Some Observations on Electric Eels

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I gave this speech at the Kindling Words writers’ conference in February 2012. The book I refer to below that has a character with lobster-claw arms is the extraordinary *Above*, by Leah Bobet.

- I know from talking to a few people already that my title has caused some puzzlement:
  - “Some Observations on Electric Eels.”
- And I’ll give away the mystery now:
- It comes from a quote, one of my very favorites ever, by Dame Edith Sitwell:
  - “I am not eccentric. It is just that I am more alive than most people. I am an unpopular electric eel set in a pond of goldfish.”
- And the reason this is one of my favorite quotes ever is that it gets at a dynamic I find endlessly fascinating in both fiction and life:
- The tension between who you are and who the world wants you to be,
- Or rather, what the world regards as successful, in all the ways it measures and rewards success:
  - Beauty, at any age
  - Popularity, when you’re a kid or a teenager
  - Fame and Money, when you’re an adult
    - Sales, when you’re a writer, illustrator, or editor
- Now perhaps you’re a person who has always had all of these measures of success—
  - Or better still, you’re a person who’s been able to disregard those measures completely, and live entirely according to your own standards.
- If this is you, I salute you.
- But as all of us are artists and readers,
- I’m guessing most of us have probably gone without those rewards at times,
  - And felt some angst about it.
- In fact, I’ll speculate further and guess that each of you probably felt like an outsider of some kind when you were a child.
- Or, if you didn’t start out as an outsider,
  - You found yourself unusually devoted to writing, observing, drawing
    - And that slowly set you apart over time.
- Then, as a grown-up, you’ve continued those activities,
  - And turned them into strengths:
    - The way you make your living
    - The way you connect.
    - The way you express your sense of being in the world
- But even once you have that satisfaction,
  - It is often still easy to feel like the eel among the goldfish.
- It can happen when you produce a book out of deep personal need, really ripping your veins open on the page, working for years and years to shape something that reflects your soul—
  - and then you see six paranormal romances on the bestseller list.
- Or for editors, when we find that one manuscript where every word is just right, where the emotions sweep us away like a river, where we put the last page down with that deep internal knowledge: “This is mine, I will publish this.”
And all the media attention goes to a celebrity book.

- I don’t mean to imply that all paranormal romances or celebrity books are bad,
  - Because lord knows I’ve edited them,
- Or to introduce bad karma by talking sales here at Kindling Words.
- Rather, I want to think about the situation of the electric eel in the goldfish pond, in both literature and life:
  - The way we tell stories of outsiders facing a seemingly monolithic Other
  - And the ways we deal with those situations ourselves.

I’m going to start with some definition of terms here.

- The outsider—the figure I’m analogizing to the electric eel—
  - Is not so much a creature that is necessarily different from the people around it—though it often is,
  - As that it’s conscious of some difference from the people around it
  - And it lets that consciousness influence its attitude and behavior.
- It sees the goldfish as a group, and itself as not a member of it, and that exclusion becomes a defining characteristic of its identity.
  - Sometimes in a positive way—remember Edith Sitwell defines herself as “more alive than most people;”
    - That she really finds her strength and energy in that.
  - And sometimes in a negative way—the eel wants to be like the goldfish, to have those measures of worldly success,
    - But it’s unable to get past that sense of difference,
    - And that perceived not-good-enough can make the eel turn on itself,
      - Loathe itself, in a way that’s destructive both to the eel and to any chances of its making a connection with others.
- I also think it’s important to note that the goldfish—also known as insiders, the cool kids, bullies, or the Man—
  - are not necessarily consciously, actively evil,
    - Not automatically out to pressure the outsider into conformity.
- Groups form for all sorts of reasons—personalities and pleasures, as well as politics and protection.
  - And they’re often simply unaware of any outsiders,
  - or would even be open to their joining the group,
    - If they’d step up and say hello.
- But still the eel can perceive the group as exclusionary or evil, because the goldfish seem so omnipresent, and the sense of difference, or failure, so great.
- Quite often these goldfish are actively evil, of course,
  - In ways we can all recognize or remember: nasty remarks, physical violence, loud exclusion, whispers behind hands.
- And just as the outsider is aware of its difference,
  - These goldfish, with their numbers, are aware of their power, and intent on maintaining it.
- As I understand it, once you’re a member of the actively evil type of fish,
  - It becomes a self-reinforcing system:
- Since every fish among the goldfish is an individual as well,
  - Potential difference—eeliness—could break out at any time,
  - And it must be squashed in others, the better to squash it in yourself.
• If the dream of the outsider is to be accepted, or at least to be left alone
• Then the dream of the goldfish is actually to accept, to have everyone get along and go with the flow,
  o Which isn’t possible so long as that outsider separates itself from the rest.

