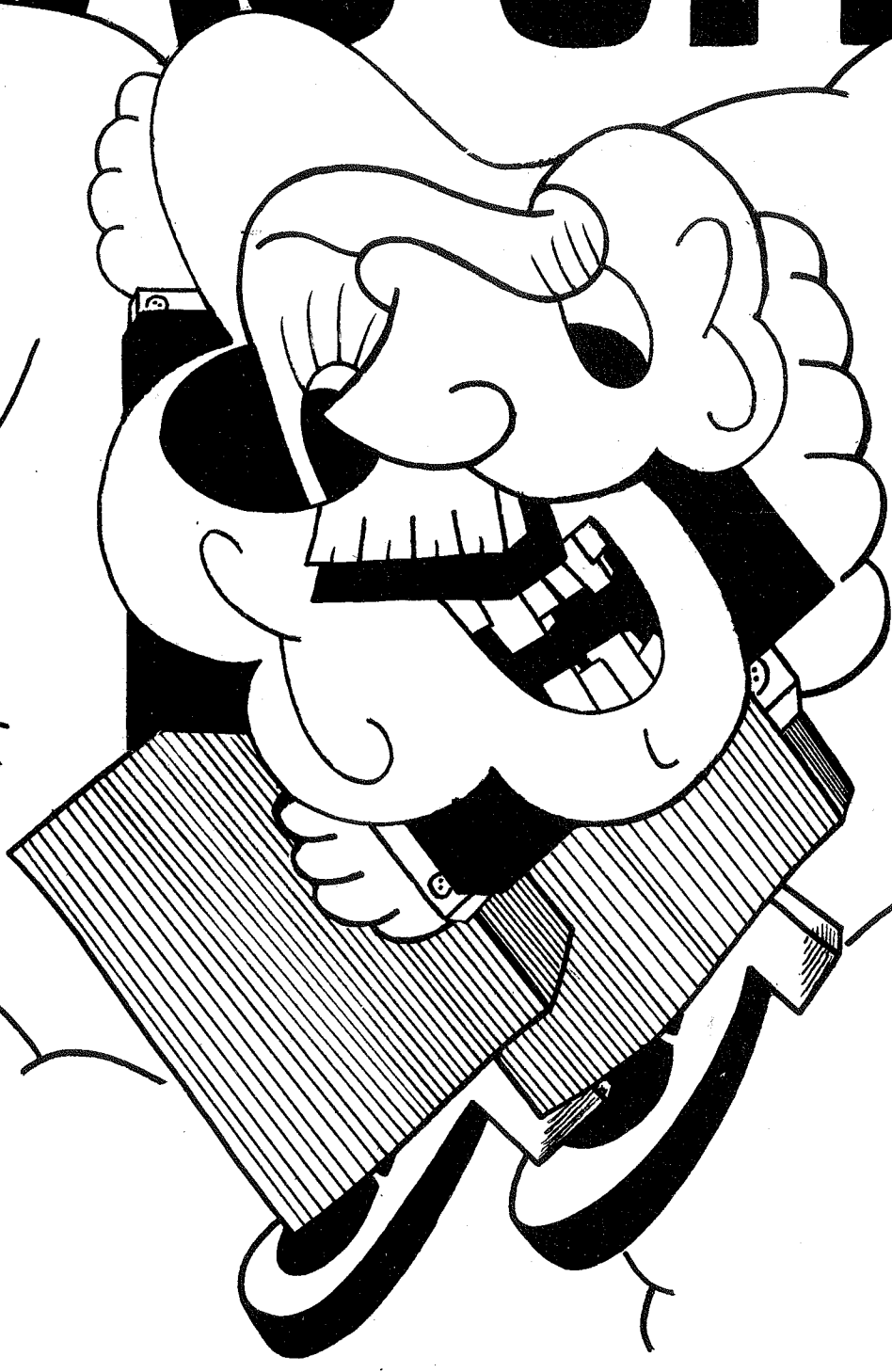
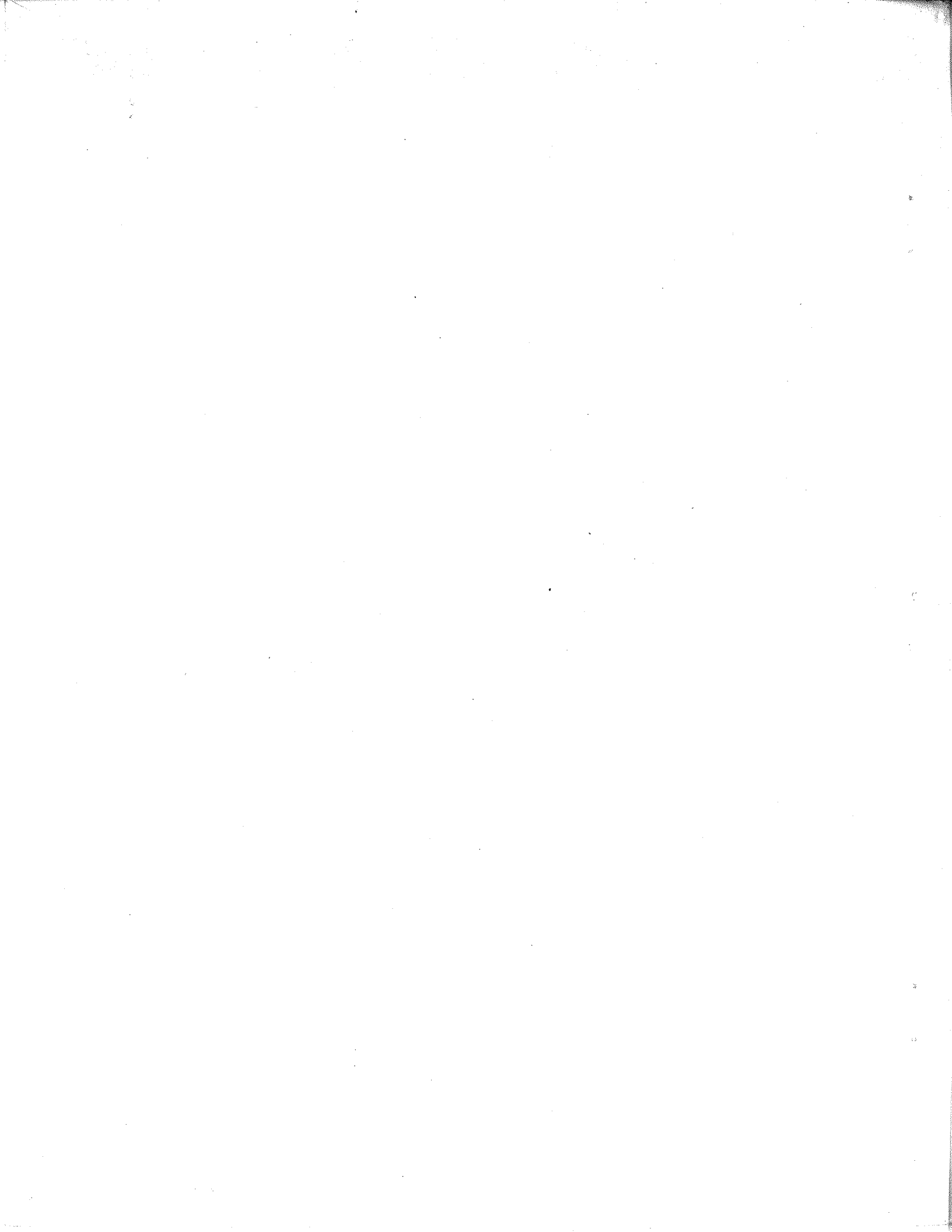


MAG CITY





MAG CITY #4

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Ah, Necromancy Sweet!
Ah, Wizard erudite!
Teach me the skill,

That I instil the pain
Surgeons assuage in vain,
Nor Herb of all the plain
Can heal!

- Emily Dickinson

GAMIN

In a few minutes, very soon, you will come
To judge me harshly and for this I wait,
Will be grateful, for these little things
Ask only to be met with high seriousness
Cause it's what they deserve, you dig?
So in you'll sweep, to see the many dishes
All unwashed, of which you cannot fail
To disapprove. Oh, our tiny time together!
While you sit steeping I shall blather.
Isn't it amazing how much a person can know
About someone they've never personally met?
Just one of the miracles of modern science
Which I'll explain, while you miaow and muse
On my frequent pauses, pinch yourself in a smile
And ask your heroically piercing questions
Composed of iron filings, chicory and lace.

But I must get my photograph, ship my articles
Prepare for boarding and abandon my space,
Knowing only how your judgement will be framed
And how it does, not will, expect my travelling
Away from anywhere the nets are falling, like here
City of broken lights and black cables, where our
Only history is just lines on paper in air
And passion but the point of dreams, and dreams
Only that place where each cloud falls back
In a film of grainy blue, though they take forever.

10.

For blue -- this (a hat). "Put it on."
Color will keep it from its nationality.

11.

The remedies loitered,
Were eventually normal and part.

One day one sabotaged the latest cluster
Or attraction and resentment set in.

The malady returned, a Tartar, free,
Smelling of then now doubttable,--

Re-established at every expense
Upon the presents.

12.

Saxophones....

13.

What's so funny about a headache?

14.

Yes.

Well...?

15.

Strangely, this is not Christian:

I admit my want and then, performing,
Turn silhouette, right-angle, ready for the otherwise
Which I appear to be waiting to embrace,
When, oh?, something drops from my hand:
I let a like go.

"I don't know."

16.

Hot isn't it.
Grey.

This is really it.
Who would ever expect the inevitable now?

17.

Abundance may be camouflage too.
Beware an obvious lack of bragging.

18.

May / Mai / Mayo / Mai
"Did you ever pipe Effie?"

19.

Saxophones...
On purpose.

20.

"I jumped...and my stomach didn't come down."
They walk by for home, Friday in their
Concern. You can't tell very much,
Even when you see them.
They are so much their age
They don't even have to care anymore
How old they are, and when they're pretty
It's excruciating and when they're not
It's alright -- they're growing.
But they don't feel safe.

21.

