AM 67°F* 🌤️

A weary boy went to bed, an' slept like a log, tho his head, was suffused by a fog. there was a family with urgency, in need of leaving the land they were in. there was a song, tho i heard not a note. the circumstances were weird and even tho my dreaming was interrupted by a trip to the bathroom, it returned, which is odd, because usually that ends it, but not in this case. i was stumped trying to comprehend while it was happening. and now, that i'm awake, i recall precious little, not enough to piece it together.

*Tuesday 17 February 4:48 AM 68°F* 🌤️

One of the worstest sleeps of my stay. damn! after a brief but fun talk with eli, i headed to Cuerno de Toro for a beer. sat at the bar. the fellow who regaled me on my first visit was working. they had no stouts or porters so i ordered the same brown ale i'd had last week. once again, he recounted his nuanced familiarity of local beers and local taprooms. turns out his uncle owns Cuerno de Toro. after our conversation i ordered the large cut papas hoping they would absorb some of the alcohol. they were not nearly as good as the ones i had at Apostol. so be it. i enjoyed hanging out. it was still early and the taproom was essentially empty.

Finished me beer and potato dish, paid and headed down Calle 55. peed in the bushes at some point. actually through the rails of a metal fence. back at the shack i was feeling the alcohol. i was dead tired. fiddled. began reading *A Lone Ranger*. i do like it. put it aside and laid down. a half hour later i went to bed. i'm not sure what time it was, but it was still fairly early, most likely in the neighborhood of 7:30.

There were repeated trips to the bathroom, but around 1:30 i fell into a swoon, slept an hour, went to the bathroom, slept another hour, also deep, and yet another trip to the bathroom, my twelfth, returned to bed and was gone, waking at 4:35. why. oh why, i wish i knew. was it the alcohol content, 7%, the water used to make the beer, or something else entirely? i can't recall my nocturnal experience from last week when i had the same beer. i suppose if it were dreadful, i would remember. i think i got up a time or two more than usual. last nite was horrible.

The early part of the day wasn't bad at all. made great progress on the so called, Final Scene of Book Two, more than i anticipated, thanks to a smart search i created which provided a wonderful response uniting several desperate concepts. finished up early, and got on my mat at 12:30. i was a bit pokey but kept at it and enjoyed the session. decided to visit Johannes Restaurant. no cauliflower tacos para mi. i was welcomed effusively by the young guy who started working there only a couple weeks before my troubles began. i mentioned feeling sick after my meal as well as the tooth infection. turns out he was a dental student for a couple of years, so naturally we talked dentistry.

Had a baguette with grilled vegetables and chambray potatoes. the sandwich was bland, the potatoes good, but not as good as other establishments. it seems their best dish remains those daggone tacos. when i left, i was drenched by a warm sunshine. it felt good. i returned to the apartment, took a short nap. worked on the script for an hour, then eli and i spoke.



Wednesday 18 February 4:23 AM 71°F ☀️

Welcome! strange sleep. dreams and more dreams, none of which drew me, or made sense, and occurred mainly in the last part of my slumber. had to get up six times, a far cry from the previous night, but not normal. i may still have a vestige of the urinary infection. it's hard to say without a test of some sort.

Superb lunch/dinner at La Sicilia. my new modus is to order a margarita pizza in addition to the garden salad which was once again sublime, and the penne arrabbiata. this way i have leftovers of pizza and penne. i feel at home at Sicilia. their pesto is only so so, but the alio olio is wonderful and i think that might be all the pasta choices i've made. the salmon dish was good, but it's over risotto with mushrooms, and i'm not a fan so i only ordered that once. i enjoy the ambience and the style of cooking.

The night was filled with radio shows. went to bed a little after 8:00, feeling quite tired. fell to slumber almost immediately and didn't wake for over two hours for my first trip to the bathroom. i actually felt somewhat refreshed. returned to bed. each trip to the bathroom came at slightly lessor interval which was somewhat disruptive, but my weariness allowed quick returns to la la land. perhaps this influenced the strange dreams?



Thursday 19 February 4:23 AM 72°F ☀️

It was an excellent night. my sleep was good, tho i did have a series of strange dreams, and in this case, they were related to Abraham, the real man, my grandfather, tho they made no sense to me. up thrice. it remained warm through the nite. i was glad for the fan and the a/c. looks like a high of 95 today, tomorrow and over the weekend. sure wish i had a bicycle. best way to stay cool is to pedal.

Throughout the morning i created several wonderful philosophical quodlibets:

quodlibet | 'kwädlə,bet |

noun

1 archaic: a topic for or exercise in philosophical or theological discussion:  
an author of theological lectures and quodlibets.

2 literary: a lighthearted medley of well-known tunes.

derivatives

quodlibetarian | ,kwädləbə'terēən, -bi'te:riən | noun

origin

late Middle English: from Latin, from quod 'what' + libet 'it pleases'.



A quodlibet (/ˈkwɒdliβet/; Latin for “whatever you wish” from quod, what and libet, pleases) is a musical composition that combines several different melodies—usually popular tunes—in counterpoint, and often in a light-hearted, humorous manner.

There are three main types of quodlibet:

A catalogue quodlibet consists of a free setting of catalogue poetry (usually humorous lists of loosely related items).

In a successive quodlibet, one voice has short musical quotations and textual quotations while the other voices provide homophonic accompaniment.

In a simultaneous quodlibet, two or more pre-existing melodies are combined. The simultaneous quodlibet may be considered a historical antecedent to the modern-day musical mashup. Simultaneous quodlibets are found in elementary music classes, referred to as Partner Songs.

The Quodlibetal Questions:

“Whether a melody can remain beautiful if it lacks a tonal center?”

“In his Quodlibet III, disputed in 1288, Giles of Rome asked ex professo (as an expert) whether the Will could move itself.”

*Friday 20 February 2:54 AM 72°F* 🌞☁️

Avi y Eli Day!

I miss you eli B. i'm extremely happy i will be returning soon. a few hurdles but two fridays from now we will be together.

Woke early yesterday, tho not nearly as early as this morning—note the time above—but after going to the bathroom at 1:45, my mind began drifting to the underlying issues i will need to deal with when i return. unable to return to asleep, mosquitos tormenting me, after lying half an hour, i decided to get up and shower. the prior morning after writing letters i began my formal edit of Book One. naturally i became intoxicated and had to pry myself away from the work, tho weariness, staring at the screen hour after hour, contributed to my ending my morning session on the early side, tho not without making substantial progress.

Yoga began at noon thirty with the Grateful Dead and their CD of a concert at Veneta Oregon during the summer of '72. several wonderful improvisations—*Bird Song, Playin in the Band, Dark Star*. my routine was excellent. there was a wonderful breeze during most of the session which felt refreshing. it was actually quite hot outside, and i came to realize that when i left the house for lunch. it felt oppressive. i stayed on the shady side of the streets. wandered to Santa Lucia and the Pita Mediterranea Restaurante. i think that will be my last falafel in Merida. the first time was the best mainly because it was unusual. i hadn't expected to be eating falafel on pita in Mexico. each visit the quality seems to go down a bit, but that is probably not the case. what is true is that the falafels are not that great, and each visit i am learning how true that is.

