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enERGUMEN 3

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Bard

ENERGUMEN 2

The great time for me is early morning, right after I've awakened. I go downstairs, onto the deck or in the cool dining room (with many windows), and open my bound notebook, usually an ordinary marbled school notebook, and write with a pen, fountain pen or gel or felt tip -- something flexible. Green tea or strong black tea or yerba mate, and I'll stay at that for an hour or two. Later in the morning, after meditation and breakfast, if I have time I'll get to type on the computer, editing and revising poems from the past few days, or from this morning (if I've caught up). So those are the two phases of a poem, the (usually) handwritten first draft and the later (hours or a few days) revision into typed form. As a typed page the poem will sit in my notebook for a long time, reviewed from time to time, revised, remade. And that process can go on till the poem is published. (And even then I don't always stop working it over -- usually in very small ways.)

So most of the writing is early morning, then late morning. My afternoons and evenings are usually busy with teaching and meetings and so forth, but often I have time, late afternoon, to compose at the keyboard. I love those moments, they feel like jazz impromptus, solos, quick, almost furtive, since there's always somebody coming to the door or the phone.

And then late at night, last thing before bed, I open a special notebook and write whatever I can, with weary mind, exhausted, trying to excavate, get below the ground level of the usual. I call this 'scraping the bottom,' to get the last possible gestures of the words waiting in/for me.

*

Someone asks me, but:

My desk would take forever to describe. It's a geology, active, thick with things that call out to me. Right now there's a whale tooth on it, a translation from the Sanskrit I did twenty five years ago I've been working on yesterday and today, a diagram of mysterious arrays at Rosslyn chapel in Scotland, a book of Hopi texts, a pot of glue, a bottle of skin cream (I have very dry skin), a fountain pen, a postcard from Kyoto.

+

I've read a lot of novels (Bard Fiction Prize submissions) lately, and far and away the most striking is Monique Truong's *The Book of Salt* -- Gertrude Stein's Vietnamese house boy speaks. Will Heinrich's *The King's Evil* is terrific too, a book of astonishing gravity and darkness.

+

Since I've been insisting on the transactional nature of guilt -- that it always is a taught thing, a thing cast on you by some other, a deliberate or unconscious manipulative strategy on the part of some (early in your life) other/others, I've been remembering so many guilt-tormented people (some of whom I have been), and what has always struck me is this:

far from allowing their guilt feelings to turn them into gentle, considerate people, most guilt-afflicted people strike their friends as rather selfish -- not just in the sense of self-involved (who is not??), but in the sense of being much less empathetic or compassionate than their spiritual level (in other areas) would lead us to expect.

What I'm saying is, that guilt-afflicted people are so tortured by the sense of guilt, inadequacy, unachievingness, that they somehow, over the years of adolescence usually, learn to arm themselves against any and all demands that come to them from the other. Guilt is enough for them to handle. So this guilt they have been given winds up like an iron maiden, spikes sticking in, but also closing the person from people outside.

This is one reason why guilt is (in that Tibetan sense of it) a 'sin' -- guilt is a vortex that draws the victim ever deeper in, and the deeper in, the further away from being able to respond to or care about, or even notice, the distress or needs of those around them.

With this analysis (to dignify my rant by that name) in mind, I think one can work against one's own sense of guilt, and move back to an open relationship (unjudged, unjudging, unprejudiced) with one's own self. And through that opening, that 'forgiving,' come to an open relationship with other people.

So that's how guilt and selfishness coactivate one another. Selfishness is apotropaic, protective, and made of armor. And that armor was put on to protect from the torment of an inflicted guilt.

+

The pelvis is an animal that needs a leash. Anna Sofie von Otter in Carmen, walking her body around, moving her hips with her hands. Sense of her willing, pulling, a pleasant enough but not very intelligent animal along. Ditto last night in that aria from La Gde Duchesse de Gerolstein, her arms in the final salute lifted in stages, steps, while her natural eyes -- no part of her body -- rolled playfully, tolerantly, ironically, self-amusedly.

The eyes are not part of the body but of the mind, at least when those two parents-of-us are separated or divorced, as they usually are. The mind is left with custody of the eyes.

*

And the thought of you [Charles Sandy] actually tending and repairing the Wearevers and Eversharps (somehow I dont know the Majestics), as well as the grander specimens, is very moving to me -- as if behind the scenes you were operating on the language itself. I get fascinated by nameless or almost nameless pens -- like a screw-fill burgundy model I bought on Lake Constance that leaked worse than any pen I've ever seen, but wrote beautifully, or like a Chinese imitation Sheaffer Snorkel I bought for a few rupees in India twenty years ago -- those strange big "Minka" pens they used to sell by mail order -- I used to think they were Russian Mont Blanc imitations (sort of), till I learned that Minka is Bavarian affectionate name for Munich. Puzzles and demands, poems than can be written only with a certain pen, pens that overrule the breath. It fascinates me so.

*

saying kaddish for the living

*

The train of thought of the original poem. Original poet not otherwise known.

Of all the grace of translation, obedient alertness to this train of thought is the greatest. How the poem thinks what it says.

And this _is_ translatable, the syntactic/morphemic order is within reach, even when the ur-sounds of the ur-iginal can't -- of course -- be reprised.

*

Anxiety as a positive thing, both an energy and a tool. To use: not just for self-analysis, but for turning towards the world of things and relationships. Anxiety is a harsh light, but very clear. It does not flatter what it illuminates.

When Anxiety is let loose among the words, it writes such grand things. It's hard to think of Celine or Camus or even Gide or Perec as other than Anxiety Given a Believer's Voice.

Let the Anxiety speak. It is the angel with whom you wrestle, and you defeat each other, but depend on each other. You rise wounded from the battle -- the wound is the work.

*

Squirrels on the snow -- Confederate troops skirmishing for seed.

*

My snow, on the analogy of my lawn.

*

Analogy -- what a teenager might think the word means: talking about assholes. Science of ass.

*

"memory is imagination troubled by timidity" -- Luis Manuel Ruiz, *Sólo una cosa no hay*, p.239

*

[to Bethany Wright, 15 Feb 2004, after she'd been asked to take over Chelsea] but this is extraordinary, and wonderful. Do it, do it. Always say Yes -- das heisst das wichtigste Mandatum fuer alle Dichter. Please. You cant know how much this pleases me, that a person I like and respect as much as I do you should be, somehow,

out of blue nowhere, be asked to complete a job that I began almost fifty years ago. Yes, I started, all my own idea, Chelsea Review (as it was then called) with George Economou in 1957, first issue next year; we joined with the late Ursule Molinaro and her husband Venable Herndon to make the four founding editors. George and I withdrew a few years later (after issue 5 or so) to devote ourselves to American poetry, rather than the (interesting enough -- Rao, Sarraute, etc) Euro fiction that U&V were more and more interested in. G & I began Trobar, which lasted into the early sixties after I came to Bard. Ursule and Venable took on a woman named Sonia Raiziss and her pal Alfredo di Palchi -- though all that is only hearsay, since George and I didnt see anything of Ursule for years afterwards. (Though I read with her in Woodstock, of all places, forty years later, hmmm) Soon the magazine was all Raiziss/di Palchi, and he can tell you its history. But it delights me immensely that you, especially you, woman of Bethany, should close that ring. Do it.

*

More than one sort of love hides in the closet, do you know that? When you've gone past straight and gay and bi, there are more devious cases, frightened combinations that would indeed dare to say their name -- but they have no name. Envy the faggots who have a label at least, envy the domestic dykes who settle down in stance and smile out their clean windows We other lovers, nameless, even the margins of the world exclude us, or margin us beyond.

*

If someone asked: there must be a word, or a phrase, that encapsulates the way the present can be locked inside the past, or the way nostalgia covers up (in its beautification) the past, the way loss is beautified and fetishized, as in the case of ruins -- what would I answer? Europe?

*

Of course I chose my life, and even now I do not think I feel shame at what I've chosen. I chose a life where I depend on my own efforts as much as I can. For whatever reasons, from whatever arcane promptings of insecurity shot through with childhood experiences of desperate hunger for independence, and just as desperate need for notice and support, I chose a life in which I would be self-supporting.

I would work, and I would support myself. I would accordingly become the source of my own approval. I would be a productive system, a transformer of experience. I would give.

And over the course of forty-five years (since that's what it amounts to now) I have worked every day at one or another of my jobs, every day except those few days, I'd guess less than one a year, when I couldn't work for sickness of some sort. Supporting myself: what did that mean? It turned out to mean supporting wives and friends, supporting my own body of work, supporting the careers and work of my students, my fellow artists, my friends, the commonwealth of contemporary workers in the arts, through endless promotion, reviewing, blurbs, recommendations, translating, revising their work, editing their texts, essays, networking. I have worked hard to advance the careers of so many people. Supported little magazines and dark little presses, supported a monastery and Dharma center dedicated to the enlightening work of about the only man I ever really trusted. I think (or I imagine) that I have been generous in these matters, and generous also in paying time and attention to people, being as present to them as time allows.

Because that is the grief of my life's method. The cost of this sense of working, of supporting myself and others, has been (given my opportunities and talents, such as they are) a regularity of income depending on a regularity of schedule. The weeks I so hate, the hated schematic or framework that society imposes on the passage of time, the beautiful *durée* of mind and body. But that is the price most people pay for their lives, for their "choice." And this schematic makes me live by the clock, much more than I like to admit. People sometimes ask me how I get so much writing done. Answer: I give myself two hours in the morning. That's what I need to live on. That's what sustains me while I'm sustaining work and to some degree sustaining others.

Anyhow, the way I work, the way I live, though I still live beleaguered by the sense of not doing enough, not writing enough, not helping enough, manages to get me through the night.

*

Yet in saying all this stuff about independence and self-support and supporting others, there is something else that has to be said: deeply and truly I have been supported too, by what an earlier age would call grace or moderns might call nurture or compulsion, and that I would

call the blessing of the Lama (in all that those words mean)-- manifested as a world full of interesting and stimulating people, attractive and provocative friends, loving friends, opportunities to write and speak, receptive and industrious students, health and physical strength to work a lot, a beautiful landscape to inhabit, a time of high energy in human culture, a time absent of local war, a time when there are more opportunities to communicate, more technologies of inscription and decipherment and transmission than at any time in history -- these are blessings and I think of them a lot, and gratefully. All my own efforts are dance steps too, I think, coopted by a world around me, moved to their tunes as much as to my own. And who can tell the difference, what is the real source of any 'music?'

*

And of course, it haunts me always, just from the names themselves, Remus was the first born, since Romulus is a diminutive, the names must once have been Remus and Remulus -- not brothers at all, verstehen Sie, but father and son. An empire founded on parricide -- the deepest secret of Rome here decoded, by the names alone. Herewith have I solved the riddle.

*

In Keith Waldrop's book, the man Jacob Delafon walks on one side of a tree, I think he tastes the shadow of the other side of it, to which a squirrel always goes to hide rather than escape -- hide in that "other side" where who knows what else may always be hiding? It made me think of my Doors prose piece, what if there were everywhere things like doors that opened, but we never recognize them?

*

In the Holocaust, the Jews were always killed for aesthetic reasons, or aesthetic reasons were always the ones given for first their banishment, then their destruction. It was the way Jews looked, it was the way their physical type would corrupt the appearance of the Aryan ideal. It was the way they created disharmony and dissonance in what had been the serenity of music, ugly abstraction in degenerate art that compromised and brought into question the correct appearances of things. The Jews were ugly and fat and skinny and dirty and wore ridiculous costumes. They had big noses. This extraordinary reliance on Aesthetics -- both the naive aesthetics of the

man in the street, and the exalted "Secret Germany" aesthetics of Wagner and the George Circle -- must be unparalleled in human history as a motive for hatred and genocide. It shows the height from which German culture had fallen, the vast superstructure of common ideas and idealistic values which so easily, it seems, was appropriated by the demon dynamic of the Nazis, who probably even believed their own propaganda. The mystery of Nazism deepens when you take away from them even the saving grace of hypocrisy and insincerity.

*

All of aesthetics as an issue, as an aspiration, is hollowed out, made sinister, by that history.

*

I'm listening to Strauss's gorgeous and underrated Intermezzo at the moment, slack social farce as the underpinning of some of his most rapturous music, the way on the way home from work on an ordinary boring road we might see the most glorious sunset of our life.

*

I missed incest. Never knew it. It's taken me so long to understand how important it is to people, how it dictates husbands and wives. How naive I feel not recognizing its pressure so long. It seems as if I'm the only one who don't look for what I had. I look only for the never, the stranger. The stranger the better. The constellation I saw in the sky that must be constructed, star by star, all of them new.

*

I must be in New York for a few days (I seldom am there, have no pied-a-terre there, so visiting my native city I must stay in a hotel, since staying with friends makes me feel even more like an exile, and there is much shame in that,

once I was walking through the neighborhood where I was born and someone asked me what country I came from -- and that was shame, and from it I know that shame is also distance between what one thinks and how one is thought,

which is maybe why celebrities and the pope are the most shameful of all?

*

I hate proactive people. Anything that has to be done should be done at the last possible moment, reluctantly, badly.

*

Yet incest. After my trip to Brooklyn, I understand that my love for Nora was incest, since she was the mothering I mostly knew. So who am I fooling when I write, as above, that I "don't look for what I had" and lost. Of course I do. Her slim grace still moves before me.

*

Then it has to be forgiveness. There's nothing else left now on the fringes of war, or set of wars, or never ending conflict, no matter what they do. Only forgiveness will rescue the loom of mind from those resentments. How to forgive your enemies? Stop thinking about them. Thank them for keeping you aware, send them good wishes and put them out of mind. There is no other way.

Once an enemy is gotten into your mind and moves around in there, he has conquered you and laid waste. So get him out of mind. Keep him out there, where the world may help to heal him.

*

(after reading David Levi Strauss on Duncan and on Golub)

The roots we can write as *liro/*liso, or the second vowel could be -a: seem to come forward as Latin lira, the furrow left by the plow, and also a Gothic word like lisn, footstep. So we have trace of the plow, trace of the foot: trace or track around the edges of the field, the border where the footsteps run, border of the page where we note down one by one the traces of our thought or of our will: the list we keep. And since delirium is to jump the track, lose the furrow, we can also sense that delirium can also mean to lose your list. As if in madness we could at last walk through language and leave no footprints, no trace of meaning fixed in the mind. The great achievement of Henry James in his last calm, ordered, carefully dictated syntactic ravings.

how far does *li-s/r-a/o go?

*

Listening to Melvin Chen playing, very deeply and truthfully, the slow movement of the second concerto, I felt eerily, reverently aware of this: that Chopin, unlike any other composer I can think of, is somehow a trul-pa, an emanation literally present in and as his music is being performed live. He is present in it, in its presenting itself to the ear in real time. Chopin somehow presides over the performance, good or bad alike. He is not there in the recordings, however great. He is there in the hiersein of his music, as it speaks.

*

A beautiful reason to use astrology: it connects one with four thousand years of human observation, experience of human behavior, the subtle relations between desire and fulfilment, the subtle affinities that bring people together, four thousand years of interpreting, synthesizing, and above all symbolizing.

An ugly reason to use astrology: it works.

*

Pin the tail on the donkey. We used to play this exciting game, the blindfolded one wandering around with the cardboard tail with a pin in it, looking for (feeling for) the cardboard donkey. All the others could see, control, arrange, connive. Guide the innocent blind hand to unlikely targets.

Now in fact we all play the game all the time, all of us in the dark, no need for blindfolds. We wander around trying to pin something onto someone. The quest. The holy quest. Knights of the Ass's Tail.

*

ROTA might be the name of my exercises in/on/off Genesis, my Bible backwards project. The versions & per/versions of the sacred, reclaiming the sacred from the religious at last.

Rescuing the God from his worshippers. Elohim guide me, Lasses, to
your selves
sometimes I think.

*

Do old homosexuals fantasize about making love to their young
selves, the self finally become other?

*

On May 4 it is clear to me: there were two sins in Eden. The first
was the sin of disobedience, when Eve and Adam contrived to eat the
apple. But the second sin was worse than the first: the second sin
was the sin of obedience, when Adam and Eve lost their courage and
obeyed the voice that exiled them from Eden. The Goddess Peitho is
the enemy of us all, Persuasion is the fiend. But Eve and Adam
listened to what anybody said, snake or angel or that mysterious
person or persons who (Genesis tells) Adam and Eve met walking in
the garden in the cool of the evening.

They should have stayed. The land from which the rivers flowed
would be our land now, fertile, crowded with pleasures.

When we are next in a garden of delight, let no one talk us out of it.

*

I woke up having dreamt this phrase: "Donizetti spoke openly of our
'Syrian' nation."

Waking, I understood Syrian to mean Mediterranean, the whole great
basin and all the cultures it tinges and inspires, all somehow had been
begotten from those Syro-Judean wildernesses where the Goddess
was worshipped and the olive and wine and wheat were the fuel of
thinking and desire.

Donizetti, I suppose because of his bel canto, and perhaps of his hard
life and madness, turning inner grief and frenzy into music.

But where does he speak openly of that? Where does he tell us we are all Jews? And such Jews!

*

Waking from that dream, I remembered that Charlotte and I had, five years ago, slept on the Hill of Tara, laid down on the gentle slope of lush grass, right under the Stone of Destiny, and slept a long hour undisturbed, an August weekday. I never remembered the dreams that crowded my mind in that sleep, though from time to time I almost woke determined to recall them. I do know that rule was in them, triumph and quiet empery, a purple shadow on a cornfield, sea on horizon in the dream, though I could not see it waking.

*

Robespierre, the Romantic poet who wrote in blood.

*

Whenever I'm asked to speak on a topic, or contribute an essay on some subject, I have nothing. I write in weakness when I write about. I don't have an about, I think, I have only an on and on. Deeply I suppose I mistrust trajectories. I am anti-ballistic.

*

The poet wants to say everything. It is a short journey to the mistake --fatal for all those around him if not himself -- to think he knows everything.

Because of the holistic nature of the poetic utterance, literally that anything can be said, and anything that is said can be supposed, for just long enough, to be true, the poet is the most sinister of creatures when given power over men and machines. Mao truly was a poet, and Hitler too, and Stalin.

To go further along this line would be to try to prove something. Poems don't prove, they probe. They don't alter, they alert.

*

Every now and then I'll experience something like this: a spontaneously intact mental awareness suddenly comes to mind, as

immediate as a sense perception, as vivid as a dream, as compelling as a daydream or fantasy, yet I am neither asleep nor 'composing' a scenario as I would in fantasizing or making up a story. It seems to be something radically different and very much its own: a third kind of mental adventure or self-telling or spelling, and the most interesting things about it seem to be these: the unbiddenness, unpreparedness, intactness, completeness and above all freshness of the imagery or imaged event. The event will seem revelatory -- I feel a gasp of surprise. The episode I witness literally 'leaps to mind.' And it will keep coming back for hours or days the way a vivid dream does, or something one actually sees. And when I say revelatory, I mean that it seems to involve persons, situations or actions I'm not familiar with. Yet there's nothing hallucinatory about them, they're clearly mental events. It's only in recollection that they begin to get confused with things I dreamed, or things that 'actually' happened. I wonder if any psychiatrist has discussed these autonomous sudden events, or given them a name.

*

Coincidence: I had picked up a book at the Rhinebeck library I'd ordered online and had not yet opened. As we were walking out, Charlotte spotted and opened a big picture book on the New Book table by the door. Illustrations of old animals carved for merry-go-rounds. She showed me a dragon, green, standing on its curled tail. Suddenly I remembered, after more than sixty years, the (darker) green dragon I used to like to ride at Coney Island (at Feltman's, I think) and I told her how I always liked to ride the non-horse animals -- zebra, bear, lion, even the chariot, but most of all the Dragon. As I told her this, I felt overwhelmed by a kind of nostalgic guilt, a guilt towards the object, that I have felt many times in my life towards things chosen or neglected. This time the guilt was strong, that I had forgotten my Dragon. I hadn't thought of my dragon in all these years, my dragon, my dragon! Half playful, half lacrymose, I told Charlotte about this, and I said it by saying, sadly, Mon dragon, mon dragon! When we got to the car and the subject had changed, I flipped open the book I'd ordered (Schweid's "Consider the Eel") and the first word I saw was Mondragon -- name of an eeling town in the Basque country.

*

[thinking about Ives]

A man proposing to write newstory - the meaningful array of information that presents itself when the data (which are always

surmises, fleshy resonances, guesswork, amber necklaces, malachite staircases, shattered chandeliers) of history succumb to the words, succumb to that language from which they first arose.

*

Once I was standing on the cliffs over the old town of Whitby, its red tile roofs strangely Mediterranean in the bleak North Sea light. Someone beside me, as if overhearing my thought, said, Look, this little town, you can go down there and in the narrow streets find little shops that sell jet, the shiny black stone still so much used in costume jewelry, look, this little town, the Romans knew it, they got their jet from here, Whitby jet, you find beads of Whitby jet all over their world, Roman world, the black shine.

*

Kingless, a realm. Mobless, a demos. These are the delights of something that gives us newstory; a good shepherd is shuffled along by his sheep a little, true, but guides them surely, slowly, richly over green fields and saltmarsh meadows.

*

Maybe not "newstory" but some tune that makes sense of old (h)istorein, the investigating. And what does a poet have to investigate except what comes to mind? Where 'comes to mind' usually means come to mouth. (Mind in mouth. Mouth silent, the hand breathes, spills mind onto paper or such. What a strange job.)

*

I want to send you a word to read in the night, or that outlying colony of night that is called quiet, a small word when no one is there to bother you except me, here, this word, just to say something, the outreach of silence to silence, a lot of words packed into one text, and the whole text rests, almost unspoken in a word like this, or that, or the silence after the sentence ends.

*

There are certain sorts of animals -- beavers, prairie dogs, men -- who need to transform their environments drastically (often irreversibly) in order to live their lives.

*

Build NARRATIVE SPACES into the world: first into the ground, then aloft, in housely fashion.

Call these "Tell Spaces" and let this new art form take in visitors, who will enact in real space, real time, their own potentialities as experiencers of space. Architecture as invitation to fable -- architecture as the analyst who by silence summons us to speak, decide, be master of our own story.

*

I ask everything for a date.

*

Is the child that's born the same child who grows up?

Not just the Jesus child (in Steiner's reading of the doubled genealogy and its consequences) --- doesn't every child become other?

Every child a changeling.

Life is a sequence (a set?) of one-way reactions.

Gates.

Everybody knows that. But at what point, what gate, does the born self become a different one?

I drag myself through these questions because I am haunted by the feeling, in recent years more and more, that at a certain point I stopped being the person I was and became another. Something just after puberty? The strange gap between the drop-out of high school and the precocious college entrance? Those are the markers that come to mind. Not the causes. Not the gates.

Does everyone lose himself then, and find another?

*

Fatal excitation of public speech.

That was the silence Rilke and Celan [everyone thinks they're opposites, they are the same voice, one dreaming, one awake] and Char seemed to cherish. The silence that healed them. Healed them enough to go on, making sure nothing was easy.

The poet is someone with nothing to say.

*

Eleven on ten. Seventeen on sixteen. These are the sacred measures of poetry.

Homer's typical line speaks seventeen syllables, just like the haiku. Each line a haiku -- in fact the way Japanese speak their haikus out loud, in one sentence, 'one line' breath.

Sanskrit line is sixteen syllables.

Catullus' line eleven.

Dante's eleven.

The basic line then of narrative: build seventeen on sixteen.

The basic line of lyric: Build eleven on ten.

The irregular, the extra-syllable of the fallen world. Lilith in Eden.

The syllable of grace. The odd number, the god entering into history.

*

I like those strophes best -- eleven lines, seventeen lines. The one feels ancient and orderly and right. The other feels archaic, shamanic, alchemic, transgressive.

*

Looking at the woods behind our house -- how close the woods come, how they half-encircle and shield us. I notice them more than ever before, and thank them.

All the poems, have I brought them from the woods?

Is my praise and love enough recompense for them?

*

And I fear that someone someday will cut them down, as is the way with woods in America. I fear that, yet even if that happens, the woods will have been. The woods would have been around us, and (for all that time) we will have been theirs.

*

Rough woods, so many bushes and trees, entitled to so many specific names I don't know. Yet for all their particulars, they are a single gathered person at our door.

*

the notions of language and silence, cloisters and porticos, the place where I was so overtaken by the reflections I tried to summarize --- the mediaeval Chartreuse de Melan, near Taninges. What's left of it has been converted to a museum space for contemporary art, and we visited an impressive exhibition. I sat in the cloister, slipped off my shoes and let the cold stone relax me -- I'd been walking a lot on the one hot day we had. The feel of the stone, and what it told me, literally told me through my skin, the sureness and clarity of that language, when I wanted to go up to the big paintings of orphan children's faces on the walls and tell the curators that Leon Golub had just died that morning, the painter whose work clearly stood behind the young painter's work on display, and of course none of this could be said, in words, the continuities, influences, temperatures, leanings of one on another forever, the love, the leavings, the sheer presence, *dasein*, that the stone said.

*

All human institutions, including this one, have one and only one purpose: to protect the rich from the poor. All religious institutions exist to justify injustice. There is only one cure for the ills of society and even the physical anguish of mankind: elimination of the disparity of wealth. Since the rich will not give (except for the ornamental guiltanthropy that builds opera houses and college gymnasiums). the poor must take. Since they have no means of production or control, they must seize them. If murder were allowed, then the the poor must kill the rich, starting not from the closest but

from the richest. The life of the rich must be made intolerable with fear and hatred. They should have not a moment's peace, and every hand and heart should be turned against them. Despise celebrities. Refuse to work for them. The only power the poor have is refusing to work for the rich, refusing to help them in any way.

*

(Thinking on the street in Saint Jean d'Aulps:) What does it mean that we are not bodies but people, people who say we have bodies? Who and what are we that we have bodies?

*

my endless yen takes me to the back of the word cave always, taking (in that huge poem *Opening the seals*, some of it here and there already) the protofact of language as the rock invaded.

*

language is the rock we can invade. In fact must invade. We have to live fully inside the caverns of language before we can go out into the bright world.

*

Maybe *Lear* is the only great play, in the sense that *Oedipus* or *Oedipus at Colonus* are great plays. A mad incoherence of morality, an immense risk taken -- as it seems -- in the most casual way. *Lear* doubts the self-evident and *Oedipus* never even questions the bizarre. It occurred to me to think that *Lear* himself might share with *Hamlet* and *Leontes* a suicidal madness, a lust for self-destruction we can read in *Iago* too -- but how many victims will each suicide take down with him? *Lear* doesn't so much give up his kingdom as try to destroy it, make it a realm suicided by its king. If we look for the villain in *Lear*, we find *Lear* -- for his massive and mysterious cosmological crime empowers and makes possible the petty villainies of the daughters and courtiers (they might almost rhyme).

*

In the coffee grounds at the Diaspora, I saw the image of a devil's face turn into *Lear's* face, and that made me think.

*

And if there really were a "kill the landlords" movement... When the revolution finally comes to America it will be bloodier than any other. The despised and humiliated poor --ever growing in numbers - - will smite those they not only have been forced to envy but also, crushingly, to admire.

They will begin by smiting the richest. Working down Fortune's list, from the top, until no rich person will feel safe anywhere. Every poor man's hand will be turned against him, and almost every man is poor. And the rich will come to see what it's like to live in the Two Kingdoms, the divided world.

And this time the poor will not make the usual mistake, will not set upon and kill the richest poor man in the neighborhood, the butcher or the baker. Their loss will mean nothing but local inconvenience, local grief, overdetermined tragedy. This time go for the masters. This time the poor will recognize that the hugely wealthy are their single enemy, and will strike.

*

All of the educational establishment is meant to inculcate only one persuasion: that the poor never get around to thinking of the simplest, cleanest solution to social ills: _kill the rich._

Democracy is a system of persuading the poor they already have the power (that common sense should tell them they clearly lack). But their only power is to choose between two or few alternatives that the rich provide for their amusement.

*

Until wealth itself is a crime, there will be no justice.

*

Don't let them enjoy their profits. Don't let them enjoy what they've cheated and cozened and killed to acquire. Start with the very rich and work down. Not with the politicians, particularly, who are just the valets and chambermaids of the rich.

*

My blundering attempt to keep mice from nesting in their pilfered cotton wadding leaves two recently born mice, almost grown, tumbling on the floor of the summerhouse. I try to work them back into that wadding, and the wadding into a little metal plate. I think they will die, and that it's my fault. I leave the plate alone for days, and see no evidence one way or the other. Sometimes it is better not to look. Then weather has its own way with the world, and eases my blame a little.

*

All the great stories are quests. And all the great quests are failures.

Epic always ends in the funeral of Hektor.

What did they get, those soldiers Xenophon chronicles, when they saw the sea?

When Odysseus gets home, he finds a crowd of yobbos in control --
so is control itself the goal?

The hero travels through the world to find the one place or woman or kingdom he can control.

To find the place where I can control myself.

*

The ability to choose to go no further... or to decide that the imag[in]ed goal is not worth the striving, what then?

But who would dare to think about the goal?

The goal for any man is determined once and for all. He either pursues it or does not. The goal is the goal, and there is no second.

Does a sparrow think about seed, an eagle about the rabbit? No, never. Only the trajectory matters to them, the arc to the goal.

*

Write a book (maybe that Bible Backwards of mine) where every sentence begins But.

But is the most honest word we have, an innocent among deceivers, a hope for something new,

a chance to break the habits of thinking by the habit of thinking.

*

Language is space acting on time.

*

Coming last week from the Zukofsky centennial conference, I thought: the usual conference is circumference.

*

Respectable specters moved around the big room (Graduate Lounge, Philosophy Hall -- where I idled hard for three years). A pleasure to see young poets and students also there, interested in anything a hundred years old, smiling, cleanly dressed, with name tags.

*

Babies now are born ready to bomb Baghdad. How long ago people stopped thinking. Is it the invasion of the images? We dont need Luddism. We need Iconoclasm.

*

Strange vowels of one's native language, where one is two. [I wrote this a week ago, and I think I meant "I is a diphthong...]

*

Porcelain is from the Italian porcellino, little pig, itself a diminutive of Latin porcus, pig. This is cognate with the German Ferkel, piglet. It seems that a popular tourist souvenir for people visiting Florence in the late Middle Ages and Renaissance was a little ceramic image of the wild boar which is the totem and emblem of the city. This image was made from white clay of the region, and was pure translucent white when fired. The bronze statue of the boar in the piazza was

called Porcellino affectionately, and its name soon transferred to the piece of tourist tchotchkes. Then in turn it transferred to the material of which the little pig was made. Who runs these transfers?

*

Listening to the images as they sly their way into the mind -- repetition, rhythm, the shock of the familiar. And once they are there, who will dispel them? The man with seven devils in him is a man in whom the images take charge.

*

Remembering how the Roman also empire spent and finally quenched itself in Iraq and all its adjacencies, fighting always enemies who had nothing to lose, fighting out of sheer paranoia about terrorist attacks on their Israel and its neighbors, one wonders how some people never learn.

In W's case he never heard about all that, I assume, but somebody down there in the Oval Hell must have read a book. Or maybe that very scenario, that seems mad blundering, is actually intended, actually policy. A mad Bush thinks he is presiding over the End of Time and getting us ready for the Second Coming, while the smart Iago Rove thinks he's just calmly, methodically, destroying the republic - a thing no oligarchs ancient or modern have ever much liked to begin with. Republics are swallowed by empire. Then Empire is swallowed by the desert.

*

The stricter the monastery the happier the monks. --Lama Norlha

*

a passage from the Odyssey, breath of a world where fable, story, explanation, cunning, mindfulness and skill win out, and violence is not praised and not foregrounded. It is the text I pose against the warful Iliad, whose vast overvaluation (in modern times) coincides with, stems from, supports the militaristic, imperialistic philosophies of Germany and England in the 18th and 19 Century. We teach the young that heroes are noble and worthy of emulation, we teach

martial arts as precepts of moral presence. What fresh air it is to hear the Odyssey chant the alertness of men and not their savagery.