He's drunk.
A riot would bewilder him.
Stinking dead boozed-up falling-down drunk.
He's lit, gassed, swacked, juiced, polluted.
Stoned. Loaded. Bombed. Soused. Plastered.
Crocked and blasted.

22.

More cars than Chicago has people.

23.

Compulsory glance.

Heavy next.

24.

This is awful.
It seems so feasible now
But how can I ever know
What it's going to be like
When the time comes?

I wish I could start right away,
Now, right here.

25.

Not a word of this was true.

26.

We learn that the youngest daughter
Does not yet care about
Being overweight; the other one
Had no choice. One son
Had quit the band, the other was gone,
The dog, strangely, loved to eat ice,
And the old television, not the new one,
Was by far the least trouble,
But with the Plymouths it was
Just the other way around.

27.

"Ought"-haunted, we stop,

Inquire,

Deceased.

28.

Something could be done with this mood,
I was sure of it.

29.

Following the third
The aftermath grew more severe.

30.

Pronounced live like leave.
Had this sweater,
Had this car.

31.

Stop it!
-- Really loud.

32.

"I'm bleeding."

GREG MASTERS

from an as yet untitled journal

January 16

Still spaced from last night's marijuana. Pleasant waking up in no hurry. Here it is early afternoon already. Third time hearing this same side JJ Cale album with me futzing around the house, like making tuna fish and checking out new books received in mail today but I'm ahead of myself. I'm too lazy to flip the album over or change it but why bother- I like it, first time hearing, Simon having lent as of yesterday and it's only background like now. Some kind of double body clock wakes me automatically at 8:30 on work days and 12 or a little before on days off. A day with a notice of a package at the post office so a trip outside is necessary and we'll do it first thing cause what is it? Finally, jump out of bed and write some checks, we'll take care of business while we're out there. The laundry, maybe. How was I thinking of writing this all up while I was on the toilet before? It made me hurry my shit up and now I can't remember the form I had in mind. Is JJ the same as John Cale? A letter to Michael C. was involved in that toilet scene. Downstairs, another letter from unemployment. I open the Con Ed bill first to create suspense. Damn. Bastards have refused me again. Means writing another letter and xeroxing. Why don't they want to decide in my favor and give me the thousand dollars I deserve or don't deserve.

Dear Michael,

....In London I stayed at a cheap rooming house near the Paddington station. My room on the very top floor was so small you couldn't open the door all the way but that was alright with me. I had to brush my teeth in the bathtub two floors down. The toilet for the floor was right next to my room and I got to listen to everyone using it. I'd read till very late at night and then sleep till early afternoon. It was my first month in Europe. I was lonely. I'd go into bars at night but was so quiet that I never met any people. I'd sit and watch. Eventually, I bought a watch and that got me to more of a normal time schedule. The place I was staying at was a bed and breakfast place but I made it to breakfast only once the month I stayed there. The deal I'd made with the owner had me paying a pound a night for that small room, which at one time must have been a storage closet, and getting no breakfast. The guy who managed the place tho, said when I first moved in, I won't say nothin if you come to breakfast. When I left, with my backpack on, having to call Fred, the manager from downstairs, contemplating for a few minutes walking out without paying the week's rent I owed- no one was around and there was the door- I yelled down to him, cleaning up after breakfast, Fred, I'm leaving. I heard him mutter, 'good'. I never could figure out why he didn't like me. I assume cause I was always sleeping when he came around changing the sheets. He wouldn't take the money I offered him as tip. That was an alright place tho. The book I read that month was Virginia Woolf's

Night and Day. It was one of her first books and pretty bad, like a soap opera or parody of one but I finished it, I guess cause it took place in London. I ate fish and chips. I'd go to movies and plays amazed at how cheap they all were. The Tate 3 times. I'd walk around all the time. Met a woman from the NW section and visited her once. Her room-mate was an artist who had some of his pieces at Biba's, which I hear has since closed down. That's too bad. That was one of the best things in London. I went to that street where all the antiques are. I went to Hyde Park on Sundays to hang out at Speaker's Corner but I never heard anything there I liked except an old woman who maybe was a little crazy. She asked all these questions about art and literature and if you gave the right answer she had all these 'certificates' she'd award you- dozens of different collage type pieces that all had a stamp of graduation on them. I still have the two she gave me. She'd also give out candy and cookies. At one point she fell over and continued her questioning from the ground. I got to know the Underground system. Lost 25 pounds to two street hustlers in a phoney card game. Got membership in a gambling club and lost 25 pounds in a half hour playing blackjack. Spent some time shopping and researching and traded my camera in at a pawn shop for a new one which I immediately brought to the manufacturer's factory on the outskirts of London and had checked out. I took a bus tour of the city. Remember the old banking part- the only time I went there. Walked all the way back to Paddington one late night from the London Film Festival at that new art's complex, after seeing Jacques Rivette's film, Celine and Julie Go Boating, which remains one of my favorite films. I remember walking over the Thames on the Waterloo Bridge and the silence, late night full moon and Big Ben. And that last shot of the film, a close-up of a cat's puzzled face, lingering in my mind. It's still there. Not one woman picked me up the whole time I was in London. No one's done it here either. I must be hard to pick up. I found out about a set of phone booths at an Oxford Street Station where you could call the states for the price of a London call. I went there to call my friend Barry but he wasn't home and I never made it back there again. I saw where Sherlock Holmes lived. I never ate an an Indian restaurant. I should have. One afternoon I was in Bloomsbury. Another afternoon, someplace else. I saw Last Tango in Paris in London. A few months later I saw it in Paris. I've seen it in NYC, too. And once in New Brunswick, New Jersey. I grew to dislike Maria Schneider as an actress. I felt the same in London as I've always felt. The diary I kept on that trip, the section in London which I've just read over, reflects that. I sound younger, enthusiastic instead of literary. It was Baker Street not Oxford Street where the phone booths were, my diary corrects.

January 17

I felt threatened one afternoon in a pub and left. There was a record store across the street and I went in and listened to the Frank Zappa

Masters/9

album they were playing. Those two incidents are a set. Entering London on the train from the south is depressing passing through old poor neighborhoods, like going to our Bronx Zoo on the subway. One time hitched out of it west to Wales on A40, another time north on the M4. Entered once from the airport, being picked up, I swear, by a chauffeur driven limousine (a friend's connection); on a bus from Liverpool (\$5 for a five hour ride, what the hell) and on that train from Dover, in the early morning rain. With only one hour to walk around before I had to head back to the airport to get my flight back home. I had \$12 in my pocket. My plane landed in Montreal and I hitched back to my sleeping parents but first had a malted at the Allwood Diner at 6 A.M., then walked into their house after 10 months away.

That's what I remember about London. So, everything else is fine. My health is good, I've grown a beard. Michael, sorry for not writing sooner but this is only the third letter I've written in a year. I think of you a lot. Send me a phone number and we'll arrange another call. So, write, etc. Send me artwork. If you really are coming in the spring I'll start cleaning up now (it'll take me that long). I guess you know about the rooms of Blake etchings at the Royal Academy, I think that's where they were. Does the Tate have a cellar? Could have been there. Anyway, for now...

Love,

Greg

*

I Knew I'd Be Writing This

Sensory assaults on laundromat time
While my clothes get clean and I use the
Time to read ZZZZZZ with some glances over
At the flat-colored-like woman at the end
Near the broken dryer. Is she giving me the eye?
No time. This is a great Kenneth Koch poem. I
Have to tell Gyorgyi about this and the two epics.
A man with a broken foot sits peacefully at the window
With his casted foot up on the ledge, like siesta time
In a Spanish village. Near the end of the
Drying cycle for my clothes, he makes some weird sound,
Alone, so he's crazy after all. The nice young man
Seated next to me is reading Sons and Lovers, he's almost
Done with it. Wish I could have been there when he closed the
Cover on the final page to have discussion. I'm
Intelligent enough to take my sweater out of the dryer
After one dime. I'm learning, ma, and fold it comfortably
Over the bench. Today, I trust everyone so I cross the street to
Shop for blanket cover, my blanket's getting shredded again.
"What size is it? Is it a blanket or a quilt?" I'd anticipated
These questions but had not prepared for them.

Masters/10

These are too expensive and probably the wrong size. No I won't
Buy these. I'll measure and come back. And look for a cheaper
Store. And never come back. Back in the laundromat and pick up
My reading but something is bothering me, I can't get past the first
Line of this John Godfrey poem. The rain, confined to dignity The rain,
Confined to dignity The rain, confined to dignity...I
Remember the encounter in the street just occurred, me,
Hurrying my pace to catch up with two people with backpacks
From the back looking the same, same Alpine Designs packs,
Same ensolite pads rolled on top, sleeping bags hanging from
Bottom, in two's I think- that's cute. Two women, ah. "Coming
In or going out?" "What?" A non-receptive response. Am I
Creepy guy to overtake these travellers to wish them well in
Their fair journeying. I say nay. German or Scandinavian accents,
Blond, "Need directions or anything?" They've been warned about
The people of NYC. I don't seem so safe. They're right to
Assume I mean more than tidings, tho I don't. I'm doing my
Laundry then writing a book. They continue on in their
Post card wanderings. I cross the street in the falling snow.

*

Today I vacuumed
Listened to the same album over and over again
While I wrote prose
Went out at some point for something. Oh,
To do laundry. Not O like O Laundry.
Didn't call you till 10:30 at night but
You know about that. This is for everyone else.
I called Gyorgyi at work around 3.
Didn't do the dishes. Then came the
Night when things can change.
Lenny came over. Previous to that cocaine, pot and
Two beers with...The CIA
Might read this. At midnight off to the Grassroots
Pouring rain, we're all thirsty. Now I'm
Home listening to Elvis Costello and doing this.
Actually I'm done.