After my meal i went food shopping. it remained hot. i returned straightaway and took a nap. the remainder of my day was spent listening to music, thinking about my quodlibet research, writing Diana and texting eli. i was in bed by 8:00. i am functioning on 5:45 hours of sleep. i will be taking naps during the day.

And what have i done today? well, i tried to keep it a normal day. worked until breakfast, which i took at the regular time, and after, took a brief nap before resuming work, finishing up early, simply running out of steam around 10:30. it was a struggle to get on my yoga mat, but i managed, keeping it simple. fell asleep i sirvasana. i was done before 2:00 with time enough to run over to Super Aki and pick up supplies. they still do not have peanuts or granola. i had time before my weekly call with Austin and Cody, so i heated up a couple of slices of pizza which i took upstairs.

At 2:30 Austin was ready. Cody was unavailable. we spoke for half an hour, touching base on the main issues at the Manse, scheduling, State Farm, this and that. i sent him photographs of the stained glass window, then took another nap.



*Saturday 21 4:00 AM February 73°F ☀️*

Shabbat Shalom!

Exhausted as i climbed into bed. i'd been up since 2:00. it was 7:00 and i was done. none of my evening plans came to fruition. after speaking with Austin, i returned to the kitchen and heated the remainder of La Sicilia's leftovers, another pair of pizza slices and the penne arrabbiata. oh so good. afterwards another nap was in order. this one a little longer than during the morning, but both naps didn't even add up to an hour. as afternoon merged with evening, i spent my time patching up and cleaning up the travelogue, before turning my attention to a New Sounds program. there was no dinner at La Sicilia as planned, nor a visit afterward to Apostol. perhaps tonite?



I love this photograph. the mix of colors, their brightness, and dullness, particularly the wall, but its mottled appearance i find fascinating, bespeaking of abstractions, and there is the streetlight post leaning, seemingly against the building, tho in reality no where near. the oddity of the fence in the front of the door which is really a window, i find almost absurd. i had hoped as i framed the building to capture more of the sky, but i was unable. if i had stepped back even a few inches, i would have been drenched in sunlight and the photograph washed out. the building is Cuerno de Toro, where i have gone several times to have a beer. it is one of the better taprooms in Merida.

*Sunday 22 February 7:02 AM 74°F* ☁

Strange night. after my phone call with Diana, which ended around 5:45, i returned to *An Orchestra of Exiles*. i was on the fence about going to dinner; not particularly hungry. i thought i would work for a bit and then decide. an hour later i decided against dinner, and against Apostol, which had i been at La Sicilia where i had planned on taking dinner, would have been a much shorter walk, and a nice way to end a perfectly wonderful sabbath saturday. instead i continued with the script for until 7:45 i brushed my teeth, then took my laptop to bed and listened to a podcast with the Grateful Dead's archivist, David Lemieux. the interview was colorful, anecdotal, tho there was precious little music. at 9:00 i turned the light off and went to sleep. an hour later i awakened for the bathroom, and truly, when i returned to bed, i was wide awake, unable to find

slumber. after tossing and turning for half an hour, i got out of bed and resumed my work, filling my new bowl with the remainder of the granola, and eating that to stave off further trips to the bathroom. lo and behold it worked. at 12:30 i found my way to bed and slept the rest of the nite without waking, until 6:30. as i write, i'm feeling a bit tired, but i'm able to focus and hopeful the rest of the morning will be filled with fun activities, as planned.

Yesterday was a typical wonderful sabbath saturday. i woke at 3:30, worked until 6:30, got on my cushion, and had a perfectly fine meditation session, then set about preparing for yoga. i began on the early side, just after 7:30. excellent routine. pyrotechnical where necessary, fluid throughout, a slow, methodical routine from beginning to end. breakfast was in house. at 10:00 i was walking to Blue Bag Cafe for another half kilo of French Roast. i chatted with the woman working, who informed me the owners were traveling. it was already quite warm. i hunted for the first of several galleries i intended to visit. found it with ease. engaged in a nice discussion with the owner about the new exhibit, then with her husband about a particular artist, whose work i was attracted by, and while i was speaking with him, silently considered making a purchase. i will return to have another viewing.



Gallery number two was far less interesting. it was the work of the owner, a man from Argentina whose canvases are largely about indigenous figures, earthy colors and tones, and decidedly not my cup of tea. we shook hands as i was leaving, however. next stop, the Museo de Musica. found it without difficulty. interesting building. underneath the upper block, is a plaza and the entrance. they do not accept cards. i left thinking, what century am i in? everyone in town, including vendors at the marketplaces, accepts cards, but not a cultural institution? i doubt i will return. i am leaving in a week and a half and i do not want to get cash from an ATM, which costs me.

Instead i wandered around the central plaza area hunting for gallery number three. the numbering system is terrible. actually, few buildings are numbered and they do not begin each new block at the next hundred, but continue the numbering, so if you are looking for something in particular, you have no idea whatsoever how far it might be. i abandoned my search, marched to Gatto Gordo for a late morning, noonish iced Americano and a slice of banana bread. sat comfortably on a couch, texting eli and reading about the Great Conspiracy Theory, the JFK assassination, written by a fellow with a good sense of humor and an ability to describe the various theories that still, amazingly, hold sway.

When i was back outside in the stifling heat accompanied by the last of my Americano, i walked directly to gallery numero quatro, back where i had begun, which had somehow missed. it was tucked down Calle 55 A and took me a while to locate. in the end there was not much to see, and of that, little interest. i was close to Muchas Vidas, so i stopped in to ask if they were serving their burger. i was given the thumbs up, so i made myself comfortable, finished the article and set about eating lunch. it was not very good. the paddy was undercooked and everything piled atop and under was in motion while i attempted to take a bite. with two bites left, i put is aside, finished my limonada rosa and left. highly unlikely i will return. perhaps for pancakes, but not today. and next weekend i intend to take a break from Merida and head to the coast. oy, yet another disappointing dining experience and there have been many.





Returned to the apartment, took a nice nap. it was 2:00 when i awoke. turned my attention to my script, made a coffee which i knew may present a problem at bedtime, but i needed a pick me up. worked until it was time to talk with Diana. she was right on time—4:00. she is a chatty woman. i enjoyed the meandering nature of our conversation, however. i hope we have another opportunity for a video chat before she flies off to Oregon this thursday, where she will be for most of the month of March.





Naturally i woke late this morning, at around half past six. i journaled until about nine o'clock when i left for Lumera, a cute place i previously had a coffee. this morning i went for breakfast and i was not disappointed. i had a bowl of fruit with Greek yogurt which followed a plate of scrambled eggs with onion and frijoles which hit the spot. the owner made up a juice which consisted of pina, cucumber, celery and nopales. it was surprisingly good. i left feeling buoyed and ready for my long trek to Parque La Plancha.



Monday 23 February 3:58 AM 67°F ☁

Woke late yesterday morning, around half past six, after going to bed at 12:30. after a hot shower and coffee preparation, i journaled until about nine o'clock, at which time i left for Lumera, a cute place i had previously stopped in for a coffee. this morning i went for breakfast and i was not disappointed. i had a large bowl of fruit with Greek yogurt, mint and an apricot marmalade which was delicious, and followed a plate of scrambled eggs with onion, just like Arie used to make, whom i was reminded of while eating, along with a side of frijoles. the platter hit the spot. the owner made up a juice for me which consisted of pina, cucumber, celery and nopales. it was surprisingly good. i left feeling buoyed and ready for my long trek to Parque La Plancha. as i left i learned the American had won the hockey final in overtime, and made an announcement which was met with great laughter. so far, so good.

