

(Forwarded in a Motion of Comity, text submitted to the Newburyport Daily News as a Viewpoint column for publication anticipated on Monday, October 31, 2011, with the headline "Trick or Treat or Treatise.")

The published article can be found online at this NewburyportNews.com [hyperlink](#), with commentary continuing the "conversation piece" in that space and follow-up conversation. The full [con]text of the unabridged, annotated version --- a work in progress --- is posted at this Comity.org [hyperlink](#).)

Despite all its fantasy and frivolity (and fructose) Halloween has such potential as a creative (intergenerational) learning experience --- about life and death, religion and spirituality, mythology and history, civilization and culture, language and communications, human nature and nature.

With the New World adaptation of Old World traditions in its third generation --- during previous "trick or treat transactions" with gaily or ghoulishly garbed gremlins --- we often wish that the Old World tradition of "souling" (i.e., recitation of a memorial elegy, or a soulful performance of a favorite song, poem, story, joke, or dance) had been adopted or adapted along with the "guising" (i.e., masquerading).

In the spirit of the season (and "souling") --- let us impart a story about a story about history (and history in the making). The setting: (time) June 2006 (space) the Firehouse Center for the Performing Arts. While staging the "Yankee City" multi-media production, the open-ended question was, "Does the city have a soul?" Five years later, one might [pose the](#) question, "Does the nation have a soul?" And propose, if "corporations are people," do "they"?

In response, one might (sup)ply another story, taking place here in port once upon another time. In response to the question, "What is a soul?" --- Newburyport's 18th Century quixotic, quintessential entrepreneurial spirit, Lord Timothy Dexter answered in writing (applying his unorthodox orthography): "I 'thinc' the 'sole' is the thinking part." Think?

Though beckoned, Lord Tim (or cohorts Madam Hooper or Jonathan Plummer) did not reappear to serve as Comity's entry for this year's Tenth Annual Greater Newburyport Chamber of Commerce Harvest Festival Scarecrow contest. Instead, another took form to inform --- and serve as a "conversation piece" during the ongoing conversation.

(Con)figured to embody the Re:Generation of the Spirit of the Waterside people of Newburyport ---an American citizen living in the new nation at the turn of the 19th Century --- or in the second decade of the 21st Century: Androgynous youth, lifelong learner, faceless everyman (woman and child) --- situated there in Market Square near the door of the original site of "ye Waterside Parish Meetinghouse" --- to remark milestones in history & "history in the making." (Including the 210-year generational milestone said meetinghouse was dismantled September 28 – October 6, 1801 and Market Square was thereafter laid out and deeded as a public way and meeting place forever [with a town water pump to be set where the pulpit once stood as approved by town selectman on October 14, 1801].)

Representing the essence and distillation of the Waterside people and quintessence of 99% of the new republic's public citizenry --- this uncommon everyman living and laboring seven generations ago may well have dismantled the Waterside meetinghouse, or built the new one (on Pleasant Street). Or he

could have helped craft the Ship Merrimack at Market Landing (once the community shipyard) ... or help with her launch on October 12, 1798 ... or sailed on her maiden voyage to Boston on December 9 ... manned her in battles at sea. Though attending classes of higher education depended upon "class" --- ever enterprising, his generation's "history in the making" was the promise & premise of America's future, in pursuit of peace & prosperity and in perpetual progress toward glorious perfection.

Since first introduced to the mayor and other contest judges on that afternoon of the Full Hunters Moon --- we sense that for moons to come, this scarecrow (archaic synonym, "shewel") will have a role. Greeting those trick or treating at our door tonight, serving as the illustrative "model citizen" to illustrate the forthcoming "straw man proposals"--- to be the "presence of mind" for the "body politic" at each and every meeting of the mind, gathering and "bee(n)."

As a proxy of approximate physique (and psyche) of proximate, imminent graduates of our public schools, s/he bears the sign of the times, of all times: 2b or not 2b, that is the quest & question --- 2b but a scarecrow in courage --- or 2b supercargo of brave good (great & greater) exploits --- (prepared for Life's adventures & consequential matters).

[The mind-traveling reader is invited to SMILE (Seek More Information Logged Electronically) at Comity.org and join the conversation at the Virtual Wolfe Tavern E-establishment.]