TOM SAVAGE

Nobody

"I was always uncomfortable as Agehananda Bahawalpur, the yogi from Bihar. My Brahmin life and British education little prepared me for the life of a sadhu but the family had too many sons so I became a holy man. In 1938, the first sound movie house opened in Delhi. I was passing through on my way to Rishikesh for the Kumbh Mela. An old college friend insisted I go with him. I protested it wouldn't be right for a sadhu to go to the movies. He offered me a suit for the night if I'd go. I went. The movie was Lost Horizon with Ronald Colman. Colman fascinated me. Well-off, moustached, British... He seemed relaxed, sure of himself. When the people he served insisted that he guide them out of paradise, he obeyed them. Duty rules, as Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita. I admired him instantly. I could never have left such a place. He brought his girl friend. Outside Shangri-la, she disintegrated. He survived. I admired that too. I'd devoted several years to yoga and austerities but I wasn't peaceful, in control. He was. I had to become him--in this life, preferably. I went to the Kumbh Mela but avoided the celebrations, the Gurus. Only went once to the Ganges. I lived in a cave. Worked hard on samadhi. Learned to make things move. Go without food. All of that. In a year's time, I was ready. I left my body and became Ronald Colman. At first Hollywood seemed hectic but film acting proved easy. I forgot my yogi life after a few days. I absorbed Colman's past quickly. I spoke perfect English. My speaking voice sang. I got fan letters from insane teenage girls. My life was everything I could wish for. I grew older. In the early fifties I made a funny little film called Champagne For Caesar in which I played an omniscient man invited onto a TV quiz program. Then I did a TV series called Halls of Ivy. College professor. Nothing cheap or stupid. In 1958, after thirty years of stardom, I died. At the age of sixty-seven. Not bad. Lived longer than I would have as a sadhu unless I'd become very holy...or very smart. Six months after I died, my wife remarried. I bear her no grudge...My problem is I'm stuck in Limbo. The soul I displaced claims to be Ronald Colman and the body of Agehananda has been gone too long for me to claim it. It's ash was long ago filed as 'inanimate matter' and sent back. You have to have a body or some ash to show to get into heaven. Either I must return to earth in search of a body or remain in Limbo. The life of a Hungry Ghost doesn't appeal to me so I'm still here. If you come across anyone who can help me, please let them know where I am. No need to go out of your way. But I would like to return to some more or less real existence soon.

Jumping Realms

You want to open your mind
visit Void and dance with devas
well don't go where I have gone.

Once a day I hit my kind of Void.
Body tingles. Synapses die.
With luck I stay awake.
Sometimes I fall down.
But the memory is choked by non-Being.

Boulder, 1976.

BONNIE BREMSER

SPRING KISSES

I sit brushing my hair, glad to know that I'll be
thinking of you for the next minutes
like the walk on the road this morning
the impermanence of dandelion glow
the contrast with other colors
and saved the thought,
as I recollected my own romantic
notions in the half cold awakening.

I'll capture something this time,
pin it down,
my buggy emotions. Even if you should happen to be
occupied with something, the very tender times you've
tried to help me get it together
were almost sufficient
for now.

I'll try facing one thing at a time,
to start with
the very thought of you, that makes other
thoughts less attractive
and from that comes the hot attempt to eliminate distractions.
That's where the dandelions came in and told me that I'm
conjuring beyond my ability.

If I concentrate on one little patch of skin with hairs
coming from it,
that is you; not all of you, but
as much as this primitive attempt to capture you is.
Only a part,
and illusive, like mineral rights.
Like my ability to think
this out, sometimes

is not even there.
It has something to do with time.

And so much is left out too, because I am limited,
more and more
(and still have hope)
and would steal into a relation
rather than approach you
confident that I could handle any communication directly,
and that includes
that yet undefined thing
which occasionally breaks down
helpless, and silent.

Spring '74

NATURE, GREY AND GREEN

Grass turning up a shiney side in the wind,
the clods also
shining in the newly plowed field
from where the metal meets moisture.
I return to the artificial environment of my room.
My noontime appetites match the crazy fertility
of spring.

Instead,
whole hills of lollipop trees
fairy detail of
color and eye touch,
taunt me to deny their reality.
I remember and picture the slow budding of maple during
a cold spell.
I feel the come-on of apple blossom.
One elm looks like it won't make it,
filling the window with
a straight line of dormant timber carbohydrates,
into the
live soil and then straight down to China it goes,
reversed
and invisible.
My thoughts reach for the subconscious,
detached from time.

I'll pack a lunch
appreciate the weather
listen to Tchaikovsky.

May 15, 1974

HEAVEN LOOK DOWN

When I see the difference of images alternating consciously
from the contrived to the natural I wonder which I prefer.
The sensual objects and their significance handed down historically
or the myth arising, typifying reality or originating it.
In the city, in the beginnings of adulthood, I saw many poets
and they wrote of mother, father, childhood.
I wonder of my feeling about the substitute mothers I had,
always yearning for the real thing as if it were different.
And similar incongruities today about sex, whether for pleasure
or the specific purpose of creating, cause me a happy indecision.

It's like the trouble writing a poem,
to skim poetry off the top of word and experience.
Searching, reaching, crawling
discover the image still hidden.
Unfamiliar,
lost in the world of
arguments about the state of mankind on earth or in
space.

Then I awake from my hopeless empty sleep of daily routine
and say to myself, open your eyes, it's right in front of you.
And see the cow's udder, large cleft feet, shit between the toes,
the line of cement edge gutter is such an angle that I get dizzy.
Perspective confuses me and sometimes becomes a personal threat
, foreshortening is robbery, I try to level the horizon with my eyes.
Anyway, the image as I see it is just so much poetic material
These trees and flowers so ruthlessly used and now I am lost.

Japanese flower arrangements, your hat cocked, my space or my
imprisonment, all are imagery and symbolic but flat fact.
There is nothing for me to revere but myself - I've pushed it
to that point, noone truly accepts that they are the greatest.
And I with vacant mind, meat gut body of no consequence, am
forced to grovel at the feet of beauty, the supposed flower of my soul.
But see how it dies too, momentarily coming to life for me,
all unknowing in its fiber, tissue, the elemental necessity that
joins us.

May 31, 1974

THE FLOWERS YOU BOUGHT

I thought you would like
my picture of you,

a little thinner
and more poetic
the truth was there anyway

just a man, in the stream
with his pants rolled up
the water flowing around him
the same as the rocks.

And the poems too

around which
I twined my feelings
bundling up experiences
provisionary for a later day,
now

it is here.

I don't know whether to face
these new events
as the woman who loved you

or try to determine your present attitude

so I push away,
and come back
enjoying the movement toward you, anew.

What about all my touch of nature
or the ability to relax
between life and death
or my searching

which seemed answered
but that is no more important
than your former dreams
which you haven't even told me
yet,
and I'm waiting.

I want the whole thing
love in any conceivable form
not to waste any bit of experience
with you, it's all with you now,
break it down
cultivate it.

July 9, 1974

Bremser/17

MY HERO

I've been reading the Greeks.

cities names times
the bigness and split-vision reality of it
truly feeling the importance of those events
transmitted by paper ink and word/that so-and-so's golden
armor bit the dust
and I believe it,

like the truthfulness of kids
the vanquished gladiator's picture in my Latin textbook
"ouch you're stepping on my balls" they wrote.

The person I have no suitable name or means of address
his face an imponderable fact of weight and personality meat
god like Easter idols lines of eye-food for me, always thinking,
that he's not back yet
not driven down the hill past the three maple trees
the old gold station wagon
fits him,

like his dog,
I always waited for him to drive by
these years that we've shared the same air
and imagined that the smoke he usually lit when he passed
my house

watching him out the window
had something to do with desire.

Now instead of days
or weeks
I worry all night
under the dark
sinister moon

that death
not so accidental
worked upon him.
Most of us are mortal.

July 11, 1974

FIREFLIES

No moon over the river
 and dark hills
the water held the light anyway
as our boat passed down thru the night.

And now the valley
meeting of mountains
a passage for stars
I walk unseeing
trusting my step and the quiet
 spirit of trees.

Mind on a face not here
lit by the recent moon
thru my window
where the view is now
damp with translucent July midnight dew.

July 15, 1974

MID-SUMMER BALLAD

A week ago as I rode up East Hill
on Molly the palamino mare
Bill's lunch I carried
for he was mowing there.

At the turning to the dirt road
the horse fought for her head
she knew the way was steep
and did not like her load.

The sun was hot and good for corn to grow
I noticed its wide grassy leaf
the gulleys where the hard rain flowed
for farmer Carmen poorly made his row.

Anne, the poet, passed and asked if I was alright
she took the lunch ahead, for I was slow
still many miles to go
and milking to be done that night.

We lingered, Molly fed where small trees overhung
a friendly chipmunk stood and did not run
but Duke the dog pursued it eagerly
as did the flies my back and thighs unclothed inviting to be stung.

The stones were sharp and shoeless Molly turned back
trying with yellow teeth to reach my knee
but I slapped her twixt the ears with heavy rein
which got her going on the stoney track.

Leaning forward eased my weight to Molly's boney neck
so we could make speed, Bill was waiting for his food
his wife had said he'd asked for me to come
and I was feeling good.

We reached the top and started down the other side
the piney wood, the schoolhouse corner passed
my seat was sore, my legs were tired
I got down, walked barefoot, no further could I ride.

At last! The paved highway
and Graham's fields were visible, the tractors going
as they raked dry hay and cut down new.
I saw the Mohawk Valley view was good today.

Bill smiled and went twice more around his swath
as we rested in the shade of a barn
I'd gestured to the bag which held his sandwiches
and waited knowing soon he'd stop.

I meant to question him while he ate
about his mood the night before
he'd sat so long with vacant stare
but now he brushed it off and leaving said "it's late".

I thought he didn't care
and started home without a tear
he did not know the subject of his moods
more than my own to me were dear.

July 20, 1974

AT FOOTE'S HOLLOW

Like morning in a New York City park
with the "mothers" in groups
watching the children.

And I'm detached from it, by
lack of money
my unemployment
or maybe I'm disabled
by my attitude.

But now
I've found my place
a farmer-poet
maybe someday a Rural Bard
go with my brood
to a private
swimming hole

rocks
water
sun
grass

I'm busy playing with words
they're just playing
shouts, laughter as others come
searching the end of the stream

I make believe the water's saying
"water"
or ULULATE
even gurling verbally.