*

Kafka. I keep coming back to that story Canetti tells of the reciter of tales who was given a book by Kafka after reciting one of the stories in it (the mines at Falun story, later so gloriously remade by E.T.A.Hoffmann, and by Hoffmannsthal as a play) --and being told by Kafka this is the best story in the world. That book, *Das Schatzkaestlein* or little treasure chest by Hebel firmly recruits Kafka to the deep tradition (and kabbalah) of the parable --the secular parable in which the intensity of understanding is challenged, energized, demanded -- but never given the consolation of a (mere) religious interpretation. So it is a riddle without a solution, a pure intensity of mysterium. The secular is what fascinates me in Kafka -- how he uses the shimmer and shadow of the transcendental to enact a purely -- and richly-- secular (and by secular I mean psychological) cosmos.

*

Girls with dead fathers win by abandonment.

*

I want to write a poem by laying out a map of Brooklyn over a text and following the words that appear to run along or under the streets - - such streets as I wd travel to get somewhere from one of the places where i lived as a child.

*

In the dream I was looking out the upstairs window at the head of the stairs. I saw that men had come and had cut down big trees in the back yard, and were cutting down the last of them. I was glad that others had spontaneously undertaken this dangerous work. When the last tree -- the big linden -- went down, suddenly a huge volume of water was released from the earth. As it gushed away, the whole contour of the ground changed, some sank, some rose. As the water gushed away, this water long trapped in the earth by the power of the

tree, the tree was like a great stopper, flowed fast, east past the garage, then the lawn lifted and another area, roughly rectangular, sank. Its walls were bedrock and it filled in with water, a spontaneous pool. The lawn was green and smooth and healthy, the pool clear and fresh. I could still hear the roar of the liberated water rushing east as I woke.

*

fulfilment of parental identities is the child's meta-identity, as I am a teacher and an opera singer)

*

The absolute necessity is to wield a confident silence -- as a profound statement of who you are, what you've done, what you mean. It is a of course challenge to those you meet, but also a gift, giving them the space to know you at their own rate, in accordance with their own needs.

You must silence about your practice, when meeting people. Something learned from tantra -- never talk about your practice. Something learned from Dharma: never offer information when it hasnt been requested. The point is:

enter a new situation, a meeting with new people, as if they already knew you. Take as a working basis that they already know who you are. You do not have to tell them anything.

Your presence is reason enough.

Your presence is justification enough.

All a person really has to do is to be present.

*

German sense of time so much different from American. We live in a vast country with a single language, edged here and there by another language of a (more or less) subject population. We are all about space, and time for us exists only as an index of getting from one place to another, a kind of unfortunate footnote of space. Germany is

a small, compact and densely crowded country. It doesn't take long to get anywhere, a few hours takes you from the Polish border to the Swiss. Inside Germany, the population can savor time for its own sake; when you can drive 120 mph on the Autobahn, time is on your side. What I've noticed is that much more than we, Germans let time be shaped by their own personal, psychological, familial necessities. Shops close early and often. A German thinks nothing of "making you wait" (actually he is doing nothing of the sort, just sharing the passage of time with you, since by his lights you have as much of it as he has) while he has a cold, a family reunion, a quarrel with his girl friend, his child's birthday, or just a six day ski jaunt to Garmisch because he's felt seedy and needs to get away. At any rate, this is how I explain it to myself when genial, loving and otherwise quite responsible collaborators, publishers, translators, correspondents, agents are (by my lights) unaccountably tardy or sluggish. Briefly, our sense of responsibility includes time; theirs does not. I think it has to do with all of them going through the same school calendars all their childhood, having their vacations at the same time, sharing (pretty much) the same religion (not that they practice it, just that it's the coating on their calendar, same language, same politics (as long ago they were taught to seem to have). For what it's worth, this is my sense of why we have to wait disconcertingly for our well-meaning German friends to answer the mail or send the check or whatever.

*

Towards liberty. The two great 'libertarian' innovations in discourse of the nineteenth century: the prose poem and free verse. Each had its clearest foundations in antinomian (Baudelaire, Novalis) or anarcho-democratic (Blake, Whitman) writers. Freedom as the technical telos of literature -- has that been studied in itself? Is it that which lies beneath the authoritarian-antinomian (Surrealism, Oulipo) as well as in the purer anarcho-hedonist (Fourier, Proudhon, Debord, Vaneigem) traditions? Experimentalism (however fascistic Pound and Lewis might have been, or [politically stodgy Stein) is implicitly libertarian. The letter giveth life.

*

SYMBOLIC TRANSFER OF AFFECT

(more precisely, Transfer of affect by means of symbols)

This seems to be the base of a huge sector of American economy. The symbolic transfer of affect seems to be the especial province of:

1. Religion
2. Education (especially K-12 and liberal arts colleges)
3. Entertainment
4. Psychology in practice (counselling, etc.)

Determine how many entrepreneurs and employees are currently working in this field.

What percentage of the work force does this represent?

Discover the STA product of each national economy.

Evidently the distinction I'm making depends on a dualism:

transfer of affect

vs.

transfer of material objects or real property.

Note that this distinction is asserted as useful only for comparative purposes (as measuring one city against another, or one nation state against another.)

Ultimately we will find that transference of affect is radical to most (though not all) 'material' transactions as well.

Celebrity makes clear: the bigger the star, the larger the number of affect transfer transactions s/he carries out.

(Star: Symbolic Transfer of Affect Regulator)

Judaism is such an effective, enduring, enthralling religion because (inter alia) it has developed such a vast network of affect-transfers in all domains of life, all seasons of the year, all parts of the day.

*

ENERGUMEN 3 [begun 5 XI 04]

An epistolary gun swinging back and forth between culture and history, aiming and targeting a feeling - shame - at once hidden and revealed by language.

A correspondence chronicling the flush as it creeps up on us: a feeling, a past, a denial... A text that accumulates collapsing definitions of shame as each author takes his/her turn or chance to dig up undisclosed spaces of description, provocation and whimsy, to

hide in and reveal one another's language: this text is a brave undertaking of an encyclopedic texture, a chance opportunity to speak about not speaking, not understanding, the requirements of language and country to retain us in their clichés and referential histories.

The running monologues on shame turn alternately toward, then away, from each other, perhaps ashamed of their ideas, of their realizations, wrong-doings, achievements, desires and denials, but trying to do right by the other person's words, persisting to define the feeling of not wanting to feel, not wanting to remember, hiding in translation, hiding in one's own language while reaching out to another.

*

GOD GENE

(from the Telegraph, 15 XI 04):

“Dr Dean Hamer, the director of the Gene Structure and Regulation Unit at the National Cancer Institute in America, asked volunteers 226 questions in order to determine how spiritually connected they felt to the universe. The higher their score, the greater a person's ability to believe in a greater spiritual force and, Dr Hamer found, the more likely they were to share the gene, VMAT2.

Studies on twins showed that those with this gene, a vesicular monoamine transporter that regulates the flow of mood-altering chemicals in the brain, were more likely to develop a spiritual belief.”

*

So dark today (28 Nov 04) the street lights never went off; it's 11:12 am now, and under heavy rain the River Road runs besides the street lamps and looks like dusk. Our crepuscule du soir. I want to make you blush, bring the ruddy light back into the day. How to make you blush? Cupid's arrow, Lord Payne's hairbrush, a plate full of praises?

*

Priase. Priapus.

Yet I would be an encomiast of everything.

*

from “L’exil de la parole: du silence biblique au silence d’Auschwitz,” Andre Neher. “Kekaloto ledabber: epuiser ses paroles, cela peut signifier, certes, dire tout ce que l’on avait a dire, mais cela peut signifier egalement, ne dire que ce qu’on voulait dire, arreter le discours a un certain moment, couper court pour ne pas aller au-dela d’une certaine limite.”

*

The sense of permission to write bad (incoherent, unknown, defiant) poems. Several times in my life I’ve been at moments of utter bafflement, thinking the work I was doing was crazed or valueless or just wrong. Each time, that chaos was in fact the stirring of a new level of concern. My *Axon Dendron Tree* was one of those times, then *Songs I-XXX*, then *Sentence*, and most recently *Mont Blanc* itself.

*

Dream. [21 XII 04] George Quasha asked me if he should throw his stones away (the stones he balances as part of his Axial installations). I urged him not to do so. Very tenderly explained how he should keep them. And start from this awareness: an isolated stone is a boulder, a xenolith. Every such stone signifies *woman*. The presence of woman, shakti, marked, made present by the presence of the stone. Size is immaterial. Each array of balanced stones is a life, a zenana full of the women of one’s life. To throw away the stones would be to deny, abjure, banish women from one’s life.

*

Later, after waking from that dream, I realized that the central fact of Christ’s suffering, ‘passion,’ was signed by Golgotha, the rock, the bare stone hill they called Calvarium, the skull. It is on this stone that Christ founded his presence in the world—a presence commemorated also by a church—founded on Peter, the rock—and authenticated by the stone rolled away from the Easter tomb.

Not the cross, the rock.

*

Work with Golgotha, the rock itself, the usually forgotten actress in the Passion. It had to be on a rock. Rock = skull, skull = womb. The skull is the permanent mother (witness also the *dura mater*) in which we live—the skull is the womb we never leave till death.

Wherefore the image of the soul delivered from earthly life is a naked woman slipping out of the suture at the top of the skull—years ago I dreamed that as my crest.

*

After years, how many must it be now, twenty, more? of getting by on four to six hours of sleep a night, and choosing that, I have decided (choosing this) to sleep ‘eight hours’ a night and see what happens. For the past two weeks I’ve been doing this, getting about seven hours but once in a while a full eight—and what i find is what I’m experiencing and remembering ‘my’ dreams.

Dreams have come back. To dream a lot is like having a distant, intelligent friend who gets in touch from time to time, erratically but wonderfully. To be back in touch with my dreams is like realizing i have a beloved friend not far away.

*

All the “great religions” are founded on rock:

Buddhism on the *vajrasana*, the stone at Bodh Gaya on which the Buddha sat in his Enlightenment, and on which every Buddha sits at that moment, the stone that is the only thing that survives the deaths of universes at the ending of each kalpa.

Hinduism on the stone lingam of Shiva—Mount Kailash and all its smaller replicas.

Christianity on the rock of Calvary, the skull stone. And on Peter: “On this rock I will build my church. And the stone rolled away from the tomb when Jesus rose and brushed it aside on his way from death.

Judaism, on the stone tablets of the law, of which the written Torah is a copy, commentary, shadow. And on the rock of the altar the Jews were bidden to build after they crossed over Jordan at last into the Promised Land: an altar built of unmasoned, unworked stone.

Islam: the black stone of the Ka'aba, fallen from heaven, round which the Faithful move in a dance step of praise. And towards which every kiblah points.

Alchemy: the stone of the Grail as Wolfram reveals it, also fallen from heaven.

Freemasonry: the ashlar, the unmasoned stone.

We are litholaters. Stone Worshipers. The Stone Age has never ended. Or it has ended, but we still carry our Gods from that time.

*

How powerful No is. People who know how to say No, and say it loud and clear, are able to wield considerable force socially, psychologically, spiritually, even politically. So many world religions seem founded on negations of one kind or another, and often define themselves by what they say No to. (The mediaeval Chinese called Moslems those who do not eat pig -a truly remarkable abstinence for the Chinese! - and called Christians those who do not eat horse - an odd fact they'd noticed.) One vegetarian dominates a whole dinner party, everyone made considerate or uncomfortable or ribald (depending on their own natures) by that solitary No-sayer.

No Sex, No Drugs, No Wine, No Pork, No Electricity, even now are shibboleths set up as definitions of virtue or self-definitions of one group or another - as if testifying to the fact that it's easier to order life by negation than by affirmative precept.

Obviously, the power of No can be used wonderfully and poetically and with tremendous good: Saint Francis, Milarepa, William Blake, Ann Lee. But also with tremendous evil: Hitler, Pol Pot, Mao Tse-tung. It's terrible to think that whole nations were embroiled in wars and millions of deaths because of the power of certain simplistic negations (No Jews, No Intellectuals, No Families, for example).

It's interesting to watch how movements in the arts and literature typically begin by negations (No Rhyme, No Representational Image, No Emotional Transfer, No Key Signature, etc.). Such issues haunt me, since I've been involved with avant-gardes of one kind or another all my life,

caught up so often in the Anger of the New.

And No sounds like New, doesn't it. No wonder we get so confused.

*

I bet if I made a list of books I would never read, or read again, then within two weeks I'd find myself reading one of them, ordering one of them from Amazon at two a.m.

Disdain is often the first signal of attraction.

And what I suppose myself to loathe becomes (like the silly swains in MND) my favorite food, my 'meat.'

*

When a plain woman smiles, there is a radiance no beauty has. How strange that is. As if the plain woman's face were by some witch's spell—or some act of macabre self-control—kept immobilized in a displeasing countenance until released, for just an instant, by the smile. When a pretty woman smiles, it's just a pretty woman smiling. There is mystery here.

*

The window frames a world. Its neat squaring off of reality, edges and perspective all intact, is literally picturesque: like a painting. A painting is an image you can't enter, guarded by its own borders, frame, supporting surface. So what you see through the window is never what you can enter—you can go and be in the terrain the window's vista shows, but you will not be in the window, not in the vista—you will be in the [relatively] unbounded continuum of whatever exists. Which is a larger thing than what the window shows (or is), but paradoxically also smaller, since the unbounded is in that sense incomplete, whereas a quiet woman standing at a window looking out sees a complete gestalt, perfect, intact.

And yet of course there is a sadness in this poem. The obvious optical, experiential truths I just belabored in the last paragraph are true, of course they are, but the sensation of exclusion from the world, the self or soul as a shut-in gazing out the window at a world forever denied them—that's there too, and god knows exactly where it comes from. It's not confessional, I mean I have never felt like that particularly—but it is what the window itself sings, it is the song of the window (of the painter?) who frames, encadres, a world it cannot enter but can only declare into existence through its own inflexible presence.

Confessional poetry, they used to say. I think all poems are confessional—but it's the confession that counts. The sins are trivial.

Doors. The lines in the printed book are as the printer made them. And that's fine for this piece, since I think of its measure as prose, and it's best if it looks like prose.

All of my poems in line are attentive to the line, and are to be sounded (inwardly even) as if with a tiny pause at the end of each—no flexion of the voice, no change of breath [unless explicit punctuation supervenes], just the merest silence. Because silence is the root or womb from which the poem comes, it's lovely to let it show through. I have defined a line of poetry as the shortest path between two silences.

It seems I have many poems about doors, or called doors. This one is a lucid (I hope) metaphor of the possibilities of experience that people don't embrace because it doesn't occur to them to push rather than pull, or pull rather than twist, etc. There is so much in the world. So many spells we can recite or perform to see suddenly the world before the Fall, the primal suchness. And we're always finding them. Now push. Or pull. Or twist. Or slide.

Vision is always a hands-on experience.

*

[after the Basque Variations of today, 15 Jan 05, I found myself thinking:]

And always the other poems, other vistas: the permutations I don't see, or don't understand. The obstruction of the lyrical. The obstruction of making sense. That is why I keep going on writing, forever, I guess, trying to get all of what is offered, trying to get it all down.

*

Quietly awakened by the roar of the water rushing past, the Sawkill over its banks after so much rain and thaw and snow melt, a real river it's become tonight but not yet threatening the road. 5 a.m. 15 January 2005. Across the road a new tributary has been running all day and all night, from the woods and even deeper flooded road east of the Triangle, Sudden lakes and rivers, wake me. I have dreamed things like this so often before, but this one woke me.

*

“...en restant bons amis, nous nous séparons avec Valérie, et toute ma petite existence en a été chamboulée...” says Franck André Jamme in a letter today, and I think about how one’s ‘little life’ is in fact always the other’s. One’s life is two. I am “the-one-who-lives-with-you.”

And that makes me aware of what a monk really is, and what the celibacy of a monk/nun is about: a monk is someone who lives around his own center (even if that center is the image of a deity or task), and no other *single person or persons* can change his own perception of his life.

*

Could we begin everything anytime again. It seems to me that cosmology is always ready for renewal, the apocatastasis any moment, in our control. The vast explosion of ‘light’ from Sagittarius the astronomers have been concerned with lately, this is an idea reinventing itself, a world deciding to begin again.

Anew, anew. Or: anew! Anew!

*

In Heidegger’s essay on the Ister, interesting that *Weis niemand* is the last line of the hymn, but almost the beginning of H’s ideas about the poem—flowing backwards again

Raetsel, if that is the word H uses that’s translated as enigma, is usually rendered as RIDDLE in English, think about the power of that word, riddle, which names not only the cognitive puzzle that an enigma is, but its verse embodiment (the earliest English poems are the Anglo-Saxon riddles, so called

the machinery of the word may be itself a silent listening, obedient—but it is we, the human who make that listening originary (that wonderful word

*

Remedium for jealousy. The first time after. The taste of other.

*

Yesterday Peter Wilson showed me a proof copy of a reprint of Novalis' *Apprentices of Sais*, the one with Klee drawings—an edition I held in my hand fifty five years ago in the 8th st bookshop, and not since. My body felt a flare of electricity that lit up a sudden landscape. And all at once I understood that the past IS a landscape. Not to be recaptured, not to be lost or won or found or the like, but to be journeyed through, just as we journey through that abrupt and hasty future we call the present.

*

I found myself writing this to a determined but untalented student:

It seems to me the main problem in your work is that you are trying too hard. You're pressing the bow down too hard, blowing too hard into the clarinet. By that I mean you're consciously trying to plan the poem, tell a little story. That can work in poetry if you have some structural device (some weird rhyme or repetition pattern, or one of the constraints we've talked about), but when one is just writing straight ahead, it doesn't do just to disguise a prose statement in lines.

If the poem really is to reveal and surprise even its own author, the author must wait a little, sit back a little, relax a little and let the poem (the unconscious, if you prefer) move things along. The philosopher Heidegger used the old German word *Gelassenheit* - gentleness, releasement, letting go - to mean something like the creative listening that goes on as one permits the mind to find the poem.

Think on this, and see if it has any resonance. Let the surface dissolve and see what comes to light.

*

The sheep, the cotton gin, the coal mine, the oil well, the car, the tractor trailer, the TV:

The U.S. Government is controlled by, or in fact operated by, different industries at different times in our history:

19th Century: cotton, and the textile industry

late 19th, early 20th: steel and coal

mid-20th century: auto / transport

late 20th: oil. (Not Z.O.G. but O.I.L.)

In the 21st century I imagine we will see oil slowly giving way to the biggest industry, entertainment, with its sidekick the medical business.

Where Goebbels was content to use UFA and the sophisticated German cinema to create propaganda for a government under other control, Reagan and Schwarzenegger are pioneers of the actual take-over of government by entertainers. The E industry will dominate the government, will become the government, since it already controls the imaginal world by which the electorate is controlled, and the electorate's 'individual' concerns are shaped.

Liberals are usually, thanks to their laudable but unfortunate love of reason and Cartesian order, the last to grasp the power of the imaginal. A liberal is a boxer who fights with one hand tied behind his back—he fears and loathes the emotional/imaginal, which alone could make him effective.

*

the premise [of Justin Cammy's lecture] -- the writing by Jews during the Holocaust—is so urgent. There is a curious way we have of relegating it all to the domain of remembering (rather than experiencing) -- and then promptly exalting Memory and writing dissertations about the 'construction of memory'—as if to avoid yet one more time and in one more way the horrors of the actual. As if it existed ONLY in that zone of fantasy we call memory.

*

about Celan's *Genicht*.

I was thinking along these lines: the Kabbalist 'trinity' of

Ain Soph Aur = the No Limit Light

Ain Soph = the No Limit

Ain = No/None/Nothing

where I take the highest term (the last mentioned) to be precisely gesturing towards what Buddhism speaks of as *sunyata*, Emptiness—that is, the unconditioned.

So in terms of the misery of history, we are working with something like the

Negative Trinity, like the *qliphoth* or shells in Lurianic prophecy

So das Gedicht , culture as we know it) usually functions in the world of Light, that is, the world of reflections we call history (light makes shadows, shadows are the persons and events of history) the world of history vomits its unselfing in such an event as the Holocaust, the limits are gone, the edges lost, the definitions of human relations and cultural premises are blurred or destroyed. This is the limitless, with light gone. This is the phase that Adorno is describing in his famous statement—which I take as exactly phrased and intended- that after Auschwitz only barbarians can write poetry—barbarians being exactly those who had no limits to lose, they are the ones who had no culture (in the Greek sense of barbaroi) to lose the edges of, hence are still able to speak but when we come to the Ain itself, the radiant emptiness, everything has dissolved and we are back in the lightless but also darkless world of utter change, from which anything may come again.

This is das Genicht—the nothingness or Ain that is now productive (both the ge- prefix and the rhyme with Gedicht say this), it's not just nothing it's The Nothinged, and in that huge vacancy yawns (chao as in chaos = to yawn) all the possibilities to go on. Das Genicht is the Beckett character saying (some years before PC, actually, isnt that so?) “I can't go on. I must go on.”

And that is the soteriological. By going on (writing, for instance) the self (the plausible “I” of any “I must” kind of statement) saves itself.

The soteriological is, bien sur, profoundly psychological. But what else is salvation if not a salvation of me and thee, and especially of the “I” who reads. The “I” who writes.

From the first time I ever read the line (which, you might be pleased to know, I always hear spoken in my head out loud in your voice, relishing with almost Austrian esh-ness the ch of Genicht), I felt in the presence of a word, a concept that “troestet und hilft” (to cite the least likely source for Celan—

though you know I keep finding RMR in PC, but that's another Geschichte—

or maybe a Genichte...),

so das Genicht seemed the essence of all we could hold to, all that would save us. And the Kabbalistic “Ain” came quickly to mind.

to get this down—hope it helps us focus. COme back at it if you want. For the Kabbalist, the Ain (same word in Arabic isn't it, as ayn?) or No or No-ness, is the highest of all, the supreme.

In Vajrayana Buddhism there is, by the way, an exact equivalence:

Ain Soph Aur = the Nirmanakaya, the Buddha manifest in and as the world

Ain Soph = the Sambhogakaya, the Buddha manifest in and as the imaginal world

Ain = Dharmakaya, the supreme reality, the Buddha unmanifest but the essence of everything—a naked blue man sitting alone in the desert of the sky, is how the Dhamakaya is shown.

Quoting Pierre Joris <joris@albany.edu> (8 April 2005)

> Dear Robert,

>

> lovely to see you in Nueva York & ride up the Hudson with you &

> Charlotte. More! As soon as there is some free time I'll call & we'll

> do lunch in Hudson—or we'll get you up here as you have not yet seen

> the new digs.

>

> Meanwhile I am trying to work your thoughts on the soteriological into

> the essay -- & want to quote you on “Ain Soph to Genicht”—but would

> want to discuss this a bit more with you beforehand. Do you see the

> “Genicht” as the poem (Gedicht) via negative theology? But how does the

> “Genicht” have salvific qualities? Or does the move from the Kabbalistic

> Ain Soph to the Genicht happen differently, i.e. not as a slide from

> positivity (I do associate Ain Soph with Light & the limitless, or

> better limitless light (waffling—that part of my library is in

> storage & thus can't go to my books).

>
> So, any insight much appreciated.

*

Creeley. What he revealed, as no one had before, is how to carve time with silence. Others worked with measured silences and artful delays; Creeley worked with the natural silence of speech, of breath, and taught us, or at least taught me, this most radical of all our shapings—the natural gap dancing among the words, the Ginnungagap from which the cosmos of the poem organizes. He made it less possible for rhetoric to take over. He made the poet conscious of the speaking, not of the word.

*

The fountain pen as syringe. The injection is necessary. We think we know what we think, but we don't really know what our or any thinking *amounts to* till we write it 'down.' My big black and gold German pen, Mont Blanc they call it. Fountain Pen, the pen is fountain, the penis-fountain, source of that minute inveiglement or seed that enters the womb—think of Courbet's "The Origin of the World"—and makes the world. The womb is the other. Meaning enters the other and makes something happen. This is society, whose doors are kept by Kafka doorkeepers dressed as psychiatrists and priests.

Writing is entering into the being who thinks. Writing is the initiation into the public self, to achieve which the private self must die away—just as the private (=secret, unforthcoming) self dies in psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis makes you talk—makes you put into words the things you think you think, and makes you put into words the things you say instead of thinking, the thinking that covers what is really thought. Every word is the return of the repressed.

Agamben on the thing itself, *to pragma*, that is not written, citing Plato's Seventh Letter.

*

And beauty and angels make me think of Agamben again, his beautiful essays on the demonic in Benjamin, and on the Indo-

European reflexive *se- The *se in particular seems to point to that linguistic function that makes memory sayable—though that’s not his point in the essay, as far as I remember. It is the reflexivity of language, the ability of me to operate on myself, to hear what I am saying, to hear (and remember) what I said, that makes memory possible—memory, as distinct from bruises or breaks. The memory that is mindfulness aloud.

*

Anger. I will only put Christian poems where Catholics will not find them.

*

What is really surprising about my dream transcript/poem is how feminine the I sounds. Even though I am “Mars,” somehow my voice sounds more and more like a woman the further into the text you read. I’m not sure what I mean exactly by ‘like a woman’ but it is perhaps a combination of sounding not entirely like myself. I think the best line in the text is “He didn’t even watch us play”—the need to be seen and observed and liked and approved of while caught-in-the-act that only children and (greek/roman) gods seem to enjoy.

*

Agamben’s *Remnants of Auschwitz* is so powerful, alerting, summoning, clarifying. Such profound respect for the words, which are the only monuments we really can erect.

(as unlike that vile ugly boneyard in Berlin—where are the names of the perpetrators inscribed? Once again, it’s all about the victims, commoditizing them and ignoring their murderers, whose descendants can wander among the blank steles, blank pages, and inscribe them as they choose. Play among the symbols that so poorly stand in for evidence. If they wanted cement stelae, it should have been six million of them, scattered through every town in Germany and Austria, with a few dropped in Switzerland—near the border crossings, and in Berne—as a reminder.

I bless Agamben for his brisk dismissal of the word ‘holocaust’—I used to carry on against the word even more fiercely. But people just didn’t want to know. It is not an offering to the gods, not a sacrifice of something of which you had the right to dispose. It was a murder

of the others, an attempted murder of all possible others. It was not just genocide, but altericide. And certainly not a sacred offering.

*

Altericide. To speak of that. The Jews were the most other of all, but they did not exhaust the category.

*

The social/political meaning of a film really is like the movie music—it lets us understand what we see, gives moral and emotional resonance to action and dialogue. Dialogue isn't always or even often about the political agenda, but the agenda should be clear enough to form an emotional and intellectual arc along which the characters interact and actions are deployed.

*

It would take real courage to say that the Jews of yesterday are in any way like the Turks of today, tomorrow. Not in terms of the magnitude of the Holocaust as measured against the smaller humiliations and oppressions of Turks in nowadays Germany—of course not. But very much so in terms of the personal and public attitude of Germans, their (often well-meaning)connivance with established cultural values, their xenophobia.

Once we relabel the Holocaust (as we should one day do) as the War against the Other, not genocide but altericide, we begin to understand the necessity right now of being clear about the real wellspring of the Hitlerzeit, the way the Nazis were able to use the muzzy, unfocused xenophobia and family-centrism of ordinary people, and focus it into a death-ray.

In Germany today, everybody is a fugitive—the Turks are trying to escape from the poverty of their own society and the humiliations of an unfriendly Europe; the Poles are trying to escape from the East into the affluence of the West; the Jews are trying to escape from the typecast roles the Germans still cast them in, while the Germans themselves are trying to escape from their history.

Each person is a prisoner of other's perceptions. We can never escape from our images in the perception, prejudice, of the others.

We are like images on photographs or films: fixed, meaningful, unalterable.

*

Sex is revenge. Image is vengeance. We are hurt by the images people form of us, and we take revenge by images.

*

(Notes from Cuttyhunk, June 2005)

When we got to the island, we could find only a rose or two in all the stretch of beach along the Sound. Now it's full of roses, white and red, fragrant only close because the sea wind carries all odor away, and the yellow sea poppies, and red-violet beach peas with their tender leaves.

And today the paulownia is subtly but distinctly past its peak. Those pale lilac-colored trumpet flowers, a lot of them are on the grass now, wind-scattered among the island graves. But most of the flowers are still on the tree, the little leaves beginning to out-spiral from the twigs above each cluster, but the flowers have changed their fragrance, there's a smell of loss inside the smell of flowering, a turn towards morbidezza and good night.

*

“only an uncertain passage over ...
... breaking Time's head...”

the great lines from *The Changeling* come back to me suddenly, the lines I set on the back of Trobar No.1 forty-five years ago, how apt they still seem, to choose the great speech for madmen - and free verse! I should mark these words somewhere in (or as) my memoirs, my next book, my tomb...

*

We are mortal interventions in cosmic affairs.

It's all about us: When the Church insists that Christ is the only (or, in more ecumenical times, just the best) persona and enabler of our personal salvation, I'm not sure that it's so much trying to sustain itself as merchant of that high commodity, as insisting on the

anthropocentric nature of the cosmos - the sense that we are the important ones, we humans, and the universe is all about us.

What a strange religion it is - wonderfully personal and generous and kind in many ways, but also harsh, terrified of difference, of animals and trilobites and mosquitoes and other planets, an edifice held together by the rusty hinges and hasps of fear. And fear makes killers.

*

Civilization is chairs.

Sitting is the perfect compromise between the beast sprawled on the ground and the upright angel, wing upraised, announcing heaven - or the upright man erect, defying heaven.

Culture begins when we sat down.

A seated man is a Centaur.

A seated woman is Queen Isis.

Mythology itself is the story seated people tell to those who stand and move.

*

Homo erectus is an affront to heaven. The vertical belongs to heaven, the horizontal to earth.

The horizon is the boundary, the walls of heaven locking the earth in.

The punishment for the arrogance of human presumption in standing upright, speaking, holding against heaven: is the Cross

on which Christ, Perfect Man, dies. Dies forsaken by heaven.

And through his own power comes to life. Not again, but for the first time.

True life.

The Cross is not a symbol of his suffering but of his transcendence - the upright broke the horizon, broke the sky.

And he made the final, definitive entrance for us into the Vertical Condition.

Now the next Buddha, Maitreya, can appear before us seated. We have inherited our throne.

*

7:48 A.M. What just happened? Gravity changed.

The water poured in slow motion out of the mug as I tried to splash it on the sink wall to wash away a few fugitive coffee ground. But the water slowed. I did it again, with the same result. It splashed slowly, the way a much more viscous substance would, motor oil, say.

The water in the faucet came out normally, just water. But for that one moment and the next, plain water changed, as it sloshed from the blue mug slowed.

*

In a few minutes as I watched, the sun glory in cloud paled to a general sea fog coming in from the south. Half an hour later the fog seems lightening, lifting. Just as suddenly on this island world, what-is-the-case hates to be described. Changes as soon as the words are out of somebody's mouth.

It makes me remember than in French *brutalement* means 'suddenly.'

Unprepared? What does suddenly mean? I suddenly need to know.

*

How strange it seems, the way I cherish still the memory of T's breath and lips, whispering Ungaretti in my ears so close—and at the same time I wont answer her phone calls, wont visit. And how true and right both the cherishing and the refusing are.

Memory is not so different from music—it takes *now* up and fills it, fills it with different contents in the same rhythmoi.

The potter's hands wield my hours.

Someone writing memoirs is actually working *against* memory. (Malraux, though he calls his *Anti-Memoirs*, is thinking not of this.) The memoirist is seeking, fossicking through a forest from which the tru memories come forth unbidden, in their own sweet Taoist (which is also Freud's) time. The ones that come forth by themselves are the real one, the true Beasts whose arrivals summon the ad/ventures. The quest. Those are the memories that matter.

I fear that writing down my life would lose them in a field of recollected detail.

Memory and Recollection are opposites.

*

Je me souviens suggests that the French has lost their memories, and have only recollection. The verb suggest doing something to the self, middle-voice, reflexive, working on the self to disgorge its details.

*

How strange we are. What a narrow range of temperatures allow us ease. I wonder whether there are other physical, sensory, domains where we are so narrowly constricted. Or past those, spiritual ones.