• So this conflict between insiders and outsiders can start at a very early age—
• There are numerous sociological studies demonstrating that young children consistently value the groups they’re a part of and devalue others,
  o even when the composition of the groups are entirely random,
  ▪ Who’s wearing red shirts, say, vs. who’s wearing blue.
• So if you’re unlucky enough to be one of the blue shirts when there are more red shirts,
  o Or worse still, the only blue shirt, at a time when the red shirts are feeling their power,
• You can do the hard work of making peace with them, or making war,
• But the easiest solution is to hide.
• First to hide that which makes you an outsider, if possible,
  o In hopes that the goldfish won’t notice your difference.
    ▪ You can change your shirt,
    ▪ But if you’re an eel, three feet long and squarefaced among all these beautiful shiny things,
      • Your odds of successful hiding are not good.
• So a better solution is to hide your mind away, to escape,
  o To take your mind off the bullies or misery by going into another world.
• And the easiest, most empowering form of escape has always been reading.
• Reading puts all kinds of power into a child’s hands.
  o First there’s literal, physical power, as reading is a totally user-driven and user-powered activity.
    ▪ There’s no “on” switch or battery or power cord.
    ▪ The reader controls how it happens, where it happens.
    ▪ How fast it happens, when to begin, when to stop.
  o And there’s the power of making your own choice,
    ▪ As many parents trust books, and so turn their kids free to run amok in them.
• These days, outsider kids might also hide themselves in TV or videogames,
  o But TV is constantly interrupted, constantly in the shallows.
  o And while games might provide the satisfaction of power as you conquer a level or explore a world,
    ▪ They make you the protagonist, so the experience continues to be solipsistic, with you all by yourself.
• Books do something else. You’re still conquering a villain or exploring a world—
  o But you’re doing it through the lens of another person,
  o Who’s often an outsider, a weirdo, just like you.
• And thus you have companionship in outsiderdom in a very real and direct way
  o That no other medium can replicate,
    ▪ Because no other medium takes the time to explore the weirdness in such detail,
    ▪ or shows so many varieties of weirdness across the whole span of its stories.
• I think there are three levels at which readers connect with characters—
o And because each reader is different, each reader-character interaction is different;
  • And the examples I offer here are specific to my reading experience—
  • You may feel differently.

• The first level of connection is interest:
  o You find this person interesting, you’re willing to spend time with him, to know more.
  o You do not like him; in fact, you may find him morally or emotionally repellent.
  o But there’s something about him that’s compelling:
    • He takes action,
      • Or he’s caught up in some grand action.
    • You’re entertained by him.
    • His personality is a mystery you want to understand.
    • Or even if he is repellent, even if you actively dislike him, you see the humanity and truth of that repellentness,
      • How real the author has made him,
      • And intense reality is always compelling.
  o I think of Humbert Humbert here, Artemis Fowl, Paul Giamatti’s character in Sideways, Christopher in The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time
    • These guys are all outsiders, and often proud of it,
      • Because it proves their superiority to the normal run of humanity in their own minds.
    • And they’re all people I would probably find difficult in real life,
      • But for the two to five hours I’ll spend with them, safely trapped in the bounds of fiction, it’s all right.