The coltsfoot plants that
grow up the hill
under hawthorn trees
like nothing else in sight
their natural habitat
and some
mint between the wet mud stones
also in position
where I expect

the water's clean enough
and the deep part of the pool
dark green water that touches skin
cool and unclinging

I raise my head as I swim the treadmill current
look thru the culvert to the other side
of the road

a round picture
too quickly seen to register
more than green yellow brown
trees water leaves
the usual.

July 28, 1974

RAY KLIMEK

Francis

The smell of chalk.
The clack of the nun's thick beads.

Row upon row of desks.
On all of them
the same book
was opened to the same picture
of that monk,
a wolf lying silent
at his feet.

And years later
that image returned
while feeding pigeons
in a park.

When there was no question of belief
one could have believed
that they were drawn
by anything
but hunger.

Apropos

Pan
O violence
bullseye
"really"

blink sideways
arc dune

Hunam taste
"lukewarm"
brilliant flowers plug in

Adieu
moist fresh
strange chariot

Sensibilities

whores...impulse's
holondaise sauce

*

later told david,
"you're too compulsive."
"I'm not too compulsive," he said.

*

unfathomable chinatown
& the quick-witted sweetness
of those we admire

*

Is she Irish?
Business or residential
reasons to mug

*

...I applied for work at Canal Jeans (Pete) and gripped George
Schneeman's hand, brusquely; "take care," freezing in unmistakable
knot. Possible openings in a warehouse do me wrong is how it is.
The only difference between men & women: women get pregnant. Music
makes you pregnant. Privilege's grease monkey clothes on, sleeping
in total isolation...

*

Urgent day
sure to buy paper

Circus blues
a yen
infernal Cumaeian combines

*

Had me a good time
Awake
to stratosphy
the useless
Anthony Quinn

*

Hoarding makeshift
astonishment gravity
let alone fortitude
commands

When it surprises us
like the taste of a meal
Enquired far away

*

My next step distributes parked car legroom. I consider nothing interchangeable. Good omens; patience, contort. Asked speculative Gods, "What about suicide?" The weather sparkled. Articles porter the usual grieving. Annie Oakley snatchers gradually liberate the Hottentots. Solace. Allurement. Secured and disengaged alike, racked insensible, sloped in a single confusion.

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More Pricks Than Kicks
The Trial
Ragtime
Four Quartets
Philip Lamantia

} AXIS?

*

junior archetypes
aggressing, early
in the morning,
psycho-somatically,
against Education;

nightmares!

interruptions!

unpredictable banners!

...MORE STEAM

Gunnery

I.

For restlessness I go,
Loisaida's Nuyorican Poets' Cafe
to say hello Carmen, Luiz,
Mary, Lois, Miguel, Ritchie,
Raul. I say to Luiz, "Congrat-
ulations. You looked great in
Short Eyes. Sorry
I can't say you sounded great."
I'm speaking of his concave-eyed cameo
Tomb's inmate. Ritchie is despondent.
This diffidence, born of genius;
Yon Cassius clay and Energy regards,
reduces me to a Bic-Pen cap a second
he roles 'neath Soft Leather Florsheim soles
in disgust,
over simple Manpower Job which sucks

II.

Jorge Brandon
improvises on
stage corner
on cassette
Claps hand palms
ineffectively
He's maybe 60
Live dancing
is a belly
around his stride
Cheered for the line,
"I can recite Shakespeare
and Cervantes
without creating a mistake,"
He says 'mish-take'
Speaks shrilly
An actor
was once a jockey
I hear,
always wears
enamel'd red hardhat
w/block white shadow
Cranium captions:
'The Best Poetry'
'El Coco Que Habla.'

III.

Tato Laviera
is a strong brown beautiful man,
a pure politician;
Just as love is
open-heart surgery

Reverdy's Peonies

The air is yellow nouveau-rich
This city runs on Principal
Like an inventor who has no contacts
Wherever you're going begin on time
No one is being whipped
So no attorneys are necessary
No committees to help
No hassles no smiles no ripples
Sunday walk
Prank the sunny avenue
Girth presides

from Piece of Cake

AUGUST 18

A little day off in a way, I'm in a bad mood, it's a beautiful hot sunny day, Marie wants to eat whatever I eat, she's always hungry, I really feel off my rocker today. Everything pisses me off, the fucking workers, Marie's erratic nature, the disorganized state of the food (we have a refrigerator full of it while Harry and Ray continue to bring us more, all going to waste, twelve ears of two-day-old corn and the pastries, the pastries pile up in the corner of the sink, one bag on top of the other, and every once in a while I take a bite from the top bag or even go through all the bags to find an old plum pastry, they're the most yeasty), the mail: a review of my books by Michael Lally in the middle of a small press article, the fucking hammering. John Ensslin left a giant zucchini outside our door this morning and a note written on the back of his hitchhiking sign. Even the sunshine I'm not out in makes me mad, like a habit of remorse, not on schedule, never on schedule, the hammering, not knowing what to expect, folding the wash.

I'm at a loss without the parents. Ray and Harry stay away today, thinking we must have things to do, when all I want to do with my afternoons is be jabbering away with Ray, right now. I hate afternoons, they're too noisy. If they don't stop hammering, I'll kill them.

They caught the person who allegedly robbed the library trying to sell the Hawthorne and Melville books at a rare bookstore in New York City, he jumped bail. The Lenox police got angry at the New York police for setting the bail at only \$250. I hope they'll do the same for me.

Dinner at Ida and John's Restaurant yesterday was pleasant but offensive as is Saroyan's book Boys and Girls Together. I feel furious. But not because dried-out and probably frozen fish was served to us Patricia Murphy style then. Everybody says the same things about my books, it's as if only one person ever had to read them and the rest copy. I guess activity is the solution to silly memories and the afternoons in general, constant activity, my body can sense its possibilities, wishing my hair would grow longer faster, panic at my own hostility to, for example, the workers. What if I can't stand it a minute longer, as in the restaurant, where I say to myself, "What if I have to run out of this place?" Marie glopping her yogurt on the red rugs of Edith Wharton's alleged ex-house.

As this may be an exercise in writing so I yearn to go much further but not to philosophy, a bent perhaps towards the identification of everything, and is there such a thing as too much of that, the liar's problem, then only equalling nothing. What am I talking about? Does it make any sense at all? Is love the same as great detail? You could be quieter, you could be much much quieter, I threw them out. Now here I mean

the workers, I asked them to leave. After all ultimately I don't have to live with these people.

These are the things I worry about: dying, smoking, Marie choking, the swine flu, boredom, writing, sex, sharp objects like nails and money, though I don't worry too much about money, since we won't starve to death. If I told you my train of thought (now there's a phrase that must be annoying to some people (and am I supposed to put it in quotes as well?) but it's a phrase with a sense of humor) right now..., yet I wouldn't risk my reputation. Writing and sex are the only good things on that list, some are neutral. I like to get alot of sun. Of dying and the swine flu I guess I only fear pain, loss of consciousness, hospitals and fever, with respect to each. Lately I feel I am an eccentric wearing a traditional cloak. And so I am not supposed to let my irrational fears fly out of my cloak and signal to others on the street from the top of my head.

Ray is afraid of walking in a downward direction. Truly, a little slope can cause it, a normal incline in the earth, also giant mountains with their cliff faces on them. I suppose I believe you can do anything, and even if you might get sick or die, you won't. But that view of life is very caught up in the belief that everything is momentous, nothing is ordinary. Perhaps I didn't say that right: I trust my sense to be unique. No, that's not it. I'm tempted to say I trust my self to be startling but that's not it either. Anyway because of this extra sense in daily life, whatever it is, because of the extra importance I give everything, when I am thrust into the ordinary shapes of mother, tenant, even person undergoing dental work, I suffer more than I have to suffer, or, my sense of extraordinariness suffers. Suffers the inability to suspend its disbelief and be engrossed in its task without imagination. So I want to be exempt, doesn't anyone.

"You think the world owes you a living," the mother of a friend of mine said to me while we were having Greek coffee and baclava at a restaurant called "Z", after having bumped into each other at the Strand Bookstore.

"Yes I do."

Yet I'm perfectly willing to work hard and die, in fact I would shoot myself if...(I can't even say what I thought here). Horrified, I'll change the subject. Yet I wonder if my little bouts with realism aren't carefully phrased by myself to introduce doubt into my life, I have the body to be too solid or stolid, and a large head. Change the subject. William Saroyan is really a pig, yet I like him better than conceptual art.

"She's freaking out, give her nitrous oxide."

Now why do I think of that now? That's what the dentist's assistant said the other day. I can't stand medication of any kind. When I was having Marie, after she was born, the hospital said to me, "Take some pain killers."

"I don't have any pain," I said.

"It'll relax you," it said.

What is that? I was very calm then, having been relieved of the burden of carrying Marie around in my belly and also of the worries that

she wouldn't be as perfect as she is. Though I didn't want Lewis to have to go home, or rather, to his room at the Autumn Inn.

Sometimes anger forms a dome over a head that wants me to be famous to exempt my eccentricities, which are so sensible, from psychology. Hysteric man seems more common, in the 1970's, than hysteric (fear of walking) woman, the knees give way. So that is like a day or part of a day's thoughts when there isn't enough activity but the mind is racing anyway. You find the life you want to live but you find your expectations frenzied, almost without you. Not many people are intelligent but who cares, I try to say. And quandaries begin. You can't be more educated, like Edmund Wilson, it's too late; you can't just be nice, it's too angry. Short of being famous to escape all this, I'll be a psychoanalyst. No, I won't be one of those. I'll be anonymous but admired all my life, I'll have my moments, I'll be an odd mother and wife, that doesn't have to be discussed, low-keyed, I'll just be sentient and struggling when I have to be, but surely, anyway it happens, I'll continue to write great books once in a while unless my luck is so bad I have to shoot myself, in which case I'll have written some of them already anyway. What a day I'm having!