[End of Cuttyhunk notes]

*

To be outside of government, to be ungoverned.

Every Utopian scheme succumbs to personal resentments, spills over into revenges against the real or imaginary (always imaginal) enemies the Utopian Totalitarian conceives and cherishes, against Jews or Blacks or Kulaks or mandarins or Reds or Shiites or Anabaptists or polygamists or eyeglass-toting intellectuals or gays or aliens. Maybe you cant be a Utopian without reacting against the imaginal other.

Find a country that does not, will not, hate: and that will be utopia soon enough. By that fact alone.

Government is crime, personified, institutionalized. Thieves license other thieves to steal. Killers license murderers to kill.

To which only the *Secret Commonwealth* might be able to respond, effectively enough to keep some heads clear.

Trust human kindness and the dark. PLW's "Endarkenment." Trust the dark landscapes under us, the earthlords themselves. And in the sunny clearing among maples, Pan.

*

The nine-scope—I use the word I heard to say, not the one I'd necessarily 'choose'—the nine-scope poem fits me these days. Nine lines = nine choruses, a kind of angel for/of each line,

and the silence at the end, where the reader gets to be, the reader whose work is silence, and around the reader the angels move in their choirs as around God.

The reader impersonates the god that every poem means to praise.

That is what it is to read: to be for that little time immensely the center of the world, being there, just being there, and hearing language praise you for being where, and what, you are.

Absorb the praise = read the poem.

Reading then is theopoetic, tantric, singular. Any reading. Is reading an act or a pass, a deed or a succumbing? It is on the side of time, its own time: what else could 'eternal' mean but this, another time to occupy, all your own?

*

Saints: Verity the hidden one. Eve the lover true. Katherine the pure, whose energy comes from self-revealing, Karinrad, Catherine wheel. Ulrica that rich wolf the world, the world does anything the other thinks—a wolf hunts what is there, behavior is her prey. Magdalene the master. I live in her tower.

*

Two crosses on the church wall—
one for Jesus, one for you.

*

The climacteric phases of Imperial ages coincides with that anxiety called the Literature of the Secret.

Indiana Jones inherits the 'scholar-adventure' mantle from Doyle's Professor Challenger and dozens of Verne's learned voyagers,

And suddenly our culture is full of scholar heroes.

The latest blockbuster, Kostova's *The Historian*, the sly unknown masterpiece by Markovits, *The Syme Papers*, Fasman's Dan Brown-meets- Borges fantasia *The Geographer's Library* -- all involve scholars in search. And of course the hero of the best selling novel in the world is an art historian...

All culture is pop culture. Things pervade. Everything is pervaded.

What does this signify? Several wonderful naive things:

People know that scholars find out things.

Things that are lost or missing.

People know that there is some secret in the world, a secret lost or stolen.

A secret that the government or church or science has hidden—a secret we need.

A secret without which we grow old and wither.

A secret that is like Freya's glowing blue eye, like a golden ring, like the cures that announce themselves every day in the paper and disappoint tomorrow.

A lost potency. The age of *The Da Vinci Code* is the age of Viagra.

They are keeping something from me. I need to know what it is.

People send out scholars to find the lost thing. Not scientists any more, we don't trust them, science has become the problem not the solution. Science tells us: there is no secret. Science tells us: there is nothing there. Science tells us: what you see is what you get.

This is intolerable. No, we send out an archeologist, a historian, a philosopher even, we trust them more. The philosopher is above all the one who says: there is more to this than meets the eye.

And that's what we want.

More than meets the eye.

So we are suddenly in a world of readers. Readers are people who want to know more than what they see around them. That is a simple explanation of why they read. Watch them reading in the subway. Reading is not about Not Knowing What Is Here. It's about Knowing What Is Not Here. Not an escape but a journey. In other words, a quest.

To find what the official world has hidden.

So literature, from Harry Potter to Oedipa Maas (Pynchon's *Lot 49* was the real beginning of the contemporary quest recital), is obsessed with the quest for the secret.

And the last time that happened was the late Middle Ages, when the legend of the Holy Grail met the stream of Arthurian narrative and flowed together, their confluence creating the great Matter of Britain, the Table Ronde, the quest of the San Greal.

And reached its definitive form (Prose Lancelot, Malory) just as the imperial order—pope, emperor, nobility, knights—was crumbling. The Battle of Bosworth Field and the *Morte Darthur* came at the same time.

In many ways, *The Da Vinci Code* and all the rest are really responses to the early stages of the collapse of the Euramerican hegemony—just about the time the Neo-Cons get around to calling the Empire by its proper name, Imperium.

*

In a good poem the four elements are at work and at issue. By the end, one of them wins out, and its victory in that text is the triumph of the text itself. Writing and reading are reciprocals within a single alchemic operation.

Think of the shortest poem common in our language, ‘Western wind.’ All the four elements are there, working quickly: Fire (western), Air (wind), Water (rain) all leading to Earth (the bed, the calm certainty in which one lies at ease, the peace to which the poem comes. One reason the poem pleases and comforts (and excites) us so much is the swiftness and thoroughness with which the elements are summoned to a strife that is about our life, and the quickness with which they are resolved.

*

That poem may have all the other ingredients:

- vernacular eloquence
- sudden verbal explosion of feeling(Christ!)
- incontestably a religious reference—though Christ! consciously not so employed
- natural imagery -wind, rain
- love
- the physical body
- emotional directness
- ‘honesty’

...

*

Raised Catholic, I have some feeling for ritual—but also a horror of it, the repetitions, the scrupulous compulsions. I hate it when life deeds and daily doings become ritual. Oh if I could only make coffee a different way every morning, or drink a different thing every waking, warm mare’s milk addled with saffron and clove.

To which one answers: If you dont practice conscious, deliberate rituals, you will be used by the unconscious rituals: habit patterns that shape a sleeper’s life. Ritual’s role is to bring the discomfort of waking, reveille. Repetition cured by repetition.

The rites must be shaped a little differently every day—the “Proper” and “Common” of the Mass in the old missals—so the ritual itself doesnt fall asleep.

*

There is only one task: Language giving pleasure.

*

The poet is, I am, an absurd little man left alone in a room with the whole world, just trying to keep the conversation going, just trying not to fall too deeply in love.

*

Sometimes—and it is a very terrible feeling—I have the feeling that I am close to a trembling, tentative understanding—that the Holocaust means something. And that might be the worst of all things to think about it, maybe even worse than the vile people who deny there was a Holocaust. Because if the Holocaust means anything, then there can be no choice, chance, hope. No world.

*

Things like that don’t have meanings—they have details. Bearable, unbearable: details. Which terrify, and haunt us, and guide.

*

If I found myself with any power I would instantly give it away.

I think joy and energy and creativity come into, are expressed in, the vacuum left when power is given away.

*

Why does the body get older, but the feelings in and of the body remain keen, sensitive, alive as ever, so that a drop of rain falling on my wrist is as poignant and total as a kiss, even now, and every sensation is as fresh as when our lives began, and every feeling still “herrlich wie am ersten Tag?”

I think we have more than one body. And to the time-vexed body we see around us (in every sense), there is this Feeling Body which remains youthful, or not so much youthful as new, ever-new. And to that also there is the Behavior Body we see in others and project to them.

It seems to me that the Feeling Body is what lovers yearn to know, connect with, interweave with, in one another. And women wrong who think their swains are after T&A—T&A is just the mailing address for the body they really want to know, to match its sensations with the equivalents in their own Feeling Body.

*

Lithotherapy. Application of stone to the afflicted part, or to the part closest to the life force. Not just precious stones. All stones have healing power. Rest your head on this rock. The marble heals, as much as the god carved out of it.

*

Never give a child a book intended for children. That intention is the cruelest trap. Give children whatever is there, all round them, open to the interpretation of their eyes and ears, hands and minds. Give them the world.

*

Sandy paths through pine woods. Sea near.

*

Writing with rhyme is so indelicate. It is playing tender love songs on a tuba. Yet before God's altar David dances with a tambourine and God rewards him with whole kingdoms and Bathshebas a-plenty. So heaven has no taste. Its truest sign is the Sun: the Most Obvious.

*

Open season on hyperbole. I excuse the book for the sake of the beautiful blurb. Maybe that is one form I can master, telling people what to read and they listen, the ones who won't read me.

*

Being in love is being a suicide bomber. You are all intention and high moral ground and more intention, and nobody knows how many will get hurt.

*

Maybe in my next life I'll write Buddhist poems.

Poetry seems to come from the *last* life, or the first days of this one, the limbic stage, or threshold between lives.

I'm still writing Christian poems, freed to do so by the Buddha's blessing.

(To be far away to see it clear, like Chesterton's traveler who has to see St Pauls as exotic as a pagoda before he really sees it)

To feel the Christian mystery, undistracted by the horrors of hierarchy and the deeds of the so-called believers.

No, it's more than that. That's just an explanation, not the root. The root is as I said it is above, the poetry comes from what we carry from the last life through the specific doorway we choose for this one.

We grow from the earliest encounters with the languaged space of this life.

My life chose to come to Buddhist practice and clarity through the rich Christian gateway. Amen. We are all gates for one another,

each thing the doorway to other things. The profound beauty of interdependence, the *pratitya samutpada*.

And my language, like myself, shaped by that passage.

(In this dense, one can hearken to the Dalai Lama's strictures against "conversion" to Buddhism.

Not to convert language and style, but to go to the heart of meditation, Mahamudra.)

*

Language too is birth trauma. Not just the syntactic patterns and semantic ranges—the things discussed. Entering into human discourse is the end of the birth trauma.

*

Through the glass roof of the library: I see twelve vultures circling a little to the north of straight overhead.

*

Lama Norlha Rinpoche: A deity is as real as the mind that thinks it.

*

The limitlessness of mind is the answer to all ontological questions.

*

The Chinese relief landscape at the Red Hook Curry House (relic of the Hunan restaurant) == the people in it haunt me, and where they are, and how they go, over the huge sinuous bridge into a busy street of shops. Life is about commerce and being with. I don't know any of their names, not even the river or the town, and I'm not going to pretend I do.

*

Mirror beings: Milarepa, Saint Francis. *One* joyous, austere intelligence severally available.

*

Christocentric Buddhism.

I don't mix them—they mingle in me.

*

I told
the other side of my hand

*

So many ways to define a syncline. Look them up and marvel.

*

The systematic absorption of other people's memories: that is what is called culture.

*

When the absorption of the other's memories is not systematic but sporadic and disordered, it is called infatuation, or paranoia, depending.

*

Being in love is privileged paranoia. You spend forever thinking about what she is thinking about you.

*

You leave all the people out and remember only what they remember.

*

Is that what is called history?

*

Imagine what culture would be like if it were the other way round; all people, but no remembering. Is that the nature of animal reality? Or is it the way of the angel. Apocatastasis. Eden.

*

An angel, they say, has to remember only one thing. Or: an angel is that specific remembering.

*

The soft *weight* of the written-on pages in my notebook.

*

After a warm day, 94° this afternoon, after the noon sun read 102° in Rhinebeck, it is down to 72° at 2 a.m. I sit in the summerhouse. I hear owls calling, many. Not close, not far. First time this summer. And I hear the fox stirring nearby in the trees.

*

Skin rescues us from images, the ones our eyes and ears and memories are so vulnerable to.

Skin has no spectacle, no “society of the spectacle,” no society at all but itself and you.

*

People who like to talk like to eat. And conversely. You can deduce the one from the other. It is evidently a mouth thing.

Yet we don't have to take it as sexual oral fixation: it is also true that people who really like to drink often have nothing to say. Or their intake is itself a gesture, every drink they take a challenge or rejection or deed thrown in the face of the mother or the anima.

*

Isn't it strange that humans eat and talk through the same orifice? It would make more sense, logically, for them to expel language through the same orifice by means of which they excrete everything else, but no: we have a number of special orifices of excretion (anus, urethra, pores, nostrils)-- but eating and expressing have to share just one between them, the dear mouth from which such sweetness comes.

*

Fashion notes: people dress to cheer their own souls. Through the kindness of the world, this behavior often cheers other people as well. My little poem "Mica" today:

Sparkle eyelid, gold belt low on hip.
People dress these days
like gifts to one another
given to the eyes, the eyes unwrap.

*

I am older than my parents.

*

Poetry speaks: I'm like the human soul—I hide in matter.

*

The Priest of Freya—through what seminary must one pass to stand in such a noble station?

*

People do what they want to do.

This is the only tragedy.

*

How they behave is how they really are.

People use language to hurt each other so cruelly: false explanations, false promises.

*

If they like to spend an hour a week with you, you have 168th of their attention, love, care, concern. That's it. The rest of them you'll never know. And never have.

That's why psychoanalysis is such a sham, though such a sweet, aesthetically appealing one. The psychiatrist is witness to a *performance*, and that's all he ever sees.

The analyst's analysis (=critique) of the patient's performance is, by a heartbreaking synecdoche, offered and accepted as analysis of the performer.

This glib switcheroo seems shabby—but the name of it, honorable name, is drama. Theater.

Psychoanalysis is the theater of one.

Almost obsolescent in our century, except for its potent effect on, as, theory.

Theory is from the same root as theater.

A hundred years ago, all those poets, Yeats, Havelock Ellis, Charles Williams, Eliot, who used *Dance* as the central metaphor for poetry, the exemplar art of all, how many of them actually danced? I mean with their legs and hips, in space and time, against and with the music of gravity?

Nowadays psychoanalysis is the foundation of the theory of everything: that things can be understood.

That understanding can be explained. Spoken.

Psychoanalysis is the Idol of Meaning.

The naked lady of interpretation, who disappears when her last veil is cast away. Salome is the patron saint of psychoanalysis. Strauss's opera coincident with Freud's major early work.

*

Ectoplastic Government. We are driven by spectral productions—ghosts generated from the greed of the living, like maggots in rotting meat.

We are ruled by such maggots, ghosts of men.

*

Hypnocracy, the word comes to mind when I need it, to label our polity.

We are sleepers, ruled by the imagery presented to us in dream, a dream that has both waking and sleeping phases, images fed to us by the educational and entertainment industry as the behest of the government or the government's more or less secret owners. The images of the spectacle rule us.

We stir and try to wake. We fight each other for the sake of images we saw in sleep.

*

Benjamin: "Conversation strives toward silence, and the listener is really the silent partner. The speaker receives meaning from him; the silent one is the unappropriated source of meaning."

"—even if sometimes our silences may cause us sadness or anxiety, ... [to] share a discourse on silence and ... speak of our silences and the meaning of such silence for each of us"

*

The question of the question.

The question one waits for, yearns to be asked: is it cognitive (what are you thinking at this moment, where were you born, what was your mother's name, what are you feeling, what do you feel about me?)

is it pragmatic (will you make love with me, will you walk with me, will you remember this?)

There is only one question that asks both ways. It is the Grail question: the one that Parzival must, after years (thousands of lines) of adventures, come to ask: Uncle, what troubles you? (*Oeheim, waz wirret Dir?*)

This is the question that, asked by the right person, restores "the land to productive order."

It is the question that works only when it is sincerely aimed and sincerely sourced, when I ask you, simply, Dear friend, what troubles you? and mean by the question that I will do all I can to alleviate the pain or supply the need imbedded in the troubledness.

And that question, sincerely sourced in this way, is perhaps what one is always waiting to be asked. Even when one does not know one is troubled.

Is Amfortas always aware of his pain? Of the barren kingdom his wound bestows on the natural order? Perhaps not always.

Perhaps the question itself is needed to awaken the awareness of pain.

And it had better be asked only by one who is willing to deal with the friend's awareness, and deal with the friend's pain.

The question itself asks: are you willing to wake me, to open the mouth of my distress and hear what my lips might say, might demand?

*

But there is another question. It is epistemological, can I call it that. It summons me not to feel or desire, it summons me to come to an understanding, to know something. Not something that requires action (I desire you, sleep with me, I am hungry, feed me, I am ignorant, enlighten me—which are I suppose the Three Things we can give one another). Something instead that initiates consciousness. This question look pretentious, absurd when given out of context (Who are you? How are you? Where are you? What do you want?) -- yet there are moments in one's life when even the simplest query will *force you to the place of the answer*. And that is where I want to meet.

*

Dream (late August 2005). I am standing on the outdoor observation platform of the gondola of the great zeppelin *Germania*. Beside me is Adolf Hitler in a neat pale uniform. He is pointing out to me the glorious new buildings, temples, boulevards, and the great Dome, in his transformed city of Berlin, now also called Germania. We hover above the city, approaching it from the south quite low, perhaps a thousand feet above the streets. Everything is peaceful, clean, silent. Hitler points out this and that, and explains (to my relief) that in fact, once he was elected Chancellor of the Reich, he gave up many of the odd ideas he had used to win votes. Chief among them, anti-Semitism. Soon after being elected, he had stopped all talk against the Jews, and welcomed their full participation in the culture and commerce of the new Germany. Germany comes first, he explains,

and those who devote their energies to building it, they are the real Germans. All of his own energies had been devoted pragmatically to the economic renewal of industry and foreign trade, and symbolically to the rebuilding of Berlin into the magic metropolis outspread beneath us. The breeze is fresh and very pleasant. I feel a huge relief at what Hitler is telling me; could it be so? Could all the horror never have happened, and the madness of colossal architecture play out his obsessions, not the madness of genocide? I woke wondering about the relationship of those two obsessions.

*

The tone of Hegel. Strenuous—he cares. The writer against and for, but not with scorn. He’s working *towards* with just enough confidence to keep going. He has to find the *end* all by himself.

*

The terrible thing right now to me about the New Orleans footage: all those thousands of people—what good are they to one another? Each hopes for help from elsewhere, as we have all been trained to do. But they are all there together, and what good are they to one another? We yield all our power to the State, then wait.

The ‘anarchy’ in N.O. argues a radical anarchy. As once in Auschwitz, last year in Beslan, now here, we witness the failure of the State itself. The State is a mirage of guns. And when the president, smirking and bellicose as ever, wants to do something—in Baghdad or New Orleans—all he can think to do is send in the guns. Shoot the looters. In his own graceless way, he is a true exponent of State power.

But the mask of the State is slipping. We see the naked government inside, callous oligarchs hiring sadistic sociopaths to brutalize and control the citizens. But will we sustain this vision that is so clear right now? Will we remember? And work to liberate the Nation from the State?

*

“we” can’t win in Iraq because States can only war with other States (i.e., oligarchies can only contend with oligarchies, since every oligarchy has precisely the same values, hence the same rules of engagement) -- and Iraq is not a state, has never been one except

perhaps for a few years of Saddam's reign. Once Saddam was deposed, Iraq reverted to being a nation, a maternal territory, a land. In which a hostile invading State can only founder and sink.

*

We have come close then not to the End of History but to the end of the State.

*

Desperate Fiction:

As when you're trying to explain something important about your life to somebody you don't much know, you'll use every trick in the book, any cliché, metaphor, rhetoric that comes to mouth, just to get the thing across—including (especially) going in and out of character. This kind of desperate fiction, probably starting for us with Barth. (How Barth and Moody, for example, differ from Vonnegut, who always stays in character, in voice, in shtick). That was the great violation in the mid-1950s of the Jamesian novel—behold, a speaking character who can from time to time speak out of character, can be someone else. That on the one side, Gaddis' 'invention' so to say of narrative, allegory, remembrance—all you might call Religion, foreign to James as it is to Twain, curiously—on the other, the two pincer-movements to capture the novel—the novel as many-voiced, and the literary novel once again as *story* driven. Probably the many-voices come originally from Dos Passos and Joyce, as much as from the artfully multiple consciousness of Sterne.

*

Who is speaking in a collage?

*

It used to be it always rained on the day Cawuk. Not for the past year or two, though. One more sign we live in Republican Disharmony on this island Am Erica. Things out of true, soon snow July. Though torrid December seems more likely.

*

Does a man wrestle god against god? (That sentence, question, verbatim from dream, waking 7 X 05.)

*

Noble metals ink will not corrode—this pen Charlotte bought in Bengal—Lalit, Swiss nib, platinum it says.

*

Hilton Weiss has made me a liter of ink. It follows the US Govt standard formula for P.O. and office ink of 1936. Since the government got this ink ready for me when I was an infant, it seems only right to use it. It writes pale blue, burns dark grey to black soon, is almost waterproof. I love it.

*

Every touch is a quotation from a lost epic.

*

Skin is tradition.

*

The nature of the society of the spectacle inherits from its samsara roadmap the insistence that nobody is ever allowed to be here.

We have to buy our way to repose, travel there, spend, to snooze in the sun by way of Club Med.

In this society we must travel to be here.

Pilgrimage: from point of sale to point of sale.

*

Any image in light projected in space becomes divine.
And an authentic glimpse of the divine nature's myriad entity.

*

Friesenlied:

Wo de Nordseewellen trecken an de Strand,
Wor de geelen Blöme bleuhn int gröne Land,
Wor de Möwen schrieen gell int Stormgebrus,
Dor is mine Heimat, dor bün ick to Hus. :|

Well'n un Wogenruschen weern min Weegenleed,
Un de hohen Dieken seh'n min Kinnertied,
Markten ok min Sehnen un min heet Begehr:

Dör de Welt to flegen, ower Land un Meer. :|

Wohl hett mi dat Lewen all min Lengen still,
Hett mi all dat geven, wat min Hart erfüllt;
All dat is verswunnen, wat mi drück un dreev,
Hev dat Glück woll funnen, doch dat Heimweh bleev. :|

Heimweh nach min schöne, gröne Marschenland,
Wor de Nordseewellen trecken an de Strand,
Wor de Möwen schrieen gell int Stormgebrus,
Dor is mine Heimat, dor bün ick to Hus. :|

*

How astonishing it is to realize, really grasp, that this moment, now, nothing special, just now, here, is as full and authentic as any moment that ever was, as 'history.' This is the only moment of life, real as Caesar in Gaul, Akbar in India, Paul falling on the road. This path in the little woods is the Buddha's footpath in Magadha. Now is the only.

*

Driving along the Thruway. Sometimes through the trees you see little houses. The sight comes as a shock, since apart from the cars

and trucks and the sleek seamless road, nothing seems to be there except forests, trees, meadows, hills, vultures hovering high over invisible ruins, now and then an eagle. And then a glimpse of the backside of a middle-aged ranch house, a sad garage. Houses near highways are poor houses, we remember, for all the trees. Never a person seen. The houses seem as empty as the woods, almost derelict, wood halfway back through some bizarre recycling. But they also have the unmistakable air of lived in houses. Sometimes my mind lingers in their shrubberies, their patchy back yards while my body hurtles forward at its almost legal 73mph towards Albany.

*

Memory is improvisation. The ontological status of stuff going on in my head: remembering? imagining? fantasizing? inferring? recalling a scene described? a scene observed in ‘real life,’ in movies, on tv? We argue only about sources, we privilege the absurdity called the real. When it all is real, all the tumbling stuff lined up and shouting and flaring, all the arena of the mind filled with its plausible jabber, its scheming verisimilitudes. Who really knows what he remembers? Try to assign a ‘mind event’ to its proper category. All memory is improvised. Something happens in the mind now which pretends to have been somehow before. Rightly do we say ‘remind.’ Just mind again, working with whatever it can touch.

*

Lama Norlha the next day said: Memory itself is *bdag*-‘*dzin*, ego-clinging. Only memory makes a ‘sense of self’ possible.

*

What makes me think the ‘me’ I remember being has anything in common with the ‘me’ I suppose myself to be now? We don’t even share the memory of remembering me—since that little boy had no me to remember, and whatever was in ‘his’ mind at ‘that’ time is lost forever.

*

All mental suffering comes from memory.

*

Breath is freedom. LNR: Freedom possible only while we're breathing, i.e., living. Not being alive means not breathing. Twice, in people I loved, I have seen the breathing stop—so gentle. The breath goes out and does not come back again.

*

LNR: Compassion and anger come from the same place.

*

You have to write poetry into the world, and what you write has to satisfy the deepest demand in you—that is, you have to write the poetry that you really want to be reading, but that nobody else is writing, so you have to do it. The passion, the pain, the distance, the detachment, the fury, the tenderness—whatever they are, you have to coax them to speak so you can give other people the pleasure and instruction that your masters have given you, whoever they are...
[from a letter to Gina Maria Tomasula]

*

[on Gustaf Sobin, from a letter to Dawn Michelle Baude:] If you ever heard from GS about me, you probably got a mixed or strange reaction. We had a week together at Lacoste, I ate at his table and heard the dormice chittering in the roof, we drove (he drove me) around the countryside, Cavaillon, St Remy, Glanum, Arles where we sat a long hot afternoon in the arena. I liked him very much, but I think I displeased him—I heard rumors thereafter that he'd hated my reading, etc., and then it got all snarled up with the awful business of Bard College having been sort of hijacked into hijacking Lacoste, and sending over a monster (not me!) to run the school, a monster who lasted a week. You may know all this, and what I'm saying now is just making overt a difficulty in my nexus with Sobin that (from my viewpoint) was pretty much all on his side. So I don't feel I can presume on an intimacy or collegiality that gossip has made me doubt.

Why am I telling you all this? Partly because you reanimated a whole nexus (that word again) of poetry and Provence and Char and

the *Sorgue* and Sobin and fountain pens and the combat I intuited G had with his own family and I know he had with the world of American poetry—so immensely distanced from America in every way (like Celan from Germany, in a sense) yet his own work incomprehensible without its American, and very specifically, American language. And I'm guessing you and I might have things to talk about in connection with Sobin, his work, his career, his Char.

*

The anonymous, timeless, placeless quality of the concentration camp atrocity photographs. The wretched naked man might be Polish or Dutch or Rumanian or Italian, he has no name, no nationality but pain. The camp where he suffers or from which he staggers could be Maidanek or Buchenwald or Birkenau. It could be 1943 or '44 or '45. Two things strike me about this abstract or abstracting quality of such very visceral, overdetermined images:

They are true to Musulman condition of which we read in Antelme and Levi and Agamben—these are not the images of victims or survivors but of the personless condition we read of, that seems to have been the last degradation of the proceses. This is the Musulman. He is no one. Or no one but his eerie and terrifying—yes, and disgusting, we know that from Levi too—effect on those who witness him—Celan's old question of who will witness for the witness comes to eye here.

And then, further from the horror, I think of Eisenstein who writes, maybe in *Film Form*, about the California newspaper publisher (John Phoenix, a great American humorist—mostly forgotten now) in Gold Rush days who had only one little woodcut of a house, and used it to illustrate any article that speaks of a house, whether the house has been just built or has just burnt down. House-ness was all the image had to express.

And this sort of hieroglyphic employment of a visual image is exactly what we get, and perhaps even profit from, when we see these free-floating horror images from Auschwitz (or is it Dachau) that illustrate the margins of the stories and essays we read—margins that become central, that are what we really remember, what remembers itself in us.

*

Orlog, Ørlog—fate.

Is it the spoken word?

Seems to be ur/law, primeval law, with law more like Dharma than legislation:

orlog, the primal pattern

ur = (Tib.) ye? The Ever-present Law?

We recur to Edda.

Dronke's translation—she makes the earlier ones seem like lyric rambling, lyric unfocussed raving, full of (like Auden's version) homeless beauties, scraps of beautiful photographs blown through an alley

now the poetry functions in the machine of the social understandings from which it spoke—

the truly contemporary is always timeless.

I mean when we get the functional deep sense of a word, image, phrase for its primal audience, we are close to its 'true' meaning, i.e., its meaning in eternity.

The accidental is the essential.

Essence is accident.

*

What is the state?

As Massachusetts long ago spewed forth Maine, those ungovernable distances, the forests of up there, so each country spins our, specters out, a dream state of its own.

Phantom Annandale
whose shadow falls on me

with all the building and renewal going on around here,
the place inside those accidents
helped along by what happens to it [that's the
point here]
ripes to its original
the Original is what comes at the end.

The original is what something really means.

Ta'wil—we hurry forward to the beginning.

*

In Old Icelandic, the words for “people” and for “listen” seemed very close—

it makes me think our true name is ‘the listeners.’

And all the millions plugged now into their iPods are fulfilling one aspect of human destiny,

human task, human meaning.

*

In the Edda, ‘to sit outside’ or ‘to sit outside to listen’ means to do magic, to listen to the spirits of the earth speaking in the night, to hear them, to bid them. Listen is different from hearing. We listen to someone.

We sit out at night
(the church forbade this)
we sit out at night
to listen,

that makes old women of us
after the rain.

Usually, only the old women know how to listen.

*

It is one of those wet November days, cold twilight, when it looks as if the end of the world came and happened while I was in the bathroom, and here I am watching the light sink out of the trees and not even a crow to console me.

*

“For the self-sacrifice to the individual moment, the forgetting of one’s integrity and of the multiplicity of things—this is lyric. The integrity of the opus stands behind the wealth of details as common esthetic point of departure on the one hand. Yet on the other it must

be capable of being forgotten [for the sake of] every detail, and this detail must be such that all other details can be forgotten over it. This detailing of the detail, this unique beauty originates in that self-sacrifice of the Whole by means of which whatever detail just happens to be affected becomes itself a small Whole. The whole depth of inspiredness can thus open up in this self-sacrifice.” Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, p.194, tr. Wm. Hallo. [Erlösung is not really Redemption]

*

Men who go blind see only in their dreams. Then they wake to darkness.

*

Still technically autumn, it has been winter for weeks. And deep snowy winter at that—it looks like February out there this morning (11 XII 05), the tired roads, streaks of blue sky like a lawyer’s smile.

*

And in another sense too I love plain names. (Thinking of my poem of 13 December 2005 of that name.) How grateful one must be to be named John or Ann or Robert or Michael or Mary or Joan—just to speak of the lucky writers in our own wee cénacle.

To have the same name as a baker or an electrician or a farmer—what a power that is for an artist, to move free of any expectation, free to create one’s own identity. To fill the common name with special meaning.

How sad to have a weird name imposed on one, or even to impose in luckless youth one upon oneself—names that will always strut and posture, stand between you and change, which means growth.

Hide rejoicing in the plain name.

*

Never give a child a name he has to live up to. Give a name to grow from, a name that is a comfortable refuge to fall back on, a calm anonymity from which one can dart out and make raids on reality.

*

Finally at the end of the morning (12 XII 05) I gave up and went to bed and pulled the covers over my head and tried to feel like me again, or somebody, at any rate. Even there in the snug dark, my head would keep spinning and my thoughts drift in and out of nescience.

Image as I wake: a prisoner or dying man chooses the mantra to say, and tries to follow it to safety. When one speaks the mantra, one speaks the way clear—Bahnhof—one finds the path and clears the path at once.

Speaking my way through the jungle? No. Why? Because the mantra (unlike language) is the speech only of the Other. We can say it, but we cannot create it or change it. We do not know or wield the generative rules of that divine language, or is it the language of things themselves. We cannot make up sentences. We repeat, we do not manipulate.

Yet this repetition also changes—changes us and changes to world. Hence my Mindful Traveler muttering his way clear.

*

The body is our witness.

It is only when we are *seen* that we can testify.

*

And the poet must bring his body with him to the poem.

And to the workshop.

*

But what more is a being to be?

To be is to will, says Nietzsche. To be is to want something, to be is to seek to induce change somewhere or in someone, if only in oneself. Yet there must be some sort of being beyond being, a knowing that knows, and means no alteration, just knows.

Now what is this being beyond being?

*

But is there anything worth inscribing that Egypt forgot? Only this: there is no Egypt now.

*

But why is coffee bitter today? What have I done?

*

A mild and lovely morning though. Yet I wake anxious, from sad dreams (see the poem “Medulla”), not enough sleep, yet I don’t want to be where dream is, not today. Sun on the snow, sun on patches of brown and green where two mild days have things melting. The stream high. Mauve mums and pink roses on the table—Dutch they look, she said, in their pale pitcher painted with another flower or two, also mauve.

*

The body of a woman one is in love with is a ‘very special’ substance—its ionization pattern, its aura’s ‘discipline,’ its electromagnetic field are all transformed, reformed, by love received. And this special-ness is available to, perceivable by, ‘works with’ only the person whose love effects those subtle but profound changes in her. So when one love a woman’s body, it is not meat, not ‘not just for my body,’ though she may think it is. The body is the symbol, the living index of a special union that has already taken place in some domain immediately above our conscious awareness, and the lover years to engage in real space-time with what already is prefigured for him in her. For them. The contours of her flesh are the cherubim in the lover’s temple. Her meat is god flesh.

