REMEMBER / WHEN

An Ontobiography

JOEL WEISHAUS

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Identity is a faulty mirror we must
break each time we are enthralled
with the image we see in it.
–Mahmoud Darwish

From there are ghosts in the air,
And ghostly echoes on paper,
And the thunder of calls and notes.
–Dylan Thomas

Joel Weishaus
Forest Grove, OR.

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For Susan, whose love and support gave me a new life, then kept me at it. To my family, and extended family of friends. Thank you also to those poets, artists, scholars, et.al., whose work contributed to this book.

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PROLOGUE

In a world populated by the crepuscular ghosts we call memories, by positioning I Am on the horizon of its finitude, a book began to assume a shape that demanded its own genre. Autobiography, “a review of a life from a particular moment in time,” seemed wrong for a text that grounds itself in passages that don’t always respect a timeline, but are knitted together with dreams, poems, quotes, speculative philosophy, literary and art criticism, etc.; while memoir had become a cliché. Only ontobiography, as “creative nonfiction with a new materialist twist,”[1] felt right.

I was born at the height of summer, when the pungent odors of real earth from pig farms and horse stables still wafted over New York’s Borough of Brooklyn. It was the year Seamus Heaney was born in Northern Ireland, W.B. Yeats died in France, and Antonin Artaud was diagnosed with incurable schizophrenia. On the first day of September Germany invaded Poland and World War II began. Three weeks later, Sigmund Freud passed away in England, “plagued by ghosts.”
The next summer, and for eight summers thereafter, my parents rented a bungalow in the Catskill Mountains, near where, some thirty years later, the Woodstock Festival, “Three Days of Peace and Music,” would attract almost half a million young celebrants.
At the end of summer we returned to the six story red brick building whose 90 apartments depended upon an anonymous man in the basement shoveling coal into two huge boilers that kept hot water rising and radiators hissing.
Each side of the building had its own elevator that rose from the basement's wheel of darkness to the roof's sudden light. In a recurrent dream, when the elevator reached the roof it became a train hurling me forward, toward an unimaginable future…

CHAPTER ONE

One hundred miles north of San Francisco, vineyard strewn Napa County climbs and becomes Lake County, famous for its “waters of life”[1] and the resorts that sprung up around the bubbling hot mineral springs.
It was here that in early Autumn, 1973 Swami Satchidanada, “The Woodstock Guru,” established a spiritual community, Yogaville West—where one night I swayed to the sound of his disciples singing and swooning, while the swami’s long white beard flowed to the rapturous music.

Not far from the ashram is Ettawa Springs, where I was living in a cabin built in a clearing on Boggs Mountain. The cabin had two rooms: the main room and a kitchen. The main room came with a king-sized bed, a chest of drawers, a coat rack, and a table on which to eat and work. It was heated by a small but spunky woodburning stove with a flat top for boiling water. For bookcases I stacked wooden crates discarded in the alleys of San Francisco’s Chinatown, and nailed, pinned, or taped to a wall:

> A photo of Ginsberg/Yevtushenko/Ferlinghetti.
> Broadsides by Creeley and Snyder. Lines
> from of a poem by Shinkichi Takahashi:
> *Late in the frosty night, alone,*
> *I cross an endless bridge.*[2]

I arrived when leaves of the oak trees were beginning to don their red and yellow shrouds and float down to the cooling earth. Although a courtesy stack of firewood had been left by the previous tenant, who during my initial visit had showed me around, I soon began bucking, splitting, and stacking lengths of fallen trees—

> Not a sacred grove,
> not Apollo, Diana,
> nothing a Druid would want:
> just a dead log
> sprawled in the mud.
> (From, “Curing It”)

In the small kitchen sat a large iron woodburning stove, looking as if it had been hammered out by Thor himself. However, as a refrigerator stood close by, for cooking I'd brought a two-burner Coleman electric stove, and an electric broiler.

Built on stilts, the cabin's back porch looked down a steep decline. Needing more dry space to store firewood…

> I nailed a five-foot sheet of plastic,
> eaves to porch rails, stretched it
> taut so firewood wouldn't get wet,
> but the wind
> leaps at it
> from across the canyon,
> shocking skin, quivering its length.
>
> Some nights I'm awakened
> by its stubborn insistence
> to remain hung up.
> ("Hung Up")

On the opposite corner of the porch was a bathroom with a flush toilet and a stall shower. Beneath the porch an electric water heater was sheltered, in front of which a slab of concrete covered a cesspool. As its concrete cover was cracking, I backpacked a 90lb bag of premix up the mountain, arriving with a fiercely-beating heart and lungs stretched to their limit. Added water to the premix and troweled on a new slab.

Once every two weeks I drove the 20 miles into Lower Lake, visiting its laundromat and supermarket. One day, while unpacking groceries a huge winged insect fell from a head of lettuce. That night I dreamed:

> *I expunged from my scalp a cocoon looking like a walnut. Cracked down its center, it reveals two large dead insects laid out as if in twin caskets.*

As the Army had cured me of owning a firearm, for protection—perhaps from a bear or lion scratching at the door—a Bowie knife was cozy in a handmade leather sheath.

Bob Callahan, who had been a speech writer for Bobby Kennedy, and was now the publisher of Turtle Island Books, was editing Jaime de Angulo's *Old Time Stories*, a book of adaptations of Lake County Indian myths,[4] I wrote and asked if he had any information on Lake County's ethnology. He referred me to Henry Maudlin, an independent scholar who lived in Lakeport, about 20 miles from Ettawa Springs.

Replying to my inquiry, Mauldin wrote: "At my home is 7,000 pages of typed history of Lake County, much of it to do with the subjects (local Indian Culture) you mentioned above. To find one's way around these pages of typed material there is 16,000 index cards which make it easy to find what one wants."

> "Push back the borders of solitude into the boundless."
> -Maurice Blanchot

Near the cabin stood a tall pine tree whose roots were being undermined by snowmelt and rain. Warned by a Forest Ranger, "It could fall and crush the cabin's roof," in exchange for a dead tree on the property, a man in town offered to fell the tree with a chainsaw that had more power and bite than the one I'd been left. We agreed to meet early the next morning.

> Rolling Thunder; e.g., John Page, a self-identified Native American medicine man and shaman who knew some interesting things, told of a rite to perform before taking the life of a plant.
> Telling the tree that I needed to end its life, that its roots are being undermined, and I needed to save the cabin, I did this, then bowed, and left a token, as Rolling Thunder prescribed.[3]

A clean piney scent wafted through the cool morning air. Then the long-nosed chainsaw began howling, its sharp steel teeth quickly cutting a notch that would guide the tree away from the cabin. Then the real work began with a even louder whining, exhaust fumes rising, chips flying… until all that remained of the tree was a thin pillar of heartwood, on which its life balanced...
Then *creaking*, the tree leaned and slowly gathered speed, falling *toward* the cabin! Man with machine ran yelling in the opposite direction… and the tree nonchalantly laid itself down next to the cabin, lightly brushing its small porch, as if caressing it.

Some of the water that surfaced on the steep mountainside above the cabin before turning into a stream, was diverted into a queue of exposed pipes snaking downhill to and through the cabin… emerging on the other side as a series of rubber hoses running down the steep hillside, transporting unused water into the stream that turned on its heels, gained speed, and became the songs of Big Canyon Creek.
One night in early winter, while I slept cozy under the warm quilt, a snowstorm moved in, and the temperature suddenly dropped to below freezing. In the morning I awoke to

no water flowing from the faucets, and opened the door onto a forest covered in a clean white blanket spread beneath a cloudless cerulean sky. Then I saw that the pipes had frozen, expanded and split.

> Ice collapsed into coldly whirling water;
> snow showered from trees,
> or trickled down
> to a muddy mottled brown.
> Arrived in town:
> “Got any blowtorches?”
> “We’re all out.”
> “A lot of busted pipes?”
> “You said it.”
> (“What I Said”)

The cabin’s former tenant, who still lived in the area, volunteered to help thread new pipes and carry them up the mountain, and for the next two weeks we knelt on the hillside in snow and slush heating and knocking frozen collars off and wrenching new ones on.

After a hard day’s work, I carried two 5-gallon buckets of water up from the creek; heated one on the woodstove for a shower, pouring wonderfully hot water over my head, and used some of it to flush the toilet. The rest of the water was for cooking and drinking.

When the new pipe finally reached the cabin, water flowed from the kitchen’s faucet, the lever flushed the toilet, and the stall shower performed its choreography of splash and dance.

Long lonely winter nights beg for eremitic justification. Read *The Pound Era, My Life With Picasso*, and a biography of Edith Piaf, along with spy and adventure novels found in the town’s library. The cabin's owner had a bungalow at the bottom of the mountain, to which she left me a key. There I found a complete set of Murphy and Sapir’s *Destroyer* novels, later made into the movie, *Remo Williams: The Adventure Begins*. It begins with a cop whose death is staged by an off-the-books government agency. He’s then, at first reluctantly, trained by a Korean Martial Arts Master and assassin named Chiun. At the end of the film, Chiun, played masterfully by Joel Grey, is running on the water to a boat in which a bemused Remo is wanting for him. “You must walk quickly,” Chiun says .

Allen Ginsberg's poem, "Galilee Shore," ends: "Just think how amazing!
someone getting up and walking on / the water."
Having prepared kindling the night before, in the morning I'd light the stove, then leap back under the quilt, where I'd patiently wait while the stove's heat spread to the wall thermometer, whose thin red column of mercury began…slowly…rising above freezing. After breakfast I'd dress and walk outside, making tracks on a clean sheet of snow, each step with a good solid crunch beneath my boots. Wafts of cold air mixed with sweet white smoke from the chimney, as if every morning a new pope was elected.

On Christmas Eve Jack stopped by.
A grizzled man smelling like
a stale shroud, I offered him
the can of beer.

Drinking in long gulps, wiping his mouth
with the back of a hand mapped with wild
rivers of white veins, Jack told me of his
recent trip to Adam's.

"Ran into a fella at Adam's Creek,
where them weeds come a-poppin through
the ce-ment, you know the place?
And when he sees me he takes off like a dang
kangaroo!" Jack slapped his thighs and howled.

"They're afraid of ghosts up there,"
my dry reply.
Jack belched and blessed the beer.
("Christmas Visitation")

When spring arrived—

Pollen pods burst,
drifting up nostrils,
        tickling within.
Waited so long for these signs
of new life, cabin'd, cuddling stove,

one good sneeze should
blow me outside!
(“Pollen Pods”)

Planted a little vegetable garden: carrots. melons, squash. When harvested, they were far too tiny to eat; however, I am neither farmer nor hunter, but a path walker and mountain climber.
When summer arrived, the cabin, with its metal roof and no insulation in the walls, became so hot that at night the lamp by the bed threw off too much heat to turn on. Darkness, sweating, why didn’t I buy a fan?

Nine months and born to what?
Mosquitoes and poison oak.

Stalking past summer to autumn,
answering letters:
“What are your plans?”
“When will you visit?”
I trip on roots.

Pulled a skunk from the pond
by his stiff tail. Drowned
in the night, this afternoon.
(“Plans”)

I had no plan as to how long I’d stay. It turned out to be one year almost to the day when I drove away, leaving behind a courtesy stack of firewood for the next tenant. It would take many years and poems before what I had learned here began to be clear.

The first installation I curated for The University of New Mexico’s Art Museum was a work-in-progress by Woody Vasulka.[5] A pioneer in experimental analog Video Art,

Woody and his wife, Steina, a distinguished Video installation artist, had, in 1971, founded The Kitchen, a non-profit, multi-disciplinary avant-garde performance and art space in New York, The Vasulkas moved to Santa Fe in 1980.
As Woody hadn’t given me the name of his video piece, I phoned and I asked what he calls it. What I thought I’d heard him say was, “The Art of

Memory." (Did I have Frances Yates' book in mind, in which a theater of objects are marvelously memorized?[6]) When I told him what I'd heard him say, he replied, "No, the title is Out of Memory. *Humm*. The Art of Memory is better."[7]

In the next room was an exhibition of Joel-Peter Witkin's photographs, a rare event in the internationally known photographer's hometown. Witkin's "surrealist concept of reality, based on a belief that the unconscious is as equally valid as the externally perceived world, is cunningly infectious." [8] Cunningly infectious indeed! He had gained infamous notoriety around town when it was revealed that a pathologist at the UNM

Medical School had given him the head of a cadaver to photograph. Witkin photographed it twice. Then he put the two prints together so that the man was kissing himself, and named it "The Kiss." Shock Disgust Humor all in one picture. Another chapter in Balzac's "Human Comedy."

Today I asked Joel-Peter if the audio of Woody Vasulka's video would disturb the viewing of his photographs. When he unequivocally replied "Yes," I was introduced to Kevin Campbell, the College of Fine Arts Recording Engineer, who attached a splitter with Frankensteinian wires leading to half a dozen headphones.

