

the trouble with midnight

(a book about the past)

the trouble with midnight is entirely a work of the imagination. It is not based on, or inspired or suggested by, any actual persons (living or dead) or events. Even the "I" is an imagined "I," and to the extent that there is a "you," it is an imagined "you."

Beyond that, it is a book about what I know.

the trouble with midnight
part one:
correlationism and its discontents

locations don't count

Nobody knew where he came from.
We're talking about Jimmy here.
Guy with three oval rings of keys hangin' off his belt.
Guy whose ribs show through his "Legally Blonde II" tee shirt
under his green army jacket.
Guy who walks like he knows where he's goin'
in boots that have been everywhere.

Just blew into L.A. on the Santa Anas
more hungry than lost.
Met a hooker in Silver Lake told him,
"Just look for the yellow signs, man. Ones with the arrows."

After a five mile walk he spotted one.
"Hungry Man Base Camp."
That'll be me, said Jimmy.

"Where dah grub?" he asked, jingling his keys.
"Craft service other side uh'duh grip truck.
You been out wida second unit, shootin' pickups?"
"Word. It were a bitch and I be starved, bro."

Jimmy reached for a danish, a donut and, as an afterthought,
a napkin.
"You the new dolly grip?"
"Guess I am."
"I'm workin' pyro this show."

"Pyro girl," he thought. Wild.

"Wanna go for a walk?" he asked, surveying the fringes of the lifeless, Pacoima-adjacent North Valley neighborhood where they were shooting.

"Okay. Nothin' else to blow up until 3:30."

Two blocks later:

"How come the tarot card lady's got a brand new Lexus in her driveway?"

"Maybe she knows somethin' we don't," says Jimmy.

"Got fifteen bucks?"

"Nah," says Jimmy. "But it's only ten anyway."

She points at the neon: ***"Soul-mate special. \$15"***

"Hear they're gonna tear all this down and put up a theme park."

"That so," says Jimmy.

"So. And y'know what they're gonna' call it?"

"No."

"Waste Land."

Jimmy wipes the glaze on his Legally Blonde II tee shirt.

"Don't mind me," says pyro girl. "I did two quarters at UCLA."

"Who won?"

"Gaudeamus sequitur. Hey don't you gotta' get back and push that dolly, or like – lay some track?"

"Guess so."

"I like you," says pyro girl.

"How come?"

"Cuz you're the only man on this shoot whose gut doesn't hang lower than his –"

Something goes boom.

"Genny just blew. Take a break, people."

Voice over a bullhorn.

"Let's go in here," says pyro girl, opening the door to an empty Star Wagon.

She latches it behind her.

Twenty five minutes later.

"I like coningulatin' even more than I like coffulatin'."

Says Jimmy.

"I never met a guy like you," says Sarah, offering him a tictac.

Ten hours later, Jimmy helped Sarah to wrap; and later still, at her place in Reseda, to unwrap.

Jimmy crashed at Sarah's place for three months. Days he spent riding busses, looking for old crew tee shirts at the Goodwill and in dumpsters, following the yellow signs. Meanwhile she taught him enough about pyro so that he could do assisting on heavy days. And at the end of a long night of donuts and explosions, she was the powder, and he was the fuse.

Then Sarah got a three-week gig on a cycle pic shooting from Lone Pine up to the Funeral Mountains, edge of Death Valley.

For the first time in his life, as far as he remembered, Jimmy was lonely. He tried to read her books on pyrotechnics, but got stuck on words like "exothermic" and "deflagration." Reading did not come naturally to Jimmy.

Then one night he heard her old Datsun pull up and caught himself smiling. Never before had Jimmy wanted to see someone. He'd forgotten to shave. He'd forgotten to put on a fresh crew tee shirt. Everything was wrong.

"Oh, hi Jimmy," says Sarah. "Dave, this is Jimmy. He's been doing some assisting for me. Found what you need for tomorrow, Jim? Early call, huh?" she asks, as she ushers him out the door.

"Who is that guy?"

"First A.D. from the show I just finished. He's got me a new gig starting Tuesday. Six weeks in Seattle."

"You ballin' him?"

"Whoa, dude. Remember The Bellow The Line Bible, Chapter One, Verse One: ***Locations Don't Count.***"

"What does that mean?"

"It means that when you're on location, you can make it with whoever you want. Even if you're married or living with someone or have a life partner. ***LDC.*** I've even seen it on a tee shirt."

"But this aint no location."

"For pyro girl, the earth is her location. Now get lost, creep. Go back to where you came from. And next time you want to get fed or get laid, just look for the yellow sign."

It's a week later. Jimmy's standing up on the bus, jangling his keys, looking out the window for that color. **Then he sees it:** *"Inferno Basecamp."* He reaches for the cord, but it's too late.

"I'm the last nigger alive and I've seen Jesus Christ."

A young white kid with ear buds and iPod, his head never stops boppin', his hip never stops hoppin'. He be blissed.

"I'm the last nigger alive and I've seen Jesus Christ."

"Hey, dude," says Jimmy to the kid. *"Locations Don't Count."* Below the Line Bible, Chapter One, Verse One. ***Locations Don't Count.***

"What you botherin' the kid for?" asks the fat lady driver.

"Locations Don't Count!"

"I'm the last nigger alive and I've seen Jesus Christ."

Two L.A. County Sheriffs Deputies appear behind Jimmy, a man and a woman.

"Let's see some ID."

"Read The Below the Line Bible. **Locations don't count!**"

"I'm the last nigger alive and I've seen Jesus Christ!"

It's just after dusk on the busway in the mid-San Fernando Valley of Los Angeles, California. We're at the donut shop across from L.A. Valley College, minding our own business, wiping the glaze on our shirt, since the napkins they give you are so small.

But we can just barely see two uniformed deputies escorting a handcuffed man in a green army jacket off the double-length Orange Line headed to the NoHo subway, where it connects with Metrorail, Amtrak, and all points east.

It's pretty far away, but it seems to us like the sheriffs are roughing the guy up a bit, like he's refusing to walk in the direction they want him to go.

And it looks to us as if the guy is shouting something. Shouting it loudly, tearing at the cuffs trying to shout it ever louder, for all the world to hear.

But we're too far away.

We can't make out a thing.

Only the sound of the busses.

And the cars.

And a staple gun, attaching a yellow sign to a telephone poll.

lockdown

"We were camping out on a high mountain with low visibility due to thunder. 'There are so many planes overhead,' said a girl with braids the color of straw and much else to recommend her. 'It means war,' said the guy with clumsy spectacles and a hoodie with a fur collar. 'He would look much better if he got contacts,' thought the girl. 'Are you sure it's safe here tonight?' I asked, toying with his gloom like a naughty child with a poisonous spider.

"It was then that he approached. The shadow with the long cape and the quiet dog.

Very quiet.

Too quiet

for his own good. And he (meaning the man) clearly had no business here. (Unlike the dog. Dogs have business everywhere.) 'Sliverman' I joked inside my head. Then caught myself. Jokes never saved anyone from anything.

'Hi' said the other girl – not my girl, just the other girl --, looking up and attempting to smile. Then the dog strained at its leash and tugged the shadow toward our fire, where there was still the smell of meat.

'We have a permit' said the bespectacled fellow in a voice so throttled it sounded as if he was inhaling as he attempted to speak.

'Don't move,' said the shadow, in a voice one would not have expected. But what voice would one expect a shadow to have? Or God or the devil for that matter. Or death, to be perfectly candid about it.

'I'm the woodman.' That voice again, only different this time, as if someone – God, death or the devil – was making his first appearance in our part of the universe and was about to lay down the law.

'I've got news for you. Which would you like to hear first: The good news or the bad news?' None of the four of us spoke. Sliverman, shadowed in his cape with its many dark folds, seemed as if he might be younger than one would expect God, the devil or death to be.

'Whatever it is we don't want to hear it' said I, figuring this was some person's idea of a prank. Then there was a grand pause in my head. Before my eyes nettles swayed in the wind and my friends' (if they were my friends) expressions changed and the dog tugged at his leash only very slowly and in a silence octaves below reality

and I heard my voice say in his voice
say inside my head in his voice
that life is just someone's idea of a prank,
death is just someone's idea of a prank
we're the butt of the joke and as such
we've served our purpose
which was inconsequential at best
in the greater scheme of things

"By this time the shadow had spoken and the three others were beginning to pack up everything we had brought up the mountain. It was impossible to read their expressions. They did not seem in any great hurry. They paid no attention to me.

If I just sit here...

If I just sit here eventually my leg will 'fall asleep,' I will feel cold, I will get thirsty, I will need to urinate.

I desperately wanted for one or more of those things to happen. But they didn't. And it did not take long for me to realize that I had already become just part of the scenery, obscure in the moonless night, uninteresting, ignorable, something at best

to stumble upon.

But soon it felt good. Not to have to scratch or drink or urinate or... or go down the mountain or look for a job or a girl or a prize.

And when they were all gone (since the shadow and my friends had departed together) it felt good to be alone.

The planes overhead

louder and louder ones, larger and larger ones,

ones with bombs

to drop somewhere,

did not worry me anymore.

"When all this begins again I will be here.

Ready with my wisdom, my scruples and my

good intentions ready to set out

on the right foot

'Every beginning is a new ending' I once heard someone say.

Dialogue in a film.

Things sputter for a while then miss a stroke, blow a synapse, invert the boson and stop again.

After months or decades (who was I to say?) there were no birds (planes had long since been forgotten)

The leaves did what leaves do – they left somehow, fallen, gray, swept away by what was left of the wind

and were not replaced then the branches from which the leaves had fallen

also fell and these were

the last sounds

other than the wind.

The insects had hidden under the leaves I had heard the slow shuffle of their lives

for a while but not for long.

I hoped for the mutants to arrive

right about now wasn't that what was supposed to happen? a tiny vicious kind of ant

with a head like a dog or a cyclops or Franz Brentano or Edmund Husserl or Jean-Paul Sartre

and speaking of whom

as part of the scenery I still had **intent** – more **intent**, in fact, than ever what I saw was what

I

intended to see,

what I hoped was what I intended to hope
 but
 hoping is not being
 hoping is not making
 hoping only stops things
 from really happening and so
 the mutants remained inside me, me, me, part of the scenery, me in whom the creatures of the
 future world the eventual new men who would (as we had done) learn how to kill before they
 learned how to love (lessons, perhaps, to be glossed over in favor of
 trigonometry) the eventual new men who would (as we had done) decide that some were
 better than others and had done so
 with no rational basis or purpose other than acquisitiveness, a sturdy principle run amok
 only in humans the eventual new men who would watch other life around them and
 before too long (in the context of eternity)
 wipe them out, and each other –
 the mutants inside me were locked up ‘for their own good’ like violent mental patients accused
 (but not convicted) of vast but undefinable crimes and now, once again, they have
 started a riot the ants and the three-headed serpents and the trees that eat the sky and
 more
 than anyone else
 the eventual men The guards are in a panic they call the warden on primitive wall phones
 someone somewhere has declared a **state of emergency** but there is no water for the
 cannons, no stun left in the guns
 the inmates the prisoners the malign captives must be placed on
lockdown
 says the warden in the voice of the woodman which is my voice which is me
 me
 part of the scenery.
 Scenery. Something to be seen. But no one to see.
 Can there be sight without life?
 Were we ever here for any good purpose?
 Was anything ever for any good purpose? Or is this just
 one more confusion
 of purpose with intent?
 one more confusion
 one more confusion

 The inmates the prisoners the captives who
 if they were only released
 would make the future
 have calmed down now.
 The warden
 The warden with my name if I had a name
 has given them back
 their TV privileges their spousal visitations their condoms their illicit substances
 smuggled in
 from the past,
 and once again

for the umpteenth time
they realize
that they are better off
where they are."

‡

Frank

the guy who had been chatting with his friend who had been George up until twenty minutes ago
is sitting on some sofa mired in those inescapable imaginings one has only his are
(needless to say) about Shirley Shirley in her bed (although it's only midafternoon) with
a glass of wine on her night table and a joint and one of those 'shade' books or 'light and
fire' perhaps or 'drowning in you' or some other entertainment franchise and also on the night
stand other things while she Shirley under her blue blanket her teddy bear shoved
unceremoniously
to one side is
thinking about
thinking about
about
George --
even though he is now
someone else who knows who? and even though
Frank -- even though his encapsulating imagining of Shirley is as real as anything else as real
as he is --
more so --
still misses George the only person he can genuinely talk to even though he's kind of
an asshole
"Why the fuck do
people change?"

cautionary accidentals

Behind the house of horrors there are old painted posters --
leaning up against broken turnstiles and tall empty tanks of helium --
... old painted posters of those freaks fortunate enough
to have the day off.
Bean Poll Man is reading Heidegger while wolfing down French toast
at Denny's.
The Siamese Twins are caught sneaking into
the last porn theater in
Minneapolis.
Prince Randian, the man with a head and no torso,
is at the Super 8 Motel using voice commands to short stocks on his
Windows XP laptop from 2002.
Harry, the Tom Thumb of his generation, is beside him.
At shorting stocks they are the secret geniuses. Goldman wants
to find them

to give them
their own fund and a partnership and their own building in lower Manhattan -
they are in heavy negotiations
"Short Jungfrau Cable Car Company"
growls Prince Randian.
A text scrolls across the bottom of the cracked dingy out-of-focus screen.
"It's Goldman again," sighs Harry, as only The Tom Thumb of His Generation
can.
"Fuck them," scoffs Prince Randian.
"We want the EU

or nothing."