You can't expect to do your work and be great at it and just be calm and relaxed all the time. You have to go the whole way, to put it all wrong. I think everybody knows this but me. So I'll pencil in the rest of my life to keep it in mind and hope I have a chance to go over it again later. Surely I hurry too much, but I seem to know what I'm doing when it comes to something important. I'm going to change Marie, go out and buy Lewis a pair of pants. Then I'll fix dinner and watch the jerks at the convention. I'll meditate politics and try to make some outrageous remarks to ex-radicals Harry and Ray. I'll have all these thoughts over again and more. I'll sort the laundry, pot the new plants and wash the new rugs. I'll put Marie to bed, go back to my books and get satisfied, sexually, a need leftover from yesterday's somewhat public and exciting though definitely one-sided blowjob. I'll ask Lewis to make sure he's my friend for life. I'll get organized and please the parents because I like them and they're good to us. I'll try to remember my dream tomorrow, casual on the outside: "It was, I was dreaming I was here where I am." That's been it lately, a recurrent dream.

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Actually not many people die. The lady from Guam was very nervous when she seconded Ford's nomination. I mean you don't hear about people our age popping off like flies. Unless you read alot of trash magazines and watch late-night t.v., and the way people walk the streets so jauntily you'd think there was nothing at all to fear. Everyone goes about alone, but what are they thinking about, driving their dangerous cars around without a thought? Maybe America has done me in.

Imagine you're sixteen and driving down Main Street (no, forget you're sixteen) and turning off onto the Edgcombe street, Sunset Street, it's midnight, Aloha! No, you pull into your dark house on the dark street, what's a dark horse? You feel totally secure, sure of yourself,

Nancy Drew in her blue roadster, no. But what a good independent feeling of efficiency and accomplishment you have as you flip the gears back into neutral and pull up the emergency brake, securing the car in this one spot, near your house, for the night. The door snaps shut with an expensive low-keyed bang. In fact, you bought this Mercedes because of the good sound the door makes, but you aren't thinking about that now. You cover the moist grass with your footsteps and enter the yellow house. The phone rings: you're the President!

Ray doesn't like women cronies. She and Harry stick together in a very nice way and Ray told me if Harry ever died, she wouldn't hang around with a lot of old widows. She'd rather be alone. We had a very calm night here watching the guys on t.v., Harry paying attention, Ray knitting and us fairly well just sitting. Imaginative seconding for such a tight-assed group as the gun-toting Republicans.

My hair's wet, the rugs are washed and seventy-six dollars worth of clothing put away. They like to buy us things and so impressed the salesladies at Dee's Department Store with their free-wheeling spending that Lewis and I will be too timid to return there with our own little wallets.

The balloting's going on. A lot of big fat dopes casting votes for Reagan, not a Marxist point of view in sight. I guess Marxism won't make it in the USA. Arizona the solar energy state. Yet, marxist, Americans eat too much, or is it that marxist Americans eat too much for fear of being slimmer than the other parties. So Ray and Harry got tan this afternoon, sitting in the sun in the inn garden all day, while I fussed, Marie napped, Lewis worked.

I must say it annoys me when John Leonard of the New York Times calls Clancy Sigal "a Kerouac with some brains." Clancy Sigal is not your ultimate radical either. His best book is Weekend in Dinlock which is only lacyly political, as is The Divine Comedy except that Sigal shares neither Dante's genius nor his vertiginous and all-encompassing love of gore. And Kerouac certainly did have brains as good as Beethoven's. In fact, but fact scorns a day like today, the heat is interesting and so are the veins on my daughter's tame hands.

Football, cowboys, governors, shimmering gray hair, Ray was accosted by a drunken man today who admired her hair while Harry was amused, I shower and muse death some more, there's Kojak, I vote for Avicenna the Persian philosopher and not the present president, no surprises here, "with great pride," up to Pennsylvania, all teams can win at once without it mattering, the cultural car coming by, four Fords in a chieftain's headdress, "the land of grass roots," the king fish, the beautiful volunteer, v-w-x-y-z, virginia, wisconsin, wyoming, and so on, they're polling the states, one by one, I give up, I'm going to bed. I give you fifty-nine kilometers of ink toward a basket of blood-cleansing dandelions, growing for free in the fields anyway, flowers from my best heart or even from the heat of the city, Ted and Alice and sleeping in the heat of the Lower East Side tonight again. Dante will have Vergil approach the podium in my dream and say, "I'd walk a mile for a camel."

AUGUST 19

Each evening my parents return to their room at about 9 o'clock. My mother says: "It's getting late, Harry, don't you think we should go?" My father taps his pipe against the side of the ashtray and they go. Last night, though, after much insistence on our part, they stayed till eleven watching the Republican Convention. My father's favorite politician is Nelson Rockefeller. ("Every time Rocky comes on I can't help laughing.") My mother sits in the rocking chair knitting a sweater for Marie, only half-attentive to the television, deftly working her silver needles. We watch Brinkley-Chancellor because NBC comes in clearest. My father calls Chancellor Huntley; sometimes he refers to Brinkley as Huntley. "What happened to Huntley?" he asks.

Another hot day. I walk around in blue shorts (old dungarees) and a blue T-shirt, wondering why so many of my thought processes take the form of memories.

Is the past, I imagine someone asking, the only subject that interests me? The past as seen from the present, intertwined, cut-up, a new perspective every day?

Or the same perspective, a tape-loop of someone sleeping, over and over again, unchanging?

I focus on something outside myself: religion, an old movie. I think about Abraham Abulafia, the 13th century Kabbalist, who I read about last year in Gershom Scholem's book on Jewish Mysticism, and who devised a system of meditation based on the words in the Torah, a method he called "the science of the combination of letters." Combine the letters, form new words, free associate, let the music of the new words enter your head, all of this in total solitude till you attain an ecstatic or prophetic state.

I think about the Hassidic Jews, roaming the streets of Lower Manhattan, or buying up old Borscht Belt hotels and forming religious colonies in the country, and what it would feel like to tag a label onto your sleeve--"I'm a Buddhist," "I'm a Catholic"--for the world to see.

You are your beliefs, but what do you have to do to prove your seriousness? And to whom?

I know I'm often left speechless by the way the ego uses the identity and suspect of any religion that doesn't wipe out that sense of yourself as being a certain type of person because you call yourself by a label or title.

I've watched people put other people into their pockets, I've been put there myself, what do words mean at all except to give alot of people who don't know you a general feeling of what you're like. What does calling oneself "a Buddhist" tell you about anyone? Be specific!

Does having a religion mean you don't have any other identities?

"I'm a poet, a Jew, a father, a teacher...." All these things, fragmented persons.

Today our social calendar reads: The Pleasant Valley Wildlife

Mayer & Warsh/35

Sanctuary, a place you visited often when you lived here five years ago and which you've been talking about in your sleep, practically, waiting for the opportunity to show it to me. My parents arrive and we tell them our plans. My mother places her daily bag of pastries on the table. The result of her morning shopping tour: a big plastic placemat with a pig on it, for Marie, one of the ugliest things I've ever seen.

"How nice!" we chirp, in unison.

My mother has been in every store in town at least twice.

"I like The Different Drummer best," she confides, my least favorite, a "gay" gift shop filled with assorted calendars, teacups, cucumber oils, and crap.

"Do you want some coffee?"

My father sips the coffee I bring him and unwraps the tinfoil from a chocolate kiss. Is it too early to eat chocolate? I suppose there are worse vices. I'm wearing my new sneakers and the new, blue workshirt my parents bought me yesterday at Dee's Department Store (also two pairs of corduroy pants, two turtlenecks, a pair of pants for you, \$80 worth of clothes in all). I'm not wearing two pairs of pants, don't be confused. New sneakers make me feel like a new person.

"It's good to have parents," you say.

We drive up Cliffwood Street, leaving Lenox, down a dirt road which rises steeply above a dense forest, roots of trees sunk deep in an invisible valley. Soon we can only see the tops of the trees. There's a house on the left. "Civilization," my mother comments. You nurse the baby in the back, my father stares straight ahead. Often, I wonder, is he thinking or seeing?

"What if another car comes?" my mother, the heights making her nervous, meaning is the road too narrow for two cars at the same time? As she speaks a car turns the corner and without slowing down we pass each other, no problem.

"Slow down," you say, "we're almost there."

Animals: two red foxes, a crow, two owls, a raccoon (in cages). Trails. A small museum. A summer camp. The kids are modeling clay and building animal cages. The raccoon looks like it wants to escape. There's a squirrel named "Frisky" who is true to his or her name. I'm carrying Marie on my back but can't tell what she's seeing. The foxes have red eyes. I've never been to camp. I wonder why they, foxes, are thought of as "sly" or "crafty." They seem as stereotyped as Scorpios, a foxy person, possibly sexy, sour--wine or beer not properly fermented. A foxtrot. I look down at my feet. I was supposed to lead, wasn't I? In 4/4 time.

Book leaves (stained) are said to be "foxed."

The owl never moves. It sits on its ledge and blinks. In junior high I was nicknamed "the owl" by my nemesis who, whenever he saw me, shouted "hoot! hoot!" in my ear.

Even with my glasses I couldn't see the blackboard clearly.

"Tell the teacher you have to sit up front," my mother, not aware of my inability to assert myself, advised.

Because my last name began with "W" I was usually placed in the back, where I preferred the anonymity, even though I couldn't see

anything. While the kids in the front ran errands, erased the blackboard, passed out papers, I sat in back, shielded from the gaze of the teacher, drawing what resembled "a head" in my notebook.

"Let's go this way."

We follow the roadside markers down a trail leading to a lake. My father picks up a stick off the road to use as a cane. Before he retired he used to walk home every day, from his school on 108th Street and Madison to the apartment on 28th Street and Eighth. The day is beginning to drag slightly, I'm making those puff-puff sounds in my chest, when a voice in my head says: "Wonder if there are any berries around here?"

While my father wanders down the path, I turn to you and my mother.

"Let's go berry picking," I say aloud.

"What a great idea!"

"We can drive to Peru." Peru is the town we lived in last August, and where I went berry picking every morning.

"We'll go back to Lenox, first, and get some pots."

"What do you think, Harry?"

"Yeah Harry, what do you think? Wanna go berry picking?"

"Sounds good to me."

