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# OF EAGLES, GOATS, AND SPACE MEN

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Patrick Madden

My wife, the mother of our four children, a generally responsible woman who cares deeply for her family and tends to order and general neatness of place and of time, stayed out until almost two a.m. last night visiting our neighbors the Aguilar, whose name must mean something about tending eagles, whereas Karina's maiden name, Cabrera, has something to do with tending goats. My own last name, Madden, may derive from the Gaelic for "little dog," though my family coat of arms features a falcon seizing a duck.

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My son, being the fourth of a continuous line of Patrick Charles Maddens that began in 1915 with my grandfather, and being the son of a Uruguayan woman, goes by the nickname Pato, which in Spanish means duck, the animal, not the verb. In any case, the eagle would probably win in a battle with the goat, the little dog, and even with the falcon. The duck is already dead or dying, which might keep the falcon occupied while the eagle goes for the goat.

Which is to say that you can essay about anything, find some small hook in the overlooked or takenforgranted. When I was young, I read in a description of my coat of arms the phrase "falcon seizing a duck argent," which I took to mean a kind of duck or perhaps something akin to *agent*. Years later, once I'd visited Argentina (though long after I'd heard the band Argent's song "Hold Your Head Up"), I understood that *argent* was the color of both the falcon and the duck, a fancy way of saying *silver*.

The band Argent occupies the same file in my brain as the bands Bread and Free. All three float rather vaguely through my mind, which is otherwise highly ordered when it comes to rock and roll. Free I remember because one day when my junior high class went to New York for a field trip, my best friend Vin and I had some free time and so browsed the record stacks at a shop in the Village. We thought we were funny when we found a band we'd never heard of before, saying stuff like, "Hey, this record is Free!" There were only half a dozen other people in the store, two within earshot, but wouldn't you know it, one was a rabid Free fan.

He glared and droned, "Hey, don't knock it." It didn't really matter that we weren't.

Rod Argent, formerly of the Zombies, formed Argent along with two future members of the Kinks and a guy named Russ Ballard, who wrote many of the band's songs. Besides the slightly repetitive "Hold Your Head Up," their other big hit—made bigger, years later, when covered by KISS—was "God Gave Rock and Roll to You" (which I don't doubt).

The first record I ever owned was KISS's *Double Platinum*, which I bought at Sears, with my own money, and which my father convinced me to get instead of *Alive!* because, he said, live recordings tended to be sloppier, less precise than studio recordings. I brought the silver-sleeved LP home and played "Making Love" over and over with no idea what it might mean. That's not true. I thought, based on the band's name, that it meant "kissing," perhaps spelled out and singsongy: "k-i-s-s-i-n-g" and all that.

My favorite KISS guy was Ace Frehley, the only one with silver makeup, whose 1977 solo album featured Ace's cover of Russ Ballard's "New York Groove." The way I figure, The Star (Paul Stanley) might be able to win in a battle against The Cat (Peter Criss), assuming it's a regular cat and not a man-sized were-cat of some kind, but neither of them would be any match for The Demon (Gene Simmons) or The Space Man (Ace). And in a battle between The Demon and The Space Man, given futuristic technology and a higher understanding of the laws of the universe, what the heck, my money's on the Space Man. ☞