I’m speaking of chemistry, not mysticism. (Not that there’s a difference, but so many think there is.) If you can feel it, it’s there. So far, you (the lover) are the best meter of it we have. But there could be others, subtler, less arguable, when the real science of Himerology reaches out to its destined technology.

*

Today I woke to the thickest fog of the winter, and it drew me, a kind of sensuous urge to be in it, move through it and see it, see the world through it from all the various angles and densities. Angles and densities = la vie terrestre.

Dark grey everywhere. I walked south along the river road to the pond where the beaver lives, and, instead of walking out onto the old dam, stood at the roadside (to which the water, so much water from snow melt and recent rain, almost reached) and watched the pond for signs of life. I kept getting distracted by ecological jive in my head, about how thick with reeds and grasses the pond was now, compared to the luminous sheet of water it was forty years ago. But those are thoughts unworthy of the moment, which was this water, the glorious *tel quel* of just this place, this now, luminous enough in fog, quiet, studded with odd growths and shoots that have as much right to existence as the bright vacancy I let myself—just for a moment—mourn. And this was beautiful. All round me the grey mist. Up to the north, up Cedar Hill, the fog was dark grey, but beyond the water, due east, the influence of the new-risen sun was speaking, the fog seemed no less dense in the bare trees, but it had light in it, and a hint of genuine blue, sky-blue's shadow or phantom, shimmering in and around the bare trees—maples, elms, oaks, big ones, undisturbed for a century back there.

It's almost nine now, and by now the mist is usually fading into ordinary light. But today it seems to be holding its own. I love it.

*

Autoritratto: I have great fortitude but little courage. Can endure but not risk.

Or is it just the other way round, and I have whimpered tunefully all these years struggling through the immense wager of telling? Saying anything is taking chances.

*

Psyche's task: to name the trees from which this heap of wood chips, sawdust, bark mulch, comes—identifying them by smell alone.

Such a heap, boy-high, on the road through Ruth Oja's plantation. No doubt left by the tree surgeons / tree assassins busy last week on the

road. The smell of this pile, wonderful, pine and hemlock I thought I could tell, and something darker, less pungent, more receding—a hardwood smell?

*

Dull remark: if in a poem I use the preterit as an infinitive ('to went') to emphasize the aorist aspect of the preterit form, the act unbounded and unclocked, I would wind up suggesting instead an absolute pastness, where 'to went' would mean to go and never come back and that's the end of it. So maybe 'go' itself is our aorist, clocked by -ing in the laughable present or by -d (or strong preterit) in the lamentable past. No wonder there is no time—there's hardly any anything. End of dull remark.

*

I was reading a list of Proto-Indo-European roots the way I do, and found the scholar Christopher Gwinn said 'empty' was **ken-* and later 'fresh or new' was **ken-* too. So new means to be empty of experience, to have room inside for new things. A young person empty like a shiny new bottle—is that the sense built into our words?

*

Cross-cultural. The greatest of all cultural divides is between Now and Then. Dickinson's Amherst rhythms are as remote from Howe's as African weather is from Mackey's, or Genji's world from Miyagawa. Or my dream England from me. They are irretrievable, sensual, compulsive, unavoidable.

We cannot *choose* our otherness. The cross-cultural, like cross-dressing, chooses us.

*

Dream is paranoia, dreamers are paranoids. They think what they see in sleep pertains to them. It is as if you woke up remembering last night's Evening News, and imagining that all the events reported were about you or for you. Dream is the Deep Night News, and belongs to everybody, or nobody.

*

Lama holding the skin of big wildcat on his knees, good for his knees. Bobcat? Bigger it seemed. Lynx? He called it “yih”—which I spelled in my head *dByi*, which the dictionary later gave for ‘lynx,’ also spelling it *gYi*. This fur is very healing for the knees, arthritis?

*

Picture his confusion. He thought at first the words she was saying to him were the words he had been saying to her so long in the silence of his body never aloud. He roused to a sense that now she at last was saying that same feeling aloud to him. But then he doubted, reflected, and read a book, and found that the words were the words of another, that he had quoted, in another context, and she was saying now, without quotation marks, yet with the delicate saying/unsaying that question marks express.

*

There is truth in wanting, but you have to think it through, connect the dots.

*

There is truth in listening, but there are no guide ropes, it is easy to fall. So many dangers: the crevasse called silence; the fatal crevasse called understanding. The Mer de Glace of never understanding.

*

When you’re good, you’re excited: the voice’s mind excited by what it hears itself saying.

*

Is it itself saying or another. You’ll never know.

That’s why it’s important—according to my theoria—to tell every single thing you see along the way.

*

The critic is a five year old child out riding with his mother and father. He reads out loud every sign they pass, pronounces the name of everything they drive by. Everything for which a name can be found in his experience, his tentative brand-new vocabulary.

Sometimes the name is wrong. Sometimes he calls an oak tree a pine tree. Sometimes he sees something and has no name for it, then it hurts him inside to be silent, so he says the name of something else, repeats over and over the last thing he knew how to say.

He is experiencing the drive very differently from the way his parents do. They are going somewhere, following the story of the road, going somewhere they have in mind. But for him it is an immense and gratifying ordeal, a ceremony of recognitions. His parents are mere readers; he is the critic.

*

On a fierce windy day one prays to the wind to be gentler. Was Job talking to the whirlwind, and surprised when a voice answered from inside it?

*

Is weather the only real news? Does it make us do what we do, as if there were millions of subtle mistrals, sciroccos, foehns that blow us along, warping our will, messing with our mood? Or mood, what we call mood, is just another weather, Dylan Thomas spoke of “the weather of the heart,” and that’s clear enough. Warping our feeble sense of what to do. Politics just another kind of barometer.

*

I DON'T WANT TO DO
WHAT I KNOW HOW TO DO

*

Eros / Euros. In Greek, Erôs means love, desire. Eurôs means decay, mould, rot. Strange that Euro-peans should call their money thus. Strange that love is so close to decay. Lust to dust.

*

The merchants carry sand in from the desert, and carry back from the city bags of broken asphalt pavement.

*

Images save from image. The wisdom of Catholic and Orthodox churches, and Tibetan lha-khangs, all full of images, many, many media, sizes, colors—all of them instructive, stimulating to thought and practice and devotion, but no one of them obsessive-compulsive. We turn into all of them as we behold them, and so don't get trapped in one single one.

*

We can learn from any image.

And worship is a way of learning.

Identifying with what one sees, what one 'studies' in the image -- Blake says: "he became what he beheld." And that is what faces the world. What faces us as the world.

*

Every time the devotee stares at an icon, a thang-ka, a statue, he enters Lacan's 'mirror phase' again, knows himself in the thing seen. And this mirror-phase heals from the first one, the infant tricked into self-identity. Now rescued from fixity. This is the real energy and beauty of iconolatry.

*

Poetry, like ancient tragedy, is a family matter. A family tragedy. The "family romance," says Freud, but the Greeks knew better. The pronoun family. Poetry is all about the antics and amours of I and you and me and she and they and he and him, their deaths and renaissances. And these relations constitute the formal geometry of the poem, the armature on which the events that are words are wound, the lines of sight along which meaning runs.

My poetry too is full of the pronouns and their tricks. Sometimes I think I would really like to meet the one whose name is “I” and the one whose name is “you.” But most of the time I think I’m better off not knowing. Or knowing in fact that these are not persons at all, not the real me or the real you (if there are such creatures), but rather nodes of energy that come to inhabit the consciousness of the reader, and sometimes tell something true, or almost true, about the reader’s self.

*

We focus on the “passion” of Christ, on the sufferings and death. We fail to focus on his passion in our normal sense of the word, the urgency he must have felt, the compelling will to make people as happy and functional as the bleak historical situation would allow, the compelling necessity to teach them something that would help them weather the brutality of their own genetic inheritance from the beasts, help them think their way, calm their way, into something clear. Something like mind. Like love.

I mean we forget *why* he did what he did and said what he said, and remember only what happened to him—as if the crushing of his life were his real gift to us, a cachet laid on human suffering. And there are holy men and women who have thought just that—Therese de Lisieux, Edith Stein in our day. Could it be in fact that suffering is the discourse we have with God, the shared language Christ came down from Heaven to learn to talk with us, had to die in agony to learn that grammar?

But do we really think he came to us only to die? Why those silent thirty years, then those three eloquent years, if all he had to do was be savaged and crucified?

*

Passion Is Here it says all over the Olympic game venues. Even in this shabby commercial logo, the word still has some juice, some meaning we have to solve.

*

THREADS is a poem in thirty three sentences. The sentences were composed in obedience to certain formal and material constraints—as usual, I prefer not to identify the constraints, preferring to sing in my

chains, but not about them. Though happy to have the reader identify and empathize with them.

*

Most of my poetry arises, I guess, from lyrical observation or listening to words move around in mind; *Threads* though is different, is a little like the old “*Texts*” series (only some published here and there). Each of the thirty-three complex sentences in *Threads* arises from some historical or natural-historical fact—thus [] rises from a postcard of the Hungarian Parliament triggering a memory that until 1830 deliberations in that parliament were conducted in Latin (to bypass the bewildering multiplicity of languages and dialects spoken in the kingdom). That passes for a fact in my book. Or in [], having seen a hammerkopje bird and its nest in the African exhibit at the Franklin Park Zoo I learned about its nest sharing habit. But less said the better.

*

“the kinds of love listen close along the skin. I lick the skin to find the mind, to lick, to tell time, climb the clock tower. Touch the bell. Rest my face in the running water that stands still, the dry water, the hidden river, the convex well. The presence it is you are flows through me and I become a consequence of your existence, feeble with absence, angry with a longing that won’t let itself turn into desire. The grief of *pothos* instead of the ferocity of *himeros*. What is lost when one loves. What I lose when I love you.” Find a speaker for these words.

*

Chiori Miyagawa’s play: A very moving (in many senses) event, one that I’m still thinking about. What came through clearest are these things:

-- how strong and even beautiful the text is/was all by itself. I could (I’m used to doing this, of course) isolate it from its *inszenierung* (or whatever the english word is) and see it as on the page; it wd work as a poem, a recitation on the page, and nobody would feel it inadequate.

-- how generously (on the other hand) the text made itself available to the director's touch—you teach me the text must be complete but still incomplete, finished but open-ended in some way, to let the genius of the director reinvent the genius of the writer.

-- and once that permission opens the door, the context of the text (Japan, US; then & now, the course of a young woman's living) allows the superimpositions of characters (the brilliance of having one woman play sister, stepsister, Prince Genji!), the opening to physical movement, balletic, to mime the passage of time which is so central to the meaning of the play, and then, of course,

-- the Bunraku! How marvelous that was, as if a specifically Japanese modernism rose to challenge our sense of body and presence ... how the puppet becomes more present than the live woman handling it, just as memory becomes an artifice that effaces the present.

*

What was I thinking when I began to think? Catch the first thinking of the day—not (comme d'habitude) the image itself that greets the day, but the first thinking about it. Propositional. The propositional as oracle.

*

Another oracle: playing computer free cell on autoplay—note the card that opens up the array, the key card that, played, suddenly wins the game. That card, mapped on tarot, tells.

*

I look at the image. It strikes home, slow or fast. I look a little, and then put it away or turn my eyes away. Now I have to let it sleep inside me.

I can't see what it is until I see what it becomes in me. Then I will be able to take it out and see it.

Looking and seeing are so different.

*

An ancient figurine, stiff and hieratic, except the tender, frightened eyes. A little wolf that lies in the hand. He is thinking: “Men are afraid of me, so I must be afraid.” That may a little bit account for the sad or timid look in his eyes.

He reminds me of the little bronze or silver figures from Ancient Scandinavia, squat gods, bearded warriors with closed eyes, hard divinities to clutch in the hand. Soon the woman’s hand will close around the wolf and he will sleep. And she will feel his wolf dreams slip up her arm.

*

I am still remembering from the first seeing. How moving this recalled image is: such fierce firm animal so small, so contained, waiting, timid even, held lightly, of its own weight, in such a soft hand.

Tomorrow I will look at it again, and who knows what I’ll see.

*

In the Lebanese café. Flavored tobacco to smoke in the hookahs on sale all round. The flavors I could recognize or read: El Makhla was the common brand, and the flavors were banana, caramel, grape, rose molasses, mint, mandarin orange, cola, coconot, two apples. The other boxes were all in Arabic.

*

When you know only one language, you have to make that language somehow foreign, to go on.

*

Our eyes also are for saying goodbye.

*

The dead are ridiculous.

*

(It said that in my head as I was waking one morning.)

*

In fact the Roman Empire never ended. Latin passed into other tongues, one capital city gave way to another and another. Just as the newfangled Empire of Augustus preserved the old forms, dream-like, incoherent, but present: rex and consul and senator and aedile and all the rest, just in the same way we have never given up the imperium. Rome is eternal superimposition. The Protestant majority rules and represses science and human behavior with the same savage sternness they once rejected in the Roman church. They became another branch of the Roman church. And the emperor too takes on new titles, old Augustus new President. The differences turn out to be trivial. We might as well go back to Latin. Maybe the whole bad dream would blow away.

*

The Law has two enemies: crime and legislation.

Only so few of us there are who try to protect the Law from its subtler enemy.

*

The things that want us to know them. And the things that do not. Can't you just feel that, the difference, in the different things out around us? The things that want are waiting. The things that don't...what do they do? Are they hiding, or just repelling?

*

[old note:

Belief

Belief is the most terrible invention -
no Greek or Hindu or Buddhist
ever believed. They knew. Or they *did*

and let the doing be enough.

Cult and consciousness, poetry and praxis.
Nothing to believe in.

When did believing begin?
When did the individual's guess
at the Godness of the world
become an insistence that had to be defined,
when did intuition become conviction,
and conviction turn into control?
To believe is an angry imposition
of ego's guesswork on the other's world.

The terrible sin of belief.

So much terrorism, vengeance, simple murder,
all Holocaust
grounded on a system of belief.]

(I found these notes from May 2004 now in March 2006)

*

[old note:

Rimbaud's *Illuminations* and Kafka's later diaries are actually the same book, by chance written down by different men in different languages. Some translator should slip them into their original text, probably in Italian, then they would reveal their identity.

And we would discover the single author who wrote both

Then the angel said (for there are angels in this story, be aware, darling, be awed), "Choose any two books at (what you call) random and you'll find that they reveal evidences of common authorship. Shadows pass from text to text, whether we license them to do so or not. All we can do is watch, and try to take pleasure in their passage, and in the glints of community of person they reveal or suggest or almost conceal."

"But the Rimbaud and the Kafka really do fit together," I said, "not just any texts, these two, very special, saying two breaths of the same story, the systole and diastole of it."

The angel answered, "perhaps, perhaps." Angels are always saying perhaps. Then it said: "All we can do is watch. All we can do is take pleasure. All we can do is take pleasure."]

*

[old note:

allocentric

if the mind only could take the other as its 'own' center--- so that the center of this would always be there ---

this would divine us, deify, reify, make us kingly, thingly, make us real.

(24 June 2004/Cuttyhunk)]

*

Autobiographies --- schools make you read Augustine, Rousseau, as if there were only one tradition (individualism learning to subordinate itself to God or State), But we should try to stretch, break free of that 'liberal' (house-slave) tradition and seek the balance of the other. When you read Augustine, you should read Apuleius too, also just like Augustine a Maghrebi beur, whose *Apologia* argues for soul against mind, for magic against government. Or when we read Rousseau, we should lay beside his work the *Autobiography of Edward Gibbon* (they actually met meaningfully) -- an aged infant like Rousseau, but all acquisition and not dispersion. We need the balances. Canetti's huge and wonderful memoirs where the whole world sinks after a thousand pages into the face of his dead mother—we need the people who turned away (like Canetti) or turned in (like Teresa of Avila) or turned against (like Emma Goldman). I wish Debord had written an autobiography,

*

The dreams we wake up with are not the same dreams we had or were having just before we woke. Waking is a sieve, not a *passoire à connerie* but a sieve that drains the wisdom out and leaves the bones.

*

The infantility of genius. Instances of a certain kind of genius as arrested or eternal childhood, the everlasting Bright Child. Gibbon and Voltaire's *Fi, donc!*

People ‘condescended’ into the sexual—Hor and Heva in the land,
aged Adam unseduced.

This is just a hint to work on. Find instances of.

*

Numbers are always waiting.

*

If God is dead, they killed Him with their lies.

*

[answering Tom Meyer, who’d written about the link between
consciousness and balance]

“the power . . . hides in the making” your ‘reminded’ poem earlier
this week tells me, and that is told true. Seeing that statement—you
and I are about the only ones left who dare/care/are fool enough to
make statements—and isn’t that the real shunt (or fall) from the
poetics in which we were both raised? -- anyhow, seeing that
statement fills me with joy, like daffodils coming up.

Balance. For you I’m a Virgo, but for me it is Libra, the only *thing*
sign (and therefore not properly belonging to the Way of Living
Creatures or Zo-diac) and things are balanced, a made or found thing,
no matter, it has a balance in itself we gaze upon and envy.

The thing is consciousness in the sense that a thing thinks only one
thing, all the time. So consciousness in our sense must mean (I’m
following you here, I think) thinking of two things at one time, and
holding them in balance, or weighing them for the privilege of your
focused attention.

And sometimes I wonder if Libra isn’t ‘alive’ after all. I have seen it
sometimes as a her, a woman balanced in and on herself, Isis in fact,
seated (as her glyph shows just her chair) -- and in that seating (no
animal sits) Libra finds its balance between up and down, human and
animal, lying and standing. A woman on a chair.

*

Psychologists speak dismissively of certain pleasurable dreams as mere wish-fulfilment, and teach us to dismiss them, oh that's just wish-fulfilment. Yet I think that wish-fulfilment dreams are likely the truest dreams we have. From them, from the exact detail, rhythm, timing, circumstance, cast of characters of those dreams, we can discern the actual name and nature of our *wish*. And most of us never really know what our wish is, the profound wish that tries to lure our life. Knowing your wish is close to having it fulfilled.

*

[writing about the paragraph above, to Tom:]

the whole question of what we are permitted to attend to by the prejudices of others and their superimposition on the self. The warp of consciousness is the greatest social fact—perhaps it is the only real social (as opposed to physical, sensual, psychic) fact.

It seems so close to true this morning (put it down to the myriad blue squills all over the bright lawn), and in a darker sense teaches me how the Enemy works by making us doubt even our own dreams.

The Enemy that is no one, whose name is Everyone, and whom we speak of as 'they,' and yearn for their applause and good opinion. O the girls in the street!

*

[answering Birgit's letter of March 06:]

I just keep writing and writing. And then a long time goes by and I look back and find that what I have written is not writing. But at least it's written. The sluices (like the gracht and sluis system in Amsterdam) are still working, words flow in and out. So I write a lot, I try to write every day, and then I look back, I am always Orpheus looking back at my poems and killing most of them by my glance. Some survive, and those are the ones that other people get to see. Why I keep doing this? Partly because it's what I do, and man tut immer was er tut. Partly because I really believe it's a basic and almost-honest way of giving something back to the world that has fed me with so much beauty and sensation. Dumb answer, but I feel I write out of gratitude.

*

Pour it into language. It doesn't have to be right, you know. My father always told me that running water purifies itself in 100 feet. Language is like that too. Lies and mistakes and inadequacies all purify themselves as the language runs. Which is why we trust and love that beautiful old woman who rules us.

*

Proverbs:

Learn a language lose a friend.

*

Morituri, omnes. Not a feeling or a gloom, it's a part of the definition. Honey, we are syllogisms.

*

[from a letter to Lee Chapman about the layout of "Threads":]

The one thing that bothers me in a quick look is that line at the bottom of the page—it makes me (who should know better) think that it means "end of poem."

Each time it would have that effect, I'm afraid—perhaps (seriously) because the high tension of reading a poem is such that any reader is somehow, somewhere, secretly or otherwise anxious for The End, for the poem to end. That anxiety for conclusion is built into the nature of the lyric poem, the short poem, and we can't escape it. Poetry seems like a clash of Gertrude Stein's "writing wants to go on" with a kind of Aristotelian "the form wants closure"—it may be the very tension that makes us love the delicate discomfort of the poem. Anyhow, that line at the bottom of the page sort of discharges the tension, just by visual cue.

*

the life of the small

*

woke writing this line: in the last days of mathematics

*

Hate weddings, love marriage: marriage enlists two people within each other; weddings enroll them in society. Weddings are the pre-emption of love—and all that can come from amative unity—into the diversities of family. As ever, family (the footstep of society) is the enemy.

*

Knots, or not.

*

I'm trying to listen
but all I can do is hear.

*

I love foreign languages best, the warm presence of the breath without the impertinence of sense.

*

Part of my love of opera is that I hate knowing what they're singing.

*

Think instead about the boundaries of my sleep.

*

Maybe the strangest thing of all is religion.

*

Artists are not famous and wealthy because people like to look at beautiful images but because people like to own things, collect things, invest in things.

Poets are poor because they produce no things. A poem is not thing enough.

*

I think too of the difference between *having* and experience and *collecting* one.

*

The strangeness of religion haunts me—not superstition, or mysticism, or illuminating experience, or even magic: all those seem specific to individual human understanding and misunderstanding. But *public* cult, the shameless assertion of mysteries or of ethical banalities, the confident assertions of full knowledge of ‘God’s plan,’ the whole diplomacy of heaven: these are very weird. And that people listen, congregate to be harangued, and join one another in belonging to something that has no existence other than their belonging itself. And that they call this smug belonging a belief—whereas the cognitive process usually subtended by that word has nothing to do with what they feel.

And how strange all that is, strange as a lobster, or a pterodactyl.

That we do such things, and always have, and that in some ways it seems to get worse every year.

Yet in the midst of all the sects and triumphalists and fundamentalists and holy wars, somewhere, somehow, in that enigma we are used to calling the heart, some quiet Otherness sometimes takes hold, and lightens our experience, and consoles.

*

But why do I wake up puzzling about, bothering with such things? Bring everything back to personal experience. That has been our light since the caves.

*

Personal experience is the only value.

Personal experience articulated is the only history, only plausible theology.

(The Jews believed Moses' experience on the mountain. Everything flowed, flowered, from that.)

Hence the importance—only truly preserved in Tibetan Buddhism—of *lineage*. The uninterrupted transmission of personal experiences from one teacher to his disciple, and that direct transmission is a personal experience involving teacher and disciple both, and the latter then passes on his own experience, so inflected, later along. Buddhism is the 'only' religion which depends on this personal experience both for its authority and its individual practice.

*

Weather: the strange skin wrapped tight around all our experiences.

*

Syntax is where the meaning lives, but I learn words. Heaps of words.

That's always my trouble learning foreign languages—I'm too good at vocabulary, lousy at grammatical patterns. I have all the words and no place to put them.

*

“When well sheltered, memories are reborn as rays of being, rather than as frozen shapes” Bachelard, *Poetics of Reverie*, p.135

*

After a day or so of fasting, after illness: how strange to chew, to have something in my mouth and have to deal with it. To eat 'normally' you have to forget you're eating. “Conscious reception of food” would be a challenge, unnatural, almost a sacrament. Every chew a contemplation.

Not just where each food comes from (the fields of barley, the men who planted it, the migrant workers men and women who tended it, reaped it, processed it, flaked it in some Christian mill down south, the crows that fed on the ears and the fallen, the beetles and weevils and nameless-to-me insects who ate around what I am eating, the thousand hands that one way or another sped it from the ground to me, here), not just all that is to be thought of, but how this mouthful

links to all the food I ever ever eaten, links me to the earth and what, if ever anything, is beyond the endless procession of eating and eaten and eater, in that hazy but exhilarating vedantic calm where all three are one.

*

Think about (as above) ‘to eat “normally”’ and how that is different from eating naturally. Natural vs. normal. Our bleak house.

*

When you begin to notice your health, it slips away.

*

Health is like a shy deer in your forest—leave it alone. Don’t look for it or it will run away. Leave some salt on the lawn, some apples, and think about something else.

*

Titles for some collected works:

Amatum iri (to be about to be loved, future passive infinitive)

Amoris tenus (all the way to love, as far as love)

*

Dreamt ca. 8:10 AM, 17 May 06: [someone is reading a letter out loud to me; after some vague expression of sorrow, he reads:] “Giorgio Agamben died this morning, from no apparent cause or reason. Alive for nearly 63 years, he liked everything and liked everyone, and had no enemies...”

Verbatim. I hope not.

*

(notes responding to Patrick Tesh on Wilde:)

Language as erogenous zone is not an altogether new idea, but bless you if you can show how it actually *works*.

What erectile tissue does an elegant adjective stimulate? And yet it somehow does.

Isn't the strangest phrase of all, "to have sex" with someone? Such a telling phrase. To have sex you first have to have a sex. And then the problems begin.

But if (following Freud and all our own experiences) there really is such a thing as infantile sexuality, then sexuality has nothing to do with sex, not the sex you have one of, not the sex you have with another.

Why do we call this thing that infants have, and we all have, "sexuality" when it precedes any and all function or self-awareness as a sex?

This thing that must be an energy all of its own, and only one of its ventures or deployments is what we call sex.

Sex is such a strange word. Such a strange work.

*

"who is Frank Moore"

I thought of that yesterday and said it out loud, and marvel at the capacity of Olson's poem to come to rest significantly on that question—without it ever having excited in me a real curiosity about its answer. Charlotte asked me, who *is* Frank Moore? and I said I had no idea. It never mattered—but why doesn't it matter? How can the very particular on which the poem alights be so particular as to elude our ordinary sense of specification? Not the answer but the kind of question it is, that's what mattered.

Do we (or did I, all these years) take it as a mere (but effective) signifier of Ordinary Civic Uncertainty, the mysteries of neighborhood by and on which our lives are shaped? The very question is its own answer. That he (Olson speaking) doesn't know is the point, a point we share by not knowing either. Holy Ignorance. Standing with the poem in dubiety, sharing it.

*

Unwanted Poster

*

The Calico or Petticoat Wars.

They didn't wear calico to ape women's clothes, as their enemies and their paid historians mocked. They wore calico because it was the cloth the Indians were sold to wear. Indians wore calico, so they, the oppressed and dispossessed,, wore calico to assert, or maybe just discover, common cause with the Indians, the dispossessed and oppressed people par excellence before them. Calico was the mark of a subject people (and hence of women too) -- subject to the the tyranny of kings, companies, white men, great landlords who "owned" by gift of the Crown lands the king had never seen, land the "owners" never worked. The myth of ownership is a bare lie, a thin tissue of deception. A kind of calico.

*

thinking about marginalia to *Fire Exit* -- these marginalia are the author's guesses—not about what the words mean, and certainly not what he or she intended or had in mind when writing them down—but rather intimations or shadows or even straightforward (it could be) pictures that come to his or her mind later, when reading the lines already somehow written down.

(For a bossy and demanding man, I certainly make big claims to planlessness...)

So in the passage marginally identified as *Canticum Adae*, the *Canticle of Adam*, it happens as the author midway through the writing down of it that it felt to him that Eve's husband was speaking, was (even) tossing such words to and fro still in his great genital mind.

*

History rapes us.

*

The conventional sexual distinctions -- homo-, hetero, bi- -- while useful enough in practice, conceal and confuse a more profound set of distinctions: the sexual instinct in any given individual will be fundamentally one of three: allotropic, homotropic, isotropic. The

individual is persistently, consistently, drawn towards the other, or to the similar-to-oneself, or to oneself.

*

That is why to an allotropic person incest is almost inconceivable -- what could be less appealing or attractive than someone already held within the circle of one's own?

*

And why incest is so common among the self-absorbed.

*

Sometimes staring at tall grasses against the sun I see cities there, rooftops and spires, all the luxe of civic life but no people. Haunted beauty of cities with no people.

*

A sense that film doesn't come to narrative closure -- even the non-narrative film needs that.

*

οραο; -- I like this verb, whose principal parts draw on three different stems: ορ-, ειδ- (wid), οψ- ο;φθο;σαν = they were seen. I ask myself what were seen. The answer comes: in foliage, dappled with sun and shade, near a quick running stream, quietly: the breasts of the goddess.

*

my first goddess, Artemis, complete unto herself. Her beauty a rapture for herself, a wound for the beholder. Dangerous shimmer in the oak leaves. In the willow branches.

*

Paying attention is the only money the mind has.

*

Note to a friend (Barbara Roether): You want men too much to know anything about them. Write from the inside of your wanting, not as if from inside the wanted.

*

On island everywhere is up. Or the other way, and we drown.

*

Rinsing out old fascinations. Restore me to my nature, the reach of this hand, not the allure of some other. Here on the island I feel released from preoccupations, like a prisoner suddenly free of routines. But the routines from which I feel liberated were all of my conceiving, perceiving, insisting.

*

Cuttyhunk, Memorial Day 2006

The ferry was nosing out of New Bedford's inner harbor when they suddenly started closing the hurricane gates, the great iron double door in the breakwater between inner and outer harbors. Since the sky was cloudy and windy and cold, it gave pause. Turned out to be just a routine maintenance operation, and the new men on the job had forgotten to notify the ferries. So the big hydrofoils to the Vineyard and Nantucket were trapped, along with our little mailboat laden with our month's worth of supplies. Back to dock. COnfusion, mild. Eventually Rich Hopps, Ray's son, drove a few of us to Padanaram in his pickup truck, where Dwayne Lynch, our nextdoor neighbor on the island and a notable fishing boat captain, took us aboard his launch and we motored across the bay, past the miser Hetty Green's generous son's mansion, shrine of American capitalist madness, with its immense radar tower built for research, stands now like a vast Lalique wine glass by the bay, unused, historic. I had never been in Padanaram before.

The ride was fantastic. Once away from the mainland Dwayne went full speed. I'd never been in a small boat moving so fast, huge double wake curving out behind us like a great peacock's tail, the spray hurling past us, the boat leaping high and smashing down on the water as it billowed forward betwee waves. Exhilarating and a little terrifying -- very sexual, the whole body ploughing hard through the receiving element. Squeezed tight in what yielded always inward.

The trip to the island took a little under half an hour -- as compared to the hour and a quarter of the ferry.

The island. For the first time we are here before the sea roses are in bloom -- by June half a mile of beach will be crimson and white with them, but the first day, not even one. Here and there a beach pea -- small, purple -- is flowering already. No sea poppies yet. But there are still lilacs everywhere. Lilacs on the cusp of June, amazing.

Such mixed motives writing claims. I write to remember. But I write for you too, to read. But even more I write to make a written thing, me or no me, you or no you.

Why does the natural world so please us now, wind flurrying the grass, a robin hopping along it, a blackbird swooping past? The sky, the clouds -- such pleasure they give us, but why? Why the sheer delight in what is merely here? This is such a hard question, maybe a clue to the hardest questions of all. Does this delight we take reveal, by contrast, some other horror which we know or knew, from which this pleasant place is a deliverance? Tell me the why of grass, the why of blue sky, the why of seas and trees and smiling.

Wireless internet access -- intermittent, but good when it's working. Almost no cell phone connectivity, and mail twice a week. A different flavor of isolation.

*

Thomas. Did I ever tell you I took that, chose that, as my confirmation name? Thomas is the twin. And sure enough there was a twinning motive in the choice. My parents, the whole family, regarded the choice as honoring my parents' favorite nephew, Tommy Sturken, who was, thanks to the name, the godfather elect -- gumbar [compadre] we said in the neighborhood, long before I knew the Mafia habit of the name, though we knew the Mafia and respected its evident local officers. But for me, I was honoring Thomas Aquinas (who was true Italian, not just, like Tommy, married to one) with whose image --and a little tiny bit, what I knew of it, his work-- I was enamored. So the Neapolitan saint was the secret twin of the tall slender pleasant easy-going smooth cousin who stood behind me at the moment Thomas E. Molloy, Bishop of Brooklyn, gave my cheek the delicate slap that signifies the persecution the adult Christian must expect to endure. And the bishop looked pleased at the name too.