‡

What "start from scratch" means is
begin with a wound.

Everything begins with a wound we realize. The wound of being seen. The wound of being
known. The wound of being
found out but far worse
the wound of having an identity thrust upon us
like a curse, a malediction, an insult, an unhesitant goodbye
thrust upon us like a straightjacket,
taking away our confidence, our manners, our accent, our longing, our prayers
and
giving us nothing in return but a task with no limits a task with no terminus a task with no
reward.
Deprived of our sense of being we cannot even hesitate, can not even skip a step wander flip
through the pages to the end of the book.
Identity is our coffin and our shield and worse than that it is
for some kind of forever
not your kind of forever or my kind of forever or Christ's kind of forever or God's kind of forever
-- just some kind. Some unknowable kind some kind that may just as well be either a
big circle or a big nothing

‡

In the waiting room of the Greyhound station in Missoula, Montana a little girl sits on a bench,
waiting for someone. Her grandmother's friend dropped her off – she was supposed to stay but,
well, she had shopping to do and... the bus station was empty except for the old man behind the
ticket counter and... the little girl was just about to turn six and looks older for her age and...
The little girl has only vaguely grasped the notion of clocks or time. Or of waiting. She thinks or
knows that her uncle, the quiet uncle who smells of paint, urine and tobacco, is supposed to
come on the next bus and then The little girl is not quite sure
not quite sure what is supposed to happen.
Another bus rolls in.

Tulsa bus arriving says the man in what he thinks is a loud enough voice, but not to the little girl. He says it to no one.

The little girl stands up. Through the fly-specked windows of the bus station she sees six people getting off the bus. There is a teenaged girl with a thin white top with her boobies and her nipnips showing followed by her boyfriend with his jeans and his black guitar and then a man and a woman, each very old, distressingly old, too old for anyone's good (the little girl thinks). It takes them forever

to get down the steps which are high and black, furrowed and inhospitable there is no one to help them

the old couple but all the same they seem to know what to do and finally two Mexican ladies, one plump, one not, not old, not young, dressed like anyone else, talking breathlessly in Spanish as if if they were to stop speaking everything about them would change irretrievably. By this time, they, all of them have entered the station and before much longer

they have all left although it is not entirely clear by what means.

The little girl sits down again. She swings her legs back and forth off the edge of the bench. She has already noticed that it is made of wood and that letters have been scratched into it in some places. Inside a scratched heart the little girl sees "R + C - forever" and outside the heart other things someday she will be able to read all of them she imagines but her legs are getting tired from swinging. The station guy has turned on a radio and is listening to a baseball game the men on the radio talk in that peculiar way sports radio men talk They also take no breaths, leave no silences between their words although in the background one can make out the sound of a crowd cheers the occasional knock of a bat hitting a ball a whistle she stops swinging her legs her ankles are bare and are getting cold Hadn't her grandmother said something about "Tulsa" but maybe it had been "Wichita" or "Des Moines" or "LA"

The light in the big space with its ceiling and fans so far above that it makes her dizzy to look at them

has not changed and yet it must be getting later

getting later

getting dark

getting

The little girl does not want to move. She thinks about what she could be thinking about if she were thinking about something but even thinking about that is too hard and yet she is not tired or should not be tired

Some day those men on the radio will die.

What kind of thought is that? Then she remembers that it is the sort of thing that her grandmother says.

Some day I will get too old to live in Missoula.

Some day soon I will need a walker to get around.

Some day they will put me in an old people's home.

Grandmother is waiting, too.

Somewhere the little girl's uncle is also waiting. He missed his bus because he went to buy cigarettes. He didn't have the nerve to let anyone know that he had messed up again. And there would be another bus

before too long.

Not knowing this not knowing

the little girl sits
and waits.

Some kind of forever.

randomized windmills

Crimson beakers we all want to drink out of
Crimson beakers and now you want to too.
You'll kiss your lover and want it you'll give birth to your child and want it you'll look death in
the face and want it
you cannot help yourself in no way size shape pattern style template or design can you
help yourself can you be
of any assistance to yourself
whatsoever
this book is messing with your mind so just remember
the other ones are too but back to
helping yourself do you see yourself as helpless we all see ourselves as helpless and now
you do too
You'll go to your job and feel helpless you'll stroke your cat and feel helpless you'll be the boss
and feel helpless and it is all thanks to
Crimson beakers we all want to drink out of
Crimson beakers and now you want to too.

‡

Three-laned highways. That is something he remembers from his youth three-laned highways
The one in the middle was a sort of "multi-purpose" lane
to pass the slowpoke to turn onto the frontage road to move your stalled vehicle to should
there be
no shoulder no solace no sacrament no redemption
Lee Highway west from Roslyn was a three-laned highway but we are certain
as of few other things
that there were others
that special lane in the middle for change and desperation, for lust and speed, for showing off
your engine your white-walled tires the possum foot blowing off your radio antenna and on that
note

‡

There is a crucial difference between "reaching bottom" and "reaching *for* the bottom."
Unfortunately the latter
applied to Otto. No bottom was too bathic or bathetic or bottomly for him his idea was –
and it was not just his idea: it was and is and always will be lots of people's – that only from
the true bottom,
the deep-as-you-can-go bottom, the scalding scorching nullifying center-of-the-earth bottom,
was resurrection possible. Sometimes a curious notion, a vice even more absurd than Cesare's,

makes its way into people's minds and if you think that the consummate struggle to find the bottom is any kind of "easy way out" you've got another thing coming. It's the hardest thing there is. Take my word for it. Take my words and either stash them or throw them away. They are yours now. Put them "to good use" put yourself and any antenna you may find "to good use" But words from the outside will never be of *any use* to the Ottos of this world the *THERE BUT BY THE GRACE OF GOD GO I Ottos* and just in passing it is but seldom that one sees other life forms with that obsession that craving that need that passion to set their sight on the worst It's a human thing and like lots of human things it could be (but not being an Otto, who am I to say?) about wanting shame something no cat or parrot or gerbil ever desired ever even knew existed but it is also based on another exclusively human mode of thought that we seem to be born with: a ridiculous species of hope that keeps telling us *"When we arrive at absolute bottom, then, and only then, someone will make everything better. And not just plain or vanilla better. Big time better. Wall Street Better. Mogul tycoon billionaire better. Saint-Tropez better* until one day stretching someone's stained sheet from their shopping cart to the lamppost and then taking an inventory as even God must do from time to time of the things that they, by virtue of having found them, can call their own all other thoughts and ideas in general disappear. They need more than they need food or even a place to defecate unnoticed they need to make absolutely certain that what they have gathered unto themselves and is thus under their protection their largesse their dominion - their domain and their "sphere of influence" - is safe: the boogie board, the Barbie doll, the child's cradle, the tennis racket, the golf award still making a statement through its tarnished bronze CHARLES ADAMS' Third Place victory is now Otto's.

But of course I The Privileged One have invented this theory to assuage my own guilt in a clumsy effort to deprive myself of my own shame and (at the risk of overusing the expression, a risk that I shall take not unaware of the consequences) **of course** it is I, the tarnished and vulnerable I the self-satisfied self-complacent self-devouring I who is the true real veritable and unchallenged bottom seeker bottom feeder bottom dweller No gutter is too guttural for me, no well of loneliness want sickness and starvation too deep for me (beneath the slot canyon of the hypervixens bones cry havoc) having fleshed out my own obsessions I go back out into the world indifferent and undifferentiated incisive and incised tenaciously untenable

Macaws can speak but they have no stories to tell
or rather
they have lots of stories
but none to share.

‡

Dawns come and go

Dreams escape us no matter the traps we set
Loves are pawns of their own unfeeling logic
Crimes are punished and sometimes forgiven
But death
is for all time for what lies beyond time

("Take comfort in the fact –"
As if facts were what gave comfort and not fallacies
Nothing settles the mind more than a lie
which we aim at ourselves like stun guns pulling those liminal triggers
ratchets up our adrenalin and then we point our mendacious revolvers at others as if
life were a shooting gallery in some interminable arcade a pink stuffed bear
is the prize and for the real winners, their own guns, their own ammo, cocked, loaded, ready
to shoot
all those drive-by lies
which never break the skin but invariably penetrate
the blood-brain barrier, the long high wall between life and thought)

Wagner-Régeny

I want to go out listening to Wagner-Régeny. Anything by him. A concerto an opera an
orchestral piece a chamber work a song I want to visualize him smoking his pipe or sitting at his
keyboard or receiving his prize from his country which no longer exists for his contributions to an
ideology which no longer exists and (one would hope) most of all for his music; or lying in his
grave next to Gertie, his second wife Gertie, or reading Aeschylus and Goethe as he plots to
compose

his oratorio *Prometheus*

Wagner-Régeny

I want to go out listening to

Wagner-Régeny

That is the way

I wish to go.

Instead of warring with my mind,
being broadsided and laid to waste by my thoughts,
under merciless attack by my own ideas, concepts, formulas, extrapolations, justifications,
willings into an unmemorable future
abject epistemologies claustrophobic ontologies back-ways-around teleologies and ethics
meticulously calculated in the wrong base thirteen instead of ten or twelve in a fraudulent
numeracy coagulating in terror.
In the end they gather with at last a common purpose: To drag us like a nameless
condemned man,
dry and naked, on ropes behind the grand vizier's chariot of vast clattering gold,
through all the pathless chasms of remorse.
I wish to forsake forswear and forego
my unique death.
It is evil to possess so

for me
The Blessed Divestiture unsaddled
of myself
irresponsible
asking for nothing but to
go out hearing
Wagner-Régeny
I want to go out listening to
Wagner-Régeny
That is the way
I wish to go.

However on some walk in the forest or in the cities of wealth and pain or in the meadows where
no language is uttered save by those who have lost the path of silence I may
or at least I reserve the right to
change my mind in favor of Schoenberg's *First Chamber Symphony* or Berg's
Lulu Suite or *Love is a Losing Game* (Amy Winehouse) or *You Said Something* (PJ Harvey) or
Leave the Light on for Linda (Sopwith Camel) or my own *Das Buch der Blauen Rose* or *Rhapsodie
amoureuse pour orchestre a cordes*
[Am I any less entitled to a choice than Edward G. Robinson was given in the original *Soylent Green?*]

or reading *Der Schimmelreiter*

or watching *Hors Satan*

[Life fails to inoculate one against such thoughts: *Ich möchte ausgehen, während ich
die blauen Rosen rieche...*]

My occupation from now on shall be contemplating My Choice
The one that at long last and for all time gives me the feeling
of being the real me.

unchained melody

"Why does the phrase 'That remains to be seen' always remind me
of an open casket?"

"(A) Because you have a morbid streak that just won't quit; and (B)
Because you are opposed to cremation on grounds so eminently ridiculous
that no one will listen to you."

"You will. You're my captive audience."

"No more so than are two hundred billion viewers of television,
hearers of pop music, purchasers of products, drivers of vehicles,
progenitors of offspring, cravers of sex, dreamers of wealth, victims of infection,
targets for swindles, devourers of animals, guardians of chastity, dispensers of favors, pumpers
of gas, breathers of gasses, creditors, debtors, inmates, mystics, spies –"

"You're running out of breath. So unless you'd prefer to prattle on and then expire unceremoniously, deign to permit me to continue."

(One gets the sense that the previous speaker was saved just in the nick of time.)

"So: Cremation. In the not-so-distant future it will be possible to regenerate an entire human being from a single cell, whether ostensibly living or supposedly dead. And I'm not just talking about bones and sinews and pulses and fluids here. I mean the whole bleeping tamale, with all its twitches, moods, sense of loss of its once formidable LP collection, sense of loss of its first Buick (the two-toned one with the Dynaflo transmission) sense of loss of its mangled romance with a girl who offed herself at the age of twenty and for no particular reason sense of loss of its chance to visit a nude beach on Long Island because the day was too cloudy and the girl sense of loss of its excrescences and putrescences and helplessness of infancy sense of loss of its chance to peek at dad's magazine or mom's 3x5 index card which she hid in a shoebox and on which were names like "Bob" in tiny handwriting, all in pencil, sense of loss of its sense of direction of its understanding of why it is necessary to breathe to think to simulate affection, caring, love, fear, pain, panic – *All -- **all of this** from a single cell, whether ostensibly deceased or theoretically alive. Just think of it.* So, my long-winded but short-of-breath friend, would you be willing to sacrifice all of this for the questionable benefit of The Neptune Society and the tentacles of its spam outreach?"

"All well and good. But who, or what, is going to pay for this 'regeneration'?"

"Same as always. Insurance. They're already offering dream insurance, sleep insurance, love insurance (if the object of your love flies the coop, or even just disdains you, even imperceptibly, she or he will be seamlessly replaced. And for a higher premium,

you won't even notice.)"
""Insurance.'"

"Yeah insurance. It's got you covered. A future with no risk. Whatsoever."

"Why am I skeptical?"

"Because you want to be cremated."