In an auditorium at UNM last night Philip Whalen read a poem celebrating the 60th birthday of his old friend, Allen Ginsberg:

> Having been mellow & wonderful so many years
> What's left but doting & rage?
> Yet the balance of birthing & dying
> Keeps a level sight: Emptiness, not
> Vacancy, has room for all departure &
> Arrival; I don't even know what
> Day it is.[9]

on Several million years ago Mt. Tamalpais rose a few miles north of San Francisco. In the fall of 1965 poets Allen Ginsberg. Gary Snyder, and Philip Whalen "opened the mountain" by circumambulating it. Afterwards, the long day's climb was held on April 8th, the traditional birthday of Gautama Buddha.

The year the ascent was led by Ginsberg and Whalen, early that morning a group of us met in a Muir Woods parking lot. As the sun rose we began climbing through the shadows of Coastal Redwoods, Live Oak, Douglas Fir… past California poppies, lupines, avoiding Poison Oak… we occasionally stopped to chant Buddhist dharani and add a few more stones onto already tall cairns.[10]

By midday we'd gained the 2,500 ft. summit, where we had lunch. While I was eating my peanut butter and jelly sandwich, Whalen called to Ginsberg, "Allen, where are you?!" From somewhere came the famous voice: "I'm naked!"
Rested, we loped and ran down the dry pebble-strewn Throckmorton Hogback Trail, kicking up dust until reaching the parking lot where we'd began. Drove or hitchhiked home.
The western slope of Mt. Tamalpais falls hard by the Pacific's rocky shore. A little north is the small town of Bolinas, accessible by an unmarked road whose sign had been torn down several times by some of the town's residents, not wanting tourists. In downtown Bolinas was the comfortable home of Dr. John Doss,[9] and Margot Patterson Doss.[11] Before leaving for Japan to begin his journey toward becoming a Zen Buddhist priest, Philip Whalen had been in residence there. I inherited his job of minding three of the Doss boys on days when their parents were working in San Francisco. I also inherited the bedroom, in whose chest of drawers Phil had left a pair extra large jockey shorts, and holey *tabi*, split-toed Japanese socks.

It may have been in the twelfth summer of my life when, sweating under heavy horseshoe-shaped canvas sleeping bags, my campmates and I gained the summit New York State's Sugar Loaf Mountain. We spent the afternoon picking blueberries, and later sat around a campfire cooking hot dogs, roasting potatoes, and singing corny songs. That night, as we lay in the depth of our sleeping bags, an ocean of stars flowed in our youth-bright eyes, then purple-tinted white sheets of the Arora Borealis spread over the firmament.

> When he was a small boy, sitting on his father's shoulders Loren saw Halley's Comet blazing across the sky. Many years later, now a distinguished naturalist and writer, he recalled his father saying: "If you live to be an old man you will see it again...I'll be gone, but you will see it."[12] Loren Eiseley died shortly before Halley's Comet returned.

A few days before the public opening of an exhibition of ancient Mayan steles at the Albuquerque Museum, videographer Robert Willis was allowed in to film it. He Invited me to join him.
With no guards looking over my shoulder, I was able to cruise the tips of my fingers along a stele's gray rugose surface; and in the coarse ridges of its script's confident curves, in the intimate language of touch, I could feel the artist's spirit in the ancient stone he had carved.

I am in a competition with two other persons, a man and a woman. There is a fourth person who is holding a large picture book that he opens at random. Then he says, "You must say something interesting about this picture." The male contestant goes first, reciting a brilliant anecdote. Then the woman recites an equally brilliant story. All the while I am trying to recall some pertinent information about Islam. Then I say, "My father is a pious man who says his prayers and does his absolutions, while I dabble with words. I must hide my work, as it's against the Law.

Philosopher Paul Wienpahl's, *The Matter of Zen,*[13] was one of the first books in English to give practical advice on how to do zazen, sitting meditation—as opposed to D.T. Suzuki's popular books, in which Zen monks are suddenly enlightened, apparently without having done long hours of meditation over many years. "If one turns to the indices in Suzuki's books," Wienpahl wrote in another book, "one finds very few references to meditation."[14]

Like most Japanese Zen Buddhists of the time, Dr. Suzuki, then a professor at Columbia University in New York, didn't think Westerners could survive the monastic rigors he'd experienced as a young man in Japan. Only late in his life did he meet Westerners who had suffered through some of the same empty hours he had.[15]

At the Cambridge Zen Center, a two-story house on Auburn St. in Cambridge MA., wearing the short thin gray robes of Korean Zen monks we made 108 full Buddhist bows, followed by hours of "embodied concentration," before breakfast. Evenings there was more meditation.

The temple's abbot was a Korean monk named Seung Sahn (Seung Sahn Haeng Won Dae Seon-sa). A story he liked to tell is how he had lived in the mountains of Korea, eating nothing but pine nettles until his skin turned green. (The great Tibetan saint, Milarepa (ca.1040–1123), had turned green from eating nettles. Had Seung Sahn read the book?)

Mind steamed green
where pine needles sat
as crawling black pebbles
were sprinkled over darker thoughts.

After several months living in the Cambridge Zen Center, I returned to the house I'd been sharing with three woman and a couple with a small child, in the town of Winchester. As I intended to continue my meditation practice, and wanted to retain a

link with the sangha, the community, I had packed the thin gray robe I'd worn through countless hours of communal meditation. About a week after I'd left, I received a phone call ordering me to return the robe. I offered to pay for it. "No," the voice said. "The robes are made specially for us by devout women in Korea." *Sewing "the blind stitch,"* I thought.[16] After all, meditation is a zero sum game, in which the only way to win is to lose.

One cold rainy morning I decided to walk the Appalachian Trail where it cuts through the mountains of western Massachusetts. Taking the flimsy plastic tent I had used during a night in Yosemite, a few hours later I was hiking through cold sleet, snow, rain, slushy mud streaming down the trail and splashing around my boots. After about an hour of slogging up and down hills, the thought of spending the night in a plastic tent when I had a warm house to sleep in rose in all its absurdity.
It was late when I arrived home. The house was quiet, everyone asleep, On my way to take a hot shower I passed a room with its door ajar. Inside one of the women of the house was asleep on her stomach, her butt rising into the darkness like the twin summits of a high snowy mountain.

At Ettawa Springs, nights were so quiet I could hear electrons humming mantras in wires behind the cabin's plywood walls. What's that noise outside? A deer turns its head and looks at me, its large luminous black eyes reflecting the cabin's pool of light.
One evening in early April the radio's ghosty voice reported that Pablo Picasso had died. His over-mediated image had so subsumed the man, it was easy to think of him as neither living nor dead,
Is it possible for a work of art to be recognized only by the power of its presence? Is this the psychology behind large paintings and monumental sculptures? The first artists of whom we know, those of the Upper Paleolithic, had no signature, their provenance was obvious. Then…

> "In these autographs is the inherent pathos of the archaeological site, the cry down the vast endless track of time that 'I am somebody,' on a wall in Pompeii, on a rock at Piraeus, in the subway graveyard at some future archaeological dig…"[17]

There' was an artist who, under pressure from his gallery, sold a painting while the paint was still wet. One night soon after this, when everyone in the buyer's house was asleep, the artist snuck in and continued the painting. In the morning the family found a

different, although vaguely familiar, picture hanging on the wall. An artist's work is always forever a work-in-progress.

This morning I awoke from a dream in which I was reciting a poem to an audience at the same time I was creating it. Such a extraordinary feeling, as if each word was being dictated to me by the Muse!

A classical composition is performed with the conductor's interpretation, or Bach's "Goldberg Variations" as interpreted by Glenn Gould. "And that masterpiece, 'The Massacre of Guernica,' does any one think that it won over a single heart to the Spanish cause?" Jean-Paul Sartre rhetorically asked.[18] Guernica's lightbulb could be symbolic of the Atomic Bomb that exploded over Hiroshima eight years after Picasso's painting was made. The agony and absurdity of war depicted in his painting continues into today's news. "To me," Picasso is reported to have said, "there is no past or future in art. If a work of art cannot live always in the present it must not be considered at all."

I first met William Witherup in San Francisco, the summer of 1967, in front of the Gods Eye Theater. Soft-spoken, with an offbeat sense of humor, he was wearing the suit coated with plaster he called his white suit. He was a Wounded Healer, as are most artists of his caliber to some degree.

During the winter of 1969 we shared a large flat facing Golden Gate Park's Panhandle. Bill chose to live in the front rooms, while I claimed two back rooms that overlooked a garden. One room I used as a bedroom, the other I left empty, except for a low table on which I ate and wrote, I'd placed in front of a fireplace I never lit.

One memorable evening Bill attended a Robert Bly poetry reading at the College of San Francisco. A Catholic school, he returned with a priest, several nuns, and Robert Bly in tow. We all sat on the livingroom floor, circling a bottle of wine, while Bly held forth with amusing anecdotes about his experiences publishing *The Fifties* and *The Sixties* literary journals, that had rewarded him with a notorious reputation in the Literary World. "After he read my critique, James Dickey threatened to kill me," Bly said, smiling.[19] We all laughed along with his irrepressible spirit.

Some nights I'd fire up the old overpowered Yamaha motorcycle I'd bought from a mechanic in Santa Cruz, and roar over the Golden Gate Bridge to Mt. Tamalpais, where I'd spend hours walking, sitting, perhaps sleeping a bit. One night—

Three raccoons

walked through camp
just looking.

During Christmas Bill made a road trip to New Mexico with Malcolm Collier. Born in Taos, Malcolm was at the time an anthropology student at San Francisco State, where his father, John Collier Jr., was a professor known for his work in Visual Anthropology. Malcolm's grandfather, John Collier Sr., had served in the Roosevelt Administration as the first Indian Commissioner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs.
To me at the time New Mexico was just a long stretch of highway between Arizona and the Texas Panhandle. While for Bill, "there are simple pleasures

such as drawing water from a well
next to a field where eight goats
are grazing
and an ancient Spanish goat man
is forking alfalfa."
(William Witherup, "At Jeannie's in El Rito.")

In the winter of 1977, I was managing an apartment house halfway down the hill from San Francisco's tony Fairmont Hotel. The tenants ranged from a motorcycle-jacketed man who one day attacked me over a film of dust left in his apartment by a repairman who as due back that afternoon to clean up, to a beret-hatted woman who fancied herself an artist.
One gray damp morning in early March, I received a phone call from my sister, informing me that she, her husband, and their two sons were living in Santa Fe.
Two weeks later I was on the road, heading south to Los Angeles, then due east to New Mexico. In a Grants NM motel I suddenly felt lightheaded… then realized I was above 6,000 ft., and was on my way to live even higher.

In my mailbox at the UNM Art Museum today I found a brochure from the filmmaker Pat Ferrero, with a note: "Are you the same Joel Weishaus I knew in San Francisco?"[20]
There was a party at the artist Arthur Okamura's house on the Bolinas mesa welcoming Robert and Bobbie (Louise Hawking) Creeley into the community. In a room filled with literary celebrities, Pat, a pretty blond buxom woman, approached me and asked: "Are you famous too?" "No," I replied. Standing next to me, Margot Doss, generous as always, said, "He will be." Pat, who knew many of the luminaries in the room, just smiled.

Not too long after this, I was renting a room in Pat's North Beach flat, up a steep hill from the City Lights Bookstore. Also living there, while waiting to move into her new apartment, was Valerie Estes, an ex-girlfriend of Richard Brautigan whose picture had appeared on the cover of one of his albums.[21] Valerie told me of when she'd received a phone call from a storied Yippie activist, asking to speak with Brautigan:

> "How do I know you're Abbie Hoffman?" she'd asked him.
> "I *am* Abbie Hoffman," came an exasperated reply.
> "But how can I be sure?" she'd insisted.

Pat and I were invited to a party welcoming back to San Francisco David H. Rosen, a UC Berkeley alumni who had recently graduated from Medical School in Missouri.

A tall man with the solid presence of a healer and an openly friendly aura, he'd been told that I was editing a book for City Lights, so asked if I would edit a collection of writing by Sam Thomas, a friend of his who had recently committed suicide.

Sam had been a student at U.C. Berkeley at the same time I was there, but we hadn't met. However, as the poet Gary Snyder, with whom Sam had taken a writing workshop, had agreed to write a preface to the book, I agreed to at least read the poems.

Meanwhile, I was still collecting manuscripts for the anthology of writers living in Bolinas, a small town just north of San Francisco, with an outsized population of poets, many of them "well-known." Everyone I asked generously contributed; no one said, "Why you?"

I titled the book, *The Bolinas Poets*, and took the manuscript to Lawrence Ferlinghetti, as he, knowing most of the contributors, seemed its natural publisher.