On the way back to my apartment i picked up my laundry which i folded and put away while my phone charged. i was back on the street by 10:45, and heading up Calle 74. at Calle 55 i began meandering, a couple streets east, then north, and in this fashion i wound my way to Calle 47 which i took east all the way to to Parque Santa Ana taking photographs all along the way. Calle 47 is lined with restaurants, cafes, shops, and more shops, for a good five blocks, all the way to the entrance of the park.

Wandered around the park and plaza surrounding the church, inside, and out the side, then back to 47 down several blocks that were filled with bicyclists. i never saw so many clunkers, especially old junker tandems. it was fun. people were riding with smiles on their faces. i was walking with a smile on mine. it was already quite warm. i found my way into the La Plancha. the name plancha means flat top grill, and the food that is cooked a la plancha means grilled on a flat top grill.



Parque La Plancha is an urban park in the heart of Mérida, opened in late 2023. and serves as a recreational, cultural, and green space featuring an artificial lake, a Railway Museum, interactive fountains, an amphitheater, skate park, outdoor gym, and of course, since it's Mexico, a food court. i wandered, took several photographs, did some dips at the gym, sat, mused, and watched folks walking or cycling, climbing, this and that. like most places in Mexico, it is overrated, but it is an enjoyable green space. it simply is not what is described.

After about an hour i returned to Calle 47 where i holed up in a book store, cafe, art gallery. got into a pleasant conversation with the owner. i was impressed with his vinyl collection. original Beatles, Doors, Nirvana, all tightly sealed and covered in plastic.

Half way through my coffee it began to rain. it was a fair storm, and part of the interior of the cafe, more or less an open passageway, began to flood. the seating area along the passageway is covered and was unaffected, but it was interesting to watch the water level rise. when it slowed to a drizzle i left and found my way back to the heart Santa Ana.



It was substantially cooler, comfortable in fact. i headed down Calle 60, south, toward the central plaza. i needed to get a move on and make it back to the apartment for my sunday briefing with Cody. however, along the way i noticed an open photo gallery, doors, like those on a garage, up, welcoming me. i was struck by the work. everything was in black and white, and had a granular

quality, reminiscent of photographs from yesteryear. lots of people, faces, landscapes. as i perused i was met by Andy, the owner and photographer. we got to talking. well, he's as verbose as they come and soon enough he was educating me about the history of the Yucatan. he's been living in Merida 53 years. for an 80 year old man, he looks fabulous. when he came to a pause in his narration, i thanked him, shook his hand, and scurried out the door. it was 1:45. there was no way i was going to get back by 2:00. i noted that Cody had already attempted to phone me. i let him know i was on foot, but we could talk while i walked. he called. we chatted the entire trip back to my apartment, and for another fifteen minutes while i sat on the couch. we covered a great deal, but the work is at a stasis, waiting on a city inspector to show up.

*Tuesday 24 February 3:45 AM 61°F ☀️*

Utterly fatigued i went to bed last night at 7:00. i have no idea why i was so tired, but after lunch at Johannes, during which i suffered through the cauliflower tacos a second time, i began to feel tired upon my return. it was 3:30 at that point. i called Mike at State Farm, but apparently he was probably gone for the day. there was a short nap around 4:00. All Things Considered was on in the background. oh, i went through An Orchestra of Exiles and changed the color of those sections that will not be spoken during a performance, and added them up. looks like 80 minutes of material. there will be more, i'm sure. this was my first foray. even with the reduction, Books One & Two appear to be 11 hours in length. simply flabbergasting. i can't imagine anyone being interested in sitting through such a thing. what does one call something of this magnitude? it's beyond epic! i can't concern myself with the length however, while i am still in the creation phase. the first two books, while i feel good about the edit just completed, still have issues that require attention. first and foremost, the music—oh, i added a song for Nahor which i found online, a drinking song from a Mozart opera—the continuity of the music and musical decisions, and in Book One, the operatic scope. length be damned, creative integrity is far more important.



Wednesday 25 February 5:02 AM 57°F ☀

Ended another wonderful meal at La Sicilia with a glass of wine. learned they don't serve alcohol prior to 5:00, due to the type of permit they have. it seems i had never attempted to order wine prior to the appointed hour. i sipped slowly eavesdropping on a conversation nearby, three women barking about business. i wasn't able to determine if they were all related. the youngest and the middle aged gals were, but wasn't sure if the older lady was the grand dame of the group.

Returned to my apartment with a box of five slices and another with the leftover penne arrabbiata. went upstairs, opened my script and began listening to music for several scenes i had not chosen a particular piece. settled on a Mahler song cycle for a scene with Nahor. at 7:30 i was unbearably tired and went to bed. four hours and fifteen minutes later i woke for the bathroom. made the fatal mistake of looking at a text message from Claudio, and when i returned from the bathroom i was unable to fall asleep. lay until 1:00, called it quits, made a coffee and got down to brass tacks.

Finished updating the Manse Chronology, wrote a reply to Tal from Spiritual Singles, and resumed where i had left off in the script, working feverishly until 5:30, whereupon i took an hour long nap. up, coffee, back to script. feeling good, and delighted by my productivity.

Yesterday was a normal day, and as such, typical of the past several weeks, waking, attending to journal and travelogue, then turning attention to An Orchestra of Exiles, breakfast, back to work, a short nap, then working assiduously until late morning, when i began considering yoga. yesterday's session was fabulous. i'm looking for the same today. at 3:00 i left Majikal Xolos for the center of Merida and some food shopping. after picking up a large bag of granola and a smaller one of mixed nuts and dried fruit, i sat in the main plaza delighted by the sun over my shoulders, catching up on articles about the Pirates. at 4:00, i headed to little Sicily for lunch/dinner, as noted above. looking forward to the leftovers, as early as this afternoon. oo la la!



Thursday 26 February 4:12 AM 62°F ☀️

Feeling tired even after nearly nine hours of sleep. why?

Friday 27 February 3:54 AM 71°F ☀️

Avi and Eli Day! not a great sleep. after a trip to the bathroom at 1:47 i wasn't able to return to slumber. i think i had several catnaps amongst the turning, but not a deep sleep. feeling as though a return to bed would serve me well, but i have a coffee by my side, and a list of things to do, so i'll nap somewhere along the way, instead.

Yesterday was a fun and productive day. the morning was filled with the usual variety of work—journaling, the travelogue and script. sat for half an hour, then got on my mat and did one helluva kickass yoga routine. i felt great. i was fluid and flexible. breakfast followed, which was good. the mango at the end, hit the spot. afterwards i took a long walk. i went food shopping rather than revisiting the art gallery in Santiago. the only reason to return is to negotiate for one of the paintings i was attracted to, but yesterday i wasn't in the mood for that, so i picked up another bag of granola and one of mixed nuts and dried fruit, in an effort to keep ahead of my needs. sat in the central park a while, then headed to a new cafe, which i've passed numerous times, Mercy, on Calle 57 near 66. they made a good americano. i was the only patron. sat leafing through articles online. when i returned it was noon. resumed work on the script then prepared for my second yoga session.