"I guess that must be the reason."

diamonds are forever

diamonds are forever
galaxies are not.
small things endure
larger things decay and die,
the largest things explode
it's just like Michael Jackson:
the bigger you are, the bigger the bang
you go out with.

smallness is immortality.

But back to diamonds.
tiny and hard and adamant
they betoken love
in societies I have heard of;
they are a pretext for osculation copulation
simulation procreation indignation lust
just like Adam Sandler is a pretext to laugh
(he is not funny)
and Angelina Jolie is a pretext to think about beauty
(she is not beautiful)
and Albert Einstein is a pretext to think about genius
(he was wrong half the time)
and sex is a pretext to achieve release
(release from what?)
and death is a pretext for mourning
and birth is a pretext for joy
and injury is a pretext for pain
and love is pretext for lust
and up is a pretext for down
and death is a pretext for life.

we need excuses for everything

but there is no excuse for us

we are utterly without justification
too big to last,
too small to explode
uneconomical to recycle
neither modular nor upgradable
no way to flash our BIOS
no way to shuffle our helix

an Ant Farm is one big mind
the elementary school teacher declared
not having a clue what she was talking about.
children in the fifties watched through plexiglass
(new at the time)
until the whole thing got out of hand
and mom threw the Ant Farm away

the pretext is the thought before the word
the word is the pretext for the action
the action is the pretext for the thought
a multiple helix of pretense –
pre- tense: What comes before we know for sure
whether it is the present, the future, or the past
we are thinking about –

Think:

all by itself -- a tiny idea (like carbon,
like a diamond,
like desire)
it's an imperative
no subject, no object, no time –

Every verb is a command.

somewhere in the desert a tarantula is having his stroll
mating would be a disaster
so he keeps to himself
until a Park Ranger picks him up
shows him to the children
then puts him back down

good tarantula
says the ranger
good tarantula

clockwork puddle

"Today we are going to speak about images and sounds – things humans make that are not tools, because perhaps animals make tools, or use things they find as tools or even as toys.

And thus we encounter the odd notions of creation, and of the 'artist,' the maker of images and sounds.

To find out something about their process we crawl into the tomb and gaze upon crafted objects, painted walls, sculpted images and in our arrogant anthropomorphism

assume that all of this was brought into being by 'artists' or 'artisans' with the sort of intent we attribute to 'artists' and 'artisans' of our day:

The intent to 'express,' to 'communicate,' to 'make a thing of beauty,' even merely to 'represent.'

However

this is not at all the case. What tourists blasély wonder over and scholars interminably ponder in caves and tombs and temples, in burial grounds and sacred places, in the palaces of the elite (to the extent that we unearth them)

are strictly ritual objects

brought into being out of nothing but the fear of death.

They do not speak; they do not show; they are not art; they have no beauty.

They are not items from which we can reconstruct a 'history' or anything pertinent to sociology, anthropology, psychology, philosophy or any other modern discipline.

They are naught but objects of terror.

Now that Heidegger has finally put to rest all the prattle about Heraclitus and Parmenides, antiquity is best left alone. Their fears can only

haunt us. There is such a thing as an 'ancient curse,' and it is much more potent than anyone suspected. Their fears will pursue us as long as –"

"Your formula is as simple as it is stupid:

'Ancient peoples were driven by fear; modern peoples are driven by desire.'

But as usual, and with your particular brand of arrogance – a word most often used by those to whom it is most applicable --, you ignore the obvious fact that desire is fear, and not the other way around."

At the exit to the subway a short woman with an apron is giving out free pretzels. Only they are long sugar-coated ones with no twist.

"You call this a pretzel?" the first man asks, the one about to launch a verbose defense at the charge of arrogance recently leveled against him.

"She can call it anything she likes," says the second man, with the slightly pissed-off tone of voice generally employed by prosecutors.

"You want one or not?" asks the short woman.

"I'll take two," replies Man Number One.

It is quite possible that back in time people were too busy to think. Or rather that the only element which necessitated thought was fear.

What is interesting about fear is that it has more flavors now than it had way back then. The fear that one may shortly be diagnosed with a terminal illness which was only named last week. But no worries: The drug your doctor blithely prescribed for you five years ago has now been discovered to cause early dementia, not to mention cancer, irritability, intolerance of politicians who wear blue ties, a statistically elevated tendency to slip on mossy stones while fording streams and thus be bitten by tiny larvae who are harmless except for their pincers which break the skin and allow parasites and toxins into your bloodstream which gradually lower one's body temperature to the extent that whenever you shake your boss's hand, she gives you a funny look and starts watching you.

"There's something about Roger" she remarks over herbal tea to the next person up the totem poll. Better mention it to her.
Better safe
than sorry.

phase split

"Since somewhere around 1968 or 1970 – but even more so after 1980 and into the 21st Century, the Two Great Themes of American popular entertainment and popular culture have been

The Redemption of the American Asshole
and
The Cult of The Cute.

"Every night on television a dozen assholes, guys (and sometimes girls) who would be intolerable in so-called 'real life,' do all the rude, obnoxious, narcissistic, uncaring, unfeeling things that assholes do, and then are redeemed. Everyone loves them, and (most important) they get what they want. The lesson seems to be: 'The bigger an asshole someone is, the better the 'real person' is underneath. It's as if we are being told, 'To be a healer one must first experience being a killer,' or 'To love animals one must first torture them.' The plot always flips so that the asshole wins and is loved by the person she or he wants. And at the end of the day, everyone loves a winner.

"As far as **The Cult of The Cute** is concerned, every night viewers are treated to cute young people jabbering cute (albeit utterly solipsistic, egocentric and uncommunicative) dialogue while mugging at the camera (and thus at the viewer) as if they are saying with their every word and gesture, 'See how **cute** I am. I am so bleeping adorable, I can get away with anything. If I reach

for your husband's fly under the table or let my bull mastiff do his thing on your lawn or back out of my driveway and smash into your car or put on my best Brad Pitt smile and say that we should go to my hotel room and one or both of us should undress because one or both of us has the cutest tattoo it's *okay*.' The more boundaries you cross, the more you invade someone else's space, the cuter, and more loveable, you are

"Needless to say these Two Great Themes go hand in hand.

"Siegfried Kracauer once wrote a book about how German cinema in the 1920s paved the way for Hitler. His specific analysis has been challenged (*Caligari* may have actually been intended as a revolutionary film in some way), but the general idea is interesting, particularly when Kracauer dealt with the German motion picture comedies of the time (*Die Drei von der Tankstelle* and so forth) and how their mindset (if one can call it that) helped create a medium in which Nazism could take root and flourish, along the lines of a culture for successfully growing bacteria. Despite (or perhaps because of) the fact that many people in the American entertainment business today are liberals, it is sometimes assumed that films, television and even pop music have a liberal influence on their audience. I argue instead that the two great themes of American popular entertainment, **The Redemption of the Asshole** and **The Cult of the Cute**, have created an atmosphere in which not only has personal insensitivity grown and empathy diminished, but racism and sexism have increased."

"Yo. I'm the Party to the Conversation Formerly Known as George. The entertainment business just gives people what they want, or to be more precise, what they will pay for *and/or* what can be used as a medium to seduce them into spending money on other things, as in 'product placement,' where producers get money for displaying certain cars or shoes or bras in their films or TV shows. But that's just the tip of the iceberg. The US economy is based 70% on consumer spending, but as more and more people see themselves as 'lower' rather than 'middle' class, families' disposable incomes are going down. That means that advertising – inducement of people to spend money – is more omnipresent, more pervasive, and more insidious than ever before. Forget about what they used to say about subliminal flashes of products appearing in movies or on TV, or even in songs. With the internet everything (well, not quite everything) is out in the open. All of your presumed 'needs' follow you everywhere you go, together with the means for their satisfaction, like (to paraphrase Arseny Tarkovsky) a madman stalking you with a razor.

"But (and you were just waiting for me to say this) *it's much worse than that*.

"For a while people were saying, 'Be yourself. Everyone else is taken.' Everyone assumed that some famous person had said it – maybe (God help us) even a *philosopher*. Then the source was revealed: It had been invented as an advertising slogan for a hardware store in the Midwest called Menard's. I know Menard's exists. I even bought a hot water heater at their store in Fridley, Minnesota.

"But actually I see things differently. Just like television (and the internet and billboards and your cell phone and entire cars and trucks and busses and buildings -- everywhere you look) is a full immersion advertising experience, so is TV a nonstop 'catwalk' in which you can watch actors 'wearing' certain personalities. So all you need to do is sit in front of your Very Wide Screen and pick the personality you want. Of course your choice will not be based on any kind of personal taste or (shall we call it) contemplation, but on which character is successful and

(most important) gets the things you want. So you're going to go for the personality of the character who gets money (if that's what you want), or sex (if that's what you want), or power (if that's what you want), or is the life of the party (if that's what you want to be). Of course you are never going to choose the intellectual or artistic or scholarly or spiritual personality, because the actors wearing those invariably end up with zip."

"George?"

"I haven't been 'George' since Hillary lost to Obama."

"Then whoever you are: Shut the fuck up."

Canned laughter and applause.

Someone once told us that all of the canned laughter in TV shows was recorded in the 1950s, meaning that by now most of the people whose laughter you hear – and (in theory) join in on – are dead.

Who "on the other side" (even behind the curtains at the séance, or underneath the Ouija board) are laughing at us right now? Well, plenty. But are they "the right people"? Is our current "real world" merely mass entertainment created to invoke the laughter of the dead?

Well why not?

Makes as much sense as anything.

(The woman is 93 and in hospice care. Suddenly she wonders what her daughter is thinking. Soon she shall know.

And she shall smile. Without any longing. Without any regret.

Death is nothing but vicarious living. Being an audience member for all eternity. Only now it's finally enjoyable, since no one is trying to get you to part with your money.

And the madman of fate or the madman of commerce or the madman of hope
or all three

have at long last hung up
their razor.)

statutory disclosure

"'NO MAGGOTS WERE HARMED IN THE CREATION OF THIS UNIVERSE'

"What a crock.

"Oh, hi. It's Michael this time. You missed me when I was Gunther and Zack (well, maybe not – those names were kind of off-putting), but now here I am as Michael. Not Mike or Mick. Michael. Nowadays only bigshots get to be Michaels. Or angels.

"So: Back to the universe. I've been prowling around here for some time, and I've got the citations to prove it, so let me lay some insights on you.

"The ancients – the Greeks, for instance – lived in only two dimensions. Let me explain. They looked at the sky and had the idea that everything they were seeing was happening right now. Sure, some god tossed someone or other up there and they became a sign of the zodiac, and that happened well... whenever. But the light from the stars was happening right before their eyes, as if they were looking at candles, or the glow of the bonfires competing with the glimmer of the moon.

"Now, needless to say, we know that they were wrong. Except for the occasional appearance of a pesky asteroid, or the cameo walk on of Lars von Trier's massive planet of man's imperturbable sadness, everything we see when we look up at night, or in that wolfish hour before dawn breaks daily like a mandatory accident – everything we see happened hundreds of thousands, more than likely millions, equally likely billions of years ago – however beyond 10.4 billion years we cannot see – we are like the Greeks – we, like them, are missing an entire dimension call it guilt, perhaps – but whatever you do don't give it a number.

"So my plan is to simply sit here and to look up.
My theory is that everything we are seeing now is the last light
that all of the stars and other celestial light-emitters however denominated have
already died
and if we wait long enough
here, looking up, sitting on the edge, we will finally know
the darkness that is already there.
We just don't see it yet.
It's like a dream where someone, as part of normal social conversation,
perhaps at a party with many beautiful women (as if we care about such things)
someone mentions, not as any sort of revelation, just as casual chitchat,
that we are already dead.
And we respond, "Oh sure," as if we are acknowledging that our car really was
totaled last week, or even something trivial: They were out of okra at the
Super King market.
It's all over. We just don't know it yet, sitting on our little outpost like
Aunt Steelbreaker in the Lars von Trier movie dreaming her myth
of the magic cave.

parental discretion

Lilly was the most dangerous kind of sweetheart,
always with her knickers in a knot, like a pine forest
trimmed and abandoned
leaping through crevices into the
thick air of June
Behind you there is a puddle

better
watch out --
Spoken like a maladroitness engineer
his locomotive running on sauterne
on candlelight, on raw nerves
and a grimace from a girl who
wants very badly
to be raped by Zeus and turned into
neither a swan nor an emu
but a modern consumer
with all the trimmings
looking for a guy to take her down the aisle not of the
church on the corner of Fifth and Oblivion
but down the aisle of WalMart
the gracious insensate fulfillment of
all desires
even the ones best left unuttered,
stewing in the clutter of their emptiness
and there she will be
your most dangerous sweetheart,
strangled by her costume jewelry
suffocated in all her mellifluous gossip
She forgets to breathe
soon ceasing to be
the singleton of the void and about to become
spousal, reproductive, domestic, maternal...

*("Don't call me 'Lilly' in front of the children. It sounds like a whore's name."
"So what should I call you?"
"'Mom.' And just so you won't forget, call me that all the time."
"I'm about to come, 'Mom...'"
"That's the general idea.")*

With neither hesitation nor destiny your most dangerous sweetheart
approaches the altar,
where a tiny plump woman in a
checkered apron is poking a toothpick
with flesh on its tip in your direction.
A security camera grinds its focus onto you
as something not altogether rational
groans in the subbasement where the
Board of Directors is toasting the
apocalypse.
In the checkered woman's other hand there is
one of those tiny thin corrugated paper cups,
like the ones they give you liquid medicine
with in a hospital if you grasp it
even a little bit, it will crumple and

spill all over everything and to
make matters worse this one has
blood in it. It's full to the brim.