Sitting in his office above the City Lights Bookstore, Ferlinghetti said, "I don't publish books on specific places." I quickly added, "I have an alternative title: *On The Mesa*." After a moment of thought, he said, "If that's the title, I'll publish it."[22]

When he asked if I wanted to include a few of my own poems, I declined. However, for the Introduction, I wrote "Arrived":

> From San Francisco, phoned a friend in New York,
> asked how to get there—never did tell me,
> just laughed three thousand miles cross country: Fly
> 12 miles north from where you're at,
> on the back of a Blue Heron
> land in Bolinas Lagoon,

rift valley of the San Andreas Fault,
southern tip of Point Reyes peninsula,
Rialto Cove, Bolinas Lagoon now,
Dogtown, Jugtown, town of Bolinas
got Snarley's, Smiley's, Scrowley's.
got a beach running north; redwood forests to the east
"helped build San Francisco
several times."
Arrived in Bolinas at night, on the mesa,
a broad, flat land looking like Midwest of the '30's
overlooking the Pacific Ocean.
Roads are dirt, rutted, impossible to drive
during the winter rain-season,
named mostly after trees:
Alder, Maple, Laurel, Pine...
Moved into a small house, a log fire to help keep warm
near the edge of a cliff,
a hard-headed, windy spot, yet curiously gentle—
yang-yin, male-female, forces join in Bolinas—

log burns moon drifts
out of reach thin
cool smoke
.

Without an explanation, Ferlinghetti let the book go out of print after it's first edition. However, to this day *On The Mesa* remains on the bookshelves of scholars interested in Modern American Literature, as it offers "alternative histories of postwar poetry written not around manifestos or schools but around marginal spaces (that situate the) more political and historical concerns of mid-century poets. . .for whom poetry is a critical art,"[23]

Clifford Burke, printer and publisher of Cranium Books, asked if I would accompany him to Inverness, a small coastal town north of San Francisco where Robert Bly and his family were vacationing from their Minnesota home. Burke was about to publish my *Oxherding*: *A Reworking of the Zen Text*,[24] and he wanted to see if Bly had a manuscript for him. After introducing us to his family, with his usual gusto Bly said,

"Take me to those people in Bolinas!”

That’s what the early
Seventies were like. We weren’t afraid.
(Robert Bly, From “Driving West in 1970”)

On a night soon after this, at a San Francisco poetry reading, Bly looked into the audience and said, "I see Joel is here.” In the middle of his reading, beginning to feel nauseous and afraid I was going to be sick, I left, as unassuming as possible. Bedridden with a stomach flu for the entire next week, as Ferlinghetti had asked me to edit Neal Cassidy's introduction to his autobiography, *The First Third*, I worked on the manuscript, in which the author—Dean Moriarty, in Jack Kerouac's *On The Road*—raised redundancy to a screed, forcing me to cover the margins with a mosaic of deletions and redactions.

When I delivered the manuscript to Ferlinghetti, in a bitter-dry voice he said, "I hired you to edit it, not to rewrite it!” After I explained that there was no other way to make sense of the convoluted repetitious prose, he looked more closely at the pages, and his expression softened.

The Introduction was the only part of the book Cassidy had written, not dictated, and Ferlinghetti left it out of the published book.[25] Cassidy wasn’t a writer; he was a talker, and a wheelman who had driven Ken Kesey and his Merry Band of Pranksters across the country. He was “Mr. Abyss, the guy who could take you right up to it: It!—and then swerve in time. Enlightenment through a sudden dispossession of self by way of the car."[26]

CHAPTER TWO

When Oxherding was published, Robert Creeley's *1234567890 was also published,* both books illustrated by Arthur Okamura. Creeley invited me to join him in a reading at a San Francisco art gallery. I was touched by his offer, but declined. I didn't want to perform my poems. While in the short run, the public poet may be rewarded with grants, awards, and many published books; *not* performing gives a poet the space in which to expand and deepen one's work beyond celebrity's fickle glance. To paraphrase Claire Colebrook, poesis is the storing and remaining of a poem through time.

A friend of mine once speculated that the greatest poets remain unknown, at least during their lifetime, scribbling, or typing, in coffeehouses perhaps on the cusp of a university campus. This is not the poet who is necessarily a Guggenheim Fellow, or whose book wins a Pulitzer Prize. This poet works for the indelible Muse, not the ephemeral Market. In this larger sense, we are not the subject of ourselves.

> "My accomplishment is my anonymity."
> (Signed) Unknown.

It was already dark when I reached Margot Ellison's house, having hitchhiked to Mill Valley from the city. That night a mutual friend phoned to tell us that her husband wanted to quit his job scooping up globs of congealed petroleum flotsam from the collision of two Standard Oil tankers that had spiled 800,000 gallons of oil into San Francisco Bay. A minister, he wanted to go on a mission. As by that time the only way to get the job was to assume the name of someone already hired, she asked if I wanted to borrow her husband's good name.

So for the next two weeks, I hitchhiked over Mt. Tamalpais, joining my half-stoned companions on a misty beach, scooping shiny dollops of tar that had floated in from the spill, throwing them into large jute bags, then dragging them over cold wet sand to a collection site, where we emptied the bags, and began the ritual again.

When I'd made enough money to pay a few months of bills, I returned to Pat Ferrero's apartment in San Francisco.

One evening I received a phone call from John Bell, inviting me to join him in a 100-year-old 32-room redwood mansion in San Rafael, a few miles north of San Francisco, in which he was living along with seven other tenants, including the owner, Minerva, a small energetic woman who owned rental properties in San Francisco. There was also two dogs and one cat. Entering the lobby… to the right was an elegant staircase leading to the second floor, where the bedrooms were located. (The

staircase can be seen in the 1972 film, The Candidate, starring Robert Redford. Redford wasn't there the night the firm crew showed up at our home; but Don Porter, who played the Republican senator against whom the Democrat Redford was campaigning, walked up and down the stairs until the Director, eating burgers and drinking coffee from paper cups along with his crew, was satisfied.)

On the lobby's left side was what we called the Sewing Room, large enough to have been a small ballroom. On the lobby's the right was the door to the dining room, whose long heavy wood table and matching highbacked chairs seemed to be waiting for us to sit down to a formal dinner, which we did one Thanksgiving evening. Off the dining room was a pantry that led to a kitchen with a gas stove and three refrigerators.

Heard stomping around in the attic was an alcoholic ex-actor whom we rarely saw, and his three-legged black Dog from Hell, who pissed on the property wherever he pleased.

In the back of the mansion's two and a half acres was a an empty tract of land, As John and I had both traveled in Japan, one day, like Musō Soseki, the Heian father of the Zen Garden, John sat in a director's chair and drew plans for a Japanese-style rock garden

first in the mind,
then as a plan,
then the shape of the land changed.
Stream was diverted, steep ditches dug,
roots suddenly bare…
at this point only the dreamer sees clear.

We found old redwood railway ties and hauled them home in a small pickup truck:

You got a pickup truck.
and an old red flag.
no need for storebought goods.

We hauled large rocks:

This is where they came from,
rocks of jasper
and jasperoid;
dark red and light gray chert
maneuvered with giant chopsticks, rolled,
pushed, looked at from all angles

before Western Sea is shoveled,
shaped, raked
into place.

We hired a cement- mixing truck to pour the bottoms and sides for two ponds we'd dug:

With bell changing between fence posts,
the heavy truck backed into our backyard,
its pregnant belly turning over…
flapjacks dropped
boots lacked up fast!

But first we replaced a one-hundred-year-old terra cotta sewer pipe:

Where turds bob up with clogs
of toilet paper and Tampax,
mint trees and flowers thrive,
the line was cracked by roots.

That summer a young cousin of mine from Brooklyn arrived, along with his wife and sister. They had come to see the infamous Haight-Ashbury. One day Sister went to the City, and returned asking me, rhetorically: "Are all the men in San Francisco sex fiends?" "Why?" I asked. "They smiled at me," was her concerned reply.
When I drove them to the airport for their flight home, saying goodbye to Sister, I meant to put a cousinly hand on her shoulder; but on the way my hand came to rest on one of her ample breasts. "What are you doing!" she yelled. I was as stunned as she, and had no reply. I had confirmed her opinion of San Francisco's men!

Of this was told
A tale of our wickedness.
It is not our wickedness.
(George Oppen. From, "Of Being Numerous.")

When I ran out of my share of rent, as the National Endowment for the Arts had turned down my grant application for a second time, I phoned Allen Ginsberg to ask if his Poetry Foundation could help me. "There's no more money in it," he replied. "But apply for any grant and use me as a reference." Two weeks later I received enough money

from PEN to get me by for another six months.
One day a large envelope containing Sam Thomas' poems arrived in the mail. After sorting out the poems I thought were good enough to publish, I mailed the manuscript to Gary Snyder for his promised contribution.

Last night a snowstorm arrived in Albuquerque. This morning the city is wrapped in an eerie silence… but for motor vehicles trying to dig their way out of pearly white drifts with wheels spinning, engines roaring like desperate prehistoric beasts trapped in a pit, exhaust fumes fouling crisp clear air.
All my notes for a review of Bill Witherup's *Black Ash, Orange Fire* have come to naught. With each attempt more paper was tossed away.
Then I realized that the only way I could review the book is in the form of a letter to my old friend.[1]

I was on an extended visit to New York, staying in my parents' apartment in Brooklyn, when Bill Witherup suddenly appeared, having driven across the country. He told me that the VW Bus had hit a deer on a dark road in New Mexico… reminding us both of William Stafford's poem, "Traveling Through the Dark," in which one night, driving on a road that parallels the Wilson River in northern Oregon, Stafford found a dead deer. Apparently hit by a car and left by the side of the road. Her belly was swollen with her also deceased fawn. Stafford's poem ends: "I thought hard for us all—my only swerving—/ then pushed her over the edge into the river."

On a mid-summer day in the future, we eased our way down a steep slope onto the river's verge. Wary of loose pebbles, stones, perhaps a cache of old poems, we walked cautiously. Then, rushing around a bend, the river sang to me:

> Wilson River on the rocks. Water gulps water,
> cascading forms drifting hills of moss. This is
> where even the oldest of trees wait for a sign.
>
> Clear piney air tingles nostrils and morning's
> whispers are "undisclosed and unexplained."
>
> The river's voices circle each other, epochs
> emoted by its cold flow, rocks grow in their
> place balancing on their illusionary shapes.
> ("Wilson River On The Rocks")

One summer when Bill Witherup was housesitting for a former professor of his who lived at the end of a brain-rattling dirt road outside Santa Fe, I drove up from Albuquerque to help him select poems for a book he was preparing for publication. The house was decorated with objects the professor had collected on his trips around the world, including a statue of shiny black heartwood animated by African ancestral spirits. Near the house was a tall basalt wall with several petroglyphs, one of which could only have been painted by a hummingbird hovering over the rock's bare face. After dinner Bill and I sat under a full moon. While he sipped wine, and I sipped green tea, we talked about about meeting old friends.

I had worked for a year to establish a Video Art collection at the UNM Art Museum, and was preparing to purchase the few pieces I'd chosen, some of which were already classics in the genre, when the museum's director informed me that the Dean of the College of Fine Arts would not pay for a Video Art Collection.
Disenchanted, I returned the work, apologized to the artists. then quit the museum.
Two years later, it was discovered that the dean had been hoarding money meant for various programs, including a collection of Video Art, in order to begin, ironically, a Media Arts Department. He received a vote of no confidence from the Faculty, and resigned.

I presented a proposal to Quote/Unquote, an organization that ran a community access cable channel, to produce a program featuring Video Art by national, and international, artists. My proposal has gathered enough interest to call an unscheduled meeting of Quote/Unquote's Board of Directors.

This morning, Pastor Dan Cotrone phoned from Las Cruces NM, where he is guest speaker at a local church.
Soon after graduating from high school, I was employed by William Iselin Company, a factoring house in Manhattan. There I met Dominick (Dan) Cotroneo, Michael Cash, and Ignaz (John) Rottenbucher.
Our job was to process IBM computer punch cards with debits and credits. We quickly became friends.
Mike Cash and I were adopted by the Cotroneo family: Mother, Father, four brothers and three sisters. Dan, the oldest son, was a college student getting high marks, when he married and, with a baby on the way, dropped out of school.
Mike was Dan's Best Man at the wedding, and I became their first child's godfather.
Years later, after listening to a traveling evangelist calling on Jesus to heal one of his

sisters, Dan began reading the Bible, left his job as a City Housing Inspector, and morphed into Pastor Dan, founding a church, a school, and a more purposeful life.