• The second level at which readers connect with characters is endearment:
  o A level up in warmth of feeling.
  o You’re not only interested in this person,
  o You like them. You root for them. You want to be their friend.
    • You may even want to be them yourself.
  o Sometimes a person you found merely Interesting at the beginning of their book can become endearing as you begin to recognize his patterns or learn his story or vulnerabilities.
    • But generally Endearing characters you like from right upfront.
  o The compelling things here can be all the same things that were compelling in the Interesting characters
    • Action, a mysterious backstory or personality, humanity
  o But endearing people have added virtues:
    • They’re often fighting for a just cause.
    • They’re morally good: They do not kick puppies or whine,
      • Or act arrogant or entitled,
    • Even though they’re also often funny, or smart, or good-looking, or strong.
    • They have friends.
      • I heard Caroline Cooney say at a writers’ conference once that there are few things more frightening or off-putting to novel-age readers than a character without friends,
        • And I think that’s really true.
      • But they’re only rarely unkind to outsiders.
  o And despite all this, they’re not perfect.
• They make mistakes, which keep them human and relateable.
  o When I was thinking of examples of endearing characters here, my brain immediately went to Percy Jackson and Harry Potter
    • Both fantasy heroes, both people I’d love to have as friends
  o And at the outset of their journeys, both a little bit blank slates, too—
    • Nice Guys who will Do The Right Thing for their friends,
    • With little interior conflict, and few flaws the reader doesn’t share.
  o That slight blankness is partly what lets the reader slip into their skins and stories so easily.
  o And it’s partly this: They start out their story as outsiders of some kind
    • Percy has ADD, Harry sleeps in a cupboard under the shed
      • Which is useful for helping a reader to connect with them.
        o We pity them, if nothing else.
    • But once they get to the place where their worth is recognized,
      • They become insiders, accepted, heroes to the community
    • So the reader gets double the pleasure:
      o The independence of being an eel
      o The acceptance of being a goldfish.
• So from interest, we moved on to liking,
• And now the third level at which readers can connect with characters is identification.
  o This character is like me as I am right now.
    • The emotional situations they face are situations I face.
    • The questions they’re trying to answer are the questions that haunt me.
    • Qualities that they possess are ones I recognize in myself as well.
  o And these are the characters who inspire the most passion in readers,
    • Because they’re the ones we know, we are, deep down inside.
• The characters with whom I identified most when I was a kid were Sara Crewe, of *A Little Princess*; Anne Shirley, of *Green Gables*; and Aerin, of Robin McKinley’s *The Hero and the Crown*.
  o All girls, all a bit strange, all passionate readers who got into awkward situations because of their imaginations.
• Indeed, unlike endearing characters, who by definition are easily relateable
  o Identifying characters are frequently very specific people, often somewhat odd, often *knowingly* odd
    • Which is partly why we outsiders take to them so much: They are like us in their difference, and sometimes in their suffering over it.
• Writers have some control over a reader’s Interest or Endearment level in a character.
  o If you make him the point of view character, the reader automatically has to cling to him.
  o If you want him to be likeable, you can make him friendly or funny.
    • And there are plenty of other techniques.
• But I don’t know how much writers can control Identification,
• Other than being very specific and real about who this character is
  o And what his challenges are,
  o Giving those challenges a good basis in human psychology,
    • And letting the book find its right readers.
• Recently, the character about whom I’ve had the most strong feelings is Rachel Berry, of the television show *Glee*. 
• I am a big fan of *Glee*,
  o And you should pity me for this, because to be a fan of *Glee*,
  o and also a fan of narrative consistency and character development, is to live in despair.
• If you don’t watch the show, Rachel is a self-involved musical theatre diva with an *amazing* voice
  o Very much an outsider, largely because of that self-involvement
• And in the very first episode, she decided that she should get together with Finn Hudson,
  o the cute, dumb jock with a heart of gold who’s the male lead in the club.
• The main thing these characters have in common is that they sing well together,
  o Which, in the way of all musicals, equals true love.
• And now they’ve gotten together and broken up,
  o gotten together and broken up twice,
  o largely because of the writers’ unwillingness to give her any character development.
• Still, I’ve been invested in this relationship since the beginning,
• Partly for narrative theory reasons: A relationship offers a great opportunity for both of them to learn to be better people by being involved with each other.
• But just recently I realized I identify with Rachel because she wants one of the things I wanted when I was a teenager:
  o for the hot football player to fall in love with me, become my white knight,
  o and leave his hot cheerleader girlfriend behind for me.
  o This did not happen for me, which, you know, I’m fine with altogether;
    • I think I wanted the victory over the social structure of high school more than I wanted the football player himself.
  o But I still want to see the perfectionist dork girl triumph.
• Rachel in essence isn’t actually all that different from the characters I listed as merely interesting earlier
  o Her talent and drive are compelling, but she’s deeply annoying in her sense of entitlement and superiority.
• But because she’s a girl, I suppose, and because she wants what I once wanted,
  o I identify with her. I root for her.
• She’s my outsider avatar who might make good at last.