Sangre.

Somewhere, behind the potted plants or
on some unnoticed battlefield, or
on the escalator, forgetting whether they
should be going up, down, or sideways,
there are people who believe something.
Belief clings to them like residue
from deodorant soap
they itch

You scratch
You bleed
Same old thing.

This is your body
This is your blood
This is your danger.

self-cleaning cycle

To allay any suspicion. That's the whole deal in a nutshell.
After all, everything is a fragment. There is no sillier notion
than "*completion*."

Every joining is, in bold unyielding reality, a subtraction.

Every alliance

takes something away. There is no "whole" and (if you seriously think about it) that means that
there are no parts either. How can there be parts without a whole? How can there be
.00001 if there is no 1? Nothing to add up to; only things to subtract from. Nothing to multiply;
only to divide. But even in that procedure there is
a diminution of the elements;

to put something through a procedure is to change it to touch something is to change it and
worse than that

to see something is to change it and
worse than that

to think about something is to change it it will never be the same to you it will forever lose
its charm charm not being a matter of emotion but of

holiness. Take no footprints take no pictures inhale but never never ever
exhale never ever
let your breath out.

‡

Cinderella. We cannot stop thinking of Cinderella. The Princess and the Frog. We cannot stop
thinking about

The Princess and the Frog.

Some kind of
transformation if not to say
some kind of miracle but instead we all grope for things
to “really happen.” In the old Nic Roeg movie with the now wizened rock and roll star someone
said: THE ONLY TRUE PERFORMANCE IS THE ONE THAT ACHIEVES MADNESS
or words to that effect and in the same spirit

we say

THE ONLY TRUE HAPPENING IS **MAGIC**

Things that are rational effects of rational causes are neither
of any importance nor of any interest and that
is what we are all waiting for
after all –

Magic.

Plain and simple.

Plain or peanut.

Organic or inorganic.

Regular or unleaded.

Soft or loud.

Hot or cold.

Benign or malign.

Visible or invisible.

Magic.

Is **magic** a notion that came into being to inspire hope or to annul any possibility of hope?

To make us dream wonders or to lead us into leaden lockdown landlocked nightmares?

To make us feel superior to the gods or more their playthings than ever?

In each case doubtless the latter if only because

miracles are far and few between scattered so wide in time and space that they have become
mere myths of themselves and yet there is never-the-less and always-the-more
the urge the lust the need (yes: the need) of **magic**.

Are we fooling ourselves or are we being fooled – but we stop ourselves mid-breath and realize:
What a foolish question. What a time-wasting brain-frying life-draining question.

Perhaps once before any of us was ever dreamed of (but where? but when?)

There was a magic to every season

A magic to every sound

A magic to every glance

A magic to every stone and spire and wing and wish and prayer

Perhaps the mistake we made was to give it a name

To call it “*love*” when love is so much less

To call it “*life*” when life is so much less

To call it “*power*” when power is so much less

To call it “*oneness*” when oneness is so much less

To call it “*The One*” when The One is so much less

and even

even

To call it God when God is

when God is

When it comes to twilight no one enjoys it more than the petunias except possibly
 for the brown grass in the graveyard or Samantha
 puttering away in her apartment happy that it's Daylight Savings Time so that she's home
 to see it through her sliding window happy that it is Thursday and thus almost Saturday and
 soon
 it will be August again she always liked August she couldn't think of a reason
 but for her it was a special month maybe it was because her boss went on vacation during
 August but she liked her boss things made more sense when he was around so no that
 couldn't
 be the reason
 but Samantha had all the cable services now so she no longer had time no longer had any time
 no longer had time
 to figure things like that out. Like why she liked one thing more than another. Or what it even
 meant to "like" something. And when it came right down to it, why she liked anything at all.
 There was too much going on
 to like any particular thing. She was funny that way.
 But when it came to twilight that was something special like a signal to the world
 that
 it was just another day
 nothing to have thoughts or prayers or feelings about
 nothing to miss when it is gone or wish for before it comes
 nothing to fold where she kept her better clothes folded to take to the cleaners to put out for
 The Good Will
 nothing to anticipate or regret
 (and by the way, the flowers have anticipations, but no regrets)
 Without realizing it she had memorized where the shadows fell on her wall by heart
 (as if validation by the heart guaranteed that a memory was real)
 Without realizing it she had mistaken certain spots on her walls for shadows and thus
 failed to clean them without realizing it she had perhaps failed in other things
 yet still
 the twilight could be relied upon
 like an inference of forgotten glory
 like a synonym for a long-forgotten word that might have meant joy or quiet or peace or death
 like her mother's love (even though her mother had passed long ago)
 like the news (after all, there would always be something "new" – on that one could rely)
 like the wink she gave the gardener every week (the wink she was in the habit of giving him and
 somehow couldn't manage to break)
 like all of those things and more things in other spaces things in other peoples' dreams
 and lives
 yet still
 yet still
 yet still

the woman who fell in love

it was by chance that I met her,
the woman who fell in love.
a right click on her part might have taken her to Paris,
a left click on mine might have taken me downhill.
an outage that day and I may never have known her,
the woman who fell in love.
however now, thanks to this binary occurrence, I
have found out a lot:
A woman's love is at her absolute center,
and deeper than most men surmise.
She is always walking in the ocean,
the waves touching her breasts,
the salt shining in all her hair like the very
glow of existence itself,
uncompromised by doubt
unalloyed with reason
untroubled by death
irreconcilable with certain agonies of struggle
that plague the male mind.
And as she steps, the ocean bottom shifts, so that
one moment she seems to be emerging,
to be ready for the sand and the shower and the beach toys,
the picnic and the umbrella, ready to ride shotgun
back to reality;
and another moment, she is in
over her head,
the woman who fell in love.
Her words burst like bubbles in the foam of the waves
"the love of my life"
hears the ocean bird, hears the sparkly plankton, the child
of earth's beginning;
"forever"
hears the sea breeze, fleeing the cold wind
of the land, of the dry, crusty floor on which man has built
his world;
"all my heart"
hear the clouds, and they worry, as clouds do,
that she may drown in it –
the woman who fell in love.

"Who's the lucky guy?"

I ask the sea breeze, the ocean bird, the sparkly plankton, the lonely sky.
"You will never know," mocks the sea breeze gently,
as breezes will do, with a lilt and a sigh and a prayer.
"Ask your own heart," chides the ocean bird, flapping ironically,

sailing on nothing, the taste of a ripe clam in its beak, and in its nest
the world-egg from which will emerge the first-born of the universe,
Phanes, The One Who Brings to Light,
whose other names
are Ἡρκεπαῖος, *power*, and Μῆτις, *craft, skill, thought*,
(and in the secret books, *magical cunning*.)

And thus, in this lineage of the sea, does she become a myth –
the woman who fell in love.

And it falls to us, to the men who see and hear and yearn
to know her heart

but to tell her story, to chant her epic in ten thousand lines and
ten thousand tongues and ten thousand ways
in the hope that one day she will walk out of the sea
and touch us;
that she will walk out of the sea
and love us;
that she will walk out of the sea

and let us live.

bed, bath and beyond

out into the world
in our leather jackets and jeans
running for the subway
feeling the lights fade in the nosebleed balcony at the Met
just enough Lagrein in the bottle to wash down
pear tart with bitter chocolate
talking about sex on a rock in Central Park as fish cavort in the lake
screaming in the dark to save a fallen cyclist from death
as headlights glare in our eyes
making just the right connection for a noon service at the Cathedral
a woman priest talks about peace and poetry and music in Edessa
Aramaic,
the arbitrary congregation stands and embraces one another:
"Peace be with you."
I feel you beside me all the time standing kneeling praying
searching for the right pages in the Book of Common Prayer
Are we going to take Communion, or merely fold our arms on our breasts
and receive a blessing?
I would like to, you say. We approach the altar.
The Body adheres to the roof of my mouth and is washed away by the Blood.
As the twenty worshipers slowly exit, the Priest seems to single us out.
"Welcome home," she says to me.
Soon I am kneeling in the neighboring Chapel of Saint James
speaking my heart to you, asking you to do me the greatest honor,

and just at that moment, an unseen choir begins to sing,
echoing from the main hall of the Cathedral.
You say yes. Tears are in our eyes. I place the ring on your finger.
It shines like a galaxy at its prime, confident in its equilibrium of light.

Then we have crepes across the street, sweet and tart.
Walking in Riverside Park, watching the light on the Hudson,
talking about everything and people and places and thoughts and dreams,
my ideas and yours,
Love has made us who we are.
I do not miss the sour cynical guy I used to see in the mirror.
Instead I look at you, with my blue eyes that you tell me are
sometimes gray.
"You look about sixteen," I say. Your kindness, your spirit, your stories,
the way you look at people inside and outside and understand them with
as much kindness as humanly possible
I strive to be like you.
I do not miss the frustrated dissatisfied doubtful yet pretentious guy
I used to see in the mirror.
I do not miss the women whom that guy wanted to get close to,
to have on his arm in Paris or London or Cannes or Melrose Avenue,
to sleep with a few times and then get left behind to stare into his mirror
at a sadder, more sour, more cynical, more dissatisfied version of himself.

Behind the mirror are toothpaste, dental floss, razors, bandaids,
misperceptions misconceptions
the ebb and flow of diurnal misery as the days creep past
women and their illusion of affection drift away
music and books and movies get written then repose in the galactic spin
of the hard drive
-- the old world, the old life,
years and years of it, watching someone else's old dream of "California" die.
I do not miss the lost, numb, disconnected guy I used to see in the mirror
Since now love has made us as we make love
in complete connection, in total empathy, in seamless passion,
to give is to receive, our fantasies aligned as we touch and spin off and up
and soar and at the moment, at that moment, at **that** moment
the gush not of release but of union
not of conquest but of connection
not of domination but of mutual power
the outpouring not only of flesh but of spirit
not only of the body but of God,
I find the breath to say
I Love You.

What is a memory?

According to Rudolf Carnap, homo sapiens' sapientia is grounded in our ability to retain memories based on sensory input; and from these memories, an indexing file of patterns gradually develops. These patterns become the concepts that enable us not only to navigate the world, but also to learn preferences which guide our choices. This is hot; this will burn. This is honey; it will taste sweet. These preferences become opinions, and those opinions become judgments and standards, both moral and aesthetic. Of course when homo sapiens began to speak and the social process of the invention of language commenced, in order to function in his or her community, each person needed to learn to make an association between the concept word ("hot," "sweet," "pretty") and the concept that had already been formed nonverbally in his or her mind. Sometimes there is a disparity. For the most part each homo sapiens learns that his or her social adaptability and acceptability increase to the extent that he or she internalizes concepts, judgments and values inherent in the language of his or her community. Here we enter the realm of Wittgenstein's "forms of life," only viewed, perhaps, from a different perspective, one from which language is seen as equally enabling and disabling both to perception and to thought. Nevertheless we agree that "if a lion could talk, we would not understand him" – our only observation being that when all is said and done, the lion understands us better than we understand the lion.

But what is a memory? To begin with the brain has a number of tracks to deal with, as in film or video editing, but much more complex. There are tracks from all of the senses, including not only the obvious ones but also others not overtly relevant but nevertheless vital to the experience (your ass itching during the concert, your leg falling asleep during your graduation). Then there are tracks for the verbal narrative the mind produces during all experience – the tracks that meditation attempts to suppress. We say "tracks" because there is not only your conscious thought process narrating the experience, but also your subconscious and unconscious minds' parallel (and usually repressed) subtext. Plus additional verbal tracks for the imagined thoughts of others – their judgments and opinions; their approval or disapproval. Then there are associative memory tracks, since each moment in the now, even as it is itself being recorded as a new memory, conjures up memories from the past. And finally (or maybe not! there may be more!) there are future memory tracks, as the mind – again, even as it experiences the present and lays it down as a memory – is generating its own vision of what the next moment (or minute, or hour or lifetime) will bring. The verbal tracks then take note (either consciously or subconsciously) of discrepancies between the remembered past, the present as it is being recorded in memory, and the imagined future.

With so many tracks, this would be a nightmare as a video editing project, and even (I dare say) as an audio recording project. Yet somehow, clearly, some of this data makes it way from RAM (present consciousness) into the deep storage that we call memory. The question is, then, how the brain edits the tracks, then files and stores the data. To be more precise, what we are really asking is, "On what basis does the brain makes its editing [redacting or distorting] and storage decisions?" We read a long time ago studies which purported to demonstrate that the brain makes these decisions based on pleasure: That is to say, that the mind is more likely to retain a good, complete and long-lasting memory if the "tracks" (sensory data and all the rest) are accompanied by pleasant affect rather than by negative or (presumably) neutral affect. This does not necessarily seem wrong to us, and in a certain ways it is not unrelated to Freud's

concept of dreams as wish fulfillment, provided that we take into account his ideas about displacement and condensation and their impact on which memories are retained; and also Lacan's key notion that the unconscious is structured like a language, so that what we believe that we remember may be, by the process of metonymy (displacement) and/or condensation (metaphor), a stand in for the actual data, which has been repressed and transformed into something else – something less ego dysnomic.