In my late teens, I read the likes of Lloyd Douglas' *The Robe,* and *The Big Fisherman*; Nikos Kazantzakis' *Saint Francis*, *The Saviors of God*, and *The Last Temptation of Christ…* thirsty for a more spiritual vision than my adolescent mind could imagine. However:

> My country's full of patriarchs returned
> from strange sect initiations to lecture
> the young looking for Peace and Joy—
>
> > Breathe in Peace…
> > Breathe out Peace…
> > Breathe in Joy…
> > Breathe out Joy…
>
> so sayeth Sam, hands fiddling behind his back.
>
> Sam, you old bag of wind whirling in the dust,
> gray Wandering Jew, come home.
> Curl up with mistress & rummy dog,
> relax, let your baggy pants out a bit—
>
> we're all members of the same esoteric sect.
> ("Sam The Sufi")

In the summer of 1963, retreating from U.S. Army Reserve Summer Camp, after a long tiring overnight bus ride I flopped down at the kitchen table of the mid-Manhattan basement apartment I was renting with Alan Shanel, a boyhood friend who would later become a prominent New York psychologist.
From the livingroom that doubled as his bedroom, Alan walked into the kitchen and told me that someone was sleeping in my room. For several hours I sat with my head resting on the table, until the bedroom door opened and a tall thin dark-haired man appeared. In a distinct British accent, he introduced himself as John Burrell. (I later learned this was an alias for John Kielty Bell.) He asked if I would mind him taking a bath, as the tub was in the kitchen.

While he soaked, John told me he was working for an architectural firm (although he had no formal training as an architect); that he had taught engineering in the British Army (although he didn't have a college degree), and that he was an actor, and had directed other actors, including Al Pacino and F. Murray Abraham.[2]

Four years later, I had recently returned to San Francisco from Berkeley, when one evening the downstairs buzzer of my apartment purred. I buzzed back, and soon there was a knock on my door. There stood John Burrell, whom I faintly remembered. With him was a fellow actor named Robert Levis. They had recently arrived from New York, and were visiting a friend in the building, who wasn't home. John somehow recognized my name. As they had just rented a house on Stanyan Street, in the heart of the Haight-Ashbury District, and as there was a third bedroom, they invited me to join them in…

> the old house creaking now
> a car going by
> the wind
> a fire engine up the hill.
> (Rod McKuen. From, "Stanyan Street")

That summer, down the street from our house, and a few doors from the God's Eye Ice Cream Parlor, where Janis Joplin would occasionally drop in for an ice cream fix, was an empty store owned by Michael Hamburger, who owned the ice cream parlor. He gave us the space for free, in which to create the God's Eye Theater.

On two sides, we built wooden stands. The third side became the entrance to the stage. The so-called "fourth wall" was the door to the street.

When one morning theater grade lights suddenly appeared, perhaps from what film director Werner Herzog called "good criminal energy," The God's Eye Theater was born. It being The Summer of Love, admission was free.

Albert Camus had written: ""We had to forge an art of living in a time of catastrophe, to be born again and then to struggle openly against the instinct of death at work in our history."[3] While America was in midst of one of its periodic wars, we staged the world premiere of Fernando Arrabal's "The Automobile Graveyard." John Burrell directed, and Bob Levis, and a demure young actor named Geno Havens, who would go on to have a distinguished Hollywood career, the principle players.

> "Although Arrabal wrote the play during the 1950's it was "not performed until 1967. This fact alone is meaningful, since the staging of the play as envisioned by Arrabal defied the conventional dimensions of theater space just as it defied

> the conventional norms of literary criticism. It was, however, one of Arrabal's earliest attempts to transcend our empirical world in a new way."[4]

I wrote an Introduction—

> "Crankdown threatens everything electrically woven, while empowered Master whips inside brainless landscape's windows. Having reptilian wings, a rusting robot's judging behind limp robes, turning heaven into dew's sealed shadows sardonically riding a wheel's bleeding moon..."

…then a trumpet blew, and the play began.

One afternoon at the God's Eye Theater, a young man who called himself Amar (Skt. Immortal One) performed his play, "Michelangelo's Ice Cream," in which the Pope confiscates the great artist's refrigerator in the middle of summer, melting the cream of his soul into warm spumoni. Not long after this, Amar leaped off the Golden Gate Bridge… joining the charmed few who'd survived the abysmal waters below.[5]

Wearing a foreign correspondent's white trench coat, a reporter for the Washington Post named Nicholas Von Hoffman appeared on our doorstep.[6]
In his subsequent book*, We Are The People Our Parents Warned Us About*, Von Hoffman wrote:

> "John Burrell, a young Englishman who was working in a small experimental theater nearby, glanced through the (Radhakrishna) Temple windows on his way to a cup of coffee at the God's Eye (Ice Cream and Pizza Parlor)...'Rice Hinduism, that's what I call it,' John pronounced. 'Around here it's either a rock dance or a pagan ritual. You know, really---these laughable attempts to reach the cosmos.'"[7]

In one of his many incarnations, John Burrell (Bell) became Swami Satprem, living three years in Poona India as a disciple of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, later known as Osho.
No doubt Rajneesh had some amazing psychic experiences, such as when one night "another reality opened the door, another dimension became available. Suddenly it was all there, the other reality, the separate reality, the really real, or whatever you want to call it—call it God, call it Truth, call it Dharmma, call it Tao, or

whatever you will. It was nameless."[8]

Look up here, I'm in heaven
I've got scars that can't be seen
I've got drama, can't be stolen
Everybody knows me now.
(David Bowie. From, "Lazarus")

Although a brilliant writer, like many other "spiritual leaders" Rajneesh was also a manipulative charlatan. John, who was older and more experienced than most of the other disciples, and an actor himself, survived.

While living in the Haight, I received a letter from Robert Bly asking if I would ask Jann Wenner if he would publish in Rolling Store, his nascent magazine, a translation Bly had made of a long poem from the Spanish. I asked Jann, who refused. Bly must have read the poem I'd published there:

Sign in Pacific Grove:

MONARCH BUTTERFLIES
MAY NOT BE
MOLESTED
$500. FINE

They caught a longhaired kid
and beat him with innuendoes
until he confessed.

A poem's language is privileged, "because the language of poetry is also already the other language."[9] If the ordinary is miraculous in its common store of revelations, we are not ordinary enough! So "a great poet is a very private person. In this privacy the poet creates a language in which he is able to speak, privately, to many people at the same time."[10]

What if you're listening to the recorded words of a poet since deceased? It's like a voice emanating from a crypt. While published poems, which now includes the digital, remain fresh and alive in the reader's mind because, although the name and perhaps the

biography of the poet remain, the poem, if it survives, now belongs to the archive. Even with the best performers of poetry, the voice over time becomes “phony,” a term derived from the tinny sound of early telephones. Listen to a recording of T.S. Eliot, an American who groomed a phony upper-class British accent, reading his poems. Or Ezra Pound’s prophetic trilling. Or Dylan Thomas sounding like he’s holding forth in a pub. When the poet’s voice is gone, only a recording would remain; while a written text would remain fresh as each reader’s reception of it.

There is also the quality of the poet’s voice. That is, should the quality of a poem depend upon the quality of the poet’s voice at the time of its delivery? Or should it depend upon the words themselves, and the levels of relationships between the words? If a poet’s voice is hoarse one day, is the poem also hoarse that day?

In 1926, the year that he died, “Rilke was asked to make a recording of his poems and refused---

> because he thought the imposition of his own speaking voice might prevent what he wished his poems’ future to be. He wanted them to live on, not as his own repeated and mechanized voice on the record, but as lines spoken in the plural, disparate, and fundamentally unpredictable voices that would belong to his future readers.”[11]

The mistrust of writing is a hangover from Socrates, and later Plato, who suggested that writing may harbor lies, while a voice would reveal them. Now we know that this isn’t true, and that it’s never been true.

On a Boston Pops TV show in 1985, Joan Baez sang John Lennon's "Imagine." When Lennon imagines what a better world this would be if there were no religion, under her breath Baez added, "except your own"—warping Lennon’s vision into the trajectory her career by that time had taken.

Some years before Baez’ Boston Pops appearance, at an anti-Vietnam War rally I was standing on a stage with the singer. Tired, I began to sit on the chair behind me, unaware that Baez had placed her guitar on it. She yelled, “Stop!” and I stood before damaging her instrument.

> John Lennon said to The Beatles’ producer George Martin, “What we’re saying is, if we don’t have to tour, then we can record music that we won’t ever have to play live, and that means we can create something that’s never been heard before: a new kind of record with new kinds of sounds.” [12]

Standing in the depths of a dark doorway in the Haight-Ashbury, I watched police cars roaming the streets with officers who were jumping out of their vehicles and assaulting anyone who happened to be walking. Later I heard that, in San Francisco's version of *Kristallnacht*, Nazi Germany's "The Night of Broken Glass," the police had been breaking storefront windows on Haight Street.
Later that year Hippie's coffin was silently carried through Golden Gate Park's Panhandle and buried in an unknown location. Then Gold Rush was on again,

> Because the barbarians are coming today
> and things like that dazzle the barbarians.
> (Constantine Cavafy. From, "Wainting for The Barbarians")

I am trimming my beard. It is thicker than thought, and as I cut through the bramble it begins slipping off as if it had been glued on. I consider gluing it back on, but new hairs have already begun to grow.

The caretakers of a San Francisco city park, who were going to visit their soldier son stationed in Germany, asked me to housesit their small apartment located in midst of the park.

> One morning there appeared an engineer
> with plans to remove a few bushes, maybe
> a tree, or two---build a road "in case of fire."
> The next morning is raped by machines
> perking sooty smoke over dewy red flowers,
> yellow eyes twisted and tossed into piles.
> Same smiles as those of Nam's dead "gooks"
> sling over the hoods of US Army jeeps.
> (From, "A Good Place To Work")

As friends had loaned me their VW Bus, and as it had been months since I'd mailed the Sam Thomas MS. to Gary Snyder, and I hadn't heard back from him, I decided to make the four-hour drive to Kitkitdizze, the name Snyder had given his home near Nevada City.
On a dusty road that lead to Kitkitdizze, the car's engine suddenly stopped. I got out and patiently waited, *knowing* the right person would come along to help, as this is the way it was back then. About 10 minutes later a car rolled to a stop beside me. Its driver asked

what the problem was. Then he retrieved an emery board from his glove compartment, popped the distributor cap, cleaned the points, and the engine sprang back to life. I thanked him, and he drove on. No names exchanged, no money asked or given.
When I finally reached the parking lot above Kitkitdizze, I parked and walked down to Snyder's evolving home. Busy with a chore, the poet looked up and gave me a sour look. I said: "I'm here because I haven't heard from you on the Sam Thomas manuscript, and you don't have a phone." He replied, "I can use a break," and made a cup of coffee for himself.
Then he told me he'd given the manuscript to Will Staple, who had been friends with Sam at Berkeley. Wanting time to reflect on this, I changed the subject. "Have you seen *On The Mesa*?" (The book had recently been published.) "Yes," he said. Unlike with most anthologies, I didn't find it deadening." We talked some more. Then Snyder gave me a broadside of one of his poems, and we departed on friendly terms.

Home, and after having had time to think on it, I wrote to Snyder, saying that handing off the manuscript without first consulting with me, the book's editor, was "arrogant, inexcusable." His return letter, nearly scribbled, contained threats to badmouth me to mutual friends. I replied that the book is for Sam, and I would remove my name from it if he wanted me to. But he should write something, as he'd told he would. In his next letter he agreed to write "a short postnote."
A week or so later, instead of a shot postnote, I a beautifully wrought full page of writing. I also received a preface from Will Staple, and an introduction from David Rosen.
Sam had begun his book:

> WELCOME TO SAM THOMAS, ENTER
> into yourself as well
> into me as dipper, into yourself and into me; it is now
> that we are here,
> together in these moments the worlds become as two
> moving together as lovers
> as moon and sun move on each others tail…[13]

A few miles from the Cambridge Zen Center was one of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche's Tibetan Buddhist communes, opposite in temperament to the ascetic Zen temple where I was living, Cheryl was one of the Tibetan commune's residents.
We had met ten years earlier, when we both worked in Brentano's mid-Manhattan bookstore. I had been hired shortly before Thanksgiving as a "permanent employee" in

the hardback books section that occupied the main floor. After Christmas business was over, the floor manager informed me that I wasn't needed anymore. However, thanks to Cheryl's friendship with the manager of the paperback section, I was immediately rehired, happier helping customers the negotiate the thousands of paperback books.
The next summer I quit Brentano's, and left for San Francisco…where one foggy evening Cheryl emerged from a cross-country Greyhound bus, her legs swollen, carrying a suitcase and an oversized pillow. I took her to my apartment, which came equipped with the ghosts the former tenants: an elderly couple who had died together on the livingroom's pull-out Murphy bed.
Cheryl returned the next summer. But I was ill, and she was cold.
Five years later, Cheryl briefly reappeared in my life. She had seen a copy of my book, *Oxherding: A Reworking of the Zen Text,* displayed in the window of a Berkeley bookstore, and tracked me to the San Rafael communal mansion. She stayed a few days, before returning to New York.
Two years later, during my hermitage at Ettawa Springs, I received a letter from Nepal:

> "I'm getting ready to drop some acid soon and shake up the contents of my mind...I'm going to Afghanistan to score some good hash. The quality of Nepalese smoke has really declined. Afghan is in the wrong direction for me since I'm heading to Burma and Thailand, but I must have the hash..."