Did you have a secret twin too? I imagine if I had been raised as a Thomas, I would have sought and found a secret twin, and mapped him on many another. And maybe that imaginal brother self is mapped on the men a gay Thomas loves.

And thinking of these matters, I wonder if the Greek thômas isn't really the same as the Greek thaumas --- the twin as a wonder, a prodigy, something magical. Thomas as thaumaturge, or the miracle-birth thaumaturred.

*

dream 27 May 06 about Kenneth Green from Denmark, met in Brooklyn, the remarkable copper artificial eyebrows of his son, whom I first took for his twin brother. In lieu of a business card, he gave me a worn old envelope addressed to him by Sartre, from China. Details NB 286, page 167.

*

The reverse entablature poem -- a poem written in a dream, a dream that ran three days. Without thinking, I sat down to it each day and wrote.

*

Brooklyn. I went there once, a long time ago, to get born. And now as I think about my life, I cant imagine having been born at any other time in any other place. Or, no, I can imagine it perfectly well (Paris 1630, 1865, Vienna 1880, London 1855) but what I can't imagine is how those other parameters would have permitted the life of the mind to issue in the joy I feel now. But every place has its *_genius loci_* -- or do some place lack those generative powers? -- and every time segues into this devious Eden we call the Present.

*

only fragments came through e-mail access all is well
Adirondacks Thursday wolf in a boat

who speaks?

*

It can rain all day, as it's been doing today, a nor'easter with wind and cold (for June), and yet when the rain stops I always feel sad, wistful. I want it to go on. I think there's never enough rain. I'm such an hyetophile. Ombrophilous. Wet.

*

so many things to tell you, and all of them vague, beautiful, impertinent, quiet, like a hand softly stroking the skin. Skin. So much on mind, *maladies de la peau*, certainties, wet grass after soft rain. Wild gale from the northeast scouring over sea then land then here.

*

Midrash on Pantagruel:

Obesity is a distorted quest for knowledge.

If there were more intellectual content (=nutrition: names, facts, faces, touches, tones, relations, functions, numbers, arrays, architectures) in elementary education, childhood obesity would be eliminated. Now education is all discussion and no feeding—keep the mind empty. But they are children, they are hungry—a vast, oceaning hunger for everything. If they can't satisfy it in the classroom they'll run ravening to the coin machines for the fastest hit of input. They are children, we can't expect them to analyze their appetites precisely, parse their hungers. Give them data and procedures, facts and skills, and they won't rush to junk food. The intense taste of junk food *is* information. Sensory input *is* information, is feeding. Make sure the child's sensorium is charged with real nutrition.

If you keep the kid busy from 9AM to 3PM, busy at busy work, what can you expect but gluttony from 3:01 PM to bedtime? *Activity doesn't feed* -- don't waste the child's time and health on 'classroom activities.' Famished animals rush to their feed. Any feed.

*

Theater of the Speaking Body:

all the words [of the play, the text] are recorded, then replayed loud while the actors move. They may mime speaking, or they may act athwart the sounded words.

*

(speaking of Tom's Interventions and my current long poem in tercets):

We have discovered the right to have voices speak and be answered without the inconvenience (or sometimes even the possibility) of identifying them. In that sense, we are more in Hell than Dante let himself be, with his firm grasp on the identities—since, as C.Williams points out, that is all the poor shades have—of the damned, For us, I suspect, the voice is the core of identity, while for Dante's time it was only a blason or emblem of one's ipseity.

*

the constant upwelling of physical energy flowers into meaning, gesture and word, sound and movement. Move in the world the way thought does, ever noticing, ever responding.

*

You ask me about voices—you say about yours “my writing voice took on something close to my speaking voice in order to stay honest” and then you ask me: “what are the differences in voices for you?” Bless you for asking—no one ever has, so I hadn't known to think about it myself. (I love questions, I think you know that, always ask me, anything, even things you know I don't know --- questions are great, because while if I ask you or you ask me, though you and I may not know, the answers know, and sometimes the answers find our mouths to speak themselves with).

My voices. This is what you made me think:

Voices. I think the writing voice and the speaking voice are very close, almost the same. The writing voice came first, in one sense. I was a child very alone, but never felt lonely. What I yearned for were names, to know the names of things and places and people and conditions. Every name is a name of power. I would read a word or

hear a word (elm, alley, shoeshine) and need to know it in the world. Is this an elm? Is that an elm? I'd ask until I coupled the thing with its word. This is an early form of making love: the conjoining of thing and word.

When I say the writing voice came first, of course I spoke before I wrote. But I cannot remember learning to read. It seems as if I always read. So in a way, the writing voice and the speaking voice are 'dialects' of the reading voice. The voice I heard in my head, reciting from a book. And then, later, not from a book at all, just reciting from circumstance alone, summoning the names and pronouncing them.

It sounds so insincere. But I'm not insincere. The ordinary colloquial may be quick, but it is not really sincere—the colloquial is always a quotation, prompt or tardy, from something someone else said. The colloquial in other words is always the Other speaking, not the real self of the speaker, a self that lurks hidden behind the conventional spoken language.

But to be sincere is to speak out loud the language you hear in your heart—that's a reasonable definition, isn't it?

Why is it so hard to speak any language? Only years and years of English "immersion" let me speak this one. And when I speak, I usually am speaking from an inner teleprompter where my words-about-to-be-spoken are composed, by me, usually, but sometimes they just appear. But when I say teleprompter and appear, I don't mean visually appear—I just *know* the words, not seeing them, not exactly hearing them, some other way. And when they are composed, they find their way to my mouth. It really does feel that intricate and difficult for me.

Because I want to be sure the words are true, and really make sense, make sensuous, make a new sense, a new direction. Why otherwise speak?

Of course: Two reasons. I speak because you ask. Or I speak because I want. These are the two ethers or metals of alchemy: responding/demanding. I speak my way to getting what I want—that primitive sociological use of language—'sincere' it may be, but only as sincere as our desires are.

*

Are your desires sincere, you who never speak of what you want, you who always seem to be in bed with the moment?

*

There is this business now of shaking people out of my story. Simplifying or at least changing the *Dramatis personae*. I don't need the plangent daughter of the exiled black sheep rightful heir. I can get rid of the Kapellmeister who plays any tune the dullest crowd wants to hear. I need quicker, sprightlier comrades, faithfuller retainers.

*

years ago, the first time the New York Times asked me to review a book for them (I have reviewed a fair number since), I warned them that I would not write a mocking or attacking review; if I could not write a positive essay on the book, I wouldn't review it at all. I felt that writing, literature, has enough trouble without writers taking easy shots at other writers. I said that was my religion. To my surprise, they accepted my attitude, I mention it now because the only critic (I am not a critic) who ever seems to have had the same religion was Blanchot. His writing on writers is marvelous, sympathetic, empathetic even, and as he writes about someone, that someone seems all at once the most interesting writer in the world. He does two things that move me: he writes about an author as if he were the same as the sum of all his works (Blanchot slipping from work to work or poem to poem for the evidence he uses to invoke the writer he's discussing), and he never attacks them or dismisses them. He knows as well as we do that not all books are good and not all texts by an author are as good as his others—but that's not his business. His business is to find the good in what is there. That makes Blanchot more than a critic, it seems to me, and the way his work has been received makes him more of a philosopher, an honest man in search of the truth of other people, other people one by one.

*

As Logothete of the Republic of Great Antillia, it behoves me to admit, even boast, that one terrain can be claimed and should be claimed by many different polities or governments. What is important is once and for all to detach the concept of State from the concept of Land. *Every* country is Occupied Palestine.

So without infringing on the rights and prestiges of the United States, conceived of as an armed executive with compliant pre-approved regional representatives discussing affairs in congress, there should also exist, in this New England, the unarmed government of Great Antillia, the Mormon Kingdom of East Cumora, the Orange Kingdom of New Netherlands, The Wappinger Confederation, the Pequot League, and many more. All of them interwoven, superimposed and underachieving, glimpses of magic and truth shimmering through the trees and shopping malls. From the American flag we borrow the white of the stripes and the white of the stars for our own banner, white to the point of transparency. Enlightened Deedlessness, Transparent Cowardice, the world with a broken mirror.

*

Surrounded as I am by woodlands and open space, I still miss parks, the multum in parvo of them, all of nature compressed into a square block or two, the false mountain of les Buttes-Chaumont, the marvellous sweep of the gardens in Hannover, the Golden Gate in Shallow Sunset, Washington Square in Paradise.

*

Zakhor. Remember, spoken to the Jews. But the Black Americans have nothing (in that sense) to remember. Nothing but grief. Their past is their present.

Imagine the Jews without Exodus, desert, manna, promised land, crossing over Jordan. The Black American has only the expulsion from Eden (Africa), a Captivity without Esther, without Mordechai. The Black Americans are still in Egypt. What fearful thing will rise when some prophet dares to say to them: Remember!

*

I finally got the novel finished—it came in a little over 300 pages, so it's not quite the stripling I had thought. But it's good, and I'm happy, and it ends with something that totally surprised me—but will not, I think, surprise the reader at all.

*

The faery kingdoms of America: to be discovered. Or perhaps, unfound, in fact inhabited. West of Brittany to Britain. West of that the line still runs, the Green Line. I have seen them tall and quiet in the midst of Massachusetts. And the sun comes out now on my lawn to make it green as Donegal and tell me I'm right.

They're here.

They're immigrants like us. All the folk of lust and wisdom travel west with Lady Grian, west with what you call the sun.

*

There are two kinds of ambition an artist can have, and they can get terribly in the way of each other. Caution. There is the ambition *to make art*, and the ambition *to be someone who makes or has made art*. They are fiercely different.

The making ambition is directed to, and largely satisfied by, the conception and enterprise and completion of a particular work: poem, installation, film, sculpture, novel, painting—doesn't matter the scale. And then the slow development of the more or less systematic year by year articulation of a body of work.

The being-someone-who ambition is directed to, but can never wholly be satisfied by, public presence and perceived identity. The being-someone ambition can never be satisfied in the artist because it does not depend on the artist's own genius, energy and sense of the work at hand or just done. It depends on the accidents of reception. And all too easy is it for the artist to essentialize these accidents or obstacles, essentialize them and internalize them as if they had something to do with him or his work, rather than the vast intricate network of social, economic, erotic, political, racial and so forth forces that every art work is launched into.

Now I happen to think that these two ambitions have a lot to do with how we get on with other people, other artists. The making-ambition leaves one relatively placid in the face of other artists' successes and recognitions. Not so the being-ambition—the success of the other diminishes and humiliates the self.

There is no way of avoiding that. The being-ambition is destined to eternal humiliation, no matter how successful the artist becomes. The success of the other will always hurt, weaken.

So the solution my sense and my practice both suggest is to focus more and more, madly, purely, blindly almost, like the great crazies, focus on the work to be done, turn the being-ambition utterly into the ambition-to-make.

And leave the rest to chance, karma, impulse, chaos, your enemies and friends—who work as hard as you do to help or hinder you.

In the work itself, only itself, to focus the ambition. It cleans one of humiliation (the artist's life is so full of them) and of false desire, leaves one free for lust and love, the true Eros which aims its arrows at real targets—the beautiful person of the other, the beautiful work on the page or screen or wall. *Arbeit, heilende Welle, in dir bade ich mich rein*, cries Dr Faust (Busoni's version)-- and those words stay with me. Stay with us.

And it's never a choice between the work and love. Love cooperates with actual making. It's only the other ambition that love, loving, love affairs, can inflect, affect, hurt—or help.

So much for the rational. By my instinct: I feel sure that people (even publishers, galeristas, impresarios, producers, editors) can tell the difference, can sense the two kinds of ambition in an artist. When they feel the ambition-to-make, they spontaneously, unconsciously try to help out, try to put their scant or ample 'inertia' moving in the service of the work—just as people normally, decently, try to help out a stranger doing something difficult and important, or just some petty thing where help is called for, or stand by making helpful remarks (they hope).

On the other hand, when people feel an artist is thick with that ambition-to-be-someone-who, they just as instinctively veer off. Repelled by the self/ishness of the other, the self-involvement instead of work-involvement, they keep their distance. They feel like prey at that moment, and turn cautious, reserved—as we all do when comparative strangers clearly want something from us.

Difference: between making and being on the make. Our (holy) words tell it clearly enough, as usual.

*

Ireland is (as far as I know) the only land with two different populations, one for the most part invisible to the other. These two—the Sidhe and the Human—co-inhere in land, in landscape, in river and fort and hill. The town (baile) is supposed to be Human, but They are there too. And in their own holy places—the bare slopes of Muckish, say, or Erigal—the Sidhe summon humans to crisis. Decisions to be made, weddings and emigrations. The Sidhe stay, always, we pray, stay, though so many Erin-leavers beg them to travel with. And maybe, please the Good, maybe some of them have yielded to the entreaties of lovely women and fine men off in the morning to Philadelphia, maybe some of them came too. Please the Good that America too will be a land of the Sidhe.

*

Now that there are twice as many speakers of Polish in Ireland as there are speakers of Irish Gaelic, it will be up to the Sidhe to make Irishmen of them, and illuminate whatever language they think they're speaking with the special language of this special world, the Good People's own inflection that tinges the accent of all those who grew up in Ireland or where Irish speakers spoke to them. Just as the Sidhe made the Fomorians and the Firbolgs and the Cro-Magnons and the Tuatha De Danann and the Continental Celts all of them, then the Danes and Norwegians and Spaniards and Englishmen and Normans into Irish, made them speak, whatever they thought they were speaking, a language that the rest of the world knows is Irish, so the Sidhe will make them Irish speakers too.

*

The astonishing history of poetry in America, where almost every poet has been in one way or another against the government. Is that Romantic, maudit, stance itself the genesis of the social and political inefficacy of poetry in America? Whitman loved Lincoln, but who loved Wilson, Roosevelt, Eisenhower? They were in some way great presidents (= presid-ed over major praxis in the world) but what poet rose to bless them?

Yet in Europe there is a tradition (inherited by Latin America) where the poet can not only befriend the government, but actually take some part in it. Milton was Cromwell's 'secretary of state,' Goethe in effect was the prime minister of the Duke of Weimar, The Renaissance poets of Italy were hand in glove with the rulers of the

republics. In our century, Claudel, St. John Perse, Paz were ambassadors. Poets have been ministers of state in Bosnia, the Czech Republic, Nicaragua. In classic China, poets were the government.

Here our only connection is the Government Grant we lobby for and squabble over. The government awards paltry prizes, annual laureateships and the like, to poets safe enough to endorse.

And lo! it is not the government's fault. We are at fault, we who (like Pound) took our political energies and savvy and conscience and paideuma overseas, we who content ourselves with penning potshots at the Pentagon, and getting famous for chanting poems against this or that to college audiences.

*

Does the poet finally have to assent, consent, to being a *representative* human? Must the poet, that is, assent to the high—but self-denying—task of being a representation of humanity in eternity? Who has the haughtiness and the humility both for that assignment?

*

Into every person's life a Christ enters at some moment.

Always in human form. To recognize him for what he is, within the garments of his or her seeming—that is the crisis. Then to 'sell what one has'—give up the conventions of one's ideas—and follow Him.

*

I remember once trying to learn Irish Gaelic—which as far as I know no member of my family had spoken for five hundred years, if at all—and somehow the turns of grammar (not so much the sounds), the deep structure of the language began to haunt me, and give me strange dreams. And I have certainly dreamt in German, though not in recent years.

Or is it German? Maybe it is a special unknown language of dream, Althochtraumisch, that we all speak and forget in the moment of waking, carrying only the shadows of in on our ordinary speech. And confuse it with some other tongue we think it might be, Gaelic, German, Greek...

*

(writing to Tom Meyer, 22 IX 06):

those are the kindest words any work of mine has ever heard, and coming from you all the more so. You've made me happy. Talk about blessing!

It makes me suddenly aware that one way you and I (and some others, wonderful others) are alike is—this is tentative, forgive me if I get it crooked—when you are actually inside the world, inside the making (as in poets as makars), then you can move to any place on the circumference with equal ease. Why you can move from the ardent center to Jyotish or Lao Zi or Musa Puerilis or Wortcraft with equal grace and equal skill.

To be at the center! There we somehow are! No wonder we live a bit obscurely, hidden by the world we master. Occulted. Though Goethe, one of our company who has been much on my mind lately, was the least hidden of all. Hmm. Must think more of how he dealt with the veils. I think perhaps he was close to the exact center of the sphere of event, the Action, while the best of the rest of us are to one degree a little closer to one part of the earthskin than another...

*

Humans—perhaps all beings—wield two identities. One in 'eternity,' one here and now. To make them one is the soulmaking Keats offered as our business in this vale.

To see the one in the other is the high silent art of the teacher, the guide.

*

Mystical: said of a real experience that is shy of words. That might be spoken but should not be spoken. The mystical can be explained or described, but it ceases to be mystical then, the wordless experiential language of the mystes, one who keeps silence (myei) or is silenced by the mysteries.

*

Crane. When he came east to the City Joe Kling helped him find his sights as a reader and a writer. When he left any city, those preposterous islands killed him.

*

dream: I am holding a thick book called the Fiendish-Yinnish Dictionary. And in the dream I smile, recognizing this as a kind of Joycean version of a French-Yiddish bilingual dictionary. Then in the dream I begin to analyze the dream: Yinnish is the language of Yin, that is, of the feminine, of women.

In the dream I laugh: a woman's dictionary would have each entry word on a separate page, so a woman can tear out the words she doesn't like. Women are rulers of language.

I get serious now in the dream. Language belongs to women: they can accept it or reject it.

Waking, I wonder why Fiendish? Am I the fiend whose language has to be translated into the words of women, so they will understand me? Accept me, o don't reject me? What makes me a fiend? Fiend is the English version of German Feind, the enemy.

Later, I notice that in the dream I did not open the dictionary. Was the discovery that there were two languages, where I thought there was only one, too big a shock?
May I learn to speak Yinnish. It's not too late.

*

Being in love: selfishness and ingratitude and greed: no gratitude for all that the beloved has already given or conferred; anger at the beloved for not giving more. Always wanting more.

In fact, one could say that Being in Love is the total cathexis of all the Five Poisons: anger at not getting more; desire for more; ignorance of the impermanent and changeful imputed identity of self and beloved, her 'uniqueness' and one's own; jealousy of all kinds; envy/invidia towards all her connections.

Being in Love, then, is the total sin.

And like all sin, exciting. Perhaps most exciting of all.

Which says something about excitement. And about sin.

*

You were going to Ireland, perhaps to be learning Irish there, certainly visiting some special places there, a forest even, and hills. You were in a good mood about it, and we chatted happily as boys. Only one thing worried you: you had been given a mantra to say and the obligation to say it. It worried you, how could you perform that daily obligation and still do all the things in Ireland? Should you put off your trip? I asked how long you had to recite the mantram every day. You said: three hours a day. You wrote with your fountain pen the mantra in question: OM HRI HRI HRI... is how it began, a Manjusri mantra surely. You wrote in red ink, the Tibetan characters, clearly, syllable by syllable down the page. There were perhaps eight syllables—it was not the usual Manjusri mantra. I was surprised that you knew the Tibetan characters. One of them I thought you drew incorrectly, but I said nothing about it. I was happy for you, and cheered you up, explaining that Of course you must go, and of course you could say the mantram—it was only three hours a day, and you could learn to say it by a process of conscious uninterrupted rippling emission. We walked outside at that point as I explained. We were walking west beside the white moonlit mansion I was living in. Do you remember Franny and Zooie, I asked, and of course you did, and you began to intuit what I was going to tell you. I explained about the Prayer of the Heart, the Jesus prayer, and about the hermit who walked all over Russia and Podolia (I insisted on Podolia in the dream, even though uncertain where or what Podolia was) his life long just repeating the Jesus prayer until his whole breath and body and mind were filled at all times with that conscious prayer, so everywhere he went and everything he saw was always fresh and new and clean around him, seen with his clean mind that never stopped its prayer. . At first I thought it had snowed, though the night was mild. I bent down and picked up what I thought was snow—it was light, fluffy seed or grain or pollen. (Writing about it now, I think: it was manna.) As I was explaining to you what the actual words of the Jesus prayer were, I began to cry, really cry, with copious tears, as I recited: Lord Jesus Christ, Have Mercy on me, a Sinner. The tears surprised us both, but neither of us referred to them. We had come by now, deliberately on my part as it seemed, to a little set of stone steps leading down to the cellar of the building, which, though the rest of the house was dark, was lighted enough for us to see that just inside the door there was a little shrine-like place, in pale wood like pear-

wood, a door with a cut-out of a double-armed cross in it, and a small dark space behind the door. I gestured down, and told you that I kept my copy of the book down there. We could feel the influence of it streaming up the steps to where we stood still outside in the night. You said, jesting gently, Careful! that book is loaded.

[dream. 21 X 06: the you I'm addressing seemed to be or be like George Q at the beginning and the very end, Ken Irby in the middle (from fountain pen to cellar door)]

*

In autumn, the leaves turn red and yellow—they color the light anew with organic earth light,

which sinks into the ground and grows there as gold and jewels. Jewels and gold are species of light built by the compression of sky. Gold is sunspill as shaped by autumn trees. Millions of years.

Hence Ratnasambhava (Rinchen Jungnas), Buddha of Abundance and Wealth, is shown yellow—not of gold, but of what gold comes from.

*

(THE THREE RELIGIONS.)

Stone. Tree. The Third.

Stone:

This is the oldest, and has never died. It tries to replace all other religions as they come along; it turns them into different styles of the Stone Religion. All the new religions as they come along try to escape from the stone.

So Christianity, which began with Christ the carpenter, the shaper of wood, climbing the tree on the top of the hill. He climbed the tree into the sky. And after his death, he was reborn: and rolled away the stone. That is, he rejected the stone religion, rolled it away so we could grow upright and tall, trees in the light. Though Christ pushed the stone away, it was Petros, the rock, on which the church was built. Christ said: Which of us, if his child asks for bread, would give him a stone? But the Church gives the child no bread, only a marble Vatican.

So Islam, which begins with weightless night journeys into the Realm of Truth, Mohammed's visionary presence, the voice that speaks the

Koran in him. But Islam is diverted, overwhelmed by the stone religion, becomes an idolatry of the Ka'aba, the obligatory pilgrimage, the stoning of the devil—as if stone were the holiest of things and could drive out evil. Dome of the Rock.

And in Buddhism, there are tendencies, Zen is one, where the meditator seeks to become immobile, thought-less, impervious, steady as a rock. The Zen meditator is taught to be rigid as the beautiful boulders in the monk's garden.

Tree.

Tree is the new religion. We are wrong when we think back to Druids and Dodona and smile about Tree Worship of the ancients. Tree worship hasn't happened yet. In Muir and Thoreau, in Keats and Pound and haiku and Mallarme we begin to see the lovely liturgy of the tree beginning. A tree bends, sways in the wind, is solid but not rigid, is full of flowing sap and architectural uprising, but stands its ground.

Tree hasn't happened yet. Maitreya will stand up from his chair—already a chair is a halfway house, something built of wood to hold one off the ground. Not crouching on the earth like a stone but sitting motionless upright, like a tree. Chairs show the way. The chair gave the western world its political preeminence and military authority. We are as powerful as our chairs—throne, cathedra of the bishop, fauteuil of the Academie, chair of the professor, the driver's seat, the catbird seat. Because the chair, which is made from trees, is like the tree, halfway to the sky.

And when it reaches all the way—Christ tried to show it, climbed the tree, went to heaven.

Zaccheus climbed a tree
His Lord to see

we said when we were children—Zaccheus was the founder of the true Christianity, the one that even now has hardly begun to be born.

*

What haunts me are the ethical (and theological) issues of *voir* giving way to *dire*. As long ago as Thucydides, history becomes amenable to spin—how we make sense of what we think happened to us. Where it came from and what it means. But the meaning of the

Holocaust is precisely where we cannot stand, cannot even enter. *Hier gibt's kein Warum* might be truer even than Levi knew. That is the mystery, the tremendum.

And the *dire* part worries me because Deconstruction can work hand in hand with Historical Revisionism (to give the Deniers a polite name), as we see when Chomsky leaps to the aid of Faurisson. It is not just Chomsky's irritable courage or his defense of free speech that's operative here, but something deeper: a profound a/nomie of language, a vast a/morality of speech. If speech is free in that sense, then (the by now familiar, almost orthodox, sense of) Memory as a Construction comes to depend entirely on the will (free, good or otherwise) of the constructors.

Think of those moments in Shoah when the seemingly nice friendly Polish peasants are remembering, recalling lost Jews fondly, etc., but little by little slip into those very attitudes (whether violent or passive) that marked them during the destruction of the Jews. How readily a skilful film editor could take those and hundreds more hours of reminiscences and *dire*, and gradually build up a vision of a healthy East European world in which the Nazi incursion was a mere episode, unfortunate indeed for the Jews but unpleasant for everybody. The Holocaust would vanish *into* history (the way Spiegelman notoriously makes it vanish out of history).

How smart Lanzmann was to show the bleak places left over from the actual: the physical evidence of the results.

Think, on the other side, of that film where in the present time the rememberers are old and unappealing Jewish women, loaded down with tasteless costume jewelry and sitting in expensively tasteless living rooms. There is nothing appealing about them at all except their stories, and their stories are given the lie by the picturing that is being done. The vileness of that strategy offends me still—to make the truth tellers ugly, tasteless and old. How seriously can we take their complaints? They *look like* grouchy grandmas kvetching about their ungrateful children. The stories they are telling are vast and terrible and full of awe—but the image undercuts the words every time.

Here the truth told is weakened by the presentation—and the lie told can be strengthened by presentation too. What frightens me is the Deconstructionist project reaching into history, this history, a world and time I actually lived through (in ignorance mostly), the project

privileging all construction of memory equally. The Polish peasants have their memories, the Jews have theirs—and the Holocaust vanishes into the contradictions of human report and judgment.

I think of that strange Israeli rabbi who argued that the six million Jews lost in the Holocaust, and the millions of others who suffered, were somehow the reincarnations of (or descendants of?) those who worshipped the Golden Calf in the desert (or some other big Biblical crime, I forget), and that their sufferings were a punishment, presumably deserved, that had been waiting 3000 years to afflict them. What a desperate maneuver! And yet one can almost sympathize with him—not for his lack of empathy or even decency, but for the crazed desperation with which he had to come up with something to explain it, something to make sense of it—otherwise God and Torah and history are just three names for blind chaos. *Kein Warum*.

Even his arguments could be drawn into a ‘construction of memory’ Which makes me want to go back to memory itself. We think: of course it is a construction. But then one construction is as good as another, as long as it tells the truth we want told.

*

from Vasily Grossman’s *Vse techet*:

“He went through the Hermitage—to find that it left him cold and indifferent. It was unbearable to think that those paintings had remained as beautiful as ever during the years in camp which had transformed him into a prematurely old man. Why hadn’t the faces of the madonnas grown old too, and why hadn’t their eyes been blinded with tears? Was not their immortality their failure rather than their strength? Did not their changelessness reveal a betrayal by art of the humanity which had created it?”

*

The twists of circumstances (Circe’s Dances) ((un-dances)) that fetch us close or far to one another, all. President Street of then and of now, of who one was and who one is.

*

I've been writing through the Mozart piano concertos. Hearing the music hard, but not listening to it, writing through it, as if writing were a way of seeing through the gorgeous cloud of sound to the world / story from which the cloud is billowing. Hearing, but let writing replace listening.

*

I think of plays I would write, and remember Crichton's wonderful cave work. The tinkling china teacup as the boy's hand trembled and made cup rattle on saucer—a marvelous mapping of the nervousness of the actor onto the nervous of the character projected. I still remember that micro coup-de-theatre, that's the way to go: the way theater in real time can shatter the defenses round the heart, can make us really present, through the accident of only here, only now.

*

The sound of footsteps pounding up the stairs—the Black & Tans arriving, some O'Casey play, *Juno?*, at the old theater on McDougal Street, 1951. The sound is what stays in mind all these years, the real time sound of where one actually is now—sharing the sound-space with the actors, hence, with the action, the history, the meaning.

*

[file: *Energumen* 4, begun 2 January 2007]

Maus. What bothers me is not the drawing, which is playful, skilful, memorable. And not the story per se, which is about the incommensurability of a father's memories with his son's sense of reality: it might from that point of view be like one of the father/son stories Kafka sketched out in his diaries and left there. No, what bothers me is the explicit, specific trope of Nazi as cat, Jew as mouse, with all the pictorial reinforcement, puns (Mauschwitz), etc. By mapping the Holocaust onto animals, Spiegelman has taken it out of history. And by denying (however unintentionally) the fact that it occurred in history and only in history, Spiegelman takes the story into a timeless never-never land of fairy-tales about talking animals. And worse than that: he makes the specific aggression of Nazis against Jews into a fact of nature, an eternal, unchangeable and (finally) amoral fact of the way things are. Nobody's fault. Cats eat mice, schluss. If that's the case, then the Jew (here essentialized as cunning but verminous) can never escape. He is essentialized as

victim -- even if (like Jerry escaping Tom) he is cunning enough to escape sometimes. But the aggression will never end. This snatching of the Holocaust from history (and hence from accountability, human responsibility, moral choice) and dropping it into Natural History, the timeless misdeeds of animals against one another, strips the colossal event of its human meaning. And gives us no hope. We smile ruefully and shake our heads. Cats will be cats, etc.

*

Full moon, the first full moon of the year. Green moonlight frosting the earth, I have never seen it so, ever. From the dark dining room I looked out and was convinced it had snowed a little, why not, cold January night, a slim coating of greenish pallor on every branch and roof, on bare earth and grass. But I went outside and everything was as it had been, snowless, and the deck light showed the conventional color of grass and wood and stone. But when the light went out, the moon made it phosphoresce in green again. (2/3 January 2007)

*

The beauty of the Other lies precisely in its failed resemblance to the Same.

*

How the colors of almost
shimmer brighter than the color of yes.

*

it is hard to write from one's childhood, I always think it shdnt be, yet it is, and even I (can you picture me a child?) ((can I picture me anything else??)) cdnt do it. Writing must always be about taking leave -- among all the other things it always is.

*

I remember myself from years ago as if the person I am remembering was another person, other people.

I remember me as if I were a number of dead friends. Acquaintances, maybe. How well do I know that RK of 1959, and what was moving him to do and speak, desire and write? A stranger, or the RK of a

decade later, I'm suspicious of him, his worked-up, worked-out appetites, his voluble lust. And a few years later, a dear friend now dead. Sometimes the Robert I remember is just a character in a book. I don't remember him well, I might remember better the delineation of the city he lived in, the friends he had. It's not that I reject them, all the Roberts I know or suppose myself to have been. Some of them I actually like a lot, and some of them I would even still be willing to know socially. And one or two of them I might even have to tea.

*

What Americans want: safer dangers.

*

If all lights could be blue!

Every line would rhyme whether or not it had a rhyme-sound, a sound-rhyme.

*

A blue light. Not red for stop, not green for go, not yellow for be careful. Not white to illuminate something else. Just blue. A blue light lights itself.

*

I want to find a piece of my childhood that I have not spoken before, given away before. Yet one image keeps coming back all day, even when I'm trying to fetch a different memory, even when I refuse this one. So I suppose I must finally say it, though it feels so ancient in me, as if perhaps I have said it a thousand times already. Yet it is so vivid, trivial, small.

We lived east of Nostrand Avenue, where all the streets had names: Brown, Batchelder, Haring, Gerritsen... But west of Nostrand, the streets had numbers only: East 37th Street, for instance. And through them both the East-West avenues ran, and they all had letters: Avenue S was ours, south of Avenue R, and a long block north of Avenue T.

Into those numbered streets I would be taken in a stroller, later for a walk, and later still would walk myself, though the small dark brick houses, the dark hedges, the low trees, but most of all the numbers themselves gave the neighborhood a feeling of the uncanny.