Subject to all of the above, it appears that the brain may store much more detailed and older memory material than we are aware of in our conscious lives, the evidence for this being hypnotism and (perhaps also) sodium pentothal. If this is indeed the case, the brain's compression algorithm for storing memory data – the various parallel tracks roughly delineated above – may be much better than its decompression algorithm. And/or (probably and), it's the pleasure factor (again) which plays a key role: The pleasure of an experience may not so much positively correlate with how well we remember it (how much of a given experience ends up being stored in nonvolatile, long-term memory), but rather how readily we can retrieve the stored memory file from that nonvolatile memory. "Pleasant memories" are those which we do not repress, and therefore we can retrieve them more readily. But still, under hypnosis, the pleasure factor is reduced, and there is access to – i.e., ability to retrieve -- much more material than the conscious mind is aware of having stored.

In the latter half of the 20th Century, humanist education – the liberal arts and even the sciences – moved away from the traditional emphasis on memorization as the core of the learning process. Humanist educators (meaning most Western educators) realized that human memory was finite in its capacity and ephemeral (to varying degrees) in its longevity. Thus the emphasis shifted toward teaching the young in such a way that they, as adults, would be capable of making sound, rational judgments and decisions which would benefit both society and themselves – both their employers and their families. A degree in history or English literature or even music or classics was seen as a sound foundation for a career in business, government, or any form of administration – indeed, for any career that involved interacting with other people.

But no longer. With the concentration of corporate and governmental power and authority, decisions are increasingly made far up the ladder from the rung where the individual resides and functions. Increasingly individuals perform their occupational tasks on a purely technical level, activating and effectuating policies and designs formulated elsewhere, in a lofty realm far removed from that where the worker exists and does his job.

And what does the worker need to perform his function? Much less a moral, social, economic and historical foundation on the basis of which to form judgments and make decisions – and much more technical knowledge and data. Most of this data is absolutely arbitrary and requires raw memorization on the part of the student. For the most part there is but scant conceptual framework to serve a mnemonic trellis or scaffold. It's like learning words in a language where there are few cognates with the one you speak, and without being taught sufficient grammar to discern the syntax, let alone the meaning. Computer commands are a paradigmatic example. There is no sense to them – to what words are used, to how they are spelled, to what order they must be entered in, to the punctuation that must be used (hyphen or no hyphen, colon or no colon). They were decided upon and promulgated as standards by programmers and committees and corporations, and the worker's role is solely to memorize them and thus to make the equipment and the system work the way the higher powers wish it to. Of course this applies

even to workers at the lowest levels: to the supermarket checker needing to memorize that arbitrary code 5030 is for okra and 1209 is for radicchio.

The economic importance of college degrees is rapidly declining as more and more people discover that such degrees, which reflect a student's achievement in studying, analyzing and discussing knowledge and creative expression as a fully functioning human being, are less important than passing technical examinations which qualify one for professional certification. And such examinations are based largely on raw memorization of arbitrary data.

The next phase of human evolution will not be somatic; it may even be invisible to the physical anthropologists of the future (if there are any – and in accordance with our theory, there may not be). The next phase will be algorithmic evolution. Pleasure will decline in importance as a criterion for the retention of new memories and access to old ones. Since it has irrelevant material (fantasy, desire, the other [*object a*], love, death) as its subject matter, the unconscious, a relic of the hunter/gatherer and proto-agrarian phases, will atrophy, like the tail among the simians. Meanwhile both the compression and decompression algorithms will evolve to be more efficient, and will increasingly favor the retention of raw data with which the eyes and ears are presented (including strings of arbitrary letters and numbers) over the other tracks – over subconscious reaction, bodily affect, even conscious experiential narrative. And certainly over the “anticipation of the future” tracks, which will decline in significance as human tasks and experience increasingly become rote processes requiring total concentration on the present. The evolved decompression algorithm will rapidly access compressed data from long-term, nonvolatile memory and decompress it in a way that is lossless with respect what is required for the individual to perform his or her technical function. This will be at the expense of others memories, which, to save both storage space and processing power, will be swept into temporary trash folder and permanently deleted on a regular basis, like malware or viruses or (more relevantly) temporary internet files.

Contrary to current fantasies as reflected in video games, popular films and television, in the future man will not create robots to do his work, so that he can live in a utopia of pleasure, creation, contemplation and speculation; or even so that the rich will become richer and the poor will subsist in ever more bathetic poverty. Rather, man will become more like a special species of computer. Evolution will favor individuals with the best retrieval/decompression systems for data, with “best” meaning ability to sort nonvolatile memory and determine which data is most applicable to a given new situation, based also on a projection into the probable future. We say probable because such projection will be based not on values or history or thoughts or feelings, or even on presumed economic benefit as viewed from the standpoint of the individual, but solely on what has functioned for the system in the past. The probability algorithm will be totally devoid of “human” factors (again, the body, fantasy, the other, love, desire – even pain... and death), either individual, familial or societal.

What is a memory?

A crouton in your broth of longing –
your hand on her doorknob, tart metal, your wrist tightens, you imagine
the cold outside, the drone of traffic and humming in the wires –
and then –
her fingers close around yours
her lips touch your cheek

her hand brushes your leg
she turns off the light
you taste the merlot in her mouth
it's overwhelming
you lose your balance but she catches you
you kiss so long
her breath tickles your upper lip you laugh even as your tongue entwines with hers
you're so happy

But somewhere in this memory
There was a splice.
There were two branches
There was a junction in the trail

So you replay the memory again,
this time with the other tracks.
The subconscious narrative rises to the surface
this time around:
You were annoyed with her. She had bored you.
The movie she had insisted on watching was jejune at best.
Touching her breast through her bra afterwards was insufficient compensation.
You had to take a leak but you were in a hurry to get out of there.
You were sick of her giggles, her saccharine and puerile advice, her trinkets and her dog.
You wanted to go home
Back to other memories which you could reedit
And play back
As you pleased.

the next time around

I will play hard-to-get
too preoccupied with deals to Skype,
to love to drown to speculate;
too importunate to be bothered --
and at some inopportune point
communicating that I am doing you the greatest
of favors
I will confide that I am actually a student of Husserl
but with a Deistic streak;
and later, in a moment of casual but manipulative intimacy
I will confess that I am in fact a crypto-Christian
who would not necessarily be opposed to kneeling with you
in some tabernacle that suits your fancy;
But for the moment I am simply too busy
you are just one more atom on the wind
just one more shadow in the cavern
to whom on rare occasion I may dispense wisdom,

ill temper, offhand annoyance, lofty growls,
inconsiderate grunts of random lust appended with
 ironic assurances
that they are not directed at you in any way size
 shape form or substance;
hints that starlets in my bed make stars sparkle in my eyes
and then
silence.
you cannot make me jealous, you cannot make me care,
you can not turn my color or my temper or my mien
because you cannot reach me.
untouchable, unreachable me – fungible you,
synonymous with a gender that I grope whenever
 the spirit moves me
scope whenever the eye candy sugars on my proscenium
 and let mope whenever I have better things to do.
Adamantine Man, indomitable, oxymoronic –
The next time around.

(the next time around
I will be a garden sacrificed to progress,
an image of eternity lost due to a fluke,
a statement redolent with disaster and hope,
a mounting goodness that people fear,
an object that might be alive in a river too wild to swim
a nonsense syllable, a berceuse, six notes with nowhere to go,
twelve partitions in an infinite whole,
an elegant gesture like an orgasm turned to crystal,
facets of sleep, fractals of fulfilled desire
requited love beamed through granite
 from the center of the earth
I will be our destiny, our sunrise, our mutual survey of eternity
which establishes, once and for all, where and who we are now,
where and who we might be,
where and who we can be
in the collapse and rekindling of time
in the birth and weariness and growth of God
in His silence and in His song
in His forgiveness which we do not need
because
because
because
Because of the wonderful things we do
wizards of peace, magi of creation,
incantationists of ecstatic -)

The next time around
I will still be Me

but you will not be You
we will not be We
but mist will still make dew
glass will still make sand
thoughts will still make time
grapes will still make wine
and what I know
I knew.

the trouble with midnight
part two:
parmenides at the dog park

giving the bride away

I avoid weddings.

the last one I remember was a neo-hippy do

I filmed at the top of mt. tamalpais.

first I carried the camera up the mountain

then I carried the tripod

then I carried the battery

then I carried the sound.

Much thought (and even more discussion) had
gone into everything.

Special words were chosen,

Special clothes, special music,

Special food, special flowers,

Special paper, near a special tree

and under a special sky

all to symbolize and eventuate

-- and make no secret of --

their dreams.

as the morning dragged on

I was pretty much oblivious to all that specialness.

for me it started out at a hot f 5.6, rapidly went to an f 8,

and by the time the "I do's" were spoken we were f 16 – f 22
split the difference.

Farther down the mountain, and farther on in time,

she left him for another woman.

he died young-ish, but not young.

But before that,

their children, Aura and Baba Ram (*aka* Bob)

had scattered off into skepticism, recession,

the military and the retail trade,

seldom to be heard from again.

so like I say,

I avoid weddings

and thus find myself at a loss

giving the bride away.

When should I show up? Do I walk up to the altar?

The other guy takes care of the ring, right?

Do I have to give a speech? Should I smile or cry?

How should I look and walk and sit and stand and feel?

Which bills will end up coming my way?

Should I say, "*I haven't lost a daughter. I've gained a son.*"

‡

The round black mesh metal chair
with the straight hard metal back

and hard mesh metal seat
is the only thing there is to sit on
on the cracked stone balcony overlooking
what could only be the world
(nothing more, nothing less)
And nothing to do but sit --
tired for once, weary for once, observant for once,
lost for once --
and take it all in.
Offices, traffic, subways, pharmacies, factories,
mini-malls, sidewalks, parks,
work, worry, dissipation of time,
things done out of necessity
things done out of longing
things done out of hope
things done as the end result of
 fundamental motion – *Zitterbewegung*,
 which, if you stretch it far enough,
 explains gravity, time, life, and the stars.
Why am I sitting down? Why are my feet cold?
Why am I on this balcony overlooking the world,
the people, the animals and the minerals,
As ice begins to form behind my ears,
to make veins on my scalp and in my lungs,
descending into the capillaries and into the
farthest synapses of my heart, freezing little bits of feeling --
 a thought of love without an object,
 or with one that went away;
 ideas on the quiet, cold islands in the icy stream
 of my frozen blood
as the flat gray ridiculous patina of mortality
encapsulates me for discreet disposal.
minutes go by, decades years and I realize
that I have forgotten to breathe
that I have forgotten what it was like to breathe
that I have forgotten why I needed to breathe
that I never really knew if other people breathe too:
I never really knew what made them tick
what made them want to practice medicine or law
 or the viola or high jumps or perfection
 which practice makes;
what made them have children and sometimes
 resent them, or feel they had let them down;
what saw them through the muddle and mire of fear
 until they triumphed or gave up;
what strength they found to build twin towers
 and what hate they found to crash them down;
what fear they found to snuff the life of millions

or to rise again as an industrialized power
resilient on the world stage;
what love they found to be naked in private with another
to pretend that their nakedness was their secret
to clutch and paw and penetrate
and thus to turn pretense into new life;
what miles they traveled to find
that they had started out on the wrong foot,
the wrong gender, the wrong prescription,
the wrong handwriting, the wrong career,
the wrong shoulder to look over,
the wrong way to turn back
and no way to do it
in the night.

Places are being set on the black, round, stiff metal tables
on the balcony overlooking the world (nothing less nothing more)
Waiters with menus, patrons with hungers, busboys on missions
of spectacular replenishment, and all immaculately dressed.
They look through me, stealing furtive glances at the far tables,
eyeing the food and the women; then
they walk through me – if I could only breathe
if I could only cut myself and see my warm blood
one more time.

Far behind me, my forebears,
shielding their eyes against the glare of tomorrow's tomorrow
at random moments in their busy destinies catch themselves,
seemingly unawares,
glancing forward and stealing a glimpse of
a speck at the end of their genetic trajectory
the null at the end of the tunnel
the glitch at which the shifting patterns of their molecular fate
finally lose all meaning and shift back into chaos –
me.

‡

Just enough light
to carry the tripod back down the mountain
the shot film sealed in its cans with black tape
the lenses in their soft cloth bags.
a cool *f*2.8
and no film left to shoot.

just enough stuff in me
to move my feet
to trip on a rock
to imagine the moon I believe may rise
after I am done with my journey

and the funny thing is
I did not even see it
and the funny thing is
I did not even feel it
and the funny thing is
I did not even know it

giving my bride away.

for the last time in my home town

I am speaking in my head
to someone who isn't there. And worse still
she was never there. She's too big to fit and also
too small. Don't get me wrong.
She was beside me on the Q Train often enough
in my arms a decent number of times not to mention
shopping, dining, planning, moping
watching reruns of The X Files on her sofa
petting our respective cats – all the usual stuff. But she was never
inside my head. So why was it there
that I addressed her? And I still do even though she is (as they'd say)
"long gone." As if absence were a thing with length rather than with
fangs.
What it comes down to is:
talking to someone who is inside your head, as if they were
seated uncomfortably on a stool with their legs crossed and a cigarette
whether or not they smoked
is effing weird. But you, reader, (who are not inside my head) do it too.
Let's face it: The people inside our heads
are better listeners than
anyone we know. More easy-going, more empathetic, more willing to respect
our point of view.
The people inside our heads, the ones we speak to day and night, rain or shine,
are
the best people. They should
be given the vote.
And what else could we give them. I cannot think of anything else. Perhaps I am too
stingy.