Then from New York:

> "I was trying to outguess myself as well when I said I was permanently 'going to Colorado.' My karma just isn't allowing me to reject N.Y..."
> On her way to Hong Kong, "for a couple of months working and attending Chinese cooking school...I'm happy, well & stoned..."

From Tucson AZ:

> "Acid desert rock cacti and mountains. It reminds me of Afghanistan, my favorite country..."

From New York again:

> "I wish you'd quickly quit your lovely hermitage and come and swing in my hammock [in my living room]."

After a year of living in relative isolation, a year during which I *needed* to be alone, it was time for me to reenter the larger world. So one day at the beginning of October I threw my belongings into the VW Bug (I must have left the household appliances for the next tenant), and mailing the two boxes of books ahead to my sister's house in New Jersey, I began the 3000 mile trek across the country…

One night a few weeks later, I entered Manhattan's Lower West Side and thought: *What am I doing here? I don't belong here anymore!* But it was too late to turn back.

Rented the cheapest apartment I could find. Roaches climbed its multi-colored walls, steam radiators hissed, loud music blasted from other apartments. I made a quick trip to visit my parents in Florida, and returned to find Cheryl—who had broken her arm and was convalescing at her mother's house in Louisiana---had also returned to New York. A few weeks later, she moved to Cambridge, and I followed a few weeks after that. When I arrived, she was living in a Tibetan Buddhist commune. I first crashed in a house where Alan Shanel's sister was living with two other women, then found a room in a communal house in Winchester, a little north of Cambridge.
One night we went to meet her mother at the train station. When Cheryl saw her, it was as if she had looked at Medusa, and her face turned to stone. The abyss between Mother and Daughter, never spoken, never resolved, how turned into a stoney stare. And then it was all over. I was finally free of the attraction had drawn us together for more than a decade.

I look back now and say:
You were you only when
your bitterness dissolved
into love-sweetened sex.

When summer arrived, while waiting to hear from a man at the Nature Conservancy who had offered me a caretaking job in southern Arizona, I moved into my sister's house in southern New Jersey. By mid-September, having read all the James Bond novels in the house, and with the job still dangling in the void, I phoned Carol Hills, the owner of the cabin at Ettawa Springs, who said: "The couple that was living in the cabin are expecting a baby. so they are going to leave. Will you come back and take care of the cabin?" Two days later, I began the journey home.

"Where are you heading?" a man in an Iowa motel's parking lot asked me, looking at the VW Bug. "California." "Will it make it?" "Yes!" I gallantly replied. Mile by mile the little engine behind me courageously pumped away, radio stations faded in and out… when I reached Cheyenne WY I finally began to feel at home. A few days later, resting by the tony waters of Lake Tahoe, I could see California's coniferous trees standing tall against puffy white clouds. The next morning I drove through the scented autumnal forests of Lake County, skirted Clear Lake, and Mt. Konocti: "When you see this mountain / 'No

doubt she’s sacred,’" paced through the small town of Lower Lake, where the "Shortest jail in the country / was built by two tall men / who hauled & heaved stones, / then got stoned themselves," cruised down a familiar back road, and turned right at the sign for Ettawa Springs. A short jog, then parked, turned off the engine. Silence.

It had been a year since I’d written anything, not even a letter, much less a poem. I settled into a small cabin near the owner’s bungalow, at the base of the mountain. Within a few days, with the familiar voices of Big Canyon Creek singing behind the house, poems began flowing, ebbing, and flowing again.

Mostly Bay Trees out the door,
pungent scent of laurel-
sweet fingers.

Apple, Walnut, Pear trees
in bright sunlight
naked of fruit
this time of year.
“A new tree annually
envelopes the old.”
Always different, not just in seasons,
with shards of moonlight flying
between black boughs, wild-haired,
twisting into weird shapes,
bowlegged. knobby-kneed, asymmetric,
trued to their own beauty.
(“Trees”)

After a mild winter at Ettawa Springs, I returned to San Francisco, where, as usual, I rented the cheapest apartment I could find. It was above a storefront, in which several nights a week a band rehearsed until 2 AM, drums exploding up through the floor. I answered by banging on the floor with a broomstick. The noise didn’t stop, and a few months later I was living in a quieter apartment, within walking distance of the Aikido dojo—where several nights a week I donned a heavy white gi and learned how to fall, roll, and stand again.

In Albuquerque, Justin Stone, the founder of the Martial Art T’ai Chi Chih, was renting

one of the apartments owned by the bi-polar landlord. With eyes itching and tearing from hay fever, we discussed Zen in America and Japan, names and places flying like pollen. Justin had written:

> “My fear is of perishing by deliquescence. I melt away in Nasal and Lachrymal profluvia...The membrane is so irritable, that light, dust, contradiction, an absurd remark, the sight of a dissenter, anything, sets me a-sneezing and if I begin sneezing at 12, I don't leave off until 2 o'clock...Turn your mind to this little curse.”[14]

In another apartment lived the traditional Chinese artist Mie Shu Ou, Justin’s friend and mine. Mie Shu had said that:

> "A painting should not be based on delicacy and sensitivity alone, nor on strength and grandeur, but a true work of art contains the best qualities of man and woman, which are not contradictory but are complimentary."[15]

Another neighbor was George Prechtel, whose son Martin had studied with shamans in Guatemala and now lived near Santa Fe. He’s written several books, and toured the country with Robert Bly.

In a thriving community of video artists, led by Woody and Steina Vasulka, “two of the most important artists of the 20th Century,”[16] the University of New Mexico Press has turned down my proposal to write a book on regional videography: "The sales potential would be quite limited,” they told me, “and we do not feel such a book has much potential for adoption as a class text." Another book not to be written, and a time to be forgotten.

> “At the end of language, the whirlwind.”
> (Matthew Kirschenbaum, quoting a friend)

A letter from Joanne Kyger today: “Someone is writing a literary history of Bolinas, and will probably contact you.”

A party at Bill and Zoe Brown's house in Bolinas was the first time Joanne Kyger had seen Gary Snyder since their divorce. With her keen intellect and knowing smile, Joanne stood outside the circle of Snyder’s admirers, whom he was lecturing on Lodgepole Pine's place in the ecocycle of a burned-out forest. Masa, Gary’s present

wife, also stood nearby, holding their baby boy.
Above us, poet and editor Jim Koller was playfully chasing The Brown's young daughter across the roof. ("It occurred to me that Joanne Kyger could have put LSD in my tea.").[17] Inside the house, in a dark corner Richard Brautigan was hunched over a small desk like a gnome writing in the light of a flickering candle.[18]

One night soon after this, alone in the Doss House, I was on the brink of falling asleep when my bedroom's door opened and standing there was Bill Brown, drunk and needing to talk.
We went into the kitchen, then the livingroom, where I sat on the sofa while Bill paced back and forth uttering a pastiche of flashbacks, from a World War II prisoner-of-war camp to an affair he had with the wife of a cowboy poet, to the bar around the corner. This man, who I'd been told felt inferior to the famous writers who were his friends, was spewing out phrases such as, "I knew she was mine by the length of her glance," one after another! I thought: *I should be recording this*. Then*, No, this is just meant for me to hear.* "No biography no bibliography! Too stoned to try explaining my feeling that either of those graphys are no longer the least iota relevant."[19]

> *I am in a storefront studio. There are two altars cluttered with icons. On one is my sculpture, "Paleolithic Potential." I feel it doesn't belong in such exalted company, and as I reach to remove it something nips my neck from behind. Jumping away, I see a figurine of the Aztec god Xipe-totec.*
> *There is a scraping sound and the god becomes animated, then with jerky articulations bounds off the altar, leaping around the room in high portentous arcs.*
> *The Other with me is delighted, while I am retted with dread. The god must not get outside! I set myself to blocking the door. "Let him out!" the Other laughs. "So what if he's evil?"*
> *Then the god leaps at me with a wide basilisk grin on a face covered by a mask made from the skin of someone who'd been sacrificed to him, through which I can see his lively eyes and grinning mouth.*

In the winter of 1977-78 there was no place quite like Taos NM. Lungs bellowed visible breath mixed with clear blue skies and the sweet smell of cedar rising from fireplaces. A slower pace through snow-bound streets, a safely enclosed feeling.
With summer came the unrelenting press of tourists peeking into innumerable Cowboy & Indian art galleries, looking for a taste of Kit Carson's buckskinned Old West catered

with Taos Pueblo's fried bread… leaving behind an abysmal haze of hell's smoke from automobile tailpipes. Poems? Few.
On the road to Santa Fe—

> Ruins of a village on a mesa's road,
> running north with designated winds
> through Espanola's sprawling dump.
>
> Feet in the desert finally top Ku's
> small butte of crimson light.
>
> Saltbush scooped out,
> ringed spires, switchbacked hairs.
>
> We make skeins of smiles
> in your blue eyes.
> (KU Two")

After having lived nine months in a little adobe house at the Helene Wurlitzer Foundation, at the end of summer I packed my few belongings and returned to Santa Fe, where I rented an apartment behind a "head shop." (Incense, cigarette papers, hookahs, etc.)
Soon winter arrived, the gas heater barely warming the two small rooms. Cracked linoleum covering the floor was cold and depressing. Lonely and love-sick.
One afternoon, browsing through back issues of New Mexico Magazine in the State Library, I came across photographs Thomas Merton had made while visiting New Mexico. I didn't know the Trappist monk, writer, poet, anti-war and civil rights icon had been to New Mexico, and was also a photographer. Curious, I wrote to the Thomas Merton Studies Center in Louisville KY, asking if there were more pictures.
Replying to my letter, Robert Daggy, the Center's Director and Curator, informed me that during 1968, the year Fr. Merton would die in Thailand, he had made two trips to New Mexico. And, yes, there are more photographs. There is also an unpublished manuscript. "Would you like to see it?"
I soon received a photocopy of the manuscript: a journal titled "Woods, Shore, Desert," the last writing Merton had approved for publication before his fatal trip to Asia.
After reading it, delighting in it, (Merton's notes faintly visible on the photocopy), I took it to James Mafchir, the Director of The Museum of New Mexico Press. Soon negotiations

began between the Museum Press and the Merton Legacy Trust. I was contracted to write an Introduction and develop Notes for Merton's sometimes obscure references.[20]

While working on *Woods, Shore, Desert,* I visited several monasteries in New Mexico, including Christ in the Desert, thirteen miles up a rutted dirt road kept in disrepair to discourage tourists. Merton had visited twice, looking for secluded place for a hermitage, as his small house on the grounds of Our Lady of Gethsemani had become a magnet for visitors.

On my first day I was bitten by a carpenter ant. With one foot too swollen to walk on (the same foot that had swelled up in Japan), I hobbled to the monastery's library, chatted with monks who had met the famous Trappist, shared chunks of coarse bread and chanted Latinized prayers.

> Moments grow bare in an ossuary fishing for people,
> dusting history's jaundiced millions, exposing riven
> flames, churning sparse regrets.
>
> Known through saints drinking the world as a fish,
> a rough road rises to the Eucharist's swales,
> silently shrugging, whiffling aspirations from atop
> the chapel's spiked peak, as the desert's silence
> sings vespers.
>
> The Charma River is smooth today. Mud off the main
> road frames a round sky crossing these few men with
> wildflowers chanting, "All's not dust left behind."
> ("For The Brothers")

A chilly autumn morning in the town of Abiquiu NM. For one dollar I bought a hand-drawn map from a local resident, then began walking the circuit outlined on it, beginning with Georgia O'Keeffe's house—where I stood on a rock and looked over the wall into the garden and façade familiar to me from photographs. With the artist deceased, the grounds had become another tourist destination.

Continuing on, walking uphill I passed the studio of several artisans, then entered a cemetery, where fresh flowers adorned some of the oldest graves in America. (Stopped for a moment to contemplate the colonial spirit that invades, enslaves, hybrids

traditions, invigorates language, and slowly settles into the earth it conquered.) From there I ascended to a hill on which a crumbling adobe *morada* stood basking in the chilly sunlight. Close by a tall wooden cross's shadow cast toward some of the hills O'Keeffe had lovingly painted.

In a style called Southwest Surrealism, O'Keeffe had dreamed these mountains and mesas onto her canvases. *What pictures would she have made*, I thought, *had she remained in New York, or had lived in Paris?* Instead of taking the deep-plowed path most artists take, O'Keeffe had fashioned herself into the legend of a tough and independent American frontier woman. (Of course she remained in contact with the New York Art World.)

Inspired by photographs of Thomas Merton in the books I was reading while working on the Introduction and Notes for *Woods, Shore, Desert*, I began drawing Fr. Merton's enigmatic face. It seemed to me a mask worn over a spiritual quest the depths to which few people sound. The sketches morphed into a wire armature, whose twists and turns assumed the priest's spectral features. As its joints were too flimsy, I firmed them up with steel resins that kept flowing from their tubes until Merton's face emerged again, this time as a solid presence.