Berry picking. Last summer I woke every morning at seven. We slept in single beds--no fun lying in bed in the morning alone. I drank my morning coffee on the back steps of our small cabin. There were the blackberries, densely packed, branch after thorny branch. The ripest and largest berries fell like small fragile jewels into my palm. Other, smaller berries required a slight tug. I buttoned the sleeve of my workshirt at the wrist to prevent the thorns from scratching me. I plunged deeper. There was a berry I'd forgotten, almost out of reach. I felt the berries were expecting me, like the grim reaper decimating the field with his silver scythe, that I was the last link on their cycle. What if no one picked them? They'd just fall off, probably, giving no pleasure to anyone. The purpose of the berries was to be plucked and eaten. The purpose of these particular berries was to star in the big pies you baked every few days. Berry picking: the eyes constantly moving. While the hands are working picking the berries the eyes rove distant bushes for a new patch or branch.

I park the car in front of The Lemon Tree and race upstairs. Mr. Hatch and his boys are hard at work in our apartment. They look dismayed when they see me, thinking I want them to leave.

"I'll only be a moment," I assure them.

Four bowls, and one big pot, is what I need.

My parents continue to delight in the great passive experience of taking long drives. My father inquires about the ethnic makeup of whatever area we're passing through.

"This is the Jewish section," I tell him, or "a lot of Italians live around here."

We drive through Pittsfield whose Jewish mayor, 31 year old Evann Dobelle, recently switched parties so he could back Jimmy Carter. Actually, I read an article in The Berkshire Eagle implying that it was Dobelle's wife whom Carter was really interested in, calling her "a very close member of the Carter entourage."

I tell this to my father thinking he'll be impressed, especially the part about Dobelle being Jewish, but he doesn't respond, I might as well be talking to myself.

This is the same route you and I drove a hundred times last year whenever we went from Pittsfield to Worthington.

"This is the bad section of town."

"There's our old bank."

There's the Cumberland Farm gas station where I used to stop for gas, 51¢ a gallon.

We drive through Dalton, a suburb on the outskirts of Pittsfield, and Hinsdale: "We used to go to the pharmacy here."

Marie is sleeping. My father is under the impression we're going to Worthington, to the house where he visited us last November when we were married.

"Peru," you announce, "is the highest point in Western Mass."

"It's where they lived before they moved to Worthington," my mother says, hoping this information will enlighten my father. It doesn't matter. The road from Hinsdale to Peru is a kind of no man's land, with Hinsdale representing the last trace of civilization before the real country begins. By civilization I mean suburbia as opposed to small-town country life. It's easy to get lost in a time warp, lost in one's own thoughts as the landscape buzzes by, and the feeling that you could be anywhere takes over, at least that's how we felt last year every time we drove home from Pittsfield, exhausted after a day spent gathering supplies from the big world.

There's Ashmere Lake, pristine blue, reflecting the clouds and the houses. In winter men with fishing poles cut circles in the ice in the center of the lake. I try to super-impose the image of the ice covered lake onto the image I'm seeing now, when my father asks, on cue: "What's the name of this lake?"

We drive up a steep hill into the center of Peru which consists of an old church and a school, no post office or general store. My mother expresses amazement that we lived so far away from everything. You tell the story of the great lightning storm when the foundation of our cabin began to shake and the TV suddenly popped as if someone had pulled the plug.

"What did you do at night?"

We played cards, gin rummy and solitaire, read endless books. No one visited, not even Clark and Susan. We didn't have a phone. We ate big meals, steak, home fries, kept journals, wrote a few poems, talked alot, read the newspapers, drank beer, and counted our blessings, drove to Worthington for the mail, picked berries, baked pies.

Henry Miller, our former neighbor, is putting a coat of paint on his siding as we drive by down the dirt road leading to our old house and the center of the berry patch.

We each take a bowl and start off into the bushes. It doesn't take more than a moment to realize that someone's been here before us. No car parked outside our old cabin but a beach chair, just the kind my father and I were searching for, on the lawn outside to testify the house is occupied. In some places the second crop of pink and still unripe

berries is coming up. Most of the already ripe berries are too small to even bother with. The giant blueberry patch down the hill from our house is barren. Dogs are barking, get off our land, no trespassing.

We finally locate an untouched area in the bushes surrounding a house that hasn't been lived in, we guess, all summer. You carry Marie in the backpack which means your picking ability is limited so it's your job to find the berries and my job to plunge in. I find a branch close to the ground with literally hundreds of ripe, juicy berries, a goldmine, get down on my hands and knees and go to work.

Last summer I began to dream about berries. Lying awake in bed, I closed my eyes and the berries appeared, waiting for me to reach out and grab them.

"I can see the berries," I told you. That was my final message before falling asleep.

The purpose, today, is to pick enough so that you can bake a pie.

"How many do we have?"

The big bowl is filling up. My parents haven't had much luck but seem to be having fun.

I wonder why berries grow where they do and whether there's a predictable environment where you know you'll always find them. I wonder if there's a berry patch in Lenox.

My father asks how much rent we paid for the cabin and shakes his head when I tell him, trying to explain how the rents triple during the summer.

"We used to pay that much for two months in Old Forge."

Back in the car, my mother balances the bowl of berries in her lap.

"Don't eat any! We won't have enough for the pie."

I'm concerned about the pie; I can almost taste it already.

I say goodbye to Peru in my mind in the same way I said "goodbye" out loud to every place I ever left knowing I'd never see it again when I was a child. Goodbye to my old bedroom at 2194 Barnes Avenue in the Bronx, and now goodbye to you, old berry patch.

Marie cries all the way back to town, all 30 miles, through Hinsdale, Dalton and Pittsfield. I drive too fast, but not fast enough, I hope, that my driving made you nervous. A baby crying uncontrollably in a car is distracting especially if the baby is your own. How's that for a homily? Home is Main Street, that house right there.

"That only took 35 minutes," my father reports.

While you and my mother go upstairs, with the baby and the berries, my father and I walk up the street to the supermarket, Loeb's.

("Here's ten dollars," my mother says, before getting out of the car.)

I have a mental list of what to buy based on our previous, secret discussions. It's been years since I've gone shopping with my father.

"Where's the kisses?"

He takes out his reading glasses and inspects the price.

"Too expensive." Again, he shakes his head.

He checks the prices of the huge chocolate bars and tells me the comparative New York prices.

"I guess I'll get cookies instead."

Chocolate grahams. Also: water melon. Baby food.

My parents don't know we use food stamps. At least I think they don't know. At this point it might disillusion them as they think we live so well!

Each night we prepare dinner together while my parents play with Marie.

You tell me what to do.

"Set the table."

"Peel the cucumber."

"Shuck the corn."

I sit on the new kitchen stool my mother bought us and slice a tomato, while you squeeze oranges for campari. Campari before dinner, a little ritual which began two days ago.

"I have to get a bottle of this when I get home."

"Can I refresh your drink?"

"Who's Dole?" I ask my father, who's sitting at the dining room table, reading The Eagle.

In New York, when we stayed with my parents, you complained that my mother cleared away the dishes before you were finished eating. It became a joke; after every dinner she'd begin circling the table, only to realize that you weren't even half done! Now, in your own home, you smoke a cigarette before coffee and dinner seems to go on forever with no complaints. I scrape the plates and place them in the dishwasher. Heat the coffee and arrange the pastries in the center of the table.

"Can I have a knife?"

A knife for my father to divide the pastries -- cheese, prune and plum danishes -- into equal portions. My parents take their coffee black. My mother is on a low cholesterol diet.

"My mother," she says, "died of a heart attack. She had high blood pressure and I don't want that to happen."

Too much food! We walk them back to the Village Inn, Marie on my back, where they'll sit in their room or on the porch or in the television lounge downstairs. My mother is reading Ragtime. My father smokes his pipe and does the Times crossword puzzle. I wonder how much I'm like him, or them. I guess I look (physically) most like my mother. You look exactly like the photos I've seen of your father. Who does Marie look like? Does it matter?

"Vilna...capital of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic...about 80 miles from the Polish border...480 WSW from Moscow...an important industrial, commercial and cultural center...grain and timber industries, and farm machinery...the city is surrounded by hills...the old section, with narrow winding streets, lies at the foot of Castle Hill...numerous Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant churches...a Moslem mosque... notable public buildings...the Cathedral of St. Stanislaus, Cathedral of St. Nicholas, churches of St. Anne, St. Theresa and the Holy Spirit... and a 16th century gate with a famous image of the Virgin." Etc.
"Population (1959) 235,000."

I can see those streets. I think of the church in Brooklyn where you went to school and which we visited last spring. Your old neighborhood. I think of Rikers Island. I think of Europe -- Genoa, a horrible

hotel near the railroad station, 1967. I think of Venice and how much fun we'll have travelling around the world after Marie grows up. After Marie, who looks most like you, and all our other children, ha-ha, grow up. I think of Valery Larbaud's poem about railroad stations. I think of my great grand-father, Louis Freedson, about John Ashbery's poem, "Lithuanian Dance Band," of Dominic Sotelo, a student in my workshop at St. Marks, who died of "heart failure" in his small apartment on the Lower East Side, and whatever became of his notebooks and poems with their Greek references no one in the workshop could understand. (Reading a poem of Dominic's was like pondering a chess move for two hours).

"If Eliot could do it," he'd insist, "so can I."

I watch the cars return from Tanglewood through the living room windows, strip the tinfoil from the last chocolate kiss, and wonder if Marie or her kids will ever read this book.

"Is that pie I smell?"

Is that tinfoil I'm eating?

JAMES SHERRY

Idyll

Maybe I don't understand my own mind,
but when I try to find some reasons why
I'm always dozing, thoughts flock around, eager
to be the one I choose; so I can't.
If I do pick one, the others intrude.
If I catch one by the neck, it babbles
to be returned. And if by inertia
or impetus beyond control I'm carried
beyond them to where I know their names,
I can't think; I don't know how I got there;
I don't remember really what happened.
It's as if I slept and dreamed I'd know
why.

fireworks

sentinel towers keep away the moon
blinking
barking
protecting fortress america

in their cages the primates inhale burning noxious fumes
to dull their awareness

the dim stars
enter their dreams
as splinters in the night

everywhere is a howling & a moaning & a screaming

but the blissful are content
to water their plants
& turn out the lights
to watch the fireworks

Didactyllic Cliches

for Ted Berrigan

the release from tension
as in peacefully dying while quietly breathing
is desirable
in this daily life

to learn how to rest
first set straight your dirty laundry
your correspondence
& your dinnerware

treat yourself as an honored guest in your own home
& in your own body

Love Yourself

& provide nourishment

so you can take care
good care
of the real business of being here

& on solemn sabbath mornings
peel away

your clothes
& peel away

your body
carefully caressing each layer
& soothing all the bruises
so you touch the points of tightness
& make them melt away

Sometimes you must surrender to SORROW!
Don't be afraid to cry.