So now I find myself speaking in my idealized voice, the resonant, persuasive, charismatic
one
that is not mine
inside my head to a vanished second person about the last time I paid a visit (as one

pays one's taxes or one's parking tickets or one's insurance premiums)
to my home town.

The "I" inside my head (a far better person than any real me which might exist – an "I" which makes me
redundant, and in an annoying way)
is narrating what seems to be its life
and in real time
to a permanently absent "you," who is perched on the aforementioned stool, blowing not rings
but
curlicues of smoke which might or might not spell --

Driving north on Glebe Road,
I suddenly want to visit my father.
But where can I find him?
In the boxy brick "colonial" on Henderson Road
reading the stories he wrote for me
about "the little animal without a name" or
on Wayne Street, drinking his scotch and skim milk
listening to the Ips I gave him of Götterdämmerung
while watching the redskins face another
fourth down or up on governors hill,
the tenor sax I borrowed from the band room
strapped around his neck, wailing away with a vibrato that could
make a hamster cry or at river house overlooking
the potomac, the pentagon, lee's mansion, the ancient
black trestle of fourteenth street bridge I want
to walk up the steps onto the wide white porch
run home from lubber run push the up button on the elevator
dash in from a long walk writing poems in my head in
Glencarlyn –
and tell him
about you
and
for the first time (or almost)
I want to see him smile
because his son has found love at long last and even
for the first time -
But then continuing on up glebe road toward "Ballston," a
necropolis of office buildings looming above the little church,
st. george's, where I learned the nicean creed
and in so doing announced
that I believe in the resurrection of the dead:
It is there that I see in my mind's eye
the cigarette burning his fingers in the
cancer hospital
him sitting with the sax and scotch and Wagner
as the places we lived in
crumble around him the rafters fall through the ceiling as

Flagstad sings the Liebestod
the music turns into white dust
and I realized
that it is a good thing that I could not find my father here
in my home town
it is a good thing that I could not tell him about you about my joy
in anticipating the first time you would speak Spanish together or
listen to opera together or talk about Texas together (you might
even have made him laugh) -
It is a good thing that, at least in this way,
I did not break his heart.

(We made a mistake –
got on the Short Line.
doesn't go
all the way.)

(Runner on the trail: "Is there anyone else coming this way?"
"No" I shout,
not knowing which way he means, what am I supposed to say?
Nor did I tell him about the dude with the huge beautiful wolf dog
up ahead.)

(On cooler days
even after just a sprinkle
the gray blotches seem to remain on the rocks forever
as if they know
in their heart of hearts
that I may not
be back their way.)

wind

voice

whisper

believe

secret

resurrection

dust

laugh

heart

nor

[wait -]

[wait -]

[wait]

listen

When I was twelve years old,
I had a tape recorder that recorded at very slow speed,
one and seven eighths inches per second, eight whole hours
on very thin tape.

So one night I closed my door, put the microphone under my pillow,
pressed "record,"
and turned out the light.
I thought, "If I snore,
I will be alone all my life."

I spent all the next day shut in my little room under the eaves
on Wayne Street, my head against the speaker.

I listened.

Not a sound.

It was sundown when the tape spooled out, flap flap,
breaking the silence.
I opened the blinds just enough to see the darkening sky.
"I will find a beautiful lover," I said, almost out loud,
"or she will find me. And she will share her soul,
And she will give me the stars."

I have heard many things since that night
and that day.

Fatal collisions in the distance and very close.
Square waves and transient intermodulation distortion.
Women whom I had tried to make happy tell me that I had not.
Women I had thought liked me tell me that they didn't.
People from companies with "Artists" and "Creative" in their names.
Clicks from deep inside my car that I was sure spelled disaster.
Melodies in my head which I imagined were my own.
The sound of my pulse, the sound of women's hearts,
The far thunder of my mother's last breath.

Today I am going to the Goodwill Industries Store,
to look for an old tape recorder,
Wollensak or De Jur or Telectro
that records at one and seven eighths inches per second;
and I am going to Ametron Electronics in Hollywood where
I hope they still sell quarter inch tape one thousand one hundred
meters long.

Then tonight I will shut my door,
put the microphone under my pillow,
press record

And tomorrow
until the sun goes down, I will
listen

listen

listen

‡

"She did her best to talk sense into me, but I didn't listen."

"Of course you listened, dumb-ass. It's not listening that's selective it's something else."
It all boils down to choice. It's choice that it all boils down to. Selection.
Every acceptance is a rejection. Every affection is an indifference.
Every glance is an avoidance. Every peck on the cheek is a kiss that did not happen.
Every apology is a diminution of self.
And when it comes right down to it,
Every choice makes us less than we are.

‡

Let it all fall down.

Let it all fall down.

The chandeliers the stanchions the illustrated periodicals the wine

Let it all fall down

The attitudes the shadows the atoms

Let it all fall down

The misery the joy the ambiguity

The tools the weapons the toys

The legs the arms the minds

The devil the teacher the beggar

The possible the impossible the unlikely

The failure the success the vacuum

The hope the fear the reticence

The singles the marrieds the divorced

The infants the aged the condemned

Let it all fall down.

The concept the process the failure

The effort the vacuity the release

The cure the relapse the infection

The question the answer the doubt

The premise the reason the void

The choice the duty the resentment

The angel the tyrant the friend

The synonym the antonym the word

The lust the numbness the soil

The death the birth the sky

The high the flat the empty

The parties the ignorance the carnage

The thrilling the boring the necessary

The forgotten the mislaid the unnoticed

The clocks the toasters the rakes

The go the stop the continue

The center the edge the lie

Let it all fall down

Let it all fall down.

‡

Survival

Survival of

Survival of the

‡

The foghorn

The foghorn was the last thing he heard

he awakens in a hospital room listening for it the foghorn dangers in the bay
the liner emerges from the fog capsizes no lifejacket underwater he can no longer hear

the foghorn until now He strains to hear it surrounded by tubes and lights
digits that blip onto metal the hum the hum the alarm a nurse rushes in but she cannot
be one her breasts are too prominent and then a young intern with a beard and an earring
he cannot be a doctor

"Mister... Mister Cavanaugh?" He does not quite remember but of course he does as a
strange shiver makes its way down his body his lips his tongue his jaw seem
paralyzed the blipping digits flash a sound that seems the inverse of the foghorn first
low then higher

"Code blue 612 Code blue 612" says the young fellow with the earring into a shiny metal oval
he pulls from his pocket

"I'll page Doctor Sweeney," says the nurse not for the ears of the prone man liquid flows
into him from a bottle hanging overhead earring man injects something into the tube
several new people rush in, none of them normal one colored, one Chinese a
box with a piece of glass hangs down from the ceiling near the opposing wall and on the glass
there are people little ones now there are two seconds later there are four all different
ones women in dresses so tight he wonders how they can breathe he must not have
been paying attention to the women as he walked down

Market Street last Sunday to board the streetcar the Taraval line out to Sutro Baths

"Can you hear me Mr. Cavanaugh?" says an older man in a loose green shirt and trousers (not
something, he thinks, to wear in public) *"Say 'yes' if you can hear me. Or raise your left arm."*
He searches deep inside himself looking for breath with which to speak It is there --
somewhere

"Yes --" **Wait.** That is not my voice. I moved my jaw but there must be someone else
talking in my stead a ventriloquist

"Am I . . . am I . . . still wet?"

The nurse gently pulls back the sheet that covers him.

"Catheter's still in place," she answers not to him to the man in green.

"I must still be wet" [that voice whose voice?] *"There was... the ship. And there was my
fiancée, Matilda Matilda Reynolds Where is she? Don't tell me she... don't tell me she
drowned. They would certainly have rescued her if they if they--"*

"Here. Suck on this." Another nurse puts something moist and sweet between his lips.
Not too much. It'll be a while before you are up to drinking water by yourself."

By myself?

"Ma Ma tilde. You never answer my questions."

More people are now shuffling around him attaching and disconnecting sticky things with wires,
little pads that shook his body slightly, rubbing salve here everything stung everything
felt hairless and dry the older man in green had been called away before he left he had
said something like *"Order X-rays, an MRI, a catscan, then a complete workup. But take it slow.
We're not dealing with 'just another patient' here. Mr. Cavanaugh is* [and here the man in
green, who had been avoiding looking at his face thus far, finally did so] *a part of history."*

Yet more commotion. He, Cavanaugh, he he he **Charles** Cavanaugh felt tired and yet he also felt that he had slept at least long enough to get the water out of his ears then there was Matilda. Matilda was not all that pretty. The nurse with the breasts was more pretty. But *how could he think such things.*

"Is it . . . is it morning?" he said to no one. And just at that moment, a short man who looked like a Mexican so what was he doing in a hospital touched the box with the glass hanging near the wall and it began to speak.

"So it was another day of fourth-and-tens for the Seahawks. Next hour we'll give you our predictions for the Moscow World Cup, but first, back to Jerry."

"Today President Donald Trump announced his plans to dramatically increase America's tactical nuclear capability."

Another man, an older man, is suddenly on the glass or perhaps behind it where are all those little people?

"Today I am taking a major step to counter threats by Russia, China, North Korea, Iran, Ecuador, Venezuela, and other rogue nations against our national security. By the year 2025 we will have the ability to make surgical nuclear strikes against our enemies. These strikes will stop them dead in their tracks and bring wars to an end before they begin."

The Mexican touches the box again. Now there are six tiny colored men moving strangely and moaning in an accent he had never heard. The nurse with the breasts shoes him out of the room as she touches the box and the tiny people disappear. It is now merely a glass the people inside the box have gone somewhere else.

"You'll need a few days to get up to speed on your hip-hop, Mr. Cavanaugh. We're very informal around here. Would you mind if I called you Charley? Or maybe Chas or Chuck?"

What do people call me? he asked inside his head. And what were all the things he had been avidly listening to coming out of the box. He understood many of the words individually and knew that they were strung into sentences, but that was about it.

The green man has returned. He carries something. *"Do we have him fully stabilized?"*

"Vitals are decent, given that we are dealing with...."

"Mr. Cavaaugh?" says the green man. *"I think I have something of a something of a surprise for you."* The green man, Sweeny, is holding what he has just brought into the room. Something metal and round. He looks at the staff to make certain that they are alert.

Then turns the roundness around and maneuvers it in front of the face of the... of the patient. In front of the face of Charles or Charley or Chuck.

"Who" says Charles or Charley or Chuck after a moment *"is that? Is that another box with people inside? Does this one make sounds, too. But wait. That face is moving its mouth the same way I am. Are you trying to drive me crazy?"*

"Mr. Cavanaugh, this is just a mirror. And the face is yours. It's not 1899 anymore. It is –

A TV episode I saw as a child, the mother of many nightmares. Mirrors take no prisoners. Mirrors tell no tales. Mirrors are the only Now. But not exactly. There is first the speed of light to allow for,

then the speed of the nerves and synapses and whatever algorithm allocates visual input to your overall perception at that particular moment to your consciousness rather than delaying it for additional processing. So I will not be the first to say that
Now is an illusion which, like all illusions, is best left untampered with
Now is over before we have any chance
to do something about it
Now is its own best defense immune as much to capture as it is to annihilation
If we could all be Now and only Now nothing but Now always and forever Now
we would all
be safe.

‡

In early Spring
rot is in the air
like no time else.
Earth has not yet digested
last year's death
in early Spring.

*

The Rotting Man
That is what we must celebrate
in ribald festival
with all our pendants and kites and marijuana cigarettes
our jug wine and our
curling up on the damp grass
for Man Rots, not burns—
putresces, not blazes
his life
to what lies beyond all celebration
to the rotten Autumn of nothingness.

So beware: It is early Spring.
Rot is in the air.
Stench is on our breath
Goodbyes are in our smiles
like no time else.
Earth has not yet had time to
digest our thoughts so they yet blow in the plague-wracked breezes
skim and slime the plague-doomed streams

It is early Spring Rot is in the air like no time else

‡

"I never thought I'd see the day..."

-- the implausible repeal of dawn --

He never thought
he'd see the day.

‡

"Hi, I'm Jenny. I don't look like much but I'm very good in bed..."

"Hi, I'm Dave Schuster. Used to be with CarMax. I've got an idea for a new type of pen. I know with pads and tablets, pens are out, but..."

"Hi, this is Christine. I've left three messages for you but you haven't called me back. Does this mean you no longer wish to be my friend?"