One of the houses had a small ornamental stone or cement lion on the balustrade. Whenever we passed this house, I would stop and insist on feeding the lion. I would bend down and pick from a stone windowbox some of the soft, succulent, broad leaved grass growing there, and feed a few leaves to the lion, that is, gently put the leaves into the lion's open mouth. This gave me great satisfaction, one I can still feel, as I can feel and smell the faintly crushed green succulent leaves, the rough stone of the lion's muzzle. It makes me happy still to think of this. The word 'lion' I mispronounced from the start as "iler," and went on referring to this particular lion as the Iler long after other lions in zoos or books got their right name.

Many years later, I was sent to a doctor whose name was Dr. Iler. But that is another story.

*

Sometimes I am a terrible person. Sometimes I want to be the 'you' in poems that I read, want the animal of the poem to be coming towards me, curling on my lap or attacking me. Something I can understand. Sometimes I am very stupid, and want words to mean what they say, and say them to me. Sometimes I want all the words to be speaking to me. And when your poem speaks, sometimes I want it to be me you're talking to or about. This is terrible and stupid and natural, and very much how I am though I try to find a way to listen sideways to words so that they don't appear to be coming right at me. But I want them to come right at me. Sometimes if I seem not to like a poem, it's because I want it to have been coming to me so much, and I know it's not, but the effort of standing sideways and letting the words pass as aesthetic events not concerning you, not concerning me, is so great that it takes its toll, evidently, and I sound half-hearted. But I'm really trying to be no-hearted, and just attend to the words as if I weren't there. That is a way I try to cope with being a terrible stupid person who wants all the words to come to him.

*

Old neighborhoods. We never really move out of them. The thought of walking around my neighborhood in Brooklyn, museum and

parkway and gardens, a cigarette, exhaling the whole sky, skyline, walking, the actual body movement. When I thought about it, the physical feeling was inside my chest: a small quiet band of children, some loose, some hand in hand, were walking down the inside wall of his chest, right side, and they had city a-plenty to look at all round them. That neighborhood was somehow the city hidden inside a city, everything complete but blending seamlessly into the great city around it. The children knew. They knew Grand Army Plaza best of all, the green of bronze and the roar of traffic doing the great wheel around the arch.

*

Indeed I'm not very concerned with the boundary experience (what I think Silliman means by the contrast between writing poetry and writing poems) that make something into 'a poem.' I'm always tending to talk about the place or passage where I find the intensity of writing, poetry,

Where it isn't so much a question of like or dislike, but of the arrow that a poem is -- does it find me (reader), or does it pass me by (miss), or do I (reader) swerve to avoid its trajectory. Or do I unashamedly introject myself into it, as its 'subject' or 'target,' and thus deflect or even obliterate its own line of movement by my greedy insertion.

*

Today I spoke to a man in Manila. After I got off the phone I remembered an event in my childhood. It shows how hard it was for me to become a poet, as I hope I have. Who knows. Who knows what poetry really is, until at the end (but there is no end) someone says: your poetry moved me. And then maybe we'd know. But the memory: I think it was the fourth grade. We were to do a pageant or presentation honoring the Allies -- the countries whose beautiful flags were displayed on the commemorative stamps issued that year. I was assigned the Philippines. I went and studied all about them, the conquistadors, the Spanish American War, the battles, the Tagalog language, the lepers, the coconuts, the fish. When the time came, we were given a script to follow. I was supposed to say "I am the Philippine Islands." But in rehearsal I insisted on saying "I represent the Philippines." No, the teachers said, no. You must say that you are the islands. But I am not the Philippine Islands, I said, I am me. I can only represent them. My memory draws a blank when I try to

come up with the actual night of performance, whether I complied with the authorities and said "I am..." or whether, up there alone, I reverted to my own idea of what was accurate. See how hard it is to become a poet? Now I could say I am the Philippines, and say it with no anxiety. Now I am them.

*

Sometimes I think I could tell everything. The foods I like best now are the ones I also like to cook: lamb bones with daikon, lamb bones with bitter melon, poached salmon, cod stew, stewed hake, baked or fried haddock, lamb or beef vindaloo. But I cook a lot of things, for Charlotte especially, that I don't much eat: various rich pastas, fried flounder, roast chicken, fried chicken, lamb chops, braised endive, braised spinach.

*

I was sent to Dr Iler because I was fat and growing fatter. Dr Iler was some sort of specialist. Dr Iler turned out to be immensely fat, the fattest person I had ever seen. He drove a little tiny Austin that somehow had been modified for him. He was said to eat a pint of ice cream at a sitting. He told my mother that I could be treated with "injections" -- a word that seemed to her equivalent to demons. No, no, there must be another way. So diets of various sorts were proposed. It seemed immediately to me that this doctor could not heal his own obesity, and was unlikely to cure mine. It took a while for my parents to see that. I think Russell Hills Iler was his name -- that rattles around in my head. He was quite young, actually, and I think his own father was also a physician.

*

All food is psychedelic in one sense or another; if we could only learn listen to our skin and our juices and muscles and such, we would learn strange things about what we swallow and (literally) transform into us.

*

Making songs I think that is what I always am wanting to be doing, think to do, but songs not from ideas but from the very fact of the body and its world. I want to hear the song the back sings, the groove of spine, the bulge of shoulder, the collarbone. I don't mean about them, but the actual smart even abstract intelligences that flood the music, or flood with music, that pours out of each part of us. And each thing in the world. Stone song and rain's reverie.

*

"Help. I need currency. It would be a terrible thing if thinking about you turned into remembering you. When mindfulness dries into memory. Or would it be terrible. Maybe it's what you really want. Or what I really want. To sustain a filament of feeling. A shimmer of sense we sometimes make. Made."

*

The brilliance of the bad obscures the good. Write a scholion on that: sorting the meanings like a supermarket clerk arranging a pile of avocados, over-ripe ones on top. The obvious is usually reliable but the subway gets you there faster.

*

I always wanted to be Picasso, in the sense that I always wanted to be allowed to do everything, make everything. And I did! I hate rules, rules make for sloppiness. Only the inner animate energy knows how to create form.

*

Writing with a sore thumb and the wind howling. "Everybody wants to get into the act!" cried Durante, and let them in, and took them along with him. Paradiso?

*

You don't actually need to read a book. It's enough to hold it carefully, then casually, in hand, stroking it gently, like somebody's glove. Then you say its title aloud many times, alone and with others.

*

Maybe the dream goes on all the time. Or dreams do. I don't mean reality-as-illusion; true or not, that's another issue. I'm asking this: if studying the dream rhythms, REMs, and so forth, periods of theta and all such measuring were continued through the waking life, would we find that we dream awake and asleep, and any moment can slip, unvigilant, into the other reality? Sometimes I'll come to myself when walking or sitting or reading and find that I have also been, or actually been, having a dream utterly unrelated to what I was doing or hearing or reading.

*

For years I've had hints, and eventually spoken them to others as helping the hints along, that the vast body of my (or many poets'?) work might be best understood as an immense array of speeches for characters in a vaster Play, a play never sketched in outline (kein Umriß von dem heimlichen Dramaturg), never 'cast,' never synopsised.

Now it occurs to be that one could take my poems, or any one of them, and cast them, break them up, redistribute the parts into the mouths of the actors.

This would be the work of Will and Recognition. Hai tes boules Anagnoriseis. The recognition of the actor in the speech, the plot growing from all that all of them can be heard to be saying. What you can in effect make them say by willing recognition.

To sit with other person and compose a play from what has already been composed. To hear a music that has been, in this sense, notated but never performed. That can be performed (meine Oper!) only when the speeches find the mouths and bodies of the actors. To say them in place.

That is it: my poems want to be said in place.

*

The picture. I can never tell you what a picture may be 'of' -- I'll only tell you what I see. "Of" is such a strange relation, we think naively: the picture is the child of some thing or some person out there in the non-picture. Leading to the bizarre and terrible conclusion: the

world is what is outside the frame. Almost: the world is whatever is not here. The world is everything that is not in view.

Photo. Not what is in front of the camera at a certain moment (always past) in time, but what it makes happen before the eyes at another certain moment (always present). Deep in our relationship to the world is the central act of looking. We belong to our eyes. One of our defining moments: looking at each other.

Are blind men selfish? Or do they have no self, since they have no other?

That question is naively premised on the primacy of sight. But even hearing, hearing has no natural mirror. And when you touch your own skin, it feels most different from the skin of someone else. Though sometimes the skin too is drunk or swoons, and thinks the other is the same as self, or, waking, mistakes the bony wrist of its own sleeping other hand for an animal or book.

Is there any seeing, or seeing going on in all senses?

*

Whenever we try to fixate a sensation on or with another person ('your hands are wet,' 'I heard you grinding your teeth when you were asleep') we have an immense opportunity that is usually wasted. It could be a moment where we stand at the mouth of a great dark cave that runs deep into the earth of each person's feelings, and more than that, each person's sense of incarnation in this place: body, speech, mind, aligned with the material, the substance of this earthlife. Instead, we usually waste the opportunity, or at least use only a little of it, by turning our perception of the other's sensation into an analysis of our reciprocal emotions, relationship, etc. Every sensation is a cavemouth, a mine.

*

If I had to guess, I'd guess I don't like Haydn because he tells me what's wrong with me: too long, too learned, too quick, too prolific, slow, boring, thorough, habitual. Willing to wade through long dull stretches (of my own composition) to reach some O altitudo! When I listen to dull composers (Haydn, Spohr come to mind), I keep asking myself why, why do they write the dull stuff, the unrelenting

passagework of obvious skilful fiddling, when they could cut all that and go right to the essence. What is the essence? Maybe (for them, for all?) the essence *_is_* the plodding onward, the soldiering through. Why can't I learn to leave out the dull stuff? Why drag people up the tedious crest when once I've gotten there? Let the brief explosion be enough. Just be suddenly there. on the top.

*

Important to study the things and artists I don't like -- they reflect my bad qualities. Haydn, Debussy, Renoir -- bland, bland almost all the time -- but then those moments!

*

The body. So much it is the body that means. The body means.

Its meaning is momentary, like a word, spoken always in context, taking its meaning from the when and where it's spoken into.

The body is a word, just like that. It means what it means only right now, only the now it inhabits and controls.

Its meaning is fugitive.

It says:

Embrace me
in all your ways.
I am the word
my soul says
only to you and only now,
this year, this skin
before time happens
to us both.

The holiness of the pretty body now, in all its freshness, the thing it speaks.

It is what the body *_is_* that gives.

That speaks.

If you don't hear the word it says at any given age, any given moment, appearance, state, then you'll never hear it.

It is not a permanency, it is now. That is its gift. It gives the moment. and gives it meaning.

It's not about what the owner of the body thinks or wants to tell, but the body itself.

You see, the point here is that the body is wiser than the mind, but it is also truer and deeper than the personality. The body of a young person is utter truth. It takes a person years and years to grow towards that wisdom his 'own' body is. And all too often he grows to get past it, to deny the wisdom, refute the word of his own body. It is that process we dignify by the word maturation. In fact it is not so much a loss of vitality but a loss of meaning.

The body a young man or woman gives, gives perhaps by just being there, is what the mind or spirit has to work so many honest years to give some permanency to, the shape of art or commitment or social form.

*

when the Gates shift (chemical/alchemical valence/polarity) in Jerusalem, arent the contradictions sublated (or sumfin) into not so much a synthesis (implying opposed or at least opposite forces brought to alignment or repose) as a mandala? such as the yantras we see/read in Dharma, the images of the shel-yay-kang (I'm being phonetic) heaven house or 'celestial palaces' where all the energies of a given principle/function ("deity") are set in place and in motion at once -- such a palace is for us to enter, to inhabit, to fuction from. As I read this then, the dualistic has fallen away (certainly in dharma, where dualisms are not meant to be reconciled so much as un-seen, un-known, gnosed into void) and what flourishes is a plenum. And it is precisely that I think Blake aims at in the myth/fable of Jerusalem, and evident (as you gloriously argue) in the plates though not in the enunciative. It is this word from that tells all the difference between Blake and most of the English visionaries before and after, his sense of working from the revelation into the world of men, not backwards to Eden (Har and Heva, George and Marion Kirby as they might be) or out in some timeless Yummyland, but the here and now where samsara is nirvana, and both have to be transcended by wisdom and compassion. [note to Michael Ives, resp. to his of 6 March 07]

*

It is not the past that repeats itself but the present.

There is no future except what this day construes. Constructs. As there is no past. Nothing but what we imagine we remember.

We flee from guilt as we flee from history, using neo-weasel phrases like "the construction of history," as if all we have to do is rearrange the wooden blocks and lo! there never was an Auschwitz.

Of course history is a construct, an imagined sequence whose exit-point is always *_me now_*. But the essential questions are *_why_* this construction, why *_this_* one.

Memory is the dream of those who are awake.

Memory is Tagesreste too, just like Freud's dream, and the question always to be asked is *why now*,

why should these remnants of the day be imagined, or imagined as recurring?

*

How it feels in your body as you read a book -- this vital part of our awareness is missing, it seems to me, from all criticism. Serious critics seldom use words like nauseating -- yet perhaps they should. They should read with their bellies and their groins, their chests and their thighs. Then they can talk from experience about this reading business. The body as vulnerable to rhetoric, narrative, fable, style.

*

Never re-read. Re-reading makes false memory real. Or distorts it. Reality continually distorts history, memory. Whose fault is that?

Aren't our memories of the book a part of the book? And each reader has a better Hamlet than any book.

*

A broken dish still full of frozen peas. Like a mastodon remembered, new risen from frozen tundra. Or a caveman in a cartoon.

I am everything that I recall. But am I only that? Am I anything other than the sum of what I remember? And if so, who's asking?

That's the one I want to meet: the one who's asking the question about who's asking the question.

But everybody knows him, he was around here just yesterday, he has a pretty wife and a little dog.

No, no dog.

*

["Might I be correct in tracing "yogurt" or "yoghurt" from the Turkish for "to knead" back to I.E. *ieug, ius*, whence, Gr. *zugon, zygoma, zeuxis, zygote, yoga, Yuga* ... joining together, uniting, DENSIFYING? The latter is of greatest interest at the moment - densification of experience, flow thereof, for instance, by bacterium ... " wrote Michael Ives on 19 March 2007, and I answered:]

heartland, densification, *dichten* = *condensare* all over again. I don't know about the Turkish -- since the one thing yogurt can't be is kneaded (i.e., must be left rigorously swaddled and motionless while the lactobacilli do their miraculous work --without which the undersigned wd be a less healthy man -- unless it's a *lucus a non lucendo* number, calling the 7 ft guy Shorty, etc., but that seems unlikely, given the sacred importance of the Curd (which itself seems with curdle, *crud* ((as in lemon *crud*, now bottled as lemon curd for obvious reasons)), *cruddle*, etc, to point towards thickening.) *Yoga/zygon* -- doesn't that range always imply a harnessing of duality? *Yoking* beast with frame, beast with beast, mind with body. (Recall the pervasive image of the rider/mind, body/horse, and make them non-hierarchical, yes, Dr Deleuze, and we get the image of mind and body yoked together, *yoga*. Which as everybody but a philosopher will know is what Parmenides has in mind (ha!) with his two mares who carry 'him' to the trackless real.

*

Simone dos Anjos sends me a citation from the introduction to Adorno's *_The Culture Industry_* by J.M. Bernstein:

"Fragmentary writing is premised upon the refusal of the operations that establish "rational" connections between statements in theoretical

discourse (inference, entailment, deduction) and their linguistic representatives ('therefore', 'because', etc.). For Adorno, these operations are the markers for domination in the conceptual realm. Equally fragmentary writing does not pretend to empirical accuracy (truth as correspondence). Fragmentary writing is modernist, its logical and syntactical dislocations the cognitive equivalent of dissonance in music. Fragmentary writing functions through the multiplication of logically distinct perspectives, each one of which is something of a theoretical caricature. Through the multiplication of diverse perspectives a complex portrait of the phenomenon in question is produced."

*

Lifelong unhappiness is the price a person often pays for happiness.

Some artists are so haunted by the necessity to be recognized, acknowledged, rewarded that no actual reward or achievement ever really pleases them; they always want more. They haunt the offices of arts administrators, grant officers, patrons, always clamoring for more. They are unhappy, driven to drink and thoughts of suicide, every other artist's good fortune tortures them, or Schadenfreude is their only comfort. These wretched, self-tormenting beings, who never feel content no matter how well rewarded they are, are in fact achieving their happiness by the very stratagems and enterprises their need for acknowledgement propels them towards. They wear out grantors and get grants, they get what they ask for. Without the rodent unhappiness they would not ask, without asking they would not get, without getting they would not be happy even for a minute. Strange consolations of the artist! How different from the consolations of art itself, for those who have the great good fortune of only consuming it.

*

(Dreamed into this waking thought, ideo of March 07:)

Karma rides DNA. Every action can alter -- and the most microscopic change can be immense in its consequences -- the sequence of letters, the Code. And lead to strange births.

This would explain as well the incremental power of karma, how it always increases, like an exponential horn, ever bigger for good or ill.

(But fully awake I wonder how does Karmic purification work? How can it work? Or does (e.g.) Vajrasattva practice, chanting certain mantras, etc. just as subtly and microscopically realign the code that non-virtuous action deranged? In a quantum world such things are possible. Even likely. In fact, how could *any* action, gesture, chant, practice, word *not* have an effect?)

*

My turn to die. The madness of being alive inside a side that is not ever allowed to show itself, the madness of being sane inside, warm and wanting and feeding and enough. Sane inside and sane outside but in between these two orders of sanity (social calm, true human feeling) lies a zone of savage madness. Hurts. Can't I tell you, means can't I seduce you, can't I lure you to live inside me like a word in the mouth, wet, wet, I want to speak and when I speak it is the sudden truth. The cheesy absolutes by which I live. Walking through the street like a high priest of some fallen faith, alone, alone-o. If I ask you I give you the power to hurt me. Wound means also what winds around. Wound, wound, no matter how you pronounce it it is a trap, the columns crush against me, I push them over, th temple falls. The price of freedom is always death. This kind. I feel you pull away from the thought of me. Whether you do or not you feel it and I feel you feeling it, and that feeling is enough to send me to the swampland, les paludes, from which myth is born and where mere mortals die. To become what. What comes out of the marshland. You are not good for me. You have made me want too much and say too little. You know, and have the power to silence my desires before they speak. How can this be?

*

How wonderful childhood reading was, when I could read a book and not need to write it, not even want to write it, just sail on over the wide sea of reading it. When an author was a distant kindly and most generous endower of mind, and not a competitor. To read with awe and delight or interest, and never envy or emulation : how to discover that again.

*

On 23 March 2007 I decide I should listen to Bach's St Mark Passion, as reconstructed by various scholars. I begin to listen, then read something about it, find that the original (now lost) form was performed on Good Friday, which fell that year (1731, was it?) on March 23rd.

*

Meaning is the Santa Claus of poetry. It brings you all the gifts you don't believe.

*

Soulmaking Keats called it, this gorgeous flurry of what we do and suffer and enjoy, always coming to expression, not self-expression but the im/pression spoken out of what is (t)here,

and that Crichton's text ("A Poem") talks about in her Easter card, giving more of the detail of how it is done, the love and saying love, the love and hearing love, the way that saying is never enough but always enough.

*

Peaceful and Wrathful Deities. They exist, appear, not just at or in death. They are always, always here. Here, in fact, means exactly where they are. Permanent identities beyond identity. Or so it seems to me this cold April Monday in Charlton, Massachusetts. Which is currently here.

*

[from a letter to Jennifer Moxley] . . . of course we felt en famille (Circe helped, and I hope her shark fin showed in the video) with you and Steve, but I carry away, to chew on, your sense of our affinity on the issue of family. Your words made me think it further along, and I've gotten as far as realizing that the real pressure for me was to escape from the horizontal family (brothers, cousins, nephews), not the vertical (parents, uncles, aunts). ((I sense the uncle as a slanted vertical, while the nephew is a slanted horizontal...)) The horizontal focuses the power, the horizontal disperses it. Etc. Does that have any resonance for you?

Being childless = the buck stops here. The focus of energy, genetic and karmic energy, is now redirected, not to the vertical (the child) but to the world beyond the circle of family, the true horizontal gesture, in other words. Yvan Goll: *o pour briser un seul cercle !* To break any circle is to break all of them. Out the door is Mongolia and Ponape.

*

Timor Domini initium sapientiae. But there is a subjective genitive as well as an objective one. Is it our fear of the Lord that makes us wise? Or was the Lord afraid, and from His fear fair Wisdom came?

Is the whole world spoken out of God's nightmare, roused by wordless fear to speak focused, limited, limitable, words, words that are us?

*

This is diary stuff, dark before dawn, graveyard palaver. Word soothes it. Sleep may heal. But who finds sleep? Who is it that goes to sleep?

*

Ego parts. Yolk of the ego. Yoke of the egg. To bind a thing to itself.

Made pregnant by yoga, a woman is plump with promises.

Cold spring. Abject biologies, subject to mere whim. Unions. Cassiopeia's throne.

*

I have never had enough -- felt I had enough-- work space. I am a big man and I wanted a room for me. A room forty by sixty, with big windows, and nothing in it but a desk, or better still just a writing table and upright chair, and in a far corner an easy chair. C'est tout. I'm not Mussolini, not especially grandiose, but I've always wanted to spread my arms, walk back and forth in a room, feel the space around me. The table could be clear or cluttered, that doesn't matter, but the

room should be empty. That's what it is, mostly, an empty space in which I could shape the air around me as I moved, in which the words I say would have space to float out and resonate and fall, or reverberate, or come back to me as if another had spoken them. I want the big echoing space of a reverberant room. A room, we say, not just room in general (where German has *Raum* to mean all space, we have closed space down, four walls and a door. And please God some windows. A lot of window. The room is for me to move in, not to shelter in. So long I've wanted this simple, impossible thing. Maybe some day I'll buy a garage and put it on the roof, and walk back and forth and hear the floorboards answer my feet.

*

I love these eleven-line poems (of mine -- like Juarez of 17.iv.07) -- they're like one-night stands.

*

Taste leads to ignorance.

*

[to an Oxford Theory man:] Why does it matter who wrote them? Or better: don't we know that poems write themselves through us, fighting our natural propensities, starting with silence (the most natural of all), our terrible willingness to say nothing. When everything is happening.

Even I have had poems written through me. And if I have had, why couldn't Shakespeare have had? He had, in a noisier time, a hungrier mind than even mine.

*

Morningdark: the dawn of not knowing. I dreamt this, as a title to use, answering Nietzsche's *Morgenröte*.

*

Sometimes we are kept apart by those who brought us together.

*

Speculative fiction: I now have the insight, and hasten to write it down before it becomes a belief, that every writer owes it to the world to utter or contrive a piece of speculative fiction. Sci-fi, horror, ghost, mytho-sorcery, Grail romance, thriller, mystery.

And then I wonder: if fiction is not speculative, then what purpose does it serve except journalism, propaganda, sociology, sugar-coated history?

I bless those writers -- James, Dostoevsky, Forster come to mind -- into whose works the shadow of another order of being sometimes is allowed to fall.

*

The face in the moon: an opera.

The man beneath the wheel: another.

Spirit is Matter: a comedy, like Gianni Schicchi, the alive pretending to be dead.

*

Every art consents to space and time only long enough to wield them for its *own* purposes.

Think what an artist --or an assassin-- can do with two minutes, and you begin to understand the energy and materiality of time itself.

*

Every forest is the same forest.

{This is an observation I gave to Carey Harrison, and that he kindly returned when I needed it most}

*

Nomenclature is sometimes more important than mathematics. If indeed they aren't two names for the same thing. Or same non-thing.

*

Note that the Tarot is a Syro-European form. Its persons or animals should be those among us, of the West. Dog or wolf, not tiger. Ox, not elephant. Pontiff or high priest, not swami. Lions once lived in Graecia, so we might let lions in.

*

SHeM. The name of God. What one needs, everything one needs: the overflow of animal. The animal overflows in a *cry*. The cry cries out to someone, something: the cried-out-to one, the ***Gaudh-**. The god. In some sky sensed as Diwos/Deva. But right here is where the cry comes, right here is the cry and the cryer and the hearer of the cry. The true name of God is: Right Here.

*

[from a letter to Barbara Roether:]

"your North African story... About which I felt strongly this, and we can talk about it: we have entered a public time when the only thing that people (that is, the people-who-read-books but are not people-who-really-read-books-all-the-time) want to read is MEMOIR. It's overwhelming the shelves, and it's not bad, not at all. I don't write it myself, this memoirisme, but I understand it as a powerful social tool for poor lost lambs finding plausible identities they can slip on for a day or a lifetime. Anyhow, even the great masters (Sebald, Bernhard) prefigure the memoir craze. What I'm getting at is this: there is something in your story that is old-fashioned. Namely the very thing workshops (and people like our poor lost Richard) used to try to trick people into doing: disguise themselves as some other. When all the while the disguise is in tatters, and the deception shows through. And is annoying. So I'm telling you that the story in question is (= seems to this reader certainly) a story about you, or a character so like you as makes no difference. The whole artifice of pretending she's somebody else (with alias, etc.) is useless -- in a jiffy you can and should, please, rewrite the story in first person barbara --- and it will not only be a better story, easier for you to work her/your feelings in (without the eternal clumsinesses of she felt, she thought, she noticed...) lucidly and tellingly, but also will be a more publishable one. Even I don't want to hear about a character wandering around among the Arabs, I want a person, I want you. And that is the big shift in fiction/prose literature in my lifetime. Memoir rules, so get

with it. Forget all the old character stuff -- unless you really want to focus on a character that isn't remotely you or your own husband or your own child. In other words, unless you become Henry James or Herman Melville, and have interesting insights into the Whale."

*

Parlando:

Take *Parlando* as organizing trope for a book.

Certainly I suspect that I tend to arrange my readings as classic operas, where arias and big numbers are interspersed with, led up to by, recitatives. Poems in that recitative—mostly discursive, essayistic, or narrative [like “Disclosures of Don Juan” in *Conjunctions*] -- style I will call **Parlando**.

But I’ve just today noticed this Mozart-Rossini habit of mine today—more Gioacchino than Wolfgang, I guess.

*

From my recent books try to construct an hermetic *doctrina et demonstratio*. Stone as a flowering substance—and any stone, not just gemstone (Edelstein).

*

The interesting thing about smoking, the wonderful thing about it, maybe, is how it connects with pagan experience. That vast sense of interpenetration of energies, the rich, sensuous, keen intelligence of place is what we mean by paganism, the sense of being part of air and earth and tree -- and smoking comes from, speaks into, that world. As the earth breathes out at evening, the mist that brushes gently along every contour of ground, drifts through trees, so we breathe out. And smoke is our visible offering of that breath, a gentle disappearance of what is you into what is everything else. Smoking connects with these holy processes and holy places -- but how coarsely most people smoke, how they violate the very "participation mystique" which is the one good thing about it. Now I have come to understand that I can achieve the same participation, offer the same pagan worship, by breath alone, by the focused inhalation, retention,

exhalation cycle that we love in smoking. Minus the smoke -- but not minus the breath, the air, the sending the joining.

I recall that 'Hopi Messenger' I met in the 70s in LA, a decent quiet man who explained what Indians know, that if smoking is always done reverently, and the smoke offered to the Four Directions, the tobacco will not harm the smoker.

*

[from my letter to Robert Pullman about Martin Kearns, responding to RP's memory from 1971 of how MK was towards me in 1951:] 'avuncular' -- yes, your word is apt, and the kindly interest it implies was certainly there. What he reported of my embarrassed and dismayed quest for girls is more likely his (accurate!) intuition than any actual avowal I'd given him. My embarrassment was profound, and talking about girls was no easier than talking to them. Because embarrassment is general, and stifles everything. Hence the poem, the golden key to all our silences.

*

Why are windows so sad?

Why do they move me so? Christ never said "I am the Window."
Yet through him we are to see light. In lumine tuo videbimus lumen.

What is it about windows? The landscape they 'command' might or might not move me when beheld all by itself out there. But framed by window, intersected it may be by the cross of the window frame, or the horizontal, or the twelve panes, so framed, presented, it suddenly becomes an exquisite artifact, the most amazing thing: a thing different from itself.

Why did I sit in the dentist's chair on Bergen Street looking out with terror at the richly grey sky of one Good Friday fifty years ago and know that the end of the world was right there?

The end of the world is always waiting in the sky, but only certain windows show it.

*

Anagogic. Anagogy is how we must proceed in these days, in writing, reading, listening.

For all we yearn to learn is how we are supposed to be, what we are supposed to do, how we are supposed to do it.

Now every book must be a guide to salvation. Every reader is desperate for the way.

When all the ways have been explored --all the books sold from Barnes and Noble-- people will say Here I am all along!

Finally everything must become a poem.

Or the poem.

The poem. Which can only be read as you are. To re-read a poem you must become another person. A better one perhaps. Further along some way.

All poems lead into the dark. But what a dark!

*

I like it that our word-from-Greek *_ceno-* can mean empty or mean common to all. Greek *kenos* (as in the *kenosis*) empty; Greek *koinos* (as in *Koine*) common. They fall together for us. Vowels! Our sole song!

*

26 May 2007: a cock crows from Montgomery Place. After so long. He's back! *Christus resurrexit.*

*

When the Christians call Mary by that wonderful name, what would it mean if the words really meant exactly what they say: *Mater Dei*, Mother of God? No equivocation about hum, hum, mother just of the human aspect of God, hum hum -- but just the actual, inconceivable,

absolute, mother of God. As we call Prajnaparamita or Wisdom the mother of all Buddhas.

*

How certain images of my mother stand before me, no different in their look from icons, from divinities. My father too, though fewer, perhaps.

Each has created a small iconography in my head, and I revisit them - or they revisit me -- in a kind of chapel-time. Around each image is utter quiet. Both silent of sound but also silent of narrative associations. Nothing precedes or follows these images. That makes them icons, not 'stills' from some remembered story or event. The images recur randomly, if that adverb has any meaning when applied to what happens in the head.

Here I was thinking of my mother in a rowboat on Lake Huntington, reading the local newspaper, looking up at me with a smile, I stood on the little wooden jetty in shade.

*

American are always trying to find something to do. They seek to achieve even spiritual goals by doing something. I'm trying to find the Doing Less (the *wu wei*) that I think hides in the woods—but even my trying is a species of doing.

*

Ascension. Christ's ascension. One of its infinite meanings, a little one, but relevant to this little world around me, is this: every teacher ascends -- every teacher at some point ascends from his bewildered students into the heaven of his subject, his scholarship, his creative actions; the students, disciples, seem abandoned: but they are abandoned into the same world of making and learning they have been brought to, made citizens of, by the teacher.

So in this reading, each one of us is Christ, since each one of us teaches, ascends, and abandons. Each one of us (if we're lucky) is or has been a student, a disciple, abandoned into one's proper work. My business is not of this world, says the teacher: but your business is; you must stay in the work where you find it, you who are ten or twenty or fifty years younger than I.

I think of all the students I have abandoned into their work. I think of all my teachers who have abandoned me, abandoned me into my work. This too is the Mystical Body. This too is Jesus's Round Dance, where from a certain vantage in space-time, we are all dancing together, teaching, learning, forgetting, remembering, holding hands and letting go. And finding soon enough the outstretched hands again.

*

Demarcated space. [Hu]man and Space.

What a window told me: how thin the wall around I am. All a house is is space marked off (as an hour is time corraled). A boundary -- and the line is more of a protection than the wall itself. We build walls now of tyvek and flakeboard and plywood, and the Japanese built them of paper. It's not their structural strength but their visual impact. I stood at the upstairs window and felt only inches from the street, was only inches from -- and yet that tiny distance keeps me safe from all except determined criminals of man or nature.

*

I'm trying to distinguish what I'd call Analytic Religion from Syncretic religion. For example, analytic religion would realize that Jesus was a Bodhisattva and taught shamata and vipassana meditation, and revealed himself to his disciples in his Sambhogakaya form in the event called The Transfiguration. The function and effect, in other words, would be stressed as insight. In syncretic practice, on the other hand, there would be a materialistic reification of process into assertion, so a Buddhist might try to worship with a Jesus sadhana, or a Christian propose a Mass of the Buddha.

All religions are not one, not at all. But all of them that I've encountered have something to say, some insight to offer, into the practices of one another.