Another excellent session. not in the least pyrotechnical, just a good, solid yoga routine. hung out for an hour, listening to music, then walked to La Sicilia, where i took lunch. made inquiry with my waiter, Lalo, and learned he and Bernardo, the owner, are brothers, and that it was Bernardo who started the original La Sicilia Restaurante in Belleville New Jersey, which i had mistakenly thought was an American's business and that he, Bernardo, had worked there learning the chops before returning to Mexico to create a satellite. nope, it's all in the family. two other brothers run the place in New Jersey. apparently, Bernardo worked for years at an Italian restaurant somewhere in Jersey before opening La Sicilia. once i returned to my apartment, i did some snooping. the restaurant in New Jersey does not have high marks, and i reviewed their menu, and they do not have a pasta arrabbiata. i have a feeling eli and i would be disappointed, so i'm going to suggest something else for us for my arrival next friday.

After dinner i wandered over to Cuerno de Toro in the waning sunshine, where i had a red IPA. it was only so so. i'm not a big fan of that style of beer unless i'm sweaty after a long, and hot bike ride. they didn't have any dark beers. i sat and caught up on the Grapefruit League. when i returned to the apartment i finished listening to the New Sounds show i had begun earlier. called it a day at 8:00.



*Saturday 28 3:29 AM February 72°F ☀️*

Shabbat Shalom!

It is the last day of the month of February:

Middle English feverer, from Old French feverier, based on Latin, februarius, from februa, the name of a purification feast held during this month. the spelling change cae in the 15th century due to association with the Latin word.



Friday began with a lack of sleep. though i had gone to bed early, i had difficulty returning to sleep after a trip to the bathroom in the middle of the nite. i had enough energy however, to work on An Orchestra of Exiles, as noted in my journal yesterday, and i was also able to catch up on the Travelogue. at 7:00 i showered, then hoofed it over to Super Aki, purchased several potatoes, a jalapeño pepper, and another yogurt, returned and set about making breakfast. i sautéed the potatoes with the jalapeño pepper and garlic, while i prepared my bowl of granola. when i had a free moment, i cut several slices of mango. when everything was ready, up i went, to dine in my apartment while listening to Morning Edition. all was well.

Left the apartment around 8:45. zig zagged my way to Santa Ana. picked up a loaf of sourdough at the Soco Bakery on Calle 51 and 58, then walked over to Andy's Photo Studio, but it was closed. i found my way to the park, sat and pulled up the galleries i had hoped to view. they were all due to open at 10:00, and it was only 9:20. returned to the cute cafe i had seen on Calle 58 not far from Andy's and had an organic americano. one of the better versions in the city.



Took my coffee and headed to the first gallery, Soho, on Calle 60 at 43. it was open. i entered, whereupon i was greeted by a young woman. i showed myself around. there were some interesting portraits, very colorful, reminiscent of the piece i purchased years ago in the Dominican Republic. the asking prices were through the roof.

When i was finished with my tour, i inquired with the young lady if the owner was American. yes. hence the name. i didn't waste a moment, launching into a diatribe about wall art. my feelings on the subject have not changed an iota over the past several decades. while i may be attracted to a variety of pieces, with an appreciation for their technique, style, use of color, as in the above piece, or content, i cannot fathom anyone actually engaged themselves in the process of painting. nothing original is transpiring. it is a process that is thousands of years old, and has not kept up with the contemporary life in the way other art forms have, particularly music, dance and theatre. it has not been innovative in a very long time. nearly everything conceivable has been done. the work created over the past couple of decades is highly derivative, or imitative. contemporary work is driven by economics not artistic considerations. painting was long ago superseded by photography. it has not had an original voice in a long time. the idea of painting, conceptually, needs to be redefined, not in a broad context, but by individual artists. next!



I like the juxtaposition of colors, the appearance of texture, but mainly the stark shadows along the street, so distinct from the sky which is really what drew my attention.

Calle 60 is marked by galleries. across the street and south a block is, Nuahalli, a word from pre-Hispanic Mexico, which means, that which is hidden and within. all the work is dedicated to Yucatecan imagery and ideas. i was not attracted though i saw merit. very pretentious and off putting from the moment you enter. while the gallery was open, the door was locked. a woman, stands by the door, checks you out before allowing entrance. the ambience is reverence. i was not impressed.



Back through the park, i returned to Calle 58 in the hope Andy's gallery was open. along the way i stopped at a smaller gallery next to the cafe which was open. a woman from Minnesota owned the place. her work was displayed, watercolors of herbs and assorted medicinal plants. not very interesting. in my wandering i came upon her, seated at a desk, fast at work. asked if she was from Minnesota, which jumpstarted a conversation. at one point however, she simply took over and went on and on, about this and that, leaving me flabbergasted and anxious to find a way to extricate myself. when i was able to bid farewell, i continued down the street and saw that Andy's shop was still closed, which was disappointing since i had come essentially to re visit his gallery intent on making a purchase.

It was time to return. my ankle was quite sore, and i had a long way to walk. somehow i managed. i was relieved when i entered the house and walked upstairs, to learn Priscila was done with her cleaning. i could sit on the couch and relax, catch my breath and attend to messages and notes. got on my mat at 1:30 but i was only able to do yoga for 35 minutes. i was far too weary to continue. took a nice nap, followed by a shower, relaxed, wrote Austin, and at 4:00 walked over to Cafe Montejo for a late lunch. i had the same meal i'd had on my previous visit, a couple weeks back, grilled salmon accompanied by a mixed green salad with cranberries, slivers of almond and goat cheese, and an extra side dish of Chambray potatoes. it was very good, and i was content. returned to the apartment, fiddled for a couple three hours, fell asleep at one point, and by 8:00 i was in bed. it was a good day, tho a bit short. they are precious. leave taking is in less than a week.



Sunday 1 March 4:55 AM 72 °F ☁

Strange night, tho another wonderful variation on a sabbath saturday!

Let me begin with the strangeness of the evening. as i exited La Sicilia where i took dinner once again, this is how i was greeted. it was like a Hollywood set, the moon hovering, tho i wasn't able to fully capture its brightness. Calle 59 was uncannily empty. i was set to walk to Apostolo.

Rather than my usual arrabbiata, i had linguine con vongole. it was good, but far from the house specialty. i think it may be too subtle a dish. they seem to excel in heavier, thicker sauces, like marinara or pesto. at any rate, my meal was fine and as i left i was struck by the movie like set of the street. after taking the photograph i continued down Calle 59 to 62 before turning north, zig zagging a bit as darkness cloaked the city. the bar was full. there were two chairs close to the wall on the window side. before i could take the stool next to an American woman the barkeep, who usually works when i visit, paused, then said, 'a porter, right?' bingo, i was a instantaneously a celebrity.