There's not much doubt about it.
The universe is calling

the breathless sleep

Below the dam
the boy lifted his pole over the railing.
And at the end of the string flapped a fish
thrusting its tail pumping its mouth heaving its gills
starved for air as the boy walked very slowly toward
the far concrete bench as his father, hat on his face,
lay prone on the perpendicular one:
Could not be bothered
by such a small fish. And I could not tell if,
in his deliberate slowness, the boy sought guidance or praise,
affirmation or at least acknowledgment of his existence as the fish
caught, vertical, gasping, doomed, faced the end of his life.

my friend, a father of two grown women, looked on smiling the entire time,
identifying presumably with the boy's dad in his studious indifference.
meanwhile, the fish panicked for breath, praying as only
fish out of water can pray that one more thrash of its long silver being
might mean water, might enable it to inhale
the drowning life of its own world
rather than the gasping death of ours.

By this time I had turned away toward the slits above the cascades,
toward the lake or reservoir in the headwaters of the mississippi
toward the signs and warnings and railings and paths --
even toward the empty minnesota sky, insufficient to distract one

from this little flailing death at the end of a two foot string and a
five centimeter hook and
the arm of a boy who did not know if he had done the right thing
if it was a thing that would be rewarded
or even acknowledged and after all
he would really rather eat pizza tonight
and ice cream and watch TV by the time he had cleaned
such a small fish
there would be nothing left,
nothing to fill the emptiness inside him like pizza crust or
give him that flash of crashing excitement like ice cream.
Nothing but an odor. An odor that would stay on his fingers
no matter how much he washed them; an odor his mom
could never quite
get out of his clothes but worse
an odor that would stay in his mind like an omen like a
sickly shadow he would hear the smell and see it, feel it,
taste it for years he will wake up sick from that smell
it will be the aura of all of his bad days, bad loves, bad dreams,
bad jobs, the aftertaste that will come when he drops the ball,
forgets the answer, guesses wrong, hurts someone he loves
unintentionally... the scent of regret.

And he will gasp for air while lying in dark rooms and not know it then
awake pale and deflated, drab and disconsolate, numbered into
an inescapable present – awake
from the breathless sleep.

I like to eat fish.
to walk down the avenue and buy ten dollars worth of whiting
then up the avenue to buy a white wine from italy,
lacryma di jesu christi, perhaps, and/or some cava and/or some malbec
then home to you. I would camp out at my laptop in the kitchen while the
little fish cooked and the kale steamed and the wine chilled and maybe
some quinoa or risotto warmed up as an afterthought.

[illegible]

~~FOR YOUR ENTHUSIASM ONE FOR YOUR AMOR AND ANOTHER FOR YOUR~~
~~HOUSING~~
~~FOR GAIN GAIN FOR YOUR MATRONS FOR GAIN RESISTS AND THEM TO~~
~~WALK YOUR DORS~~
~~YOUR MOUTH THE RATES OF YOUR KNEES YOUR AMPHORA TO HAVE~~
~~GAIN SOME~~
~~SCOTCH TO MY TOMATOES' DARTING KOLCHIKOS AND THE SOFT HEADLINGS~~
~~OF MY MATHS WITH MY TOMATOES AMONG YOU A LAMOR RESISTING "DON'T~~
~~STOP"~~

~~A AN AMONG THE FACTOR A WANT TO RESIST YOUR NAME DOWN TO YOUR~~
~~ENTHUSIASM~~
~~SO THAT WE CAN GELATE AT TOGETHER A WITH MY TOMATOES AND YOU~~
~~WITH YOUR TOMATOES A BUILT AT FACT AT AN MY HOUSING DATING AT AN MY~~
~~DAUGHTER~~
~~FROM A DEAR MY TOMATOES AMONG YOUR TOMATOES WE'VE AND OTHERS WITH~~
~~FACTS~~
~~AND BUILT AT A WANT YOU TO RESIST AT TO YOUR HOUSING AND FACTS AT~~
~~TOO A~~
~~YOUR COMPLEXION A WANT TO BRACE YOUR FACTS WITH YOUR A WANT TO~~
~~BRACE~~
~~THE JOY OF HASTING MOVE TO YOU WITH YOU~~

like we share everything –

links about shrinks and jay-pegs of voodoo humanoid cockatoos and

apps that distort and transform voices in the subway diagnoses

memories of beds and rooms places we went to against our will

reunions with our without the anticipation of sex

or of the night families and wounds we pour salt on them

we lick them off we talk into a delirium of insight and

then

you said "I love you" without saying "I love you"

and "goodbye" without saying "goodbye."

~~"MY ROCKY APO FACTORS ARE NO MORE" YOU WOULD SAY BUT A WANTED~~
~~AT AMOR TO HAVE YOURSelves AMHONOR A CAN WOMEN~~
~~WHAT WAD ON YOUR NAME~~
~~AT YOU BOUNDED HAVE SOME AT BETTER YOURSelves~~
~~HADG THAT SCOTCHIKOS BRACING~~ like mercury around the sun or

a finger around the rim of a glass (I loved the higher harmonics

of your passion, like on a viola or a guitar, resonating with

the grain and texture of your essence) AND WHEN

~~THE OTHERS YAMANNY DATED THE GADDS THE FACTORS OF~~
~~YOUR FUSION~~

~~A AMHONOR WANTED TO STAY THOUGH TO HAVE LITANI AT SCOTCH~~
~~AMHONOR BUT NOT GELATE AMHONORAMOR FOR YOU TO HAVE YOUR~~
~~SCOTCH THEM~~

~~TO HAVE MY UNRECOGNIZABLE NAMES TO YOUR FUSION YOU NAME~~
~~APD~~

~~YOUR NAME TO HAVE A POSITION THAT WADY~~
~~HAVE YOU GADG AS YOU DO AN YOUR RESISTING AMHONOR~~
~~TO HAVE YOU AMOR WITH MY TOMATOES AN YOUR LAMOR~~
~~ADAM AND ADAM AND ADAM~~
~~FROM~~

I had hoped that the dam would save me

I had dreamed that the dam would save me

I had thought that the dam would save me.

I had built it so safe and so strong.

that the ice would melt into my waters and remain in a lake of regret
a lake of placid surface and pure intent
a lake for the casual recreation of others

 ("is this hydroelectric or mainly flood control," I asked my friend,
 the father of two grown women, as he smiled at supine dad
 and the fish declined to die
 in its time. "I think there's a small generator here," he replied.)

My lust turns its tesla rotors then, mixed with urban waters and waste,
joins the mississippi's disconsolate liquid journey toward the gulf
 (your stories of bodies and sunny boats and islands
 down there)

Eagles nest here near the headwaters where do they fly?
are they frightened by the skyline of st. paul do they understand
the traffic below them?

 (your stories of men, women, rooms, suddenly naked, then
 the next day)

downstream downstream undistracted by the night just cool and hidden
why am I here dispersing into anonymity even my sorrow
without a name.

Below the dam

more people arrived to fish.

Ostensible adults in tastelessly colorful odd clothes like cartoon marionettes
of characters from some Coen Bros. film the most recreational story
in these parts
must be of hooking the fish
that is so big and strong
that it can tug you under.

Above the dam

more people arrived with their boats

On the roads

families went where they usually went for pizza

In the houses

kids pushed remotes on TVs, game consoles, fingered iPads

In their bedrooms

couples made love

On the radio
the very latest familiar voices sang about romance and sex

On the six o'clock news
twelve people were shot at an early screening of a highly publicized movie

In the church
folks dozed through parables and genealogies of long-dead jewish people

In the school
children learned just enough to pass a test then enter the forgetfulness of life

In the washing machine
the ~~sun~~ and ~~moon~~ and stains of life are mostly washed away

In the clothes dryer
the stains that are not are set permanently like our dreams like our sins

On our faces
the subtext of embarrassment:
do our stains remain visible
despite everything -- all our efforts
to lead normal lives?

‡

The only quest which appears to be without end is the quest for context.

the trouble with midnight
part three:
the null hypothesis

window envelope

Not far from the mulch stood the woman,
on the verge of some age or other,
on the far side of some time or other,
wrestling with stories that just wouldn't quit –

harassment

borderline confusion
in the winds

unsubtle
risible
as she took it all in

"Mulch this year just average," she opines. The shallow thunder thought about
making an appearance
before she finally went away

empty handed.

"She shows up this time every year," says the attendant as if to no one although he is not alone.

"She ought to know better," remarks an unqualified visitor,
more like a passerby than a person.

Back in her car the woman wonders
Where else she might go.

On the seat beside her are three broken pots and some exceedingly dry
flower bulbs, virtually indistinguishable from the cellophane they were wrapped in.

"There ought to be a revolution,"
offers a body sitting behind her, like some radical mannequin.

"I've had just about enough
of your crap," answers the person next to him. A man with no hair and no skin to speak of.

"How do you get things to grow around here?"

Back to the woman
and her obsession.

"They drain us in the end," offers the man with
no hair, no eyes and no heart,
"Those things you cannot get out of your head."

"You're no one to talk."

The traffic slows before them

Crumbling into the gray distance in which
all their prickly tomorrows huddle obliquely like
distaff commodities futures.

The first man crunches the driver's seat with his knees. Either he or the driver must be tall,
although from this perspective
either could be true.

"All this goes against my grain." (Just something to say while massaging his bruised knees.)

"Next time I want your help--."

"Next time I want your *help*...

"Next time I want your *help*...
You'll do the same thing you always do.
Insist on tagging along
and then just take up fucking space!"

"Now aren't we being cozy," whines the individual with no hair, no situation, no thoughts, no
agenda.

"You couldn't have picked up the mulch anyway," he continues.

"And fucking why? Because neither of you have fucking arms? Because neither of you really
gives a shit about me? Because women are nothing but a freak show for you?"

The two men look at one another.
or would
if either of them had eyes.

"No" says one of them --
it doesn't matter which.

"You could not have
picked up the mulch because

Harry's in the trunk."

underrepresented demographic

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--

Glancing at this on the utility poll
waiting for the light to change
as some random wind caused the five remaining confetti strips at the
bottom
to flutter
Painfully aware that her legs were thicker than her consciousness,

even more painfully aware that the
twenty three people on the waiting local bus
would have their eyes glued
to her hand
if it were to reach toward the leaflet
and grab at glory

collapse of the state vector

Living in the mountains
was not all that it was
cracked up to be.
First there were the bottles.
And then the complaints,
the toasts,
the recriminations.

Under the mildewed blanket
Something was lost.
It had justified itself by being between
two nothings of different sizes:
one hopelessly speckled although unseeable
to the naked eye;
the other a vexing conundrum
in the shape of a pearl.

"Only certain atoms
Survive at this altitude."
"That's bad news for the material world."

"Worse news for meta-fucking-physics,
If you follow my drift --

"Dude."

Mountains are not only high.
They are abstruse,
and in that way
not worth thinking about.

A hen grazed the gravel in silence as if
she had no opinion. The egg that became her
just ended up here
somehow
perhaps by rolling lazily up
the northernmost fire road
through time
or tumbling backwards from emptiness with

a satin parachute.

If watched closely enough,
something –
a wave or a speck -
stirs under the mildewed blanket
every once in a while
when no one is watching.

But there will not be anyone *to* watch.
Not for another sixty-eight million years.
Only the hen
should she develop the gumption
to come inside.

And hens don't count.

*

"In this context 'extinction event' is an oxymoron,
since events are what unleash upon us
imminent truth."

"Ergo extinction is truth."

"Mutatis mutandis you are not true until you die.
Death sets your truth for all time."

Who's speaking?
Is it the truculent
mendacity of heaven,
colorblind,
immune to shape,
crawling the walls of time
as would any perplexed spider;
as caught up in her mind-numbing
ratiocinations as she is
burdened by the best intentions?

At the bookstore in Soho in New York
customers, shivering from the cold,
line up in a queue to get their books signed.
On the sales counter,
the stack of glossy books is
diminishing in size.
In the stock room,
an employee opens another box
with his box cutter,
something one must not take on a journey by air.
At the table, trying very hard not to appear like
a scholar

but succeeding only in being the spitting image
of your high school guidance counselor,
the liberal one
who always wore
a sweater over his white shirt and green tie

The second year graduate student has arrived at
the front of the line. She hands her newly-purchased book
to the author, who winces imperceptibly at the title as he flips open
the cover.

THE BIG BANG AS EXTINCTION EVENT

(Too Nietzschean, perhaps. *Amor fati* and all that crap.

Still, better than the publisher's ideas:

"Arising From Their Ashes"

"A Fiery Future"

"Dust to Life"....)

"How should I sign it?"

"Would you mind writing 'to Melissa'?"

As if for the first time in his life he glances up into someone's eyes and sees
a shy woman, ill-formed for a smile; ill-prepared for his inevitable question.

The author keeps looking into those eyes as if they just might possibly
free some entangled truth from its benighted maze. But they only begin to –
to tear up? Is it possible?

Is this possible?

"I'm sorry," he finally says. How should I sign it?"

She just stands there, too embarrassed to wipe her eyes, or her cheeks
down which the tears descend
like dew on the horizon.

"To... to Melissa?"

"And that would be you."

Finally – a hint, the tinniest of hints --
of a smile.

Heading toward the subway, the girl stops in the middle of the pavement,
and reaches into her shoulder bag.

She can no longer wait to see
how her name looks
when written by him.

To Melissa

I will never forget

your eyes

Six years later

they already have two children,
a farm scarcely worthy of the name but still a farm
on the side of a mountain
slightly upstate but not too distant
from rivers,
a plan to painlessly improve their Latin,

for her to learn Greek,
to patch up the roof on the barn and for her
to teach at the State University rather than at
the community college.