• And that example shows one of the ways all readers, not just outsiders, use literature:
• As case studies for lives we want to or might one day lead.
  o Hero--or failure? Outcast--or superstar?
  o Stories implicitly ask readers, "What sort of choices would you make in the protagonist's position?"
  o And they promise, "If you act like this, in these circumstances, these are the results that will follow"--including, even, a happy ending.
    • Of course, that’s a false promise, because the circumstances of the readers will never be the circumstances of the characters
    • But the promise is immensely comforting: Do this, act as the hero does, within your own circumstances, and you'll create a narrative you know, you've read, in the tangle of real life. And that will help you survive.
• I have a friend my age who has never finished reading *Harriet the Spy*
  o Because she got about a third of the way into it, and she was so inspired by Harriet,
    • that she started spying herself
And then she got in trouble.

- She believed the false promise,
- And she hadn’t yet read enough of it to know that Harriet got in trouble too.
- And so she put the book away, as if it was *its* fault that she was punished.

In general, reading for escape, hiding in books, is a double-edged sword, as I imagine many of you know,

Because it disconnects you from the people around you.

- You enter your own world, where the voice on the page drowns out the real voices in the room.
- The reality of the book will almost always be richer and more interesting than the reality you’re living.
  - It will almost certainly be better shaped, for one thing, because it has a conscious and all-powerful shaper.
- And the mere fact that you can close the book and turn off that reality gives an appealing illusion of control—
  - all the more appealing if you’re a kid, and control is still something you don’t have much of.

So you read more and more, and separate more and more from the lives other people are living.

This is something we forget, when we praise kids for reading and reading and reading

- That reading can be as addictive and isolating as video games, or the Internet, or TV, or any other intense, focused interaction with people who aren't there.
- And when you spend so much time reading about, and *loving*, imaginary people's social lives—
  - You don’t always have one of your own.
- And thus your outsiderdom gets reinforced by the very thing you were using to escape it.

Now, the standard adult advice for kids in the eel’s situation is to "Be yourself! Let other people see the real you!"

Where the adults don't get that it’s the real you that's the problem.

There is a whole genre of books, mostly picture books, that I think of as "Be Yourself" books.

They’re always directed at the kid who's suffering, not at the popular kids or bullies

- Which maybe is a mistake--maybe we should have more "Don't Be a Jerk" books.
- But writers are rarely the bullies when they’re kids, and writers tend to write the emotional experience they know.

Anyway. These "Be Yourself" books always have outsiders as protagonists,

And because of the clothes they wear or their love of dance or whatever it might be,

- The insiders torment or ignore them, until . . .

I’m now going to theorize that such stories, in picture books or novels, can resolve themselves in one of seven ways:

Going from the least positive for the eel to the most positive:

1. The goldfish crush the eel's will or unique strength.

- I call this one the McMurphy, after the character in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*
- For YA readers, we can call it the Chocolate War.
- And if the eel gets crushed willingly, we can call it the Rainbow Fish.
• Whatever the name, in this situation, the goldfish just can’t take the eel’s independence, the threat it presents to their superiority, the way it causes self-doubt deep inside their flat little golden skulls.
  o And thus they destroy it.
    • And it’s a little soul-destroying as well,
    • Which is why we’re still talking about the Chocolate War all these years later.
  o We don’t use this one very often in children’s literature,
    • Which perhaps is a little cowardly of us, as it’s as likely to occur in reality as any of the rest of these. More likely, maybe.
  o But we want to offer children hope, so far more often we write:
• 2. The goldfish let the eel keep its will or unique strength, but they also absorb those strengths for their own good.
  o This one is the Rudolph, as in the reindeer.
  o Someone who is different is scorned, reviled, made an outsider. "They wouldn't let poor Rudolph join in any reindeer games."
  o But the outsider sticks to whatever makes him different--usually because he has no choice—
  o and eventually that difference ends up saving the entire community.
  o "Then how the reindeer loved him, and they shouted out with glee--Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer, you'll go down in history!"
    • This is also a Christ story, you'll notice, someone suffering at the hands of the community and yet redeeming them all.
    • And at the same time a story about Darwinistic evolution--the community at first resisting an odd mutation, and then adapting to and benefiting from it.
  o If the goldfish were being threatened by, say, an evil angelfish,
  o And the electric eel stepped up and volunteered to take the angelfish out, as it could, • that would be pulling a Rudolph.
• (One supercool thing I learned in my research for this talk:
  o Electric eels have electrocytes in their bodies that basically work like the plates in a battery,
  o And when they have prey in sight, their brains send a signal to these electrocytes, which in turn generate an electric charge in the water,
    • Shocking and sometimes killing their prey.
  o In other words, they really can kill things *with their minds.*
  o Do not mess with the electric eel.)
• On a less lethal note,
• In 3. The goldfish yield to the superiority of the eel, who has been right all along
  o This is the reverse of the McMurphy—the Ayn Rand,
  o And it really only works in fiction if you’re Ayn Rand
    • And magnificently unconcerned with real human psychology and relationships.
  o You also see it a lot in fanfiction—Mary Sue characters are often the sign of an Ayn Rand plot,
    • Where the Mary Sue will get everything they want,
    • Never mind how people would act in real life.
  o How many of you went through an Ayn Rand phase as a teenager?
    • I did—I loved *Anthem* and *The Fountainhead*.
  o She is actually a great writer for questing teenagers, I think,
Because she is wonderfully rigorous
And her outsiders are always right
  • And that sort of certainty, that moral fundamentalism and the community that can come with it
  • Can be a great boon when you’re feeling a little lost in the fog,
    o However much it annoys the non-converted people around you.
    o The Ayn Rand also usually doesn’t last, because while the eel can indeed be brilliant—
      • Truly, it isn’t always right,
    o And if it insists upon its rightness, then it just becomes the new goldfish.
• Another version of an eel-wins story:
• 4. The eel manages to make itself unconcerned about the goldfish, and just accepts itself as an eel, alone in all its eely awesomeness.
  o This is the Buddha,
  o And again, it really only works if you’re writing about a Buddha-like figure,
    • And creating a character who can exist outside relationships with other human beings
    • (Assuming there are no other eel figures around).
  o This is not only extraordinarily difficult in life,
  o It makes for rather boring fiction, as fiction relies on figures in relationship and conflict, and so not many writers use it.
• If you can escape from the goldfish, then you have the option of
• 5. The Ugly Duckling, where the eel leaves the goldfish and finds a new school of eels
  o In this case, again, the outsider is scorned, reviled, tormented inside and out.
  o But rather than saving his community, he leaves it, to find another group that truly understands him and appreciates his talents.
  o This one leaves the Action Plot of eels vs. goldfish unresolved, a bit, as neither one wins or even comes to a détente;
    • But the Emotional Plot is resolved, as the eel achieves acceptance at last.
• If you stay home, then you might still experience
• 6. The Wizard, where the eel discovers the goldfish have actually been eels all along,
  o That the mass of insiders is composed of outsiders just like him.
  o As Margaret Mead says: “Always remember that you are absolutely unique. Just like everyone else.”
  o I named this one after the Wizard of Oz—the idea that there’s just a human being behind the curtain of this almighty figure—
  o And just as in that movie, this isn’t always a happy resolution—
    • As taking away an enemy can be disorienting rather than satisfying.
  o On the other hand, it offers opportunities for all the eels to connect in their individuality, which is a beautiful thing.
• Much like
• 7. The goldfish and the eel, after some initial distrust, look past their differences and come together in equality and harmony—or at least tolerance.
  o I call this the Johnny Castle, from Dirty Dancing
    • Based on that fabulous last scene where the dancers and the establishment come together to party
I always wondered what happened after Dirty Dancing was over, after that mirror ball stopped spinning.

- Did Baby go to the Peace Corps like she planned? Or did she hang around the Catskills with Johnny every summer?
- Did Johnny maybe come with her to the Peace Corps?
- I admit I have a hard time seeing those two together anywhere besides that resort.

And that’s because the Johnny Castle only works if the seeds of real and sustained change are laid in both sides in the course of the story,

- That the goldfish and the eel can truly find common ground between their essential differences,
- Something deeper than just a shared interest in dancing.

That feels a little bit like a fairy tale to me, always

- But when it works, while it works, well, you know—you’ll have the time of your life.