The woman i and began gabbing about Merida, food in the city. where can we get good tacos. i made several recommendations. told them about Taqueria de la Union across from their hotel just down the street, Cuerno de Toro, the other taproom nearby which has a broader menu, and of course, La Sicilia she and her husband are from Bend Oregon. they were celebrating their fifteenth anniversary since their first trip to Merida. her daughter was supposed to join them but work got in the way, an opportunity to speak about our children. every once in a while her husband would enter the conversation, then resume talking with another couple at the corner. all in all, it was fun. they took their leave as i was three quarters through my porter. i was going to move closer to the other couple, but they seemed rather tight, so i kept my place. i finished my

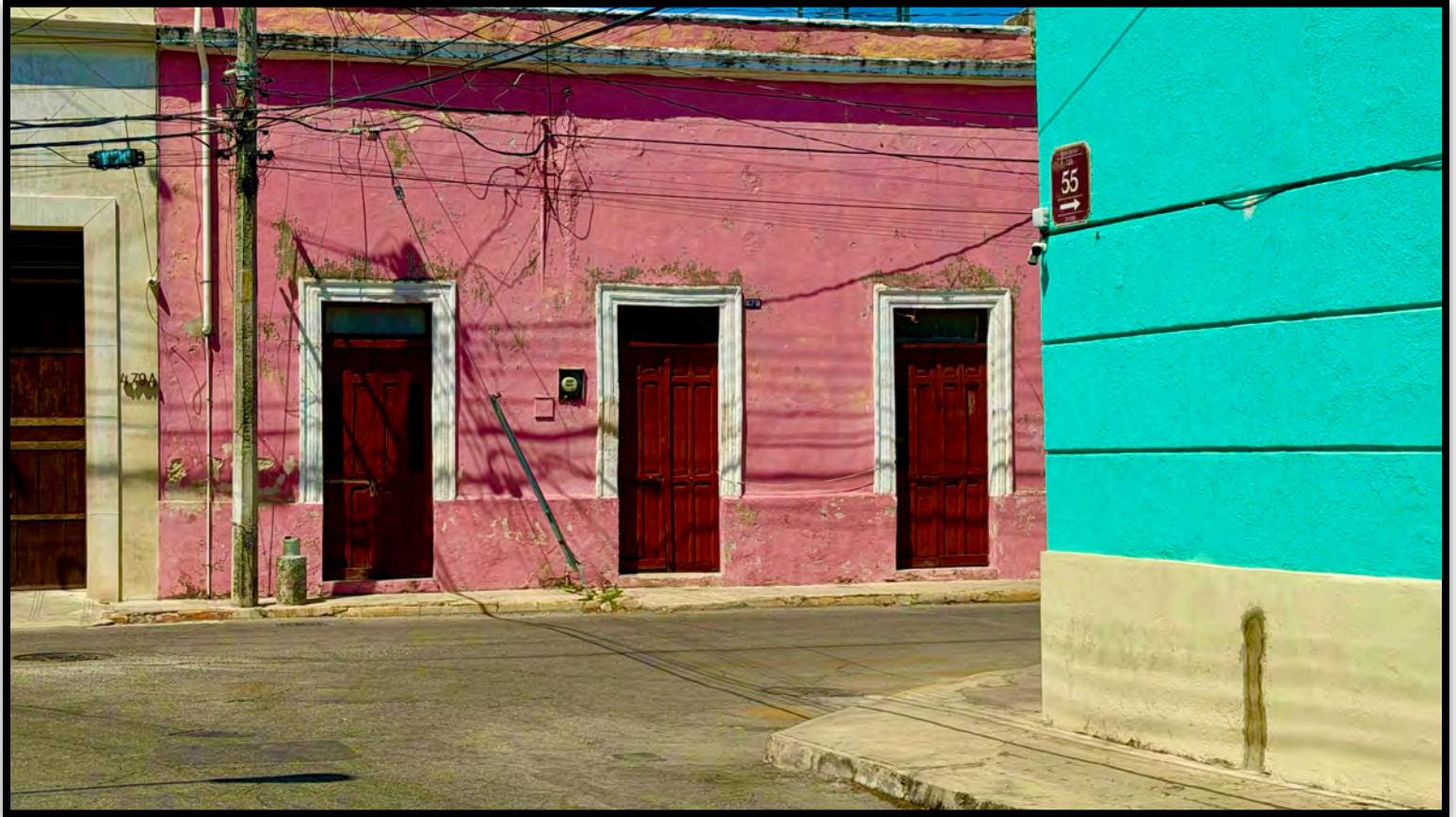
beer and gave some serious thought to another. the other won, and my glass was refilled. it was even better than the first. i drank more slowly. unfortunately no new faces entered, or those that did took tables. the other couple left not long after my second glass arrived.



Facing the window, i watched the scene in the park, the passing pedestrians, traffic, carts of crafts, food, a cleaning crew, all the while, talking to myself about the quodlibet i have planned for Book Three which i am scheduled to begin monday morning. i finished my beer and headed out. the night air was pleasant. the walk enjoyable. i picked up my laundry. i was surprised to learn they were open until 8:00. it was 7:30. back at the apartment i laid the bag of clothes on the floor at the foot of the bed, and took my place on the couch. the longer i sat the wearier i became. i got into bed a little after 8:00 fully clothed and fell asleep with the light on. woke for the bathroom an hour and a half later, removed my shorts, shut the light, and fell back asleep. i think i only had to get up three, or at most four more times which i thought was superb considering i'd had a second beer. however, the porters are poured into twelve ounce glasses so two are only a pint and a half which is my limit. the strangeness of the night had to do with the dreams that rose halfway through my slumber, none of which i recall, and the cast of characters who made their appearance. it was an odd mix, so it felt. eli was present. perhaps Zaza, though i'm not so sure about her presence. my neck was an issue. finding comfort became paramount. all in all, i had a decent enough sleep, certainly a good length, and i feel pretty good as i write.

As for the remainder of the day: i believe i woke around 3:30, certainly no later than 3:45. the morning was marked by the usual, work here, in my journal, and the final pages of the script. i sat at 6:15, afterwards prepare for yoga, on the mat at 7:30 and off i went. it was a glorious morning. i

was bathed in sunlight. it didn't take long for my body to begin sweating. my routine was sublime. i took sirvasana on my mat rather than the bed. i was too sweaty to muss up the linen. showered, dressed, then got breakfast together. had to deal with ants who were all over the sourdough. after my meal i sat and relaxed waiting for my 10:00 zoom call with Zaza.



Something seems to have shifted for her. not long after our phone conversation and several texts, she ghosted me. a week or two later, she texted an apology for abandoning our fragile connection., then ghosted me again. a month later she resurfaced, apologizing all over again. ever since, we have had steady communication, arranging the zoom on the eve of her trip to Europe for business and study. initially i thought the entire trip was about studying, but it turns out she's a consultant for a dairy concern in Ireland. my impression about her consulting work was that it was related to her dance therapy. we never spoke about the other side of her brain which is involved in the world of business. it was interesting to learn. she's an expert on the dairy industry. and the company she works with in Ireland are organic yogurt producers, though they may produce other products but our discussion was focused on yogurt. we talked for two hours. after an hour and a half it seemed like she was interested in taking her leave and attending to packing, but we wound up continuing our conversation and even after another half hour it was apparent we could continue much longer.

I am attracted by her. i like that she is Jewish; a dancer; a creative person; that she utilizes her right brain as well as her left; abundantly attractive...later in the day as we texted each other, she proposed having a Passover Seder together. i will still be in Brooklyn and she will be returning from Europe, so it was clear to me that she was implying doing this at the my apartment in Brooklyn. she has friends; i have friends. it's a lovely and highly attractive gesture.