Leaving the skull's sinister side exposed, its wires symbolic of the neural network that had transmitted the mystery his genius, I finished the piece by rubbing in layers of colored waxes. Mounting the head onto a wooden board I'd colored and varnished: there it was, as if it had always been, "a mask of his death and ours."[21]

Here I am reminded of the head of Mahatma Gandhi I'd sculpted for a competition at the San Francisco Art Institute. The winner was a toilet bowl, a weak Duchampian trope. If I had had the vision to submit a toilet bowl with the Mahatma smiling up through blue-tinged water, my career as a sculptor would have been brilliantly launched

In Santa Fe, Wally Gordon, an ex-Baltimore Sun Washington Bureau Chief who was then a political reporter for the Albuquerque Journal, rented me a comfortable room attached to his house. Facing a garden, it had a skylight, a large gas heater, a bathroom, and private entrance. Wally and I shared a kitchen.

As the room had no closet, I used the carpentry skills I had learned from building a Japanese Garden, and constructed a large closet with a sliding door. I had written a poem with The Beatles song "Come Together" in mind:

Heavy leather holster strapped to his side—

got the long-nosed pliers,
got the offset wrench,
got the Phillips screwdriver,
got John Henry's hammer for drivin' in spikes,
got machine gun stapler,
and the long tape measure slides back by itself.

Draws American wages,
pays American prices.
Wears Big Mac overalls,
gloves in the back pocket
hung over.
Works a drill with bit,
looking like a woodpecker
riddling through a tree.
("The Carpenter")

While sculpting in the room and in the garden, I caught up on Art History. Not attracted by the minimalism and conceptualism then in vogue in New York, I studied the work of Constantin Brancusi, the Rumanian sculptor from the Carpathian Mountains who settled in Paris. One of his interests was making sculpture that is "a working philosophy" in the expression of its materials.

After Brancusi's magnificent contribution artists began moving toward Marcel Duchamp's conception of art as a purely intellectual achievement. Then, with American society becoming more transient, sculptures such as Carl Andre's "Lever," that consisted of a single line of 137 firebricks began spreading over the polished floors of New York art galleries.

Real bricks, their color uneven, ranging from orange to magenta; and mortar evenly

spread—a union job, like my grandfather had—is distinctly pebbly. And how painters grinded and mixed their own pigments, or at least knew how to, when high art was also a craft. Like Brancusi, in my sculptures the base is a significant gesture toward a dynamic relationship between above and below. Although Brancusi worked in many materials, with limited space and resources I fused steel resins and wood. When, at the University of New Mexico, I had access to a kiln, my materials became clay and wood.

After five months, Wally Gordon decided to join the Peace Corps. and leased his house to a homeopathic doctor and his girlfriend. In turn, they rented my room to a friend from

Rochester NY, a member of a group who had come to Santa Fe to build a monastery in which their teacher, Philip Kapleau Roshi, could retire.
However, concerned about the influx of people the monastery would attract, neighboring landowners were able to stop the project. By that time I had moved to the City of Albuquerque.

I hadn't seen Gregory Manoff since we were in the group that founded the Santa Fe Zen Center. The Zen Center was in the lineage of Joshu Sasaki Roshi, whose main base was on Mt. Baldy in Southern California, where writer/performer Leonard Cohen spent five years looking for a deeper way of mind and career.

> I never really understood
> what he said,
> but every now and then
> I find myself
> barking with the dog
> or bending with the irises
> or helping out
> in other little ways.
> (Leonard Cohen, "Roshi")

Several of Sasaki Roshi's advanced students complained that he demanded hard training from them without naming a dharma heir. Perhaps the old fox knew that "scholarship has torn transmission stories to shreads."[22] Or was it that the apocryphal story of transmission—dating back to when Gautama Buddha held up a flower, and his disciple, Mahākāśyapa, smiled—can't bridge centuries of religio-cultural incompatibilities between East and West. Although some philosophers try valiantly to build bridges between Buddhism and Christianity. an enlightened mind is clear of all epistemologies.

> "The thing about all this is that there is no puzzle, no problem, and really no 'mystery.' All problems are resolved and everything is clear, simply because what matters is clear."[23]

Gregg, his wife, and their two children had been living at the Santa Fe Zen Center. Since divorced, he is now a medical student at UNM. When he told me that the woman he's currently seeing knows me, I learned that she's Bill Witherup's old flame, Marian—

> I remember your hair / spread out like black moss against the rock,
> your skin tasting faintly sulfurous
> from the mineral baths…
> (William Witherup, From, “Marian At Tassajara Springs”)

Marian had changed her name to Charma, and was living in Pecos NM. Then Greg added that Charma is dying from a malignant brain tumor.

In a cafe this morning a woman was sitting with her back to me, her long blond hair flowing over the chair. So many times I’ve fallen under the spell of a woman's hair! Compensation for losing so much of my own?

> “And how did (Joseph) Beuys come to wear the hat that became his trademark? It was quite simple. Because of his war wounds, especially from the crash of his Luftwaffe fighter plane in the Crimea, his head was very sensitive. He also had very thin hair.”[24]

Not far from Santa Fe is the small town of La Cienega, where I spent a pleasant afternoon talking with John Brinckeroff Jackson. Wearing a motorcycle jacket, his hog parked nearby, he resembled Humphrey Bogart on a good day. The retired Harvard professor and founder of Landscape Magazine had defined landscape as:

> “a composition of man-made or man-modified spaces to serve as infrastructure or background for our collective existence; and if background seems inappropriately modest, we should remember that in our modern use of the word it means that which underscores not only our identity and presence but also our history.”[25]

He waved a hand as if a magical wand, and asked if I knew the names of the various trees in his yard. I didn’t. “They’re all Sycamore!” he said, if I’m remembering right.

Commenting on Michael Heizer’s large scale earthworks, John Beardsley noted that “the purpose of these works is to create art, not simply to make a statement about the landscape.”[26] There was also Walter de Maria digging shallow cuts in the central Nevada desert with the six-foot blades of a bulldozer, forming a square with half-mile sides, two sides of which extend south half a mile at opposite corners.

How many microbes, plants, and animal habitats did the making of this terraforming art sacrifice to men carving out monuments to themselves? Then art critics call it ““art,” instead of the ecoterrorism it actually is.

There was also Alice Aycock’s “Clay #2,1971.” Consisting of "clay flour was mixed with water and poured into nine 48 x 48 x 6 inch plywood containers. Over a period of weeks, the clay dried, hardened, shrank, and cracked."[27]

At best it is clever. At worst it is devoid of the rich geophysical and phenomenological relationships dowdy clay has with an environment that can’t be replicated on an art gallery's floor, where the depth, textures, critters, weather, and the stories of its indigenous people have been filtered out. Unlike galleries, nature has no doors.

In Los Angeles, at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA), New York-based artist Alan Sonfist attached branches and twigs to the wall of the gallery, copying the exact arrangement in which he found them on the forest floor one day in 1969: “The show presents Land art as far more intertwined with museums and galleries than has been acknowledged, upending assumptions that the movement represented a decisive break from the gallery system, art world centers, and urban social contexts in general.”[28] This is serious absurdity!

Several pieces of my sculptures were accepted by an art gallery in Taos… that went out of business before I could deliver them. Then they were accepted by a Santa Fe gallery, who kept them in a storeroom, and were never displayed. A downtown Albuquerque gallery was interested in giving me a show; but when I told them that the room must be darkened, with a spotlight on each piece, creating the paleoanthropological milieu in which the work envisions itself, the “gallerist” refused to dim the bright white environment. He *was* interested in a proposal I made to bury sculptures in a forest, then supply clues leading to them. It was a joke he took seriously. A corporate office building gave me a two-man show in their lobby. Here, too, the pieces weren’t displayed correctly. But at least it got them out of my studio, although there were no reviews.

> *I arrive at the gallery late, walk in waving to a few people who are standing behind a long table at the other end of the room. The painting hanging by the entrance is the big winner. I examine it down to its brushstrokes. It is mundane. Safe. I feel that it is to be expected that such a painting would win.*
> *Walking downstairs, I come to a room in which there is a wonderful installation consisting of various pieces of art that form a mysterious unity. Why didn't this*

win? Then I'm told this is a storage room into which stuff was moved to make way for the art.

CHAPTER THREE

One warm afternoon in Albuquerque, while dozing I was traversing again the high mountain pastures above Santa Fe—

Flexing head,
boots genuflect against rib cage,
bound about, ankles, knees rising,
suddenly dancing,
planting circles
of tracks. Someone's hailing:
“Arms here,
but no pack straps!”

Following visions
to nameless peaks,
following each other.
(“Climbing Above Santa Fe”)

New Mexican Transcendental artist Raymond Jonson, “a pioneer in the history of American abstract painting,”[1] received a letter from the Guggenheim Foundation asking him "to advise us of the abilities of the artist whose name appears on the attached papers and who has referred us to you." Jonson replied:

> “I intend to never again recommend any one to the Guggenheim Foundation for a Fellowship. I have done so a great many times and never has one been honored. I have a feeling that there is no chance for anyone living in New Mexico...It has reached such a stage that both the applicant and myself are insulted.”[2]

He received a return letter that invited him to stop in at the Foundation “if you ever find yourself in New York.” Reading this, I thought, *I was never able to find myself in New York, which is why I left.*

I was working nights sorting mail at San Francisco International Airport’s Post Office. One warm summer afternoon, before leaving for work, lazing in bed, naked, I was reading R.M. Rilke's *Duino Elegies* aloud, in German, when I felt a Presence. An Angel? Then I saw a young man standing in the apartment's doorway. Rising and walking toward him, I asked, "What do you want?" "Do you have anything to sell?" he stammered, eyes darting around the room, trying to avoid my looming nudity. "This is my *home*, not a store!" He left with an amusing story to tell his friends.
It was in this apartment that, while I preparing to leave for Japan, I heard Allen Ginsberg on KPFA Radio reciting his poem, “Death News”:

Walking at night on asphalt campus
road by the German Instructor with Glasses
W.C. Williams is dead he said in accent
under the trees in Benares; I stopped and asked
Williams is Dead?...

I imagined myself walking through Tokyo's Haneda Airport like a jet-lagged zombie, asking directions and receiving polite smiles. Lost, aphasic, how would I find my way to the farmhouse from where John Bell had written to me:

> "To find the place alone...is easy despite the language: bus from airport to Ueno Station (pronounced Wayno). At Ueno train for Numata station (newma.ta) in Gunnma Ken (ask for...fuck Mioko is going to draw a map! so you can phone when you arrive at Numata. Point to phone and say "Denwa!" Someone will telephone for you to Sarugakyo 29. Ask for Bell san..."[3]

Thankfully, reality had dawned on John and his girlfriend in time, and they materialized in the airport.

My first evening in Japan we had dinner in a Tokyo restaurant, where a jetlagged I tried to maneuver chunks of whale meat and mounds of rice into my mouth with chopsticks, to the amusement of native diners.
The next morning, we rode a train around the city, then another into the mountains, then a bus to the village of Niiharu, where we walked uphill to the stygian farmhouse that would be my home for the next two weeks.
A futon for bedding, cooking over a fire sunken in the middle of the main room, eyes stringing from sweet smoke that hung in the soot-darkened rafters. A taste of Old Japan that was quickly fading away. Cold autumnal mornings—

A fire of dry kindling,
a handful of charcoal,
make quick heat.
Drink a cup of hot tea
burning all the ways down.

Zip & snap heavy leather jacket;
walk out onto the frozen sun
and crack a layer of thin ice.
(“Crack a Layer of Thin Ice.”

After two weeks, hoping to stay longer amongst the scent of woodsmoke watering my eyes and rising through the roof, the textures of it all, Mioko, a pharmacology student at Tokyo University, needed to return to the city for news on the current student strike. Bus, train, Tokyo.

While Mioko was off to the university, John and I spent a humid headachy afternoon in various offices, in which secretaries giggled at the two bearded *gaijin* and, for the opportunity to practice speaking English, executives bought the crude woodcut prints Mioko had made in the farmhouse. By the end of the day we had enough yen to take the bullet train to Kyoto, where the poet David Meltzer had told me I could find Cid Corman at Kyoto’s Java coffeehouse.[4]

When I walked in, Corman was busy watching the Olympics on television, and couldn’t be bothered to talk to yet another young American poet.

Corman's at the Java, sipping coffee,
watching Olympics on the color TV.

Snyder's packing for America,
other side of town, Kyoto.
(“Yasaka Shrine”)

As I had written to Gary Snyder, who was preparing for his permanent return to America, John and I walked to where Gary received us with tea and cakes.

The next day I met a student from Oxford University who was in Japan to attend a *sesshin*, an intensive period of meditation, at Ryutaku-ji, the Zen Buddhist monastery founded by Hakuin Ekaku Zenji in 1771. Asked if I could tag along, he cautioned me that without an invitation I probably wouldn’t be welcome.

Consulted Snyder, who suggested I talk to Dana Frazer, an American Zen student living in Kyoto. Dana said, “You have nothing to lose.”