But it is best to cry in your most comfortable corner
& then come on strong
with compassion your greatest passion

you can't go wrong

remember
you're lucky to be here
& you're real lucky if you can afford to get sick

don't push your luck

I drink to your health with aguas minerales
wishing they were tehuacan
but any of the waters of the earth will do to cure to heal
what ails you

listen brother just listen
for in the voice of any brook
and in the hollows of the ojos
which are springs
& also eyes
our goddess
wanders the earth in a white dress of clouds

none would argue her beauty & her grace
tho many would dispute upon her name
which I say in all truth

I dunno

at the top of the Klau Pavillion
of the Montefiore Hospital snowcovered in the Bronx
I clean the grime of decades off the window
so I can see the sun sink slowly into the abysmal clouds
of poison gas and sea water enveloping distant Manhattan
Red Orb slowly disappearing dropping sucked up by
giant bridge span of triboro
plane floating slowly across
the whipped brush stroked angelic winglike
grey smudge clouds
& scarlet rippled marbled dream layer glowing
reflecting disappearing illumination
above the frozen tributaries
the subway roaring distantly
grey iron on brown steel elevated
downtown headed downtown

where I live is invisible in the thickening dusk
which is unnatural but now so long with us
we fail to even notice how the spires of the city poke out
barely visible in the shroud of the dream
the nightmare of some science fiction writer of the 40's
as the sleek jet planes cruise past the rising towers
turreted antennae
only needing observation stations everywhere to make
the dream the nightmare complete come true

across the street in the medical school
a young technician's electric lamp radiates hope
but below me in the beds lay the bodies of the dying
men & women who consider themselves lucky to prolong
& delay for so long the inevitable
& nobody's in a hurry to leave
seems not just human
look into the eyes of any dog

& I forget to pray
as the light of day is gone behind the giant monolithic
towered island which reaches up skyward
from every point on the horizon
every second escaping thru windows the spirits of the dying
on the wings of the destroyer
every second entering thru the windows the spirit of the maker
the creator on the wings of those same angels

That's what i guess that's what i figure
I can't see those winged creatures except their echo
in the clouds in my memory
when the solid brick buildings danced like plastic man
before my eyes in unison
as i breathed & the universe breathed around me
then indeed i saw how those windows talk

to the east night is already glittering somewhere up the canyon
bleak white blizzard covered rooftops will glitter to the
full moon tonight
I promise never to be hopeless

as if it were my destiny to drive truck

as if it were my destiny to drive truck again I got
three rides in the last three days in giant diesel overland rigs
Three very different rigs driven by three very different drivers

Wally I liked the best He was the baby twin brother of
Mickey Mantle identical in every respect except he was
five and a half feet tall but otherwise just as strong so
he got into lots of fights in bars taking on 10 or 12 guys
(so he told it) & did a week's time of a one-to-twenty
assault on an officer rap before the judge for one reason or
another turned sweet & paroled him on the condition that he take a
job driving truck

His teeth were all fucked up from getting punched &
kicked but in the shadow of the dimly lit old truck cab
rapidly shooting east along stretching interstate this was not
so evident as we and the sun parted ways & the reddish light of
dusk slowed quickly to purple twilight in our convex mirrors
showing a golden blue around the corona of the earth & our
headlights blazed onward willingly plunging into the black hiway
night that hungrily engulfed us leaving the smog & the valley of
Tucson suspended in time behind us

He was handsome in the dark of hiway night
travelin in the ancient roaring truck an old Kenworth
runnin machine he referred to as "she" & claimed to own

He spoke Oklahoma & it was easily intelligible
& tho he was shy as is the manner of men of West Texas &
Oklahoma when they are not being rowdy he was not impossible
to engage in conversation & he fairly soon began to talk
expansively about himself & I being a hitchhiker who does
his job willingly and well listened & asked him questions
for my own instruction as well as to stimulate his mind
& keep him awake & attentive to the task at hand as the
wheels rolled into & out of his millionth ragged edged hour
on the hiway line

I liked the way he drove because it was more like the way
I drove the old international five-by-three & five-by-four boxed
rigs I'd been taught by Sam to drive & Sam had been a true
master teacher

But this was a diesel which is driven at different engine
speeds & has a few other tricks to learn before one can take the
wheel

Three days before I had been puzzled by a driver who
seemed to lug his engine as Sam had taught me never to do

Wally kept that sonofabitch or that ol gal as he called her
wound up tight at twenny-three hundred in high gear In lower
gears he used twenny-one as a shift point up and eighteen-hunnerd
for shifting down He was moving along at sevensny-five
miles an hour on the flat He had his fifth main bolted off
so in effect he had three more gears he wasn't using & claimed
he could do a hundred-an-five miles an hour on the flat

loaded or unloaded & I believed him

but then as if it were my destiny to never drive truck
but to see truck to feel truck to live & experience truck
for what it is which is life at hard labor & a hell of a way
to make a living time carried me through on another truck
to Albuquerque & the driver had numbers tattooed on his arm
& he knew I wasn't no good ol boy no matter haow ah tawked
but he was takin me on thru anyhow & we both wore sunglasses
to fight off the dawn's early light which silhouetted
enchanted vistas of far flung magical purple hued magenta voiced
mesas

but I bailed out of that sonofabitch faster than he
could've imagined I could he was still sayin take'er easy
as I was blowin up like dust with a sleeping bag comin off the
freeway Central Avenue frosty in the may dawn

Then by more magical truck it became clear that this
was not my destiny to drive truck but rather to see truck
as the dollar & the insane enslavement of all my brothers &
sisters & I could throw in the Ruble & the Mark & the other
paper magic with that but even so I could see there was no
free lunch

So I felt well I'll pay & you'll pay & we'll all
pay together until we see how to make our labor make some sense
but there will always be some wise guys who figure it will be
easier for them if they rip us off

So that's how come I find myself here by the last patch of
snow in the shade of the big trees on the mountains in May
ice water rippling through my motors cours in in springtime
out of the earth

TED BERRIGAN

RED WEATHER

Here I am at 8:08 p.m. indefinable ample rhythmic frame
The air is biting, February, fierce arabesques
 on the way to tree in winter streetscape
I drink some American poison liquid air which bubbles
 and smoke to have character and to lean
In. The streets look for Allen, Frank, or me, Allen
 is a movie, Frank disappearing in the air, it's
Heavy with that lightness, heavy on me, I heave
 through it, them, as
The Calvados is being sipped on Long Island now
 twenty years almost ago, and the man smoking
Is looking at the smilingly attentive woman, & telling.
Who would have thought that I'd be here, nothing
 wrapped up, nothing buried, everything
Love, children, hundreds of them, money, marriage-
 ethics, a politics of grace,
Up in the air, swirling, burning even or still, now
 more than ever before?
Not that practically a boy, serious in corduroy car coat
 eyes penetrating the winter twilight at 6th
& Bowery in 1961. Not that pretty girl, nineteen, who was
 going to have to go, careening into middle-age so,
To burn, & to burn more fiercely than even she could imagine
 so to go. Not that painter who from very first meeting
I would never & never will leave alone until we both vanish
 into the thin air we signed up for & so demanded
To breathe & who will never leave me, not for sex, nor politics
 nor even for stupid permanent estrangement which is
Only our human lot & means nothing. No, not him.
There's a song, "California Dreaming", but no, I won't do that.
I am 43. When will I die? I will never die, I will live
To be 110, & I will never go away, & you will never escape from me
 who am always & only a ghost, despite this frame, Spirit
Who lives only to nag.
I'm only pronouns, & I am all of them, & I didn't ask for this
 You did
I came into your life to change it & it did so & now nothing
 will ever change
That, and that's that.
Alone & crowded, unhappy fate, nevertheless
 I slip softly into the air
The world's furious song flows through my costume.

18.2.78

New York Yankees vs. Boston Red Sox
Yankee Stadium September 14, 1977

H: the monolithic bronx county courthouse looms out of the depths of the night as the mickey mouse organist plays some vaguely tangoesque warm-up music for the Boston Beantown (Berrigan curses inaudibly in background then sez here we go) players to hit fungoes to the outfield to about 7:22 on a September 14 Boston playing the yankees in a crucial game for the red sox who are totally caving in in the heat of the 1977 pennant race

T: What're you on, Harris?

H: I'm on the edge of my seat Ted

T: Harris has gone out to get us a beer he's three seats away from me and looking out the back window of the stadium talking about the amazing view away from the ballpark all those various kinds of drugs that he's taken have no doubt ah put him in such a position that anything he says tonight will be completely illogical relatively useless & totally inaccurate however it may have some saving wit

the red sox are taking fielding practice
the field is beautiful yankee stadium is beautiful we're sitting directly behind home plate with no obstructions between us & the field in the very last row of the upper deck from where we can see the entire field stretched out in front of us

we haven't found who the official what the official starting line-ups are yet but ah we have found out that ah it is feasible to be here if somewhat odd

the fucking redcoats have invaded the stadium & are playing very loudly some fucking noise
there's no pussy among the redcoats as far as I can see there's a lot of pussy among the yankees let's hope they show it tonight

H: Say that a little louder punk & you'll be thrown out of the upper deck!
(martial music recognizable as the theme from ROCKY in background)

T: I'd like to say hello to my mother & I hope she's enjoying watching me here at the game

H: Well Ted I'm totally ripped out of my skull I must say & this uh panorama of this giant Yankee Stadium all lit up is On bullievabull

T: Don't gimme this Phil Rizzuto bullshit I mean my mother actually is probably watching this game since they're televising it in Boston too Thank God tho she can't hear us My mother brought me up to go to ball games & I'm happy to say that I'm at one tonight

The opposing pitchers tonight are the puerto rican flash-in-the-pan Ed Figueroa who will be lucky to last thru three innings in my opinion & the decrepit pot-bellied Reggie Cleveland who is probably not going to last much longer Probably the game will boil down to a contest between the plug-ugly ape Thurman Munson & the sensitive... ah intelligent & statesmanlike Reggie Jackson against the ah fat headed hotheaded marvelous Carl Yastrzemski & the ah secret agent for the red sox who's liable to do the Yankees some serious damage is uh the dago wonder from god knows where---Bernie Carbo ---that's your expert announcer's opinion

H: It's really hard to say anything after that Ted but I do notice that Reggie Jackson is warming up maybe he's gonna pitch tonight.