Left the apartment at a little after noon. wasn't quite sure what i wanted to do, so i decided to begin with a coffee at Blue Bag. found my way to the shop and had an americano. it isn't the most comfortable cafe. it isn't really a cafe. it's a roasting business with several tables. the machines were silent. the air was fresh, being whirled about silently by overhead fans. i was comfortable. when i left it was after 1:00. walked by the gallery where i had been attracted to a certain artist's work, but it was closed. i simply returned to the apartment. i was consumed with thoughts about An Orchestra of Exiles and how to set up the philosophical quodlibet i envision. i worked for a while, then turned my attention to my second yoga session. i kept it simple, straightforward, nothing pyrotechnical, basic postures, few, if any, variations. i was finished 65 minutes later, once again sweaty. got into the shower which felt refreshing. once dressed i sat for a bit before focusing on dinner plan. by 5:30 i was out the door and heading to La Sicilia.

*Monday 2 March 4:47 AM 71°F ☀️*

Woke to go to the bathroom, and by habit, checked the time, and saw it was 4:30. i was flabbergasted. i had slept through the nite, from 8:45 until 4:30 with only one trip to the bathroom. in fact from that first trip, to my waking nearly five hours of good solid sleep elapsed. it was half an hour after i had asked my body upon getting into bed, to waken at 4:00, but i was satisfied. washed, prepared coffee. reviewed the word of the day, *exhilarate*, and the associated test word, *thrill*, forwarding the email to eli, hoping he would have the same good fortune i had had guessing, all the while, inching my closer to opening An Orchestra of Exiles.



Yesterday morning was spent organizing my travelogue and balancing the books before taking breakfast at the apartment. i usually head out sundays, but decided to prepare potatoes as well as the usual granola and yogurt, along with a couple slices of toasted sourdough. by 9:15 i was walking to Parque Santiago where i sat a few minutes before ordering an Uber to take me to the

Gran Museo to the north on the road to Progreso, out in the suburbs, a fifteen minute ride, literally in the middle of nowhere, unless one calls being surrounded by endless shopping, somewhere.



I was only interested in taking photographs. from the first i had seen the building, back in early december not long after i arrived, i was impressed with its architecture. i wandered around as much as i was able, took several pictures, poked my head inside and took another, sat and reviewed my options. i had previously planned on going to Progreso for the day, but decided i really didn't want to spend the day wandering aimlessly under a fiery sun, and chose to visit the museum instead. it's an archaeological museum. i was not in the least interested in spending the requisite time wandering around stuffing my head with information i find is useless at the moment. if i were a tourist i would feel differently but i am not a tourist. i am here working, and this museum does not relate to my work. i have visited an overwhelming number of archaeological sites throughout Mexico, Guatemala and Belize. i am familiar with the history of the region. after fifteen minutes i ordered another Uber and backtracked my way to Santa Ana in the hopes Andy's Photo Gallery would be open.

Unfortunately Andy's was close, as was the cute little organic coffee shop nearby. i walked down Calle 47 a block and found an espresso bar, sat outside and nursed an americano watching bicyclists pass. i've never seen so many junkers, rehabbed bikes, an assortment of two wheeled machines, tandems and the like. it was delightful, even for a bicycle snob like myself. after my coffee i headed down Calle 58, Andy's shop was still closed. it was time to keep on walking.



*Tuesday 3 March 3:51 AM 70 °F* 🌤️

Another excellent sleep. today is my last day in Merida and i will do what i have done most weekdays, work through the morning, late morning, head to Blue Bag for a quarter kilo to take home as a memento of my time here, but i will need coffee while in Brooklyn, return to the apartment, prepare for my midday yoga session, relax, pack, head into the heat and walk to the central business district to do a little food shopping for tomorrow's journey, sit in the Gran Plaza, then head to La Sicilia for my last meal, return to my apartment, hang out, head to bed.

That was yesterday's routine. my work session went well. i read several articles about Russia during the early period of Abraham's arrival, from 1901 through 1905 and the October Revolution. compiled lists of cultural figures i might like to include in my philosophical quodlibet, and read up on the game of Vint which will become the central metaphor for these sessions. got an early start to yoga. my session was really good. i was particularly happy because i had and still have a slight neck issue from too much stretching accompanied by an odd position during my sleep saturday night. i was finished much earlier than normal so i sat and listened to the BBC report on the Iran conflict, then dressed and headed down Calle 63 to the natural foods store in the central business district where i purchased supplies for this morning's breakfast. afterward, i wandered into the main plaza and sat. taped a voice memo, did a few searches, one on Vint, the card game that will be played. learned it is one of the antecedents to Contract Bridge. i'll need more insight before i can actually begin to shape a card game. watched people taking photographs, took a few of my own, then headed to dinner at La Sicilia. another excellent meal.



*Wednesday 4 March 1:16 AM 71°F ☀*

I am awake at this ridiculous hour because after four hours of sleep, i had to go to the bathroom, and when i returned to bed i was unable to fall asleep. i lay for an hour and a half and when i had to pee once again, i decided i would stay up and do all those things necessary before taking my leave. this is my last morning in Merida. i will be taking a 5:45 AM Uber to the airport.

Yesterday was not the normal day i had expected, tho my early morning before breakfast was, which offered a false sense of what was to come. i woke early, at 3:30, not unusual during my stay, and engaged in a typical fashion with my journal and travelogue, while sipping a coffee, before turning my attention to the script and those google searches i had bookmarked, transferring the information to the appropriate journals i keep for this project. at 5:30 i sat, then resumed work on *An Orchestra of Exiles* until 7:00 when i took a shower. afterwards, dressed, feeling clean and sparkly, i descended to the kitchen and prepared the last potato for breakfast, along with a bowl of granola and yogurt. i cut thin slices to speed up the cooking process, then added jalapeño and garlic. it was the best version of this dish yet. in fact, breakfast was rather enjoyable. i ate while catching up on the events in the Middle East.



After breakfast i expected to speak with Cody, but he was unavailable, so i checked in with United and paid for my bag. at 9:30 i called Mr. Adams and we squared away my needs for thursday. i dressed and left Xolos, sauntering over to Blue Bag to pick up a quarter kilo of French Roast, and while the beans were ground i sat nursing an Americano.

When i returned it was a little after 11:00. while having my coffee i envisioned in a new section in my travelogue, showcasing Majikal Xolos where i have lived the last three months. i immediately began work, uploading photographs from the Bed and Breakfast's website along with their history, then touring the house with my camera. within an hour i had a nice layout. it was time for yoga.



My neck was more of an issue yesterday than it had been, and after working tentatively for an hour, i decided not to continue, for fear i would exacerbate the situation. the routine was 65 minutes long. i was satisfied. i am looking forward to a kick ass routine at the Houston airport, hoping to repeat the previous yoga session on my way to Merida. i'll have an even longer layover, so plenty of time to move slowly.

After sirvasana i resumed working on the travelogue, translating the Spanish from their website, into English, and choosing a different font and formatting. it looks good. it was now deep in the afternoon and time for lunch, my last, at La Sicilia. i walked down Calle 59 as i have so many times over the last three months, passing Cafe Montejo, Placer Delirio, Blue Woo, the park, and all those little tienda and hotels i have never stepped foot within, the garage now used as an art gallery, the shops, and then the magenta walls of the restaurant, and the climbing plant in bloom, the bench outside where i've sat numerous times, once, waiting for KiKo, most other times, simply to relax. i entered, took the table in the rear corner on the interior wall, chatted with Lalo my waiter, ordered a garden salad and penne arrabbiata, the dish i have had the most, then sat back and relaxed soaking the ambience up. it was my nineteenth visit.