As this would probably be my only opportunity to experience life in a Japanese Zen Buddhist monastery where monks were being trained, I bid John, and Mioko, who had rejoined us, farewell. Then, with my new English friend, I took the train to Mishima City.

From the train station, under an evening drizzle we hiked up a mountain path, past shy buddhas half-hidden behind dripping bushes—

A green buddha pitted
against two white faces,
sits quietly in the rain.

Darkness descends on wooden steps
commanded by a smooth-scalped
monk, “Leave shoes outside.”

Responding to the bell at the monastery’s gate, a young monk emerged, looked at me suspiciously, left for instructions, then returned and guided us to a large empty room, in which, sitting on the cold tatami floor, we patiently waited.
The silence was finally broken by a surreally deep voice engaged in a telephone conversation in another room. When he appeared, it seemed unbelievable that this small bald man gliding toward us could bring forth such an abyssal voice. It felt like Soen Nakagawa embodied all “the ear-whispered teaching” that’s been passed down through the centuries.[5] Roshi, meaning “old man,” an honorific title for contemporary Zen Masters, escorted the two tired Westerners to his private quarters, where he whisked a bowl of soupy green tea, so bitter I thought it must be a test!

Reporting on his visit with D.T. Suzuki, Thomas Merton wrote: "Miss Okamura made green tea and whisked it up in the dark brown bowl. I drank it in three and a half sips, as prescribed, and found it wonderful. I was pleasantly surprised. (James Laughlin, on the contrary, had said that it was awful).”[6]

Mud mirrors footprints,
where slabs of polished letters hang
overlooking Mt. Fuji.

In 1983, the scholar of Jewish mysticism, Perle Besserman, visited Ryutaku-ji, and reported: “Rumor had it that (Nakagawa Roshi) had grown hair down to his shoulders, that he had long, clawlike fingernails, that he was wetting his pants and had to be tied to the bed. Even in hiding, Soen’s life had assumed Shakespearean proportions.”[7]

Leaves die,
and Earth's mind
is drifting.

One morning, after gazing at Mt. Fuji from a hill behind the monastery, I wrote to Gary Snyder: "Having found Paradise, what do I *do* with it?"
When I returned to Tokyo, there was an unsigned postcard waiting for me at the American Express office. (Years later, during a ride Snyder gave me to San Francisco from a party in Bolinas, I asked him, “Did you send an unsigned postcard to me in Tokyo?” “What did it say?” "Beware of the fox inside." “It was from me.”)

On its platform,
the zendo sleeps—
stars shoot down its doors.

(All poems above: “Five Panels from the Monastery of the Pond Dragon”)

Still dark, inside and out, early one morning Roshi entered the room where I slept amongst other visitors and the few monks who were not off on holiday. Picking up a small broken handbell, he turned and slowly walked away, holding the bell as if were a bird with a broken wing. Then his deep mournful voice he intoned, “Everything breaks, everything breaks.”

> “For philosophers are beings who have passed through a death, who are born from it, and go toward another death, perhaps the same one.”[8]

Later that morning, the young American who had been assigned to keep an eye on his compatriot *ordered* me to take a bath, as it was the day the monks bathed. Not wanting to travel with a wet towel, I refused. Of course it wasn’t only about a wet towel, but also to taunt the ego of a fellow countryman who had spiritual ambitions. (Oddly, I don’t remember having seen my Oxford friend since the night we arrived.)

Leaving the monastery, I took the train to Kita-Kamakura, "a little up the line from Kamakura," where I stayed with friends of friends: an American man and his Japanese wife. That night I emerged from their hot tub with a swollen foot. its capillaries broken from sitting *seiza*, Japanese style, on the monastery’s hardwood floor during meals. Hobbling around town, I found Engakuji, the Zen temple on whose grounds D.T. Suzuki had lived.

A little temple,
an old priest,
the famous bell.
From, “Kita-Kamakura”)

After my foot had healed I phoned Delancey Kapleau, Philip Kapleau Roshi’s estranged wife. A few days later, Ramana, their young daughter, met me at the bus station and guided me to their unnumbered house, where Delancey––reserved, centered, lovely—served tea and cakes. As she and her husband had received their initial Zen training at Ryutaku-ji, we discussed my time there.[9] She told me Lama Govinda, the German Tibetan Buddhist scholar/monk had recently visited,[10] her house being a station on the circuit of spiritual wayfarers.

Robert Bly wrote:

> “To write well, the poet should have experiences of deep solitude. Instead of that, we send them to workshops where they live exactly like other people do and have no original experience; all you give them there is technique…”[11]

My sense of this is that poets, and artists in general, need to “step beyond the family (as a scene of self-replication), beyond ourselves, and be radically orphaned."[12]

On the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, Michelangelo painted the fingers of God and Adam *almost* touching, symbolizing the synapse over which a mind must leap to connect with the Absolute.

> “Seen from close up…the nearly touching fingers of God and Adam, were quite evidently the handiwork of someone other than Michelangelo. A wide crack divided the Maker from the First Man…emphasizing the divide between man and God just a fraction more than Michelangelo intended.”[13]

“How interesting that so unfathomably great a being as the Creator should possess a silly little body part like hands. Apparently, handiness isn’t at odds with godliness.”[14] What makes this statement so untenable is that throughout its history humanity has been at war with itself. From hand-held weapons to now, when supersonic missiles are poised to deliver nuclear warheads anywhere on earth in a few minutes, killing most

terrestrial life, including an intelligent species that has failed to become wiser, but only more skillful at killing each other.

One wintery morning at Ettawa Springs, as I walked down the mountain path to the mail box, a wiry woman approached me. Hired to patrol the unoccupied summer homes, “Didn’t rec’nize you,” she said. “Must be the hat.”

I grinned, then saw
the pearl-handled pistol
snuggled under her arm.

Deer sighed, squirrels shook
their small gray heads:
that my own kind would
gun me down.
(From, “To Gun Me Down”)

One dazzling summer afternoon in Albuquerque the patio’s door opened onto San Francisco’s Golden Gate Park, where I walked again through a soft gray drizzle, past a grove of rhododendrons, to the Japanese Tea Garden. Where I wrote:

Empty bench
rain
sits down.

This could be a “haiku,” a Japanese term best known for when in the 17th Century Matsuo Basho culled out the first seventeen syllables from a renga—-linked five line poems that were made mainly by wealthy, e.g., educated, people for evening’s entertainment— and wrote them as standalone poems called hokku, now haiku. Besides not having an equivalent English word for haiku, there are several other problems with appropriating the form from the Japanese. Sam Hamill gives one example: “Much of what passes for haiku, or the translation of haiku in American English, is really not either.” For example, “Issa’s poems have often been reduced to fragmentary English bearing little resemblance to the music, meaning or syntax of the original.”[15] Of course this doesn’t mean there hasn't been any excellent three line poems by Western poets who follow *haiku no michi*, “the Way of Haiku.” For example, Vincent Tripi’s “In the snow / around the carousel / tracks of a horse.” This poem gives me a wonderfully eerie feeling that, after the amusement park has closed, a mechanical

horse trots off the carousel and around it, free from the limits of human imagination. During his summer as a fire lookout on “Desolation Peak,” Jack Kerouac wrote a few excellent haiku—he called them “pops”—, including this one::

Late afternoon—
the mop is drying
On the rock.

The best haiku make the ordinary into the extraordinary and the extraordinary into the ordinary.

One a mid-summer day I took a slow headachy train ride from New York City to Cambridge MA, where I visited Elizabeth Smart Benton. She and her family were living there for a year, her husband having been called to the main office of his think tank employer. Elizabeth was a Bard College graduate in Medieval Studies, with whom I had worked in Macy’s of San Francisco’s Advertising Department. Sleeping fitfully on their livingroom’s sofa, its plastic cover sticking to my skin, was quickly forgotten when they took me to visit Walden Pond.

One of a chain of ponds formed near the end of the last Ice Age, Walden had become a *utamakura*, a place of cultural significance, because of Henry David Thoreau's famous book. While *Walden* remains in print, the original 10X15 feet cabin its author built is gone. His sweat is long dried up, but not the words he wrote there.

Walking along the pond's piney shore, munching on a dry tuna fish sandwich, I was thinking that I too had lived in a sequestered cabin with only the essentials. Although, unlike Henry, I couldn’t walk to town and have my laundry done by my mother. While I was thinking this, a loony laugh emerged from the pond.

Alone one weekend in the Doss’s three-story Better Homes and Gardens house on San Francisco’s Russian Hill, I received word that there was going to be a beach party in Bolinas, which meant a gathering of some of the San Francisco Renaissance Poets.

I had a VW bug that was registered to Rev. James Albert Pike, the Episcopal Bishop of California,[16] The Bishop’s son had left the car in Bolinas, throwing its keys into the ocean. Esther, Pike's ex-wife, had asked Margot Doss if she would store the car in her San Francisco home's garage. Some boys in Bolinas hotwired the bug, and I drove it into the city.

Beginning the drive to Bolinas, I suddenly thought of what would happen if I was stopped by a cop and questioned about why I was driving a car registered to the famous

bishop, and why was it hotwired! So I parked near the Golden Gate Bridge, hitchhiked over the bridge, then stood by the side of the road with one thumb up, waiting for my next ride.

Soon a convertible with its top down sped past me with the poet Lew Welch in the passenger seat; his girlfriend, Magda Cregg, was driving. Knowing we were heading to the same place, I waved and shouted… Lew waved back, but the car didn't stop.

When I finally arrived at the beach, Magda, whom I hadn't met before, told me Lew was "sleeping it off in the car."

When Lew finally appeared, I asked him why he hadn't stopped to give me a ride. He replied: "I told Magda, 'I know that guy,' then I passed out." Gary Snyder and I stripped Lew and threw him into the cold baptismal sea, while Don Allen, famed editor of *The New American Poetry* anthology, snapped pictures. When Lew emerged from the water, he pointed to his shrunken penis and, laughing, said: "I once took a cold shower and Magda said, 'Where'd it disappear to?'"

CHAPTER FOUR

The first day of my Chinese Language class at U.C. Berkeley it was apparent that most of the students were Chinese: an easy credit. When the professor began speaking, I felt

as if I'd missed several weeks of classes. The Department Chair was Cyril Birch, with whose *Anthology of Chinese Literature* I was familiar. He suggested I change to Chinese Literature. his field. I told him I'd consider it.

> *In a newly built university designed by its faculty, of which I am a member, we gather in the lobby, then walk upstairs. I recognize a few of the other professors, although some have aliases. When we reach the lecture hall, I take a seat in the first row.*
> *The lecturer is sitting in a dark corner but is clearly heard. He begins by telling us he was in a hospital for three months, the result of a stomach spasm, and then speaks about the various medications he'd been given. Somehow his lecture veers to "Hemp." He gives us a sample to examine through a magnifying glass.*

The university was in midst the Second Free Speech Movement. Because of the protests, The Daily Californian, student newspaper, had gained an international readership. As its Literary Editor, one day I was chased around my office's long table by an angry man whose poem I'd refused to publish. Why does publishing, or not publishing, a poem enact such passion?
The first poems I published were in Trace, a literary journal of experimental poetry edited by James Boyer May. I received $15,00. He was a generous man.

Lunch today with Thea Witt at an Albuquerque restaurant. We'd first met at the Santa Fe Zen Center, where, having recently arrived from Big Sur, she was renting a room. During her first years in Santa Fe, Thea worked as a photographer for a local newspaper. Then she married, and moved to Taos. When she decided to attend Graduate School in Santa Fe, to become a Gestalt therapist, Thea moved back to Santa Fe and divorced her husband, who was a curator at UNM's Harwood Museum of Art in Taos, known for its collection of New Mexico Modernist painters.
During the 1930s and 40s artists, primarily from New York, spent summers in Taos, painting deserts, mesas, spectacular sunsets, and native people. The most well-known among them were Andrew Dasburg, Marsden Hartley, Agnes Martin, John Sloan, Robert Henri, Georgia O'Keeffe, and John Marin. Of them, I was most impressed with the angular brushstrokes and abstract energy of John Marin's landscapes, perhaps because they reminded me of Marc Chagall.
This thought led me back to a foggy night in San Francisco's Embarcadero District. Walking aimlessly, depressed from the direction my writing was going, or not going, I was drawn into a store by its bright lights. Inside hung a large poster of one of Marc

Chagall's paintings of people flying over a tipsy Russian shtetl. As I contemplated it, I thought: *Everything is up in the air. Nothing ever is as it seems.*

> And we are hung in dreams,
> But assurance ringed
> the stars of our fathers' home,
> bearded, like angels, and with trembling mouth,
> with wings of cornfields…
> (Johannes Bobrowski, From, "The Homeland of
> the Painter Chagall.")

