

## A Letter in Response to Lara Narcisi\*

I like your understanding and appreciation of Tripmaster Wittman and his journeys. It's been my standard for a good book that the characters change, not just their fortunes but their very souls. I had to work hard to push Wittman to change. Though Monkey's motto is "Be-e-en!"—"Change!"—his transformation was hard won. I'm glad that you saw that he did change, and that his changes are natural, and came about through language. I mean to help build the American language.

Calling the book *His Fake Book*, I meant to suggest a jazz score for improv. I would tell some Monkey stories that trip the reader out; the reader invents more stories. Yes, Wittman becomes a very different person in *The Fifth Book of Peace*. I'm very interested to know what you think happened between the time of Wittman the Alienated Ranter and Wittman the Family Man. I am gratified that you do not seem to think that I have totally contradicted myself.

I'm happy that you see that I am not just playing around with form. There's content! There's story.

It's good to hear you laugh at the relationship between Zeppelin and Wittman. But you are so serious about the rest of the book. Am I not funny throughout?

You affirm that I was able to pull off what I wanted to pull off. I can include everything—and everybody—I know.

Right now, I'm writing Wittman at 60 years of age. He's aging. I'm looking forward to your reading of that big continuous change that we have no control over.

Thank you! We communicated.

Maxine Hong Kingston

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\*Reference: Lara Narcisi, "From Lone Monkey to Family Man: Wittman's Evolving Inclusion in *Tripmaster Monkey*," *Connotations* 12.2-3 (2002/2003): 249-80.

For the original article as well as all contributions to this debate, please check the Connotations website at <<http://www.connotations.de/debnarcisi01223.htm>>.