Dinner was good. i was satisfied. finished, i washed up. it was time for photographs. i toured the restaurant taking pictures. there were few patrons to interfere. it was still rather early. when i felt i had captured La Sicilia satisfactorily, i got the boys to sit for a candid shot. i shook hands with Bernardo, paid, shook hands with Lalo, waited for Victor, and when he returned, we wished each other well while shaking hands. one last look and out the door, and back down Calle 59.



Stopped at Super Aki where i picked up a couple of bananas. continued down the avenue drawn by the sunset. there was an orange halo over the city. i walked to Calle 74 turned south, then at called 61 turned west and walked half a block where i could get a good shot of the sky illuminated by the cloud covered sun.

It was beginning to drizzle. i picked up the pace and returned to Xolos and my apartment. i was feeling tired. i doodled, trying to work on the new section of my travelogue, but i was unable to focus. listened to the various NPR shows after All Things Considered, then, around 7:00 began to get ready for bed. by 7:30 the light was off and i was out.

Merida has been good for me even though on occasion, annoying. the laid back nature of the city has allowed my creative juices to abundantly flow over most of the past three months. if i had it to do over again however, i doubt i would have stayed at Majikal Xolos the entire three months, opting instead, since State Farm was paying, for something more upscale with slightly more traveler friendly amenities. on that note, it is unlikely i would have stayed in Merida the entire time, more than likely dividing my time between three separate places, Merida included. i do not regret my decision. i will forever fondly recall the time i spent here. it has become inextricably woven into my work. thank you, and goodnite!



# Majikal Xolos



Mientras que la alegría seduce al semblante para abrazar al presente, el alma vuela hacia coordenadas que la imaginación construye dentro del espíritu. Ahí, el sonido que se respira, el viento que se observa y la luz que se emana, se convierten en memorias para el corazón. Cuántos momentos se conjugan para determinar un andar ligero, un viaje con poco equipaje pero siempre con gratos recuerdos. Así, el todo se integra para trazar el rumbo hacia un lugar lleno de historias y de objetos que relatan su lejano origen, pero al mismo tiempo, su sorprendente coincidencia.

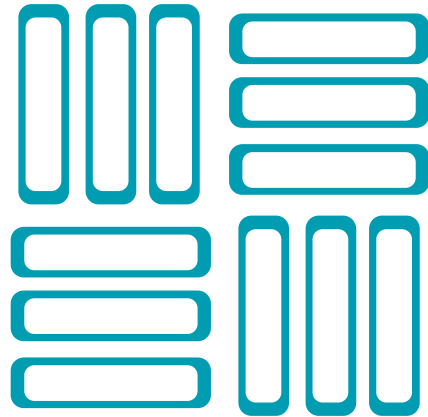
While joy seduces the countenance to embrace the present, the soul flies to coordinates that imagination builds within the spirit. There, the sound that is breathed, the wind that is observed, and the light that is emanated, become memories for the heart. How many moments are combined to determine a light walk, a trip with little luggage, but always with pleasant memories. The whole is integrated to trace the course towards a place full of stories and objects that tell its distant origin, but at the same time, its surprising coincidence.

Contrastes, tonalidades y expresiones que juegan para fusionarse, naturaleza y vida que habla por sí sola. Entornos enmarcados por la identidad de una tierra mágica, que ha sido testigo de la mezcla de diversas formas de vivir, de pensar. Un hábitat enriquecido por la mirada creativa de una cultura cálida, franca, alegre y siempre hospitalaria, que en una sola emoción sólo es posible expresar con la palabra México.



Contrasts, tonalities and expressions that play to merge, nature and life that speaks for itself. Environments framed by the identity of a magical land, which has witnessed the mixture of different ways of living, of thinking. A habitat enriched by the creative gaze of a warm, frank, cheerful and always hospitable culture, which in a single emotion can only be expressed with the word Mexico.

Porque estamos convencidos que el espacio que te rodea es el resultado de la plenitud de tu interior, recorreremos el mundo para impregnarnos de cada rincón y elemento cultural que cuente la historia de una identidad que enamore. Nos inspiramos en la armonía y el equilibrio para crear espacios que cautiven los sentidos, donde seamos capaces de expresar el valor del ser humano dentro de una filosofía de paz, libertad, diversidad, autenticidad y valentía.



Because we are convinced that the space that surrounds you is the result of the fullness of your interior, we travel the world to impregnate ourselves with every corner and cultural element that tells the story of an identity that falls in love. We are inspired by harmony and balance to create spaces that captivate the senses, where we are able to express the value of the human being within a philosophy of peace, freedom, diversity, authenticity and courage.

Viviendo la riqueza y encanto del folklore mexicano, somos una gran familia que trabaja apasionadamente por servirte. Mediante una plataforma digital de alojamiento, somos proveedores de atmósferas mágicas que alimentan los sentidos a través de espacios acogedores y cálidos. Sea cual sea el motivo de tu viaje, en cortas o largas estancias; descanso y restauración en apartamentos, casas y estudios.

Living the richness and charm of Mexican folklore, we are a great family that works passionately to serve you. Through a digital hosting platform, we are providers of magical atmospheres that feed the senses through cozy and warm spaces. Whatever the reason for your trip, in short or long stays; rest and restoration in apartments, houses and studios.

Inmersos en un mundo cambiante y abrazando la expresión de lo trascendental, nos dirigimos a resignificar la manera de percibir y vivir experiencias dentro de alojamientos donde el mayor lujo, es el valor de lo genuino. Desconéctate, respira y sonríe. Deja fluir tus sentidos y vive el encanto del presente en una tierra mágica que tiene todo para ti.



Immersed in a changing world and embracing the expression of the transcendental, we aim to resignify the way of perceiving and living experiences in accommodations where the greatest luxury is the value of the genuine. Disconnect, breathe and smile. Let your senses flow and live the charm of the present in a magical land that has everything for you.

Majikal

Creatividad y amor en cada rincón.

Creativity and love in every corner.



When i first arrived i spent time in the garden area, dining, sometimes working, or socializing, but as time went on, i gravitated there less and less. i think it was related to the other guests who were staying at Xolos. they seemed increasingly less interesting or simply unavailable.



UN RECORRIDO POR

# Nuestra Historia

Nuestras propiedades con una personalidad original comparten historias diversas que reflejan nuestra vida familiar, la experiencia étnico cultural de los viajes que hemos realizado y la cultura de las ciudades donde nos hemos establecido.

Our properties with an original personality share diverse stories that reflect our family life, the ethnic cultural experience of the trips we have made and the culture of the cities where we have settled.

En 1995 Majikal B&B Cholula nació como un conjunto de 4 viviendas familiares que compartían áreas verdes. Con el pasar del tiempo estas propiedades fueron divididas en apartamentos temáticos creando Martinlandia. Fue nuestra preocupación poner atención especial en la comodidad, armonía y privacidad necesarias para que te sientas en Casa fuera de Casa.



In 1995 Majikal B&B Cholula was born as a set of 4 family dwellings that shared green areas. Over time these properties were divided into themed apartments creating Martinlandia. It was our concern to pay special attention to the comfort, harmony and privacy necessary to make you feel like a home away from home.