T: Well he can't do any more damage on the mound than he does in fucking rightfield

H: Or homeplate for that matter Although I know you're a great defender of Reggie Jackson as being a fabulously abused superstar.

T: In fact I wish he was sitting here next to me now instead of you.

H: Well I do too but unfortunately we might have to sit thru this game together although together is hardly an adjective that could be applied to you

T: Thank you Joe & I notice that you didn't really hit all that well in the world series in 1946 either there are three sonofabitching yankees doing something really weird in centerfield behind the ah fucking redcoat marching band they're doing something like looking for contact lenses between their legs while sitting down.

H: No I believe it's uh Billy Martin's secret autofellatio exercise that he has his centerfielders do just before the game.

T: Well they seem to have stopped doing it now & they are now coming off the field let's see if we can get their numbers actually there's some uh something something very peculiar actually just happened now there's a man walking across the outfield who uh seems to have nothing to do with the game has on a white outfit now ~~ermmmmmmm~~ there's uh two more guys running back and forth man this Yankee team is full of hot dogs there are these four guys running all around behind the band actually they're probably the bullpen pitchers whom the Yankees will need tonight hopefully there goes Bill Campbell down to the bullpen if he changed his number from 38 to 10

H: Now if you look carefully at the tenement building overlooking the bleachers you can see all kinds of amazing people hanging over the edge watching the game

T: I can't see them O yeah I see'em.

H: I remember during the vietnam war going to uh goin to baseball games & not standin up durin the star spangled banner

T: Well I'm glad to hear that you supported us while we while I was in Vietnam getting my ass shot off by the fucking gooks & picking up incidentally a \$500 a day heroin habit which I still can't support ...I don't have the habit anymore but I still am getting dunned by the credit union.

H: We're the worst jackoff jokers I've ever heard

T: This is no joke.

H: There seems to be a lot of empty seats in the stands tonight as if the Yankees winning the game last night took a lot of interest away from the NY fans

T: However the uh the redcoats are now uh reforming into some marching position & they're gonna haul ass off the field & uh meanwhile a few red sox hot dogs have uh run out on the field to do windsprints. I understand that the national anthem is being sung tonight by Mushka.

There's Billy Martin & Don Zimmer down there make a little announcement will ya.

H: You hear those drums that's the death knell for the red sox that Billy Martin had ordered especially for this pre game ceremony. Martin appears to be in a lousy mood & uh Don Zimmer seems to be ready to punch Martin in the face as they exchange lineups.

T: It's a wonder that the drum & bugle corps agreed to do what Martin said since most of the other Yankees don't. Don Zimmer & Billy Martin have just given the lineup cards to these four umpires in the maroon jackets. The umpires all look like they're very hungover...should be an interesting game...there's a huge pennant waving from the uh rightfield which says uh JOE GARAGIOLA SUCKS
I wonder how long it'll be before they take that down?

H: Thank you Tony Uh...

T: It is now uh 8:02 official time & this fucking ball game hasn't started. I consider that the Yankees owe me 11 cents so far for not starting on time; however here comes another hot dog with a yankee jacket on walking in slowly from the 430 ft mark.

H: It's Ed Figueroa showing off his form here comes a bull just let out of the Boston bull pen

T: Being rid by uh holy shit that's stevie cauthen riding that bull Well they sure entertain ya here at Yankee Stadium folks However nothing has been as entertaining so far as these pills uh which doctors in NYC give out so freely the Yankee fans uh vicious idiotic animals that they are are beginning to clap & HERE COME THE YANKEES FUCK EM! (wild applause & cowbell)

PA ANNOUNCER: Ladies & Gentlemen on September 14th 1814 a hundred & sixty-three years ago today the Star Spangled Banner was written (boos & cheers) On this...

T: I could have done a better job of it myself.

...163rd anniversary Our national anthem will be played by the Boston Pops Orchestra (tremendous chorus of boos drowns out everything) under the direction of Arthur Fiedler.

T: Boo Booouo Crowd: BOOOOOOOOOOOOO

T: Fortunately they seem to be playing it in Boston so we can't hear it (anthem begins---a recording over the PA system) I think that Alex Katz is right the American flag definitely is a symbol (flag is shown on giant scoreboard tv screen, as anthem continues suddenly is drowned out by cheers) I see Reggie Jackson's back (screen shows Jackson's back wearing #44, crowd gets louder) Reggie Jackson's back has just been projected onto the scoreboard! (wild cheering) These sucker Yankee fans will be singing a different tune when ol' Yaz comes to bat.

H: A shameful display of bronx provincialism as the rabid Yankee fans drown out the national anthem. Ed Figueroa's statistics are flashed on the giant tv screen. Lifetime vs Boston 7 & 5 shuddup 51 & 40 lifetime record pretty---

T: 1977 versus Boston 0 & 2!

H: That's what counts. Figueroa whips a few warmup pitches into Munson & Reggie Jackson is bobbling the balls that are thrown to him by a batboy; looks like a bad night for Reggie.

T: Rick Burleson is warming up in the on deck circle PA ANNOUNCER: AT FIRST BASE JOHNNY PESKY johnny pesky is coaching at third base uh at first base & Eddie Yost at third Eddie Figueroa's curve ball looks very poor tonight so far (crowd boos as announcer sez #7 Rick Burleson) BOOOOOOO the uh sporting yankee fans give a healthy round of boos to the inoffensive rick burleson that animal sound (someone screaming unintelligible exhortations) is coming from directly below us.

H: Burleson taps the plate with his bat figueroa winds up delivers outside ball one BOOOO the yankee fans are booing every pitch figueroa comes back with a fastball lined into rightfield but Jackson is backpedalling & makes the catch (APPLAUSE) whips it in to Willie Randolph throws it around the infield

T: That's a pretty hard hit ball folks fortunately jackson just closed his eyes & caught it here's bernie carbo the joe dimaggio of the lower class set

H: Carbo takes his time steps out now he's in
 straight away T: they're playin
 H: a strike on the outside corner (applause)
 figueroa adopting a matador stance on the mound
 T: not much wind
 tonight

H: Carbo swings at an inside fastball & misses that was a pretty swishy swing whatya think ted?
 T: it was a fucking outside fastball
 too

H: carbo pacing around talking to himself at the plate...
 T: in Italian
 ...the Boston Red Sox are completely psyched out Carbo takes the pitch high for a ball one & two the yankees look magnificent against the beautiful green turf here as CARBO BOUNCES IT UP THE MIDDLE to Figueroa a little bouncer he's out (cheers) (YAHOO) & Freddie Lynn comes up his .252 batting average pretty ridiculous he takes a ball he pops it up bucky dent calls for it 3 up an 3 down

T: Looks like the red sox are seeing the ball pretty well tonight another inning or two will be all for big Eddie now we'll see if fatass Reggie Cleveland has anything on the ball

H: Baltimore is leading Toronto 2 to 1 in the eighth inning first game of a twinnight double header it's 8:11 & this fucking organist is gonna drive me insane if I have to listen to him play for the rest of this game

T: He's playing the yank's are coming, however the yanks are going!

H: The yanks are going to kick ass actually it's hopeless for boston to play in this park they jest get totally psyched out by the yankee fans

T: While it's true the red sox are the greatest choke artists in baseball it would be only justice in god's eyes if they would beat the shit out of these arrogant cocksureidiotic imbecilic & outrageously ugly new york yankees the only thing about manhattan & new york that is not wonderful is the new york yankees

H: well many other refugees from the hinterlands agree with you Ted but here in the bronx you'd be hard pressed to find many people who share your opinion of the yankees however I do feel that they are a bunch of bush league yo-yos & I really wonder what we're doing here tonight (big cheer)...

Swell Picker-Upper Mutiny

Glad you like my friends to begin
Your thin wrists ease
Consider honest as joy
intimacy with anyone
Not fakes to Rembrandt's hand
but personal put-upon air

Where a boy amid cheese
or seaman on his knee
Does he have to look after
Want a family odd weeks

One mean artifice, Moon Goddess
with no eternal genes
Quel Pretense
Me generous
Scoop garbage can lids to fix them firm
Would I leave a stranger flat tired in the rain
What pumpkin on radio gnaws me so
to nibble my smiley fillings

Aqua machine companion
Weep for me & jeer persona
I'm talking to you Punk
who I trust among giants
drugged however many times

The best reading I seen was lyrical & curt
as a jab to the champion's pompadour
flicked prior to freedom

Brown sheets Wow she's beautiful with pupils
or orange & yellow pillowcase by dim bulb
Count exact, ask
Don't mind being corny if I do

A Gourmet Salutes the Best Verse

"Pass the biscuit"

Pink stripe mattress scorch
Garbage hurled from the wall by police
This my detail
strewn about the slush like eggshell & saran wrap
No chance of getting fired
Television introduces the World

Better than high school
& companion when I swallow
Distracts from frying pan
teflon scratched off center

"O you're one of those domestic poets"
Fast anecdotes to break into tedious soup
Black bean, in a novel maybe,
thick with Parthenons of cracker
Left standing to cool out

Appetite, that's what I'm after
Terrific mouth water
"Irrigate the broccoli dust"
This Chinatown ain't cheap
Like having Mickey Spillane for a mother
the fact we can't forget
Larry's apt to evict us

(I just stuck both feet into my hideous mouth
& spilled the beans brown on my clean knees
What an awkward occupation