

Toyon: Multilingual Literary Magazine

Volume 69
Issue 1 *Volume 69: The Sex Issue / El Edicion
del Sexo*

Article 19

2023

Sciamachy

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Recommended Citation

Little, Arno (2023) "Sciamachy," *Toyon: Multilingual Literary Magazine*: Vol. 69: Iss. 1, Article 19.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.humboldt.edu/toyon/vol69/iss1/19>

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SCIAMACHY

Arno Little

I'm petitioning the local governments to change the name of Iowa to Idaho-2. Things get confusing in upper middle America, and I think a simplification is in order. Or, maybe Idaho-1 should just become Iowa-2. In any case, I've been looking at maps, the big ones found at the Bureau of Land Management. I unroll them across large tables in cluttered offices and pour over latitudes and longitudes with my magnifying glass.

I rub my chin and go:

"Hmmm."

I've been collecting testimonials from confused travelers who set out for Idaho but ended up heading for Iowa; baffled Oregonians who wanted a quick hop over the border for Denny's and ended up in Nebraska somehow. Simple folk, found with their heads stuck out of their car windows, screaming into the sky and shaking their fists at God when their supposedly three-hour drive just never ends. They wind up being pulled over for reckless existentialism, and many are institutionalized. The experience breaks their minds, unfortunately, and they never really recover. The scientific community at large is either blissfully ignorant of this madness, or worse yet, in the pocket of Big Highway.

Yes, of course there's a conspiracy. Mustache twirlers gather in occult orgies on moonlit nights and draw up plans to give states similar sounding names. It's obvious if you know what you're looking for. Think about the tourists who wander about in confused herds asking about the local history of places. They don't know where they are! They've been swindled into being in the wrong state, bilked of their gas and knick-knack money. The lucky ones return home unscathed, and say in their country accents:

"Oh me and Martha had such a swell time in Idaho. Why, we even saw Albert the Bull."

You fools, that was Iowa!

Sometimes I lie awake at night in fear and righteous indignation. I fret around my house and peer through the blinds, looking for signs of the corporate lawyers who stalk my intellectual properties with their private investigators, just waiting for me to slip up so they can drag my reputation through the mud. They'll slander me, and I'll be declared a kook, a crackpot, a fringe thinker fallen from grace.

Look for me in the papers.

They'll say I'm a danger to the community, a headline-worthy menace. I'll be pictured on the courthouse steps, big map in hand, with journalists crowded around me and a fist raised defiantly in the air. I'll never be confused again. Just as soon as Idaho-1 becomes Iowa-2, or Iowa-1 becomes Idaho-2.