Para el año 2003 decidimos invertir en una propiedad en el centro histórico de Mérida, así nace Majikal B&B Mérida que por razones financieras, se quedó abandonada hasta el año 2009. Con el inicio de la remodelación como vivienda familiar nace el primero de 14 proyectos de Casas Lottus. Todas las propiedades son coloniales y han sido restauradas para brindarte seguridad, comodidad y conexión con la historia de la arquitectura de la ciudad.

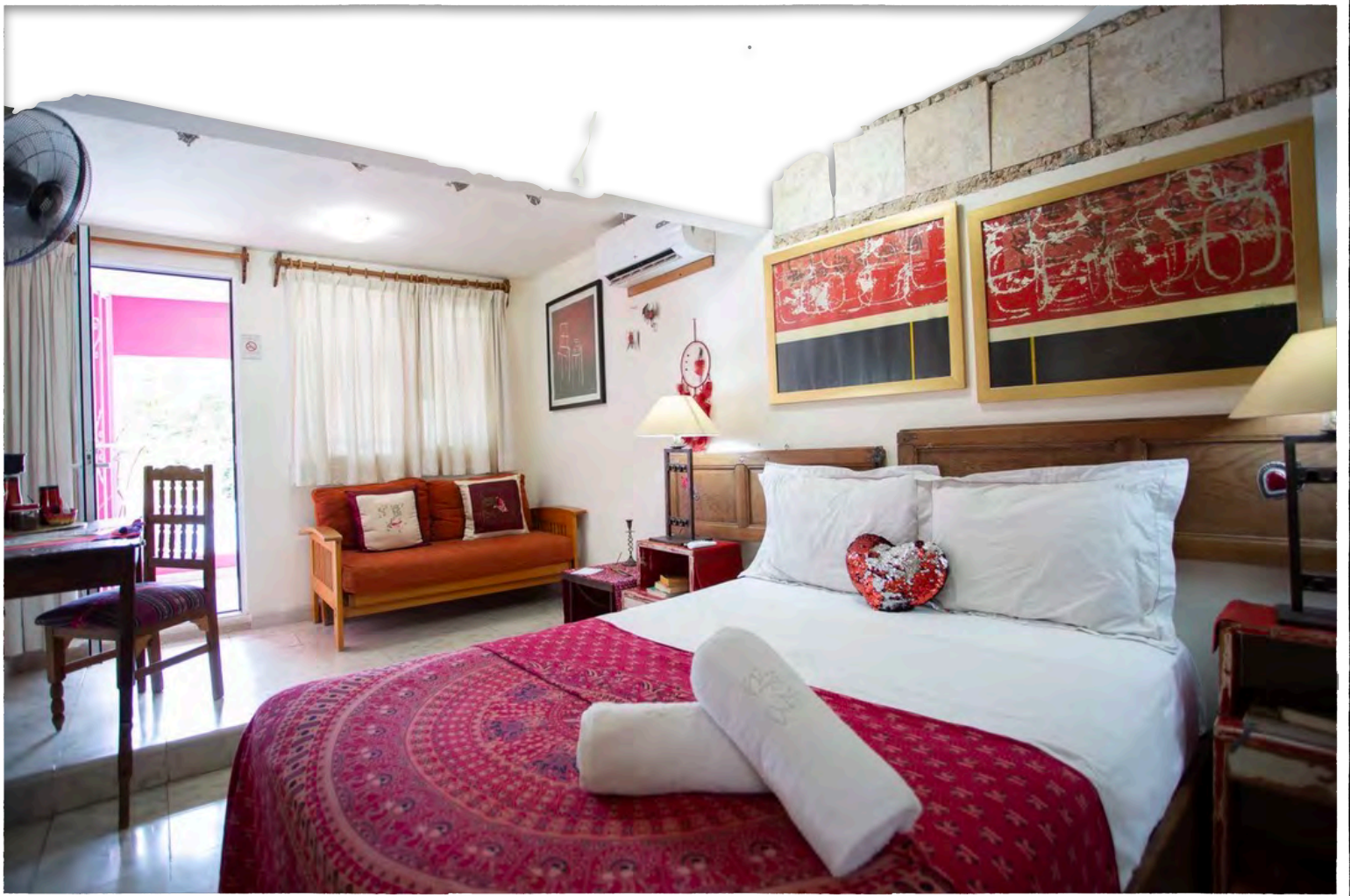
In 2003 we decided to invest in a property in the historic center of Mérida. This is how Majikal B&B Mérida was born. For financial reasons, it was abandoned until 2009. With the beginning of the remodeling as a family home, the first of 14 projects of Casas Lottus was born. All properties are colonial and have been restored to provide security, comfort and connection to the history of the city's architecture.

Nuestras casas tienen su propio carácter y reflejan las experiencias vividas por diferentes generaciones. Ustedes como huéspedes, participan en la continuidad y larga existencia de nuestros proyectos, es decir, son parte de la historia de Majikal B&B.

Our houses have their own character and reflect the experiences lived by different generations. As guests, you participate in the continuity and long existence of our projects, that is, you are part of the history of Majikal B&B.



**Please, the door is ajar, the one on the right, entrance to Corazon where i have spent the past three months opening my heart to the city of Merida, veritabily hibernating in my little apartment, hour after hour on the ochre colored couch diligently working my script, An Orchestra of Exiles, moving it from Book One through Book Two, and the start of Book Three.**



**While i have felt embraced by my cozy apartment, space enough for my needs, it has not been without tribulation. perhaps it is not the apartment as much as the home. the water has been extraordinarily annoying, finicky, difficult to find an adequate temperature. i've been scalded several times thinking i had successfully blended the cold with the hot. on several occasions, while fiddling, hot water continued coursing even though the cock was turned off. it was always an early morning crashout. recently, there was the plague of ants marching in a long line from the top of the door leading to the terrace, across the wall and down to an opened bag of mixed nuts and dried fruit. i had no idea that was in their dining wheelhouse. they first appeared several weeks ago, to attack a loaf of sourdough bread that was properly covered, albeit in penetrable paper.**

**The kitchen is a less than satisfactory. again, appliances are finicky, particularly the toaster oven. after three months i still don't have the hang of it. it takes forever to toast. the stove is also weird. it's a communal space and it feels like it while cooking. i never attempted too much, tho in retrospect i could have done a little more.**





**Early on, i gravitated to the terrace which faces east. unfortunately, it also faces the front of the house which is along Calle 74 a very busy street. lots of buses, old and dilapidated, diesel fumes spewing, along with hot motorcycles, and contrasting, a man riding a bicycle with cargo attachment at the front, ringing his bell for the neighbors to come and purchase fruits and vegetables stacked and looking fresh. the terrace is where i did yoga. the terrace is where i listened to loud music. the terrace is where i often took breakfast. el patio, seated on a stiff spongy fiber chair, coffee atop the wooden table, i sat and listened to the birds. across the street and behind those abandoned buildings was a green space. all the homes that open to the area are uninhabited, those on Calle 64 and the adjacent Calle 63. the trees have grown tall. i saw many birds flitting about, several large species, perhaps raptors, and many smaller colorful songbirds. as well, in the tropical garden at the back of the house, tho still inside, i often sat by the pool and invariably saw hummingbirds flitting about the blooms.**