And for him,
to write a less pessimistic book
Now that the world is at his feet
and happiness is his oyster and
Melissa is its pearl

in the barn
under the mildewed blanket,
something had been lost

and outside the barn
their hen grazes the gravel in silence as if
she had no opinion. The egg that became her
just ended up here
somehow
perhaps by rolling lazily up
the northernmost fire road
through time
or tilting backwards out of emptiness
borne by gossamer wings.

If watched closely enough,
something –
a wave or a speck -
stirs under the blanket
every once in a while
but only

when no one

is looking.

Or can look

Or wishes to look
Or wishes to see

because in their eyes

are tears of joy

hair extension

"Ex-girlfriends and future girlfriends
are trouble enough."

"That's not the half of it;
the challenge is going to be getting it to fit."

Maneuvering three sofas into an average-size truck
entails multiple considerations.

In no particular order –
the functionality of some higher principle whose sanity escapes us;
downtime wishfully to be spent in a commercial-free museum;
the third book from the left on the bottom shelf –
you know the one:
the one with the pictures.

What does anything mean
without the pictures

"But back to girlfriends."

"That's why you need the three sofas.
I told you that already."

"You don't get it. I think I'm in love."

And with that everything
grinds to a halt.

The little girl on the perfunctory sidewalk
lets her hula hoop fall.
She looks down.
She's trapped in a circle.

A paramedic ambulance screams up to the curb.
The uniforms jump out without the men,
who will only follow after lunch.
Nevertheless the spirits animating the clothing
want to help
free her
as she is clearly dying.

"Future girlfriends. Now there's a concept."

"And not one to be sneezed at."

"Unless you're allergic to the future."

"Love is no laughing matter."

"Neither is pain."

"They both grow until there is no longer any room
for you."

No one has noticed
that ten thousand pink hula hoops
are descending from the sky;
or that by reaching out
one only grapples with disaster

The pavement is more fragile than the earth
The uniforms more transparent than the stars
The sofas stiffer than the waves
The pictures more empty than the text
in the book
on which one relies
if only for the certainty
that it will outlast us.

Once again
both men are heaving the second sofa,
the one on which the ex-girlfriend will sleep.
(The third will be for dogs, bunnies, chinchillas,
bankruptcy attorneys
and "future girlfriends,"
should any of the above
make an appearance.)
"One. Two. *Three!*" shouts the second man
before the second sofa tumbles atop the third one at which
both men stare but see only

A boy the same age as the girl.
A boy with a twisted mouth.

"My gang's gonna fuck you up."
He speaks in a high, reedy voice from the side of his mouth,
looking up at the struggling men as if he were looking down.

Then he walks toward the hula hoop.

The little girl is standing with stooped shoulders
shivering a little

The boy crosses into the circle and puts his arm around the girl,
who is the same age but taller.
With his tiny head on her shoulder he says
"My love."

And she:

"My love."

So many possibilities

and yet so few.

And with that –

fade to chaos

‡

In medias rain;

when the gist of your self splatters on the pavement, then drains into obscure punctuation. Today there are new marks that mean different things. : and ; and ! and # and even , and ? have new neighbors, if not to say friends. The new sign to indicate that you regret what you have just thought clutters up your keyboard. The new sign that means the last word in the sentence has excited you in some unmentionable way. The new sign that stands in for the tear that would have fallen on the paper if anyone wrote on paper anymore. The new sign whose meaning is that all of these words are better left unspoken until tomorrow, or until some yesterday which clamors for them. The new signs have been allotted their own keys, upper and lower case. Your iPhone is now six times larger. Eventually there will be no more room for words, only signs and squiggles and signs, marks to compress our latitude signs to query our intent so unforgivingly that soon we realize

(Perish the thought of elderly rainbows too noncompliant to disperse,
of newborn gorgons sucking
at the sagging breasts of reason,
of man

of man in a wilderness of his own making in a maze coincident with his mind. The meanderings, the salutations, the embarrassed fidgets of uncertainty. He trips on the bootlaces of his plans his future his grasp of the possible his quakings at the stone feet of the inevitable, the top, the remainder of its sandstone colossus long since plundered by adherents to some faith best left unnamed if not behind
best left
best left

One car per green

One life per birth

One death per moon.

The coruscating, dooming law of The Conservation of Synergy with its ever-reliable twin, the reticulated statute of The Conservation of Will, trundle in conspiratorial tandem into self-created darkness, their cherished territory. A belonging like none other
as sensuous and tender
as imagined love.)

(Throwing flotsam to the winds,
the grand toss of dysfunctional liberty.

Opposing traffic does not stop.
Opposing traffic
does not stop.



‡

She had hungered for the irresponsible charm
of being outdoors with her,
the her who was not her daughter but her -
Push her on the swing her smile blowing by as if it were the breeze,
her patterned skirt riding up her thighs
(her eyes locked once more with yours over her shoulder,
a wisp of her hair caresses her soft cheek and
she smiles a smile you dream must mean
*Push me harder push me higher push me
forever
push me
to the stars. . .*
your promises left unspoken her questions left unasked your longing
caught up short but only for now. Later is soon enough --)
"This is how it was meant to be," she whispered to herself, gathering all of her love
for another push.
Things are meant.
Meant to be.
As if meaning came before being, as if being were *the result* of meaning -
(The look in her eyes is meant for you her her *all
meant for you...*)
A young man stopped near a tree
the lump in his throat even larger and more ungrateful than the lump in his jeans. Visions of
plangent tribidism danced through his head like caramel fairies
Swing Swing
as Being and its Partners in Crime, Time, Nothingness, and Event, bludgeoned the moment -
The girl on the swing gave another smile with a different meaning if not a different being
(and you said:)
"Ready to stop now? I'm bushed." (a bush a bush and what it hides what it must
give up)
"'Bushed' are you?" laughed the girl on the swing as she slowly began to drag her shoes on
the brown dusty ground
then clenched the chains that were the swing and stood wary of the dizzy sky.
And in that moment their eyes locked. Time stopped.
"This is how it was meant to be"

thought Janine, the pusher of pushovers, who cherished the perished thought that she could look into a woman's eyes and say without breath or words *"You were meant to be mine."*

Which two of our troika of crooks will *pull the job* tonight? Being and Nothingness?
Being and Time?

No no Nannete. This time round, the thieves are to be Being and Event -
Event the Elf of Redefinition.

"Guess what?" grins Janice, having finally found
her balance.

"Got a hot date tonight. Met him online (where else)? He introduces himself as 'Anthony' but I am going to call him Tony. Tony's are sexy. Or that's what I read. I wonder what he'll be like."

"They're all the same" Janine was about to remark but stopped herself short -
a short stop on the diamond a halt on the amethyst, the ancient coaxing gem of sobriety.

"What are you up too this evening? If you don't start dating you'll never land a guy."

Never land

Neverland

always an ocean

deeper than the squalid sea of self-deception of making up stories of making up
meanings
meanings

Neverland

Never land

ocean

ocean

in memoriam louis althusser, who

The b side of paradise

The one for which we got less studio time

The one on which we used pick-up musicians from a strip club since we had broken up for good
by that time

The one where the engineer was some kid from a class at the community college who didn't
know the mass from a soul in the wall

The one that barely made it as a bonus track onto the Kmart bargain reissue of our last
compilation album, the one even our sixty year old ex groupies won't spend
their hormone replacement money on and our seventy year old ex roadies won't spend
their Exelon and Razadyne money on and our eighty year old ex producer won't spend
his funeral money on

The b side of paradise.

That's where we are.

‡

The hexagonal reservoir atop Tonga Mountain, covered with thick rusted planks of furrowed steel, has, like all the others, been abandoned to the echoes and the snakes. Below a rickety city spreads to the mountains through the wishful gray haze. Towers carry their wires. Ants carry their food. The earth carries all of it, round and round Carries more fantasies than it can bear. A shrub shivers in the cold desert wind.

Let's call it home.

No other journey makes sense
No other goal stays steady in our eyes
The finish line of flimsy twine we flashed across and then as if in death
No where to run
No one to hide from
No watch to stop us swollen in our tracks
Like all victories an infraction a shattering a debasement
And all the more reason
The seasons are spent
The race is run

Let's call it home

Let's call it ours.

‡

who
plays his lay on the lyre of capital,
the clinamen flushed by a wink,
the impatient impatient swerve
His cerebrum then his cerebellum sliced by power sufficiently puissant
to ground unassailable rationality's dreadnought dynamos
 (the head, the shoes, the inmate's collar, the attendant's hunger
 for a brioche or some other extravagance, soon the belittling electron orgasm, the numb sound
 the shock to which there is no before, only an after, *l'avenir, l'avenir dure dure*)
They will let him out again to write reams now guarded by the comprehensionless trustee.
And to seek something more within his small apartment.
Yet in the streets remains the forlorn struggle
in the mills the girls collapse from grief
in the books the lies enshroud the meaning
and in his heart he finds that he's the fiend.
All the patterns of his life bring torture
except his hollow triumph with Lacan --
as short a session is a thought is shorter
le stade du miroir made us light and clear not firm
le objet petit a outside us,

le manqué which drains us of our selves
as agalma gives and takes from us *jouissance* --
(entre deux nuits, celle dont je sortais sans savoir laquelle,
et celle où j'allais entrer)

The surplus value of his heart made no one rich

L'avenir dure longtemps

Hélène Hélène Hélène

‡

who
like Sartre was a prisoner of war but not particularly troubled by it
who
as a prisoner changed his mind about some things
who
like Derrida and Camus was born in Algeria
who
had for students Serres and Foucault
who
lectured on Freudo-Marxism, Feuerbach and Spinoza
who
called his philosophy "theoretical anti-humanism"
who
reminds one in that sense of the inhumanism of Jeffers,
who
would rather
kill a man
than a hawk
or a pigeon dropping its cue cards into the East River, or above Far Rockaway
(As I child I went to New York I loved New York its steam was my steam its throb was my throb
and always hoped to see the side of the subway train going to *Far Rockaway*. Where the cradle gently rocks us
as far as we can dream to go
so far
so far)

‡

Iphigenia never married Achilles.
More's the pity,
less is the shame.

Menelaus the cuckold demands his say.
Cassandra at sea
Clytemnestra on land
all about wind

all about wind

all about war
all about war

l'avenir dure longtemps

l'avenir dure longtemps

Hélène Hélène Hélène

the null hypothesis

Three a.m. my time –
minatory bullhorn in the dark please exit the freeway
branch against my window in the moonlight streetlight
possible raccoons forage or the old house creaks and sighs
wide-load trucks small earthquakes
ivy brugmansia sore shoulder too many blankets nightmare
possibly my sister's nonexistent back veranda
 descending in infinite turquoise and curves sweat
 like your skin waxed and dangerous like your eyes
 when they're hinting or your breath when it's hinting or
 your touch when it's hinting
 that they've left something out
 and that something
 concerns me -
that you are lost
 in my vertigo, in my myopic psychic unease, in my insomniac panic do I
 need to drink something, turn on the lights, read about the Buddha,
 touch my arm where it hurts
 or somewhere else where it does not now but will
 ache ache losing your love down the turquoise slide missed connection
 to sri lanka istanbul illusion infallibility and to you
Sixteen-wheelers grind their gears on the 101 my windows rattle a police
helicopter in the distance sirens paramedics a heart attack my longing
 for you sirens breaks gears the highway patrol and not so far away
 just possibly
 a fire.

Blue sheets wood blinds brown dawn naked unwashed last night's wine
in teeth stain stain pad thai or garbanzo salad or gruyere or Cheetos
No Cat. Not home. More light. Cell blinks in your purse, bra rumples
on its chair his hair grease slightly smudged the pillow where you are awake

and how did you get here? Awakened in the hangover version of
your own past
You will him to sleep so you can creep out unnoticed
and find a way
any way
home.

6 a.m. your time.
His hand touches your thigh in his sleep
in his dream
but not in yours

Stop for a moment to think
That these events are related to everything else
behind us and in front –
They caused us to come together
Just so we could reach this moment this point
where the lines of our lives converge.
Just so we could live out our fantasies henceforth
with a garbled conscience, with cluttered suspicion

But The Null Hypothesis assumes that there *is no* cause and effect
That Krebiozen does not cure cancer
That Prickly Pear pills do not cure hangovers
That war does not herald prosperity
That meditation does not bring wisdom
That falling does not bring injury
That sex does not bring babies
That dark does not cause light

But one can never prove
a negative.

You are in the hall outside his apartment his sock slid to make certain
it does not lock behind you wearing his robe his shaving cream
from yesterday overpowering on the collar holding your cell
nauseous leaning against the wall can't stand up dull blinding throb
behind your eyes, feet cold on what feels like stone you speed-dial

3:05 a.m. my time.
"Hello."

"It's me."

"Oh. Pretty freaking weird. I was just thinking about you. Couldn't sleep.
Had the oddest feeling."

"I was thinking about you, too."

"Are you sure you're okay? You sound like you're in a tomb."

"Probably this new headpiece. Is this better?"

"Maybe a little.

It must be dawn where you are. Did Minx wake you up again?"

"How'd you guess? I'd better go feed him.

But before I do

I thought I'd call to say

I love you