Analysis = a solving upward, a loosening of things from their apparencies upward into their true identities, ipseities, functions.

Merkavah: the work of the Chariot is analysis: the descent upward.

I think analysis is a profound tool for the soul in its work.

All religions are not one, God forbid! -- For then all men would be the same man.

But from time to time we hear voices from the church next door that help us in our own practice. Not because religions are the same, but because we all breathe the same air into our different organisms.

For most people, the phrase "analytic religion" would have a chilling sound, since analysis suggests geeky and ill-smelling procedures in chem labs, or bored teachers gutting live poems on the blackboard, or at best a testy Viennese explaining how your fascinating love life merely plays out some old Greek sitcom.

But these are the failures of analysis, rather, when the keen, endless processing that is analysis dies, or dries, into the syncretic trait.

Syncretism is the corpse of analysis, as 'a thought' is the corpse of thinking.

*

Suggestions for conference topics.

When I was asked at The Abode of the Message for a suggestion, I mentioned: The Nature of the Sacred Text. It would be an attempt to investigate the powerful, but elusive, suchness of the sacred in texts. What makes a text sacred? Is it something that comes from within the text, that is, is there something in the words themselves that signals the sacred to a reader, and thus summons the reader to special and reverent attention? Or is the sacred something that comes from outside, tradition or society; that is, does the reader approach a text already labeled sacred by its inclusion in a canon, continuity of commentary and (above all) use in worship? We could look at all manner of 'religiosis' texts, familiar and less so, as well as visionary writings from secular sources.

Another issue that might make a good conference is: Spirit and Soul: their relationship. The controversial German thinker Ludwig Klages called his masterwork *The Spirit as the Enemy of the Soul*, and while hostility is not what we usually expect between those two terms (if indeed we understand them as separate!), it is striking how important the distinction can become in the actual religious life of people. There are paths of spirit, paths of soul, and paths that seek to use

both. I suggest this as a novel way of looking at contemporary spiritual life (as it is called), which we might finally discover to be something more like the life of the soul.

*

Death is our mother.

Death is our tender mother.

*

Now I've written my way through an attack of the Bard power mower, who rides around proudly loud and slow in his canopied chariot, wearing earphones to protect himself from what he injures us with. He rides like the figure in the Tarot card of the Chariot -- and no less ambiguous.

*

Have you ever tried to disambiguate a bird cry? Rilke did, and won years of sullen grace, Adriatic fog kept the seaside roses fresh, tunes that had not been heard in two thousand years. All it takes is listening. And loving most of the things you chance to hear.

*

Inky fingers give the best caress.

*

What do I know of all my work that came before? Should I archivize myself, and become a scholar of 'my' productions? If I truly believe the work is *heard* or 'given', no reason for me not to study it, like anybody else—since with respect to the work, once written, I am anybody else. Right now I'm an indolent schoolboy faking some knowledge of 'my' Iliad.

Or, this might be truer, I understand my work well-enough, I just don't remember. Never did, and why start now?

*

It takes a precious stone a long time to show you all its colors. Night light and candle light and strong sea sun, winter and autumn and spring green all round -- every moment's different, and all the differences are the property of the stone. Each unrecoverable gleam: a precious stone is memory. This sapphire on my hand, yellow, lustrous, waiting for me to read in sunlight some text it wrote in the dark below the earth, it never stops speaking.

*

Learning once that the Nestorian scribes carried pen and ink pouches with them, and used blue and black ink -- each to its own indictment prone -- used systematically the way we use black and red, thrilled me. I have known this fact for thirty years at least -- and every now and then the thrill renews itself. Men carrying blue ink and black ink in little pots with them, fifteen hundred years ago, professionals, men, men.

*

Looking is friction -- we rub by looking. Seeing is frictionless. Explain this for the rest of my life.

*

Wohl
dem den der
Herr in
seiner Arbet
segnet

says a calligraphic page in Johannes Klinger's *Vorschrift* (model writing book), 28 November 1812, intended "for those who like reading and writing," Exeter, Pennsylvania. (The spelling is not yet standard modern.)

I notice this: as a literal string of words, it clearly says: It is well for the one whom the Lord in his work blesses. Lucky the one God blesses in his work.

The perverse periodism of German intends it to specify...whom the Lord blesses in his work.

Even there, though, whose work it is that's being blessed remains interestingly unclear. This per-ambiguation of the blessing is powerful. The Lord's work is to bless the work of the one being blessed. The two works are complementary, necessitate each other. I like it that the cut of the lines insists on that.

And more: that third line! three different forms of the same word! the definite article in the dative, the accusative, the nominative.

And more: on one line we read: Herr in. The in is written so close in the calligraphy that we read at first: Herrin: the Lady, the Potnia Kosmou.

*

Those Pennsylvania mystics found such beauty and enlightenment in the calligraphic act itself, the *Fraktur* or fracture of the self, fracture of the predictable 'look' of the word so the real word could manifest through the beautiful rubble of its letters.

*

Coming in from a sabbatical where I finished a novel (The Book from the Sky) and two long poems (Fire Exit and Listening Through). My most recent books are May Day and Sainte-Terre this year, Threads last year. Right now surprising myself by working on a play, about which I know nothing. Talk to me about Antigone, tarot cards, Moravians, lost things, Russian spirituality, Roberto Bolaño, Iris Murdoch, Richard Strauss. And read the most important local news: the Annandale Dream Gazette.

*

Russian blondes. Intensely spiritual and utterly amoral. The most dangerous combination.

*

Once I asked a class of young poets to write a text describing their ideal reader. One quiet student --Laura Dorsey-- said that hers would be a young waitress in a snug grey skirt, crouched down in the store room of the diner, stealing a few minutes reading in a book of poems.

I thought: this is the ideal reader indeed, the crouch of her body, that tension when the body folds in upon itself to read its own response to its own physical predicament, as if she is reading with her thighs, her feet compressed against the floor, her ass compressed on the packing crate, her elbows compressed on her thighs, her back bent over the book. A poem is *compression*.

And it is labor. In labor. The poem, unlike prose, *wants to be read through the body*. That is the difference. She is almost in fetal position: *the poem wants us to be born from it*, she is newborn from everything she reads. Hence the immense responsibility of each poem, that it be mother man and mother hawk and mother tiger, that we can be reborn through reading.

And her location is transgression, she's stealing some of The Man's time, she's made it her own, for the moment, free, and we live only in the moment. It teaches us that *a poem is a transgression*. Not just the great naughty or outright criminal poets (Rimbaud, Villon, Genet), but the poet by nature stands outside the ordinary discourse (call it prose, a simple if not really accurate word for it), stands outside and mocks it, pilfers from it—*de vulgari eloquentia*—violates it at will, to make that creative spasmodic wrench of time, when the reader is alone with the poem and something happens, and happens fast.

*

the cry in the woods, the word of the words, words rising again, the skin speaking its immense malady of touch, the death of a decent man, languages of strange mountain clefts, and the little delve on the upper lip, the philtrum, the very core of a face's beauty,

the philtrum in folklore, the fingertip of the angel on the lips of the about to be born, sealing the lips softly, to unsay all knowledge of the newborn's previous life, and in *Les Bienveillantes* the old Jew --but is he really Jewish?-- on his way to his chosen grave, how we march to our destinies but so few know it,

the softness of the upper lip, the philtrum, children suffering from fetal alcohol syndrome are born without the philtrum, fact, the drunkenness of the mother baffles the angel, the poor newborn knows it has just lived a life and lost it, and carries the loss into the new life, so many places on the body where angels touch us, nape of neck,

base of spine, the finger of the angel pointing out the resting place of the Grail.

*

The long golden afternoon of atheism, when we played on the lawn and thought we were alone, with nothing worse to affright us than the odd microbe, lingering rattlesnake, or misfiring neuron that turned some blameless youth into a psychopath. I feel nostalgic for atheism, now that most of us, and soon all of us, come to learn that we are not alone. And that the aliens we're always fussing about have no need of spacecraft. They are here, and have been here all along.

There are tribes without notable architecture, without literature. But there has never been a group on the earth without a fully articulated demonology. All these people, all these ever and ever ancestors, were not just fools. They knew something, and we are coming to remember it too.

We don't even need to study Hitler and Stalin and Mao and Pol Pot, monsters great and small. We just need to study little things, like road rage when it strikes even us. We are not all monsters, but some part of us seems swung into the rage for violence -- but it is not a part of us: it is a gap or hollow or access in us that demonic forces enter. The highway demon has been with us as long as there have been caravans. All the Harry Potter and Philip Pullman and Susannah Clarke and Bartimaeus are symptomatic of our growing awareness that magic exists, and is a technology, and is meant for, intended for, created for, dealing with the Other Beings who people 'our' world.

Interesting to chart the innocent awareness growing, Andrew Lang and George MacDonald, the lovely and dubious faerie of Dunsany and Machen, up through the growing sense of our own vulnerability to demonic attack that culminates in Lovecraft, the last atheist, asprawl before entities that have (like Cthulhu) always been here. Rowling, Pullman, Clarke, Stroud and so on give us a breezy, stiff-upper-lip --muscular Magianity?-- attitude: magic can be learned. Demons can be dealt with. Negotiated with.

They live here too. It is with us as with all the generations past, apart from that century or so of sweet atheism. We have to get used to it. Soon we will have --if the Pentagon does not already have-- a Ministry of Magic.

*

How strange one is. There are Shakespeare plays one knows almost by heart, and Shakespeare plays one has never read -- and one rests comfortably in that savage contradiction.

*

FRAKTUR. I need to know about this sense of Fraktur the Blake book talks about (and Stroudt on Pennsylvania German art) -- a sense that fraktur is fracture: breaking the letters and that it is a cabbalistic exercise,

break the letter open
see what's inside,
let the inside out

the bent stance of a man
a man bent over the writing desk
like a broken man

humbled before the word
humbled by what he is writing
humbled by the very act of writing it

he breaks the word as he is broken by it:

Writing is always a spiritual exercise, but the intrigue of this literal striving, the letter itself, to kneel at the foot of the letter like Saint John at the foot of the Cross, waiting dry-eyed, all tears long shed and gone, waiting to take down the broken man, Man, whose twisted Body you are still trying to read, as Gruenewald painted Him too, a twisted green letter, tzaddi maybe, nailed to the sky.

Am I making this up, or is this in fact historically, intentionally, present in the metaphysical, baroque, roots of Fraktur script? I want to know what they did in Altona, and at Herrnhut, and among the American Moravians, Mennonites ... Pennsylvania! It was there all along!

*

You can't see darkness with your eyes closed.

You have to open your eyes to see the dark.

*

An image is the knife-tip left in the wound.

*

Catullus and Dante had their hendecasyllabics. I have my hendecastichs -- the eleven-line poem that seems my natural outburst.

*

Dreamt (10 VII 07): [Naturally] [he had] **a complex theory to safeguard [his] silence.**

Dreamt in two stages: first "a complex theory to safeguard silence," then. almost immediately, the bracketed amplification to make a sentence.

*

Dream of a chubby barber sitting on a chair outside his barbershop waiting for a customer -- a common sight in my childhood. But this barber also was, or could turn into, a thick snake looped on a boulder.

*

The imaginal body. This is the body your lover feels, sees, knows in mind --though mind is something that pervades the chest, the thighs, the loins, the sides, the throat -- before he has actually touched or known or made love with your 'actual' body--- that is, the one that the dressmaker fits garments to or the rain falls on.

This imaginal body is very real to the lover; he (we'll call the lover he, for simplicity) feels it already, knows the taste of your skin, the smell of your body, knows the humid folds and the dry scalp-- it is distinct, particular, utterly different from any body he has ever touched or made love with or even thought about.

This imaginal body is a strong part of what he means when he says 'you.'

Though he knows it so well, he yearns to put that knowledge into practice on your current skin, the actual weight and mass of your physical presence. He wants to sample your eagerness and reluctance, wants to feel that skin he loves so well press forward to meet him, or shrink away shyly; he wants those lips he has studied so intently to part just a little and let his tongue slip in. The thought makes him swoon a little. He hardly dares to imagine the actual kiss, though his mind's hands are long practiced already in running along your hips, pressing you to him.

He wonders if his eyes will notice any difference between what he sees then, when he actually kisses you, and what he sees now, the fine bone structure of your face, the lucent intelligence of your eyes.

*

The two bodies of the beloved: that should be the title of everything.

*

And sometimes the lover realizes: my body, the body I bring her to, is also imaginal -- I only feel that I'm feeling.

*

"Gott ist ein unbegreifliches Nichts, und ich bin ein unbegreifliches Ichts. Wir [haben] zu leiden . . . [bis] alles Seyn in das Nichtseyn and alles Etwas in das Nichts aufgelöst ist."

Conrad Beissel, cited in Jeff Bach's book on Ephrata, 220.

*

A feel left in the air
by the red woman

*

When I'm sick I sleep.

Sleep heals.
It feels like going back to my original planet

deep sleep or shallow

"often I am permitted to return" to my own country

The rule seems to be I can't remember that place consciously, because to be conscious of it in this life would contaminate my mindstream by letting this life shape that, and thus risk spoiling the _experiential purity_ of that place -- which is always ready for me in all its clarity when I return.

(As I was writing this, on the deck, it suddenly began to rain, without any prelude of dimming or wind, just water sudden from the sky -- warning me to be careful in what I was inscribing here -- this is holy ground. I closed my book and wrote no more.)

*

So many things I don't know about you, you don't know about me. This ignorance is the ground of intimacy, and makes a friendship into a never-ending education.

*

Imagine a special separate alphabet for each person you ever knew.

Even choosing a distinctive typeface for each would be interesting -- but a secret alphabet peculiar to each one! And in it you could write at length the actual nature you detect in her, and its actual consequences in you.

An alphabet at last in which you could, almost perforce, tell the truth.

*

Voila mon histoire:

Had too much everything
and still want more.

*

Good last words:

-- Yes, Mother.

Or:
You're asking a lot.

Or:
Is it real gold or only plated?

Or:
As you were saying...

Or:
I never thought i had one of my own.

*

[some notes from a month ago, Cuttyhunk and after:]
Osprey whistle over the roofbeam. Sufi weather: blue blue sky, sleep
under wool, fall in love, get drunk on actuality alone.

*

When we came, the flowery catkins of the chokecherry were everywhere, and the great half-mile plantations of wild *Rosa rugosa* by the sea, scarlet, pink, white, were just coming in. Now they have peaked, the catkins faded, gone, while the honeysuckle now is everywhere, and the *Rosa multiflora* --white, with many small florets-- are exultant. And the hydrangea even --that Betty planted by the rock, for me, she said, knowing my love of them-- is blue now, sky-flowers profuse but still small. But why does it make it seem --or make me seem-- more authentic to mention the names of flowers. As if I too were finally of this earth.

*

When you read philosophy, it stays in your heart.
The rigor of thinking makes you feel.

This heart-thing, where the blood is logical and the breath full of love, this is the midpoint, the ruby jewel Klages needed, between Spirit and Soul.

*

As if anything depended on what I think!

*

My first opera will be: "Herodotus in Egypt."

*

There is a refining also to be done on every element.
To discover the water of water. The air
embedded in the air.
What we call wind is the struggle of air to escape from air,
to set its essence free.

We never see pure earth--
what we see is earth subdued by or in conflict with air or water--
rock or sand, marl, mud.

Refine earth to get earth.

But what of fire?

*

Me is purely relative.

*

The last day. The last day remains. It is like salt way back in the
cupboard. You know it's there but never reach for it.

*

Go ahead, be mechanical. Alot this destined otherwise.

You can unsay the said, the fatum, fate.

Maybe what one always means is that which undoes.

[end of older notes]

*

There is a curiously Moloch-like quality about the university. It devours the cultural productions of recent times and its own conjuncture, then sells samples of it back, repackaged, to the very people who produce culture in the first place.

The commoditization of learning, strange. Selling the experience of reading a book is more sophisticated merchandising than selling the book. And the certificate at the end of four years attests: four years have passed, during which the graduate has successfully confined his or her attention to the notional gridwork proposed.

*

A fool's paradise
is perhaps
the only paradise there is.

*

What color am I now?

Dry water.

*

Nine-tenths of a ruby's power is its color alone. But we need the other tenth to do the stone's work in the world. Glass beads help a lot, no doubt about that, but they don't go all the way. They do remind us. They are present, cheer us up, point us towards the missing tenth. But above all, they keep color itself before us: concentrated, alive.

*

So the incipient magician (isn't that a polite epithet?) unless he is wealthy will need to find a cheaper, effective surrogate for the missing tenth of the genuine jewel. The finding of this succedaneum is an important sign of the magician's progress in the art.

Four big red glass beads at the corner of a pewter trivet, in sunlight on the kitchen table in a motel in Glimmerglass. Four red reminders.

*

"...when an orator delivers a truly inspired discourse, nodded heads during the speech show he is deeply touching his [Indian] audience, but the greatest tribute that can be paid him is an absolute aftermath of silence, as, in their hearts, the listeners continue to follow him devotedly on the pathway he has led them."

...

"...when a member of the immediate family, a beloved friend, or two young lovers return home after a long separation, and finally coming before each other, [they] are transfixed in a sweet silence ... they let their spirits dance to the rhythm of their thoughts for a long while before the silence is broken..."

(David Villaseñor, *Tapestries in Sand*. Healdsburg CA, 1966. page 65)

*

"Manche quälen sich schwerfällig ab, sich aus dem Sande ans Licht emporzuarbeiten--wie große schieferfarbene Taschenkrebse, wenn die Flut zurückkommt,--und als wollten sie alles daransetzen, meine Blicke auf sich zu lenken, um mir Dinge von unendlicher Wichtigkeit zu sagen. Andere--erschöpft--fallen kraftlos zurück in ihre Löcher und geben es auf, je zu Worte zu kommen."
(Meyrink, Golem]

*

Thinking about secular -- remaking the secular into the secular is to make it magical -- as if the link between a place/event back then and that place/event now actually creates a perpendicular to historical time, an expedition to Magic Land, that is, the land where every gesture means every, and every visible detail is significant.

Between the two images a powerful and mysterious Third arises, a kind of invisible instructor bringing us to the heart of our own engagement with the visible.

Secular means: of an age, of this age (as in English commonly) hence mundane -- our dismissive word for what is only real, and all around us. But secular is saeculum too, of the ages, kalpas, ins ecula secolorum Amen.

*

The sexiest part of someone is the ipseity. That's what men and women go to bed with time after time.

*

A fetishist displaces part of his own ipseity onto or into the fetishized aspect of the other. No wonder he'll never be sated! Through this displacement, the hunger itself enters into the fetish -- the unquenchable skin!

*

Tong-len. The heart of the other is God's heart.

*

When you're in another land, another language, it's the time to face what your body on earth and your mind in speech and your heart in shadow really are asking. Now might be the time to ask: what your soul wants.

Ludwig Klages, strangest of the German philosophers, an Aryan anti-Nazi, saw the great tragic history of Western culture as the battle (all too successful) of Geist gegen Seele. The suppression of soul for the sake of the exaltation of not just rationalism and other 19th century horrors, but for the sake of that dialectic deconstruction of experience into categories that makes up philosophy as we understand it -- anti-experiential, anti-'soul.' And the so-called spirit (the other reading of Geist) was perhaps an even more sinister contradiction. In the name of the spirit, religion triumphed (always authoritarian, organized, cultic, processional, social) -- leaving the soul (always personal, experiential, immediate) to howl in the dark. I think Freud, for all his rational and pseudo-rational explanations, was the first to try to hear the soul's clamor in the welter of will and representation that makes up our lives.

We are caught in that place. That's why the 'other country' is so helpful -- you may understand the people and speak to them, but your heart is running on a different language, and in that gap, the soul shines through. What you want. Because the soul is made up of closenesses and desires and affiliations, recognizes its kindred and flees from inappropriate connections.

*

= = = = =

What feeds the soul is desire. Not *doing* what it desires, that isn't important, isn't worth making people unhappy.

What the soul needs is to know what it desires, and to let the constellation of that desire shape the way the soul sees, speaks, responds.

It's not about sublimation or repression. The alert soul represses nothing— it is its clear knowledge of its own desire that allows the soul to motivate the art and beauty, the dance of its person.

Only the unacknowledged desire is dangerous. Imagine in great detail what you desire, imagine the fulfillment of that desire in every particular. Then the soul is strong, and you, the person, can do as you want.

In other words, what hurts the soul is not not-getting-what-it-desires but not knowing what it desires. That is the danger, the smoldering fuse.

So if you meet someone you desire, be aware of it. Dwell in the desire for a time, then see who you are. Don't worry about trying to fulfill the desire— the soul's perfect knowledge of its own requirements will bring everything to pass.

That is the soul's word. Whence poetry.

*

If we can't endure the hatred of our friends, how will we cope with the indifference of our enemies? These are the artist's notable obstacles.

*

Language is the voice of the friend.

It has been talking to us since the beginning. Or more likely, when it began talking to us, the beginning began.

The voice heard over Eden was a voice.

Speaking.

It begins with hearing someone else's cry.

It begins with hearing someone.

It begins with hearing.

*

The singular beauty of just being alive, christ, it's like a peach in August.

*

Change by being.

*

In claustal gloom what we demand: novation of our contract with the earth.

*

Egypt: the more we know, the less we know.

*

*

The Committee for the Abolition of the Week {CAW} seeks to abolish the chronological infrastructure of ordinary life. Of our subjection to a system. Ours is a practical agenda, and like most such does lack aesthetic appeal. We love the beauty of the Moon in Monday, and Venus on her special evening, and Mars's morning -- but for those pretty pictures we pay too dearly. They are posters that Moloch sets up to cheer slaves on our way to work.

*

If time could only be allowed to flow free, the way experience does. The way a current flows along your electric lines -- but nothing moves, nothing changes place, no substance moves. It is pure flow. So let time itself run our machinery! Unfettered time, not boxed in days and weeks, let it surge onward and run our refrigerators and our radios -- if it doesn't, or can't, or won't, we'll find another force behind it:

the time behind time,

the Blue Lord that even death fears, all human time just a pretty little coral snake around his wrist.

*

And when we free time from the week, we will at the same time free the gods from time, and set Venus free of Friday, and let Mercury slip bright and lissome out of all our Wednesdays. Break the week loose and we and the gods both go free.

*

What color is an animal either?

*

The way the soul is chained to certain images. My mother's garden, its lost roses so crimson on the left, not one missing after sixty years, the big hydrangea in the middle, blue flowers soaked all day with morning dew.

*

To take reckoning of just those images -- of which each one's soul has dozens, scores, or more -- is worthy work for any poetics.

To leave at the end of one's career a chanted tabulation that shows: these were this one soul's hallows, and these were the charges that drove it through the world. Look on them and know a single human as well as you ever can.

*

The stronger a will, the easier it is to bend to other people's needs. Only someone with a very weak will has to insist on getting his own way. Someone with a strong will easily goes along with what the other wants or needs -- it doesn't matter, because will is sturdy, and will is always working out its own designs in the world. Because will is the public name of Being itself -- and one is as strong as one _is._

*

Temple mysticism? As if there were any other temple but the heart!

Yet 'freemasonry' shows how to build the heart.

*

Poiein = euruskein. The only point in writing is to discover.

*

To know of the something self another body floating through your personal air.

*

My life is woven of obligations. And even the free time I owe to me - - to my sense of what I should be, should be doing, should have done.

Nothing is ever enough for 'me.' So I travel morning after morning to that country where anything is enough. And even that journey is an obligation.

*

Who knows what poetry is?

Poetry is precisely what you didn't know.

*

Thesis: That the Angel with the Flaming Sword set outside the gates of Eden was in fact standing there to burn through the thorny autonomic hedges and let us in again. That He is in fact the Gardener, the same one that Mary Magdalene would see in the garden outside

Jerusalem thousands of years later, just before she recognized Him for who He actually is. He was waiting there all along for us.

*

Trust the image. The image always tells the truth.

Sometimes it takes time -- you have to live with the image, with a wise companion, and bring it with you through all your affairs. Attend to it in different contexts, different adversities. Study slowly. It speaks.

*

We disguise ourselves as one another all too successfully.

*

A difficult thing about growing older: the discord between two impulses. The first, which has been developing consciously and unconsciously over many years, is towards a softening of one's edges, a releasement into natural feeling and perception, an erosion of boundaries, an openness of mind and social presence to the kindness of the world, simply, an alert and undemanding awareness of the world, a spaciousness of mind. The second impulse, one which much more recently appears, is almost directly opposite, and moves towards toughening the hide, bracing oneself against the losses which mount up in one's experiences, losses of friends and relations, influence, vitality, charismas of various kinds, and looking away, looking firmly away -- *averte oculos, custode oculorum* -- from evidences of weakness, unattractiveness, senescence, futility, habits, while at the same time trying to do something practical and spiritual about all such minute catastrophes. What hard work it is to grow old!

*

When you give a gift, never wonder what the given-to does with it.

*

One by one a world gets made -- your world, made one by one person at a time. Made by that one, or *vy* meeting that one.

That's what meeting means. Our world is made by the ones we meet.

*

A car door slamming. Are they coming or going? Or just checking their tires, taking a breath of air? You can never tell by the sound itself. A perfectly ambiguous sign.

*

_OLD MAN

You are blind, blind
and walk in the dark,
you, it is you who cannot see

while I look all around and see,
and see no masters anywhere,
just us, all of us
we're all the same now, slaves of the light,

common slaves
of the light or slaves of the common light,

you hurry onward through time and age
but I have none of that,
I come back towards you now. . .
(he pauses)
... maybe it's my turn to guide you._

He blinded himself at the end of King Oedipus. Now, in that weird grove at Colonus (which I keep seeing as the strange clustered now shabbily overgrown pine grove on the headland at Clermont) something has happened to him. He is 'gone.' But someone is left, an Old Man, and that someone sees again. And sees that we are blinded by the sensory world around us, all the things we see tear us from, distract us from, what we really see, what the eyes of the soul are really fixed on. Is that what it means? The 'Old Man' Saint Paul talks about, the old Adam, unregenerate, full of lusts and worse: full of habits?

Oedipus has outlived his habits. He who married his mother is now younger than his daughters, he is in a sense newborn -- not born

again, but maybe born for the first time out of the weird dream his life was made up on: the prophecy, fate, the thing that has been spoken. You can be born out of your fate. You can be born out of your life.

Oedipus looks around and sees no masters -- no king (he has killed the king, has been the king, has died as a king and died as a beggar, and is somehow born as neither, he is born as an old man, or as no man), no god. Theseus can't bear to watch -- the triumphant vanishing of a man into himself, that is scary to see, earthshaking. It is also the death of kingship and government.

"Living, I want to depart to where I am!" cries D.H. Lawrence, and Oedipus has done just that, become an old man, an old man who sees and wants and goes his way. We are slaves of what we see with ordinary sight, slaves of the images -- not just media manipulations, but the whole 'education' that teaches us to value and possess things and obsess about them. He has none of that, so he can guide his girls, can guide us.

He is not a slave of the light, and not a master. A man can guide or be guided or can sit still. Which does each one choose?

*

Perfect balance of a horse asleep standing up. Asleep in its feet. House. A house should be like that.

*

Dream [6 IX 07]. Walking through Los Angeles, a dingy suburb more like Brooklyn or Chicago, but vacant lots stretching out, rare buildings. One of them in a building all by itself, like the last house left standing from a row of attached houses, is an old bookstore: in the window are ranged impressive sets of leather-bound volumes: one multi-volume set "The Flora of New Guinea." I call out to Ted Enslin who is walking with us, and prompt him to look in the window. We are astonished at the set -- of course the store is closed.

*

A radical change in humankind happened with the movies, during my own childhood, the era of continuous showings. A subtle change, but

consider: A child would sit there gripped and cathected with the story, shaped towards an ending, ending. And then things would happen: news, cartoons, trailers, the second feature: and then the film would start again. Eternal beginning. The vivid presence of the cyclic, the absence of finality: how much we were taught by those interminable double feature afternoons that segued into night. Dark when we came out, clutching our new beginnings. Nothing ever ends. Subtly we were already being primed for the virtual. Everything was exactly as it seemed--and then it wasn't. We could always recur to the beginning. So now the eternal return was no longer the property of the mystic or philosopher, it belonged to all of us. All. It had become a basic trope for all civilized humanity. Stay in your seats and it will all begin again. With a book you had consciously to decide to 're-read' or 'start from the beginning.' But in the Gem or Embassy or Loew's Kameo you just sat there and it all renewed itself. Apocatastasis every afternoon.

*

Skill grows out of motivation.

Teach poetry by making them poets, then the poetry will take care of itself.

Anybody can learn to write a poem; only poets can write poetry.

First be a poet.

*

When the ancients called Homer blind, they must have meant a certain indifference they felt in his work to the sheer sensory, the glance of things, in favor of a structured, moral understanding of person against person.

Surely that is why strict Lutheran Germany valued Homer so highly, while lax latitudinarian England relished the sensuous delights of Virgil more. Whatever they said, it was Virgil they quoted.

For the blind man, everyone's an enemy.

*

Everything is far away.

Everything falls.

*

You walk the way you will. If you want to see what kind of will a person is driven by, watch the gait.

Walking is pure will --motion with a goal or for its own sake-- the whole body set in motion.

Running is something else. It's contextual --escape or competition or exercise-- and the context shapes, distorts, the driving will even while it manifests the will's intention towards or from.

*

Some day we'll find the opposites of the elements. The pure withdrawal and abstention that is the opposite of water, the dark containment that is the opposite of fire. A black hole? It annihilates as surely as fire does, whatever touches it. but does not send smoke and flame and glare and soot and cinders and heat back into the air of the world -- it keeps it all inside.

Maybe it's in every inside that we have that we should look for the elements' opposites.

*

Alchemists leave no traces. The ones we know of were the outriders. ambassadors, quartermasters, correspondents for the nameless bright ones who turned themselves into themselves (Au = gold) and stayed apart. Abscondite masters. They, like the lammed-vavniks in Jewish tradition, pass through our occasional midst, town or mountain. Sometimes we meet their splendid Talleyrands, like an Eugenius or a Paracelsus, but never themselves. Except we do, over and over, but never know.

*

I suppose that is my central song: what we meet and never know it, the love affairs through which we pass unknown and unknowing, the

doors we open and look vaguely through, stand there gormless then wander away.

The song that's all around us all the time, drowned out by music.

*

I can't be smart every morning.
I need your sassy questions
to rehearse me. Tibi cano.

*

Some people about control, about giving power to the other person. I think if you stay in yourself, sure in what you want (above all what you want) and know, nobody has control over you. It's when one drifts into what the other wants that one loses control of the situation. Be you and be in power: the will to power is the will to be. Being itself is control.

*

Mist on the pond early. The fewest loosestrife I remember. Stream very low, trees still green. I walk around as if I have come back from somewhere not the earth.

*

Such sleep these days, brief and terrible.

Dream by its very nature is alien abduction.

*

Onus humanum: to know so little. Or: to know so much and be able to do so little.

*

Thomas Bernhard's work and voice I love so well. But now I find his book _The Voice Imitator_ and it shows instead his limitations. Tries by turn to be Hebel or Kafka or Adorno, fails. The little fables are far too clever, too rational. The curse of the theater haunts them: the playwright's deft, all too easy, sense of epiphany of the banal.

Fénéon's *_nouvelles_* in three lines (thanks, Luc!) do it better, firmer, fiercer.

And in the little stories, it's the standing back from the characters and their deeds or dreads, that makes him feel more like Canetti, that heartless cleverness, that almost smug arrogant apartness of his stance.

More to think on this. I want to be wrong.

*

Fénéon. Getting the world into its news, getting the news into three lines. Making up the news to fit the world.

Not just getting the *historia* (*ficta aut vera*) into three lines of type for the newspaper column, but getting it into one sentence (like Slonimsky in his version of Baker's dictionary). History as sentences. History as a sentence.

*

Every car that passes by roars a denunciation of our system. Drivers turn up the volume on their audio to drown out the noise of their own animal.

*

Diseases of music: Listening. Caring. Responding. Remembering.

*

An ending is always a mistake.