I’m a bit skeptical about the Johnny Castle partly because it’s premised on change,

And the other six story structures here do not offer that option.

In those stories, no one ever says to the eel, “Well, can’t you just become a goldfish?”

- And any attempts at trying to do so are greeted with ridicule.
- In the cartoon, Rudolph paints his nose black—but it washes off in a storm,
  - And the other reindeer make fun of him again.
- In the McMurphy, the change is imposed with brute force, and against his will, and with eventually lethal consequences.
  - In One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest, the loss of self really is worse than death.

These stories say, You can only be who you are.

And as a result, if you want to survive and have relationships,

Here is what you can do:

- Make your peace with being different, as in the Buddha and Ayn Rand.
- Work with the goldfish as much as you’re capable, as in the Wizard and Johnny Castle.
- Try to get them to work with you too, like in the Rudolph—
  - And if that doesn’t happen, go for the Ugly Duckling, and leave for a different pond.

I thought of this over and over again watching the “It Gets Better” campaign last year,

- Because that’s what the adults involved were all saying to the gay teenagers, and rightly too:
  - Love yourself, be kind to yourself.
  - Negotiate whatever peace you can where you live now,
  - And then when you can—get out of there.

This is very hard wisdom at every age, and even harder to practice.

Because it involves letting go of the dream of becoming a goldfish

- And all the perceived benefits that come with being a goldfish:
  - Popularity, fame, money, quote-unquote normalcy
    - Again for our business, sales.

And what you get in return can feel a bit dodgy:

The fullness of being yourself,

- As tetchy and limited and imperfect as you are.
- Some days, I would rather have the popularity.
• But good work comes out of that fullness, that kindness,
  o Getting all that energy back that you put into wanting to be something else.
• And real relationships come out of it too, when you find another eel,
  o Built on mutual Identification of inmost truths.
• And with those two things, you might still get the benefits of goldfishdom anyway,
• And in a way that’s true to your whole self.

• The idea of “working with the goldfish” is important here too.
• The electric eel who holds herself too far apart from anyone else, who prizes her own special
  nature too highly, does everyone a disservice
  o Because no one can get to know her
  o Or see what gifts she has to share with the world.
• Nor is there any shame in being a Rudolph or an Ugly Duckling in the right circumstances:
  o Helping a good community, or seeking out the right one for you.
• There’s even a great pleasure in taking the goldfish’s expectations and tastes
  o And turning them to your own eely ends.
• I love it when writers take their unique voices or fascinations
  o And apply them to plots that readers already know and love
    • I’d love to see a multicultural Jane Austen retelling, for instance
    • Or a vampire romance written by a literary writer, from the male point of view.
• Or—we editors do this all the time—you take a book that’s an eel down to the ground,
  o Totally and completely and wonderfully itself,
  o And you put it in goldfish packaging, to help eels and goldfish alike connect with it.
• I’m editing an amazing novel coming out next year that involves shapeshifters, dying young,
  a man with lobster-claw arms, the mental barriers created by reservation life—
  o And I am totally going to sell it as a paranormal romance!
  o Goldfish readers will pick it up for its dark cover with a pretty girl on it, and have
    their minds blown.
    • I can’t wait.

• To close here, I admit that I formed a lot of my opinions about being an outsider back in the
  1980s, when I was one myself,
  o And when I didn’t have the Internet to connect with other people like me.
• If I had had a book club, or a blogosphere,
  o Or Nerdfighteria, or a Harry Potter fan community
    • My middle-school life might have been very different.
• And because outsiders now have all those ways to connect,
• It’s easier for eels to find each other—and goldfish, and angelfish, and seahorses, and
  sponges.
  o And even creatures of different species who have something else in common—
    • A taste for fine plankton, maybe.
• Anyway. A lot of these old dichotomies are being broken down
  o And that is a good, good thing—
    o Helping us let go of the boxes and differences we wall ourselves up in,
      • Or wall others up in,
  o So we can explore all the possibilities we have inside,
• Or that we might discover with each other.
• Kindling Words here is a pond full of eels,
  • Correction: A party full of eels,
  • Dedicated to helping each of us find what makes us most alive in our work and connections.
• I wish all of you a wonderful, productive weekend here, 
  And thank you for your kind attention here tonight.