*

Little by little have I denied myself to those who care for me? With the thought that when no one does and no one's left, then I can go? But there is always someone I do not remember or cannot imagine, and for that person I should stay. And if that person turns out to be me, then one at least person I shall not have refused. But let it be the other. The other is my mother. Better let it be you.

*

Restless. But the lack is not 'rest' but 'deed.' I feel deedless. A weightlifter with a pile of feathers.

*

Recent books: *May Day* (poems, Parsifal Press); *Sainte Terre* (Shivastan); *Threads* (a cycle of poems, First Intensity Press); *Lapis* (Godine/Black Sparrow). Forthcoming: *The Book from the Sky* (novel); *The Language of Eden* (a poem investigating psychoanalytic discourse); *Opening the Seals* (a long poem essaying to reflect and refract proto-linguistics matters: sounds and roots). The newly finished long poem *Fire Exit*, biggest project of recent years, is now getting ready for publication. RK is one of the directors of the Writing Program at Bard College. For twenty-five years he has studied the philosophy and systematic practices of Vajrayana Buddhism under the guidance of Kalu Rinpoche and Norlha Rinpoche -- the teaching of those most generous masters has enriched and clarified his life-long devotion to the Western wisdom traditions.

*

Travels into the body, I bet that's what we'll all write, since we're still on pilgrimage to that most elusive of all shrines. Our own body, I mean, let alone the distant galaxies of other people's. [note to Elizabeth Robinson, on her *Out of the Body Book* project.]

*

Real power is not something one has, it is something one is. If you have power, you can always lose it. If you are power, it can never be lost. It continues to draw your life, the quality of your life attracts people and situations to you.

*

Power is not getting what you want, it is wanting what you get.

*

The problem is seldom finding the key. The real problem is finding the door.

*

Balance. Tibetan letter {na} (nasal, tonguetip between teeth) -- means 'sick.' Sickness. what can it be but imbalance -- of body, mind, soul -- of chemical, emotional, sensory inputs. The Medicine Buddha's lapis light heals lust's infections too, and anger's inflammations. Our usual mistake: to think physical illness different from emotional disturbance -- we are one physis. Balance. The letter {na}, how easy for it to topple over. As it is written, it looks like a broad-headed long nail standing on its point. O keep balance! Keep thinking to keep balance.

*

There are poems that can only exist as dialogues from broken plays, 'dumbshows' in words, word mimes. They arise like waves, and fall back, and the ocean is not changed. Such discourses are the opposites of drama, which (I think) always has words entrain action, action entrain resolution.

*

I'm just trying to give you all I can, that's all. No power, no control scene. Just my ability to give, and all of that I give to you, unarmed, having no hope of ever satisfying either of us, but giving what I can. Most of our future is in the past -- but the past is pasture too, where even we can roam around and hunker down and hide a while and be us, be us a lot, not enough. Not everything, but not nothing either.

*

In hope of achieving balance, I wear the color of the day.

*

These days I want to feed on sleep. I am hungry for sleep.

*

In a mess hall on the moon, I am teaching someone to eat, to prepare, kidneys.

There are cars parked outside. A vista, with cars in it, dwindling into grey distance.

In a packed assembly hall I take my seat. My name is called, I raise my hand, am told that the Dean wants to see me. "I've been bad already," I say, rising. Laughter. It's clear that I am a high-ranking something or other, so my remark amuses. Breaks the ice in this formal gathering. I wonder: is that my role, to break the ice? To wake up _a different mood_ in whatever is the case? [Dream, 28.X.07]

*

The poor mistake rhythm for melody. They settle for a drumbeat, when they could be saved by a tune.

*

Humans, we, us -- we control the moon. If there were no humans, the moon would be different. If there were no sentient beings on earth, there would be no moon at all. The moon is pure response. That is why the ancients called it the Chalice of Semen.

*

Following a tune --une petite phrase-- is like almost recognizing a face in the street, and following the person shyly, but steadily, to see if it is finally the face of someone you know, someone you love. (listening to the Bridge string quartet No.1, 2nd mvt, adagio molto)

*

The secret nature of reality is a woman's face.

*

All the people born into the world at the same time are part of the same person.

But what is the 'same' time?

*

We need a graph that means [?+!], question and exclamation at once.

As if a cry is the truest answer.

*

Why does remember?

*

There is a dream state that can happen while I'm awake -- sometimes listening to music, as today to a Schubert quintet. Not asleep, but while hearing the music clearly I am in a different place. My eyes are open inward as well as outward. What is this state? I call it a pale dream, or the White Dream.

*

How strange to look up from the communion chalice being offered to me at the funeral mass and see the deacon is someone I have for such a long time wanted to be in bed with, and see those lips I want everted for my kisses now speaking, in priestly undertone, about the blood of Christ. Truly how strange it is that we are people, always people, never get away from it, never reach the paradisal point where the entity vanishes into essence, and the being exists only in its function.

=====

finding this note I wrote just after Dick Higgins's funeral. The distance from the New York scene in 1959, Yoko Ono's loft, the angry mimeographs and joyous combinations of those days, the arrogance of the vanguard we were ... to this country church to which Dick, a churchman, had come with regularity in recent years so that the celebrant could speak of Dick's relationship with the church and with his God.

*

Always I provide people with *Waffen gegen mich*, I am generous with the weapons any hand can turn against me, that is my business, isn't it, I really am an ancient Roman after all, *römische katholische Kirche*, build an empire so that every wandering Volk can strike against me, tear down the walls I build: so that you can come to my heart, so that you can pour into the streets of my city. That is why I

build everything I build, so that you, someone like you, can overwhelm the limes, die Grenzen, and come in. You capture my city. Waffen und Wagen, and as if that weren't dangerous enough, bildhauerische präzise Lippen just a little turned out, a little parted for a fated kiss. And this city of mine, in here, in with me, is decadent and perverse and corrupt, just like old Rome, wives and slaves and concubines, temples to strange gods, passionate sexual worship of dark namenlose Streben, worship of no sky god but the clouds, the clouds themselves. Once I called myself der Wolkenhirt, that was in England years ago, when I inherited my body for the first time, early 1980s, suddenly I was no Ungeheuer, was normaler Mann, walked around, walked around, Norfolk marshes, cliffs, moors of Yorkshire, green green lowlands of Somerset where my great-grandfather came from, I was a Wolkenhirt at last, walked around, guckte in die Luft, sah die Wolken, and suddenly I knew I needed nothing else. But I need everything. You said it right: I want everything new, and I don't want to give up what I have. When I was in school I read a lot of Kierkegaard - his Either/Or [Entweder/Oder] was the crux for me, and I constantly fought against it, and made my own slogan Both/And. And so it's been all my life. Gierig? Neugierig? Or just naturally wanting - like someone composing a mosaic - to put it all together.

*

Thisharb is the first word of Genesis - bereshith - spelled backwards and supplied with a helping vowel. It is like the ta'wil spoken of in all those interviews with me, a kind of leading backwards from the evident or the local to the primal, Imaginal, world from which the present comes: exactly as some mental/emotional/intellectual event or 'passion' will be the Imaginal World from which the present 'mood' arises. Arriving, always arriving: that is your keyword, your Grail word- to observe the arriving.

*

Great dome of the Ukrainian Cathedral, stand inside under the dome, knowing what is to be known. What can only be known by standing inside.

Something that stands for heaven. When the Russians and Ukrainians build their churches, they intend them to make the worshippers feel that for an hour or three they have been in heaven.

*

I have a natural delight in secrecy.

From the time I was perhaps eight years old, my favorite Christmas present was always a chemistry set, and from the time I was ten I had one set up in the little cellar room that was mine, and where I spent all my time, reading, thinking, daydreaming. Even at that time, I realized that I was less interested in the actual bench work of chemistry than I was in contemplating the universe of materials in transformation. I had never really heard of alchemy, but already the alchemical disposition had formed in me: to involve mind and its imaginal, seminal, powers in the work of transforming a material world.

I loved the flasks and test tubes and little flames, the tiny jars nested so neatly by a wise company that knew just which chemicals a child should have. A wise Company that gave me what I needed. O the oral thrill of receiving the word.

My natural delight in secrecy extends of course to everything that has to do with process, be it the process of art making or the process of the heart.

So for me it is a gentle pleasure to talk with people about their affairs and keep silent about my own - I don't mean I elicit their confidences, far from it, but I endure them, taking interest, trying to be wise. But I take a real delight in keeping my own to my own.

Because in alchemy the very secrecy is not just a part of the process. It is an actual tool. Silence is the great Reverberating Oven, which increases the heat of the process, and brings it to the critical temperature at which the transformation starts.

Idea turns into image, image into text or film or art or gold. Just as a novelist or film maker prefers to say nothing of the work she's actually doing, so the alchemist stands silent in the doorway of his house, looking out onto the busy street, smiling, having a sweet word with the neighbors and the passers by, but saying nothing of what is going forward in the shadowy house behind him.

So yogins say nothing of their experiences in meditation, poets nothing of the poem in hand, lovers nothing of the one they love or why they love them.

This holy silence! To speak of these things is not so much to profane them as to spill them out unfinished and unready. To speak about the affairs of the heart, the affairs of art, is to pry up the seed to see if it has sprouted, or pluck up the sapling to see if it has roots.

Interesting that this reflection began with the simple remembrance of the big Ukrainian cathedral, I can't even recall what street it's on. And that failure is part of it too. In some Eastern Christian rituals, there used to be a moment called the Great Silence, when the doors of the temple are opened, and we look in. And something wordlessly comes out and touches us.

*

From my earliest glimpses of the world, by word and image, guess and dream and story half overheard, it seemed to me that the greatest of all things was to tell of the interpenetration of the ordinary by the extraordinary: matter by spirit, history by godhead's incarnation, the political by the magical, the congressmen by angels.

I had not much love for fantasy per se, for remote kingdom's a galaxy away, where things were such and so and never come home, or come home only with a wistful look in the eye, and all lost.

What I wanted was the crisp daytime pierced with the brighter, fiercer gesture of the angel.

An angel is all about entering. An angel never abides, and never leaves. An angel is all entering:

in school children begin their definitions "...is when" - and that is strictly right for angels. An angel is when something ripples into the system from outside, an angel is when a new thing happens, an angel is when it comes in.

*

The Other Side of the Mirror

I have been thinking about this anger that so many women have articulated about the Male Gaze. Warped and full of malaise as our gender relations are, I wonder if there isn't something else at work here as well. Maybe the anger is really a disguised form of a deeper and more ancient outrage. The 'feminist' rage, quarrelsome though it may be, is more socially acceptable than the outrage it masks. I think the real anger is directed at the victimization of the Mother, enthralled by her infant's Gaze. Anything that reminds a woman of that unpersoning, demanding, obsessive yet fickle gaze will horrify her. Of course men inherit the gaze from infancy. Of course they turn towards women some version of that impersonal yearning with which the child dominates its world.

Lacan's 'mirror phase' positions the child in front of the mirror ? but behind the child is the adoring mother who beholds the act of recognition ? and the child beholds that while it moves, and knows itself in moving, behind it there stands one who does not move. A fixed unperson, a mere part of its world.

Women who rage against the male gaze are perhaps unwilling to recognize that a woman's truest enemy is her child, the very enemy she is least able to resist. No wonder she's angry. The gaze humiliates her: the one person in the world she loves most, with all her heart and biology, is precisely the one for whom she is not a person at all, merely a necessity, an object, a food.

*

An image fades into an image. Into another image. An image fades.

*

The hardest things to give up are the ones you don't have.

*

What if the dead carry their old diseases with them? Sickly ghosts stumbling through time in search of cure.

*

Old diseases need old medicines. Love still needs one another.

*

All night I drank the cup you gave me. And woke to ask you. Not so much what was in it, because my throat knows that and doesn't need a word. But ask you, because I want to ask you, because asking is a part of what anybody is we might try to be. That is lame, like an old moon, gone tonight or tomorrow night from the sky. Even the shyest witches are sly, and know more than others. They know words in old languages, and some word or two in every language. But they don't just know words or with words. They know with their fingers, their knees, their lyrical soft elbows, their eyelashes. This is a witch, a body of knowing by night. All night they worked in stone, worked the stone so that when light comes back up the world will stand more or less firm around us. They do it for us. Everybody does it for us. So in the stone room under the house (this was the dream you had for me, thank you) the witches were performing the ritual called Knowing Things by Way of the Chalice. But what was in the chalice, that's what I need to ask you. You know because you were there and I only saw. Seeing is so feeble, compared to being somewhere with the silver in your hands and the gold on your fingers and the last light of the dying moon pretty, no fancier word, pretty on the slim new snow. Or maybe the chalice was empty, they have so many rituals, this may have been the Mystery of the Vacant Chariot, whose sacramental sign is an empty cup. When do we drink it together and find out?

*

'My God, what a world! You can prove nothing.'
-Walter De La Mare, "Out of the Deep," 1923.

*

In Kabbalah our only hope.

Nec spe nec metu -- and hope is also what we can learn to live without. Callahan's indians: "We're the No-Hopis..."

To live without.

And the sacred alphabet teaches that too.

To be a fish a-swim in the \y [yam].

*

The imagination is an orchestra. The conductor is dead on the podium but the music never stops.

*

I have never believed in the ordinary, but I have always loved it. [one more epitaph for me]

*

Knowing is violation.

*

Do you think people will ever tell each other the truth? The truth means: to say accurately what images of the other arise in the mind of the self. Not to share, or not just to share, the emotional summary one makes of another person, but to declare like a shipment's manifest -- or a manifesto-- exactly the images, thoughts, visions of the other that come to the self's mind. Tell the texture or glisten or smell that those images have or yield. That would be the truth -- the truth that only you in all this world know, can ever know unless you tell. That is why each of us is or can be a Truthteller, a soothsayer, a knower of the world. You are the only one who can declare that portion of the truth that arises in your mind, and only there.

We owe our images to the world.

And will you dare to return to each person the images of them that their actuality, their essence, their energy, made arise in your mind? How will they ever know themselves unless you do?

If you could tell me, I could know me.

Everyone must one day be a poet, must tell the truth or try to tell it.

"You" is a collection of still and moving images, senses, icons adrift in the dark of my mind. "Telling" is the only way to keep from unconsciously projecting those images back onto you, and feeling baffled or frantic when they don't match "your" sense of yourself. Or don't work.

How to tell. Art of Poetry. Art of not telling lies.

And the biggest lie we tell is not telling.

*

Bad art can only be art at all by reminding us of good art. Good art is the product of telepathic powers in the artist -- I begin to learn that today.

Telepathic powers [un]consciously projected into the art work, from which it's retrieved by the sensorium of the beholder.

This means of action (or "mode of action" as the druggists would say) of art has never been mentioned, let alone discussed.

Action at a distance.

Why a Pieter Saenredam church interior is utterly different from his contemporaries' equivalent paintings, which 'look just like it.' What intensity of frightened Catholic sexual longing ill-silenced by the vast light-infested spaces makes these Protestant inscapes so overwhelming? Isn't it the mind of the artist projected?

Or how (more to our time, our sense of relevance) a Rothko panel gets us (literally) between the eyes, while his strategy or habits can be imitated with no effect whatsoever.

How offended art criticism would be to learn that there is something going on that is not susceptible to formal or quantitative analysis, something that can only be felt. And those feelings are what they talk about, honest critics, no matter how strictly they try to talk about the mark on the canvas, the structure.

It is when they deal with the whole 'body of work' of an artist that they allow themselves to talk broadly of meanings -- meanings which are actually profoundly and specifically encoded in any single painting, that can be decoded only by the heartfelt mind of the viewer.

These questions rise when one asks of (say) an abstract painting, why this mark, why this gesture? Why does this painting work, and another image --so very like it-- does not?

The work of art is a mind-lock perception sets free. To pour thinking into something seen -- that is art.

An object or image charged with telepathy.

*

Writing books I wouldn't dare to read.

*

The dance of ordinary light that a film can make extraordinary, god-like or even godly. Syberberg's H-----.

*

So deep in the night, though the clock doesn't know it -- I walked a lot today, in morning through luminous mist like some Goethean fantasy about the birth of color, then in the afternoon we walked in sunlight veering to cold, by the river.

*

Nature tells me when to turn on the light, lower my eyelids, take a walk in her generous trees, But what do I tell her? There must be reciprocation in any love. Could my attention possibly give her something, add a minimum of devotion to the riches of the natural order?

*

But matter enjoys its destinations. Matter loves what we do with it. There is nothing more quietly beautiful in the world than the deeply spiritual, giving, generous, self-abandoning and at the same time self-fulfilling way in which matter gives itself into our hands. For us to use. Matter wants to be used.

*

It doesn't matter. I have written so many things into the world that the world (or mind or who) wrote into me. A little man sitting in the desert humming, his music also enters, inscribes itself into the world. All alone or all about, the word spoken writes itself into the great

text. The world is so huge. But the world is also a tiny place, where the least breath dislodges meaning from a sound.

I woke up thinking that. "It doesn't matter" had the feeling of *_Allein*, was *tut's*, was *tut's!*" *_ Salome* crying out, what does it matter if the main thing has been done. I have kissed your lips, she cries out, accepting the guilt and triumph of her sin, which also was a dance. And then the soldiers crush her. But it was worth it.

I woke up thinking like that, everything is worth itself. It doesn't matter so much what effect my work or any work seems to have -- the effect of art is deeper, deeper in people, deeper in time, deeper in the substance of the world itself, that joyous willingness we call *Matter*.

Matter that is, our language tells us, also our Mother.

*

I have been thinking a lot about *matter* these days, the sweetness and kindness of things.

*

Surrealism, from its outset and before, *Lautréamont* to *Gracq*, depends upon the first person singular. Every book is an *I-book* for surrealism. No other subject, no other pronoun, wields and is wielded by such dreams.

*

Waking early on 12 Jan 2008, a German sentence spoke me awake:

Ich will nicht so tief im Koerper leben --

[I don't want to live so deep in the body]

that's why no swimming, no sauna, how I want not to be in body,

that's why sex is so vital, because *_sex* lives in the body of the other_

--

sex is will, and lives no deeper in the body than the skin,

(it is skin that takes the skin of the other in,
only skin)

Will toward the "figure of [the] Outward"
the one standing there,
over there.

Ich will nicht so tief im Koerper wohnen
[I don't want to dwell so deep in the body] ==
hence the Dharma, ths spring past death,
the always departing, the actual
embrace of the other _as_ the self and conversely,

in this life (by sending & taking -- *tong-len*)
and the next

where one's actual beloved is
one's next embodiment.

(This part seems less clear as I write it down, poured out of waking.)

(The German phrases are mine -- how we sometimes talk to ourselves
about the deepest things only in a foreign language, as if half-hoping
not to understand -- and the first one woke me and wouldnt let go
cycling and commenting on itself till I got up and wrote it down.)

*

Finally today I take in hand the small squat edition of the late Julien
Gracq's *The Castle of Argol* that New Directions published when I
was very young -- and that I used to see in the 8th St. Bookshop for
years. Never touched till today. Facing the title page a list of some
of their Modernist classics in that format back then: Pound's *ABC of
Reading*, *The Flea of Sodom*, which were my own classics. But it all
seems a hundred years ago -- yet as I look at the book itself, shape,
format, its kindred catalogued on the frontispiece, I feel again the
excitement of my own first years, my own first taste of the avant-
garde. Dahlberg, Kierkegaard, Rexroth, Queneau, Conrad, Hawkes,
Sartre, W.C. Williams, Pasternak --- all jumbled together, all new, all
somehow eternally Now. What a strange garden, their names all
together. Some of them still seem chancy, fresh, dangerous:
Hawkes, Queneau.

There seems then to be a vital classical avant-garde canon to set
beside (or set fire to) the sluggishly evolving canon of official

literature. Work that is inherently, perennially vanguard -- Joyce, Stein, Apollinaire, Pound, Zukofsky, Khlebnikov, Jandl, Char?

*

Nature is superstition.

*

The veil of Isis is the human mind.

*

Identity is the first mistake.

*

Who am I? is the only question in the world guaranteed to produce only wrong answers.

*

(by R.S. Thomas:)

Death Of A Poet

Laid now on his smooth bed
For the last time, watching dully
Through heavy eyelids the day's colour
Widow the sky, what can he say
Worthy of record, the books all open,
Pens ready, the faces, sad,
Waiting gravely for the tired lips
To move once -- what can he say?

His tongue wrestles to force one word
Past the thick phlegm; no speech, no phrases
For the day's news, just the one word 'sorry';
Sorry for the lies, for the long failure
In the poet's war; that he preferred
The easier rhythms of the heart
To the mind's scansion; that now he dies
Intestate, having nothing to leave
But a few songs, cold as stones
In the thin hands that asked for bread.

*

In my dream, the violinist Julia Fischer paused before the cadenza and explained to the audience how the new cadenza she was about to have the honor of playing had been composed by young Mr Paul [], present in the audience, who had in fact written it not for her, Julia, but for [], the distinguished concertmaster of this orchestra -- who also seemed to be present. The explanation went on and on; at first I too was present as she explained, then absent, reading the transcript of her remarks (but the concert hall sounds and feelings were still all around me), which at first were in German (we are after all in Kiel, in the Kieler Schloss), then in English. At first it seems that the concertmaster -- a tall, unappealing woman in her fifties, I'd say -- was alive and well, and had graciously yielded to the the young Julia the right of first performance. But then it seemed she actually was dead, and Julia was about to play this new cadenza in her memory. The dream ended before the cadenza began.

Is it to be said, or thought, that to yield the moment to another is the same as death?

Or is that all that death is,
yielding the score or instrument to somebody younger
to carry it forward

to the happy and attentive audience?
And for whom did I write my cadenza?

*

in quo salietur?

*

Kant is the *domovoi* of European culture; its house is his house, the bleak Scot with his copious German settled on the Slavic coast. He doesn't want Europeans to think outside his solemn and on the whole comfortable thinking-salon. He douses occult fires whenever he can, and sneers from his chimneycorner at ghost-seers and New Age illuminates.

By and large we comply with him, his sense of what is important to think about, and how to do that thinking aright. Even though our forefathers escaped to the New World precisely (if unconsciously) to flee his categories, they quickly built them up again all round, as the old Iceland settlers brought ridge-poles from their former continental homes. All our floorboards and shingles are steeped in his thought.

What would it be like to think something new?

That kind of house would such thinking built?

But always what seems at first to be new turns out to be only one more image -- one more metaphor. "Only another orphan," as our most magisterially Kantian novel concludes.

*

Germania and Nostalgia, those two interpenetrating countries. I think of the spectacularly ruined Gedächtniskirche (and such a name!) on the Kudamm, how that turns (like old friend uneasy Anselm Kiefer) past horror into carefully preserved artwork, commodity, which is a culture like theirs (ours) is infinitely digestible. It is also, that jagged molar, a ruined church preserved as a reproach: but not a reproach to Germans or German history, but to the US/UK/USSR that made a ruin of an imposing Wilhelmine chapel.

Ruiz: "memory is imagination troubled with timidity" -- what I understood was the notion of all memory as a construct/construction, but hampered by timidity, i.e., by fear of its own power, fear of what it might say (like a timid man), and so allowing itself to be shaped by probability rather than the 'essence' of what is remembered. If it weren't timid, in other words, our imagination would construct vast and _usable_ memories for us, which we would not arrogate to the past, but allow (the way we do compelling books of fiction) to interpenetrate our lives time/less/ly.

Which is what Nostalgia (which is a pathology of memory) could become in Deutschland, actualizing itself as present energy for social or intellectual growth. 13 feb 04

*

What do I know and where do I know it?

*

"Ten Sephiroth made of nothing. Break your heart from thinking too quickly. Break your mouth from speaking. If your heart races ahead, return. For it is said: "the creatures ran and returned." The Covenant was made for this.

Ten Sephiroth made of Nothing. Their end is lodged in their beginning. Their beginning is Their end, a flame and a coal. Know, then consider. Then, be silent: that the Lord is unique. The Maker is one. He has no peer. What number comes before One?

Ten Sephiroth made of Nothing. Their number is Ten and They have no end. The range of beginning. The range of end. The range of good. The range of evil. The range of height. The range of depth. The range of east. The range of west. The range of north. The range of south. Only Lord, Gd Faithful King, patient of all from the Residence of His Holiness to Eternity

Ten Sephiroth made of Nothing. Their appearance is the look of lightning. Their disappearance: They have no end. His Word is in them as they come and go. At his command They race like the whirlwind and bow before His throne."

*

for Ron Padgett)

when Jack and Jill came tumbling down,
what is the meaning of down

how can you fall down if fall is downward movement anyhow?
where or how is down?

if people go down
where do they get to

can you go down without falling
aha

said Jack and Jill

*

The things we care about. How people we know and maybe even love recede in the mind until they're only a ground note dimly felt, if at all, then 'for no reason' swell forward and upward in brightness until they're center stage in the mind. But that 'for no reason' is such a strange and terrible ignorance on my part. Everything reasons. Everything means. How long would it take to figure out precisely why X arises in my mind, so vividly, sensuously, out of nowhere? Opus Luminis indeed, where do they hide in the dark, why and when do they come in brightness to appear, and what (above all) is that Light made of with which they shine, show, seem?

*

1)to be whatever kind of artist one is, 2)fulfilment of parental identities (like the child meta-identity, as I am a teacher and an opera singer) 3) [most important] the absolute necessity of confident silence as a profound statement, even a gift. I mean silence about your practice, when meeting people.

*

"I found myself liking this word: goizean--it means early morning. Perhaps Goizean is the time of the fox, the time the fox wanders back into the woods."

the Basque sport documentary and their relation to language/the alphabet so interesting and true. "I think that is why I am drawn to Basque: each word is pure because its origin is unknown/absent. We must interpret the words."

*

The poet's relationship to language is like the theologian's relationship to God. At once special, privileged, commanding. busy using and defining the object of inquiry. But at the same time profoundly subjected to That of and with and by which he speaks.

*

*

A man with no sense of humor can't be serious.

*

NARRATION:

There are two forms--

- a) when all is known and 'merely' has to be told
- b) when nothing is really known, and everything is beginning.

(A) is the order of history, essentially anecdote, report.

(B) is the order of invention:

- i. working from a character or persons
- 11. working from lyric observation or detail

Lawrence's "Snake" is an instance of (a) as the ground of (b) -- something indeed happened, but then the telling is not what happened, but working out the meaning of what happened.

*

What love teaches us is that there is no neutral space. Everything means. Every single thing means. Every fucking thing means. Whatever rhetorical level you reach, or reach for, the fundamental postulate is that: everything counts. Those teachings that show this best (Buddhism, Steiner's Goethean wisdom, Renaissance painting) are our guides. The gleam on the doorknob is painted with as much care and devotion as the gleam on the angel's halo, or the tender flush on the Virgin's cheek. Everything matters. As long as art commits to that (and the modern grace of artifact, soupcan, felt and fur and copper, is profoundly so committed), art can help us. Comfort and help.

*

Augenblick means a moment, the twinkling of an eye. Our form would be 'eyeblick.' But _blick_ means a glimpse, a sight, something seen. And blink means to close the eyes, if only to open them again. We blink against the light.

How did blick (= see) become blink (=not see)?

Do we English-speakers see better with our eyes closed?

*

Language a forest. Language is a forest. The words are trees. But in them and between them and beneath them there is a rich complex life to which the traveler has to pay the most precise and reverent attention.

*

Liberate the aces, name of the game.

*

When one has lived a certain time, it's hard to meet a woman you haven't met before.

*

"From: orville crane <manbythewater@hotmail.com>
Subject: LL-L "Etymology" 2008.03.15 (04) [E]

Lowlander Ron,

* The Faroese have the 'hulda', (imaginary) being which is believed to hide things which are right in front of one's eyes. These beings are believed by some to be the unwashed children of Eve. There is a whole group of words for this hidden group of beings and their everyday life;

1. huldubatur-boat manned by huldur(plural)
2. huldudrongur-fairy boy
3. huldafolk-hulda people
4. huldugenta- girl hulda
5. huldukona- hulda wife
6. huldukugv- cow belonging to huldufolk
7. huldumadur- male hulda
8. hulduneyt- cattle belonging to huldufolk
9. hulduseydur- sheep belonging to huldufolk.

The Far. verb, 'hylja' means to cover, hide, conceal.

A nighttime walk in the Faroese outfield might show the hiker this hidden world."

*

Religion is a disease that happens to ethics.

As an example: the Biblical injunction, so transparently intended to promote a kind of universal sympathy and compassion, against seething a kid in the milk of its mother, is dried out into a religious legalism about all milk and all meat. The rule is kept, the compassion forgotten. Or, from the Christian side, for centuries one did not eat meat on Friday, in mournful remembrance of the death of the Lord's body on the cross -- so one ate instead the dead bodies of fish or (in some dispensations) birds.

*

I think of how Creeley's "my love" (tender, ironic, sincere, offhand, wounded as it sounds breathed in Bob's own reading) turned in Jean Daive's translation to "mon amour," naturally enough, but how vastly, vilely, different -- it came across spoken with a dreadful hypersensitivity, the kind that makes us hate poetry. But what could Daive have done? Creeley had created a space in which 'my love' could speak with a controlled, controlling resonance. Daive had not, as a translator, created such a space in French. And this is one instance where the literal translation can be the most treasonous. (Remembering our reading at the Pompidou a decade ago.)

*

How to create a space in which the word sounds right and resounds correctly.

Translation is no different from composition. How could it be?

It is just an altar dedicated to a different santo from the one who usually talks in your head.

Translation is the same as writing, except the translator endures a benign and necessary (literal) schizophrenia.

The mouth with two minds.

*

As we hurtle towards death, things get clearer and clearer. Dozens, scores of things, doubts, issues, histories quickly gel into sense. Suddenly, like a chest easing, breathing easy, suddenly the knowing comes. Oh that's why....[whatever it is] ! may well be the last cry.

*

Entitlement. A strong sense of entitlement is a kind of prison. A person early taught entitlement can't escape from her own desires and the necessity of fulfilling them. One has to get the thing one wants. One is not free to decide not to want, not to have to get, not to get.

*

Her body movements --carefully imitating the Speech Eurythmy she'd seen at Camphill Village -- were a description of the movements she had seen and at the same time a critique of them. Her body was telling what her mind and sensibility had thought about what she had seen.

Body as critic.

Body as describer.

Leading to: body as speaker.

Let the body learn to / enact / perform / = inform space with / the sounds of language. The actual sounds in the actual language (English is not German) speaking, but speaking through movements of the body as a whole, not just the 'organs of articulation.'

Or better still: the body as organ of articulation.

For each of the 13 or 14 vowels a movement, for each of the thirty or so consonants, a pose (for stops) or gesture (for fricatives and continuants).

Can we learn how to speak?

Not sign language but space language.

*

Next book: Intermediate Thinglish. Thinglish Without Tears.
Elementary Thinglish.

*

The reader is himself a footnote in the text being read.

But the asterisk that reminds him of his condition has somehow strangely dropped out of the text, leaving the reader to find the phrase or section or judgment in the text that is for him. Or is him, himself, forever after.

*

Who said: painting the dictionary red?

*

In this sickness, when I'm thinking, I'm at some distance from the thinking, I see the words of my thinking roll onto the paper or come onto the screen but I am not exactly writing or typing them; something is happening, and I seem to be able to follow the argument my words are constructing. As yesterday on the phone I cd have a rational discussion of departmental business without confusion, watching myself participate. No, that's too strong a sense of apartness. Some distance, only a little distance away from the one who is speaking.

*

Having an active social life shortens it.

*

Everyone is looking out
of his own eyes too

*

POETRY

Poetry is the weaving of silence into speech.

Every age has its own ideas of what poetry is about or what poetry does. But I'm speaking of what poetry is. What it always is, the weaving of silence into language,

weaving by ear or metric or good idea
moments of silence into speech,

line ends, caesuras, great pauses, poetry.

The weaving uses silence to shape sound into meaning or music.

And music is (as ever) meaning enough.

*

RUNNICLE.

A runnicle is an image left over from dream left in the mind at waking, an image or fact with no narrative content or context. This information is itself a runnicle, and I wake, hurry to write it down and share this runnicle with the dream community. 23 May 2008.

*

Poor young people who don't even have any perversions of their own yet.

*