As if from a different mode of existence, one day during the late 1960s my parents materialized in a San Francisco hotel. They had come to ascertain the depths to which their hippie son had sunk. How could I explain my way of life to them when I couldn't explain it to myself? All I can recall of this incongruous incident is meeting them in the hotel's lobby, where

> Father finds me sitting behind a pillar writing
> a poem about the plush hotel lobby he's wandering through,
> while Mother is starting at her reflection in the hotel lobby's
> window, wherein she sees me…
> two weeks later, looking at a newly hatched sign
> across the street:
>
> ADULT OPPORTUNITY CENTER
>
> (From, "Signs")

After having unanimously approved my proposal to establish and broadcast a collection of Video Art on their TV channel, last night Quote/Unquote's Board of Directors voted unanimously to turn it down. I was told that one person had complained that the project is "not grassroots enough." They don't understand that grass growing locally is growing on the planet. We need to grow a planetary mind.

> *The floor of my apartment is made of smooth gray stone slabs. A large insect disappears down a hole in the floor. Tiny eggs appear around the hole. I wipe them up with a sponge, then rinse and squeeze the sponge, washing the eggs down the drain.*

While in Santa Fe tourists were buying provincial art, in Albuquerque contemporary art was thriving. Gallery openings were frequent, and low-rent studios were available.
One afternoon New York art critic Craig Owens condescendingly asked an audience of art students and their professors if they know what a trope is. In a university hallway I passed Jenny Holzer, the New York-based artist whose displays of clichés are monumental. German conceptual artist Hans Haacke delivered a talk on political art, and avant-garde composer John Cage was seen contemplating an empty auditorium.

When UNM music professor and percussionist Christopher Shultis began losing feeling in his hands, after many unsuccessful visits to doctors, a massage therapist located the problem in his neck, and his hands began functioning again. By this time Dr. Shultis had enrolled in an American Studies Ph.D. program and became a John Cage scholar.[1] He also returned to composing and performing experimental percussionist music.

Early one New Year's morning, I finished packing, carried my few pieces of furniture to a dumpster behind the apartment, and soon was on the road, heading toward a new life in Gainesville Florida.
About fifty miles east of Albuquerque, as the sun rose in a crystal clear blue sky, lighting the living desert on both sides of the road, I suddenly remembered Edmund Jabés, "There is no trace but in the desert, no voice but in the desert," and realized that I wasn't ready to leave New Mexico; and that, anyway, I was heading the wrong direction!
Made a U-turn, and returned to where—to the amazement and amusement of friends to whom I had said goodbye a few hours before—I reappeared in time for breakfast.
Phoned the manager of the apartment I had just left, whom I knew was on a retreat at the Bodhi Mandala Zen Center in Jemez Springs, and retrieved the apartment, to which I still had a key. As the dumpster's contents had already disappeared, the next day, with the money I had saved for the trip, I bought more used furniture and a new computer. I was eager to begin working in a different direction.

New Year's Day—
Returning to where I'd just left,
Spring's flowers bloom early.

What Ever Happened to Gilbert Stone?

While I was outside playing various ball games with our friends, Gilbert was inside copying Old Master drawings, painting a large blue Crucifixion, and a hellish Holocaust, between lifting weights. In his bedroom/studio/gym stood a life-sized cardboard cutout of Charlie Chaplin's Little Tramp.

Living two years in Italy on a Prix de Roma, Gilbert painted and sculpted within site of his beloved Renaissance Masters. Upon returning to New York, he and his wife, Carol, bought a brownstone house in the Park Slope section of Brooklyn.
The last time I saw them was when, driving from Cambridge to New York City, I stopped briefly at the upstate farmhouse where the couple and their two children were living, having converted its barn into a studio. After leaving, I thought,, *Did I see a monkey in the house?*

> "This time, art comes in the shape of a monkey. But is it art all right. We recognize it by its 'coat and trousers.'"[2]

Next Spring, back in San Francisco, I phoned to ask Gilbert if he'd like to illustrate the eight small New York poems I had written during my trip there. Carol answered the phone: "Gilbert has a patron and he's very busy." His patron was Bob Guccione, the publisher of Penthouse Magazine. One New York poem:

> Washing her pastel pink density,
> this woman would appreciate privacy.
> Degas would blame New York.

Gilbert had become one of the foremost commercial illustrators in the world, and also a respected teacher at New York's School of Visual Arts. However, as original and lucrative as his paintings were, the Art World had become Conceptual and Minimalist.[3]
Years later, rummaging around the University of New Mexico's Art Library, I became curious as to what had happened to Gilbert Stone. Not finding his name in the long list of current New York artists, as he had illustrated stories for Playboy I queried the magazine, and received this curt reply: "The artist Gil Stone is deceased." I dreamed:

> *Gilbert is now a musician. I ask him: "Have you stopped painting?" He says that he has. Then I tell him that I wrote to Playboy to find his whereabouts, only to receive word that he had died. Hearing this, he looks surprised…then laughs.*

I wrote to Carol Stone. Her brother replied: "My sister, Carol Stone, is very ill with Multiple Sclerosis. Although she is still at home, she is primarily bedridden and cannot communicate anything but a few basic needs." He also sent me the address of “two dear friends of both Carol & Gil." One was the artist Jean MacFarland, who lived in Santa Fe.

Over lunch one day Jean told me that she had stayed with Gilbert and Carol at their farmhouse, and confirmed my assumption that Gilbert had been depressed in part from being rejected by the New York Art World. This, and because his wife was irrevocably ill, he began drinking heavily, and fell into the well of drug addiction.

In one of their "kitchen conversations," Gilbert had told Jean, "I got one up on the devil, because the devil doesn't have a sense of humor.” In reply to my final question, Jean said, “Yes, there was a monkey.”

Long ago, I was sitting in the darkness of a Brooklyn movie theater, watching Charlie Chaplin in “The Gold Rush,” when someone in the audience began laughing loudly at the Little Tramp’s antics. It was Gilbert.

Gilbert Leonard Stone died of AIDS. He was 43 years old.[4]

Rained today…sun appeared…rained again. Are New Mexico’s roots planted too deep to respond to rapid cultural changes? While deep roots can nourish creativity, they can also drain it of its relevance to the larger, planetary, conversation.

With my teenage years waning, before exchanging my suit and tie for a t-shirt and jeans, I’d phone the newspapers to confirm they’d received the day’s advertisements I’d sent before leaving my Madison Ave. office, and that the copy was correct. Then, after a quick dinner, a few nights a week I’d drive my 1956 blue & white Ford—stick shift, twin carburetors, blue lights glowing behind the grillwork---–to Brownsville, where I’d hang out with Mike Cash and friends, including my peroxide-blond girlfriend who one night sent a shock down my spine when our tongues touched. Is she still alive? Perhaps sitting under the dome of a beauty parlor’s hair drier, passing around pictures of her grandchildren.

I wonder too what happened to Curly, who competed in a Golden Gloves Tournament. I, along with several of his other friends, were in the audience that night loudly cheering as he dominated the first round. But Curly was a smoker; and when the bell rang for Round Two he was out of breath and couldn’t continue. The audience heckled, and we made a quick exit.

Today Mike is on the phone telling me that he’d bought an interest in a New York bank;

while my income is nearly the same as it was when we were teenagers!

> *There's someone at the door. I try to open it, but it's being held shut from the other side; so I try to lock it, but I also can't do that. Yet I feel no fear of the unknown force behind the door.*
> *The door suddenly opens and two boys in their late teens rush in and jump me; I fight, easily defeating them.*
> *Now I'm lecturing the boys on the importance of continuing their education. One agrees with me, while the other laughs in a wise guy manner. I tell him how complex the world will be in the future, but he doesn't care.*

Tonight Albuquerque's streets are flooded with free electrons dancing in the warm humid air. The electricity out, as I can't find a flashlight, I light the candle lantern from my stash of camping gear. Wanting to hear the news, I've found four batteries, but the radio takes five. An ambulance just flew by with its red eyes flashing and siren screaming. Is it, I wonder, rushing to save the life of another poet who jumped from the canon's high window?

On the Mediterranean coast of France, in the darkness of a partly flooded cave, divers found a gallery of Prehistoric Rock Art. The oldest, dating to around 20,000 BCE, included stenciled hands, probably the signatures of people, common on the walls of Paleolithic caves.
Most of today's artists won't overcome capitalism's drain of their ideals, unless they, like artists of the Paleolithic, remain anonymous. The *responsibility* an artist has to the gift of creativity needs to be closely examined.

Some Friday nights, my mother's father, a retired bricklayer, visited our apartment. Leaving his cane in a corner, his calloused hands would present my sister and I with rough lumps of rock candy. Did these blocks of sugar with a string through them lead to my interest in Paleolithic cave art? Or just to cavities?

"In my book, geniuses are there for the same reason as the yeti, the Loch Ness Monster, and little green men…"[5] There was also young Robert Creeley "battling it out with Jackson Pollock at the Cedar Tavern, (and) running away with Kenneth Rexroth's wife, even as the Beats were taking over Rexroth's town of San Francisco." [6]
Sunday morning. Mid-1960s. North Beach, San Francisco. "To this corner of Grant and Vallejo / I've returned like an echo."[7]

I'm sitting in the Café Trieste nursing a foamy cup of cappuccino. Sawdust covers the floor. A local Italian tenor is wobbling out an aria. I'm talking with woodcut artist and printmaker Peter LeBlanc.

Like me, Peter once worked for an ad agency in New York.
Now he sleeps in his studio, eats slabs of liver for lunch, and walks around the city wearing a Tai Chi practice outfit. A friend said, “Only Peter can get away with it.”

to go out
to the world,
this time dressed as
a japanese printmaker…[8]

Peter introduced me to Nietzsche’s philosophy and Joseph Campbell’s, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. One morning, when I didn’t agree with something Peter had said, he *ordered* me out of the coffeehouse. I’d walked a few blocks before realizing he'd kicked me out of a public place. I laughed at the fool I was.

One warm summer’s night, strolling down a street in the Haight-Ashbury, a raucous group of people was approaching me. There was a moment of tension. Then I heard ankle bells jiggling, and smelled sweet whiffs of marijuana. We walked past each other smiling. I knew then why I’d quit a future decided by other people’s agenda and values. I was poor but free, and with an extended family of genuine friends.

> “The Great Subculture has been attached in part to the official religions but is different in that it transmits a community style of life, with an ecstatically positive vision of spiritual and physical love,,,”[9]

It was a time when a backpack wasn’t a sign of homelessness, but of someone heading for, or returning from, the backcountry, the so-called “rucksack revolution,” when “the postmodern religious nature lyric, in turn, manifest(ed) the same tendencies under the greater pressure of a vision that cannot reply on symbolism or theological metaphors, but instead depends entirely on the quality of mental acts dramatized in process.”[10]

Night of December 13, I went to meet
Leon the Lama of the Left-Hand Path.
Must have written the wrong address:
found a schoolhouse,

windows deserted.
(“Leon The Lama”)

At an Albuquerque art galley opening last night I was introduced to Patrick Nagatani, a photographer who had recently arrived from Los Angeles to join UNM’s Art Department's faculty.[11] `Someone had told him that I write featured pieces on photography for Artspace, so he invited me to see his recent collaboration with LA.-based artist Andree Tracey.

Can contemporary artists redeem the courage of Paleolithic cave artists who, with hearts pounding and amygdales firing, crawled through narrow tunnels, scraping knees, elbows, shoulders, then sliding or jumping down into the pitch-black Underworld in order to paint?

Their stone lamps flickered with animal fat, casting shadows leaping across floors still strewn with the bones of extinct giant cave bears, walls scarred with the scratches of their claws, their rancid smell lingering in the hypertoxic air.

Michael Cuddihy phoned tonight from Tucson. He wants to publish my review of Bill Witherup's *Black Ash, Orange Fire* in the final issue of Ironwood, the literary journal he edits.[12]

On this cloudless autumn morning in Albuquerque, brightly decorated hot air balloons are floating across the city. Suspended from them are baskets from which people are gazing down onto the vast desert landscape that surrounds the city’s network of paved streets.

Cool morning wind—
hot air balloons
are farting overhead.

If we someday colonize other planets, will philosophers see Earth as having been the site of humanity's birth and extended childhood? Will this self-exiled species, who fled from the fertile planet they had made uninhabitable by their hubris, artifice, greed and paranoia still call itself Homo sapiens? Or Homo defectus?

To an interviewer, Joel-Peter Witkin told of the day when, a young boy in Brooklyn, he

saw an automobile accident in which the severed head of a little girl rolled out of the car…an event that influenced the work of the artist he would become.[13]
Around the same time, in another section of Brooklyn, I was playing in the street, wearing a jacket the same color as one worn by a boy who was suddenly struck by a car. Looking down from a neighbor's window onto the scene of the accident, thinking it was me who was hit, my mother was crying. When I walked into the apartment, unharmed, her heart went into a drumroll, her tears stopped flowing, and the boy lying bloodied in the street was forgotten.

> *I am in the belly of a skyscraper, walking down its spiral passageway with a string of people heading toward street level. The passageway's plaster walls are decorated with hieroglyphic symbols. Walking in front of me is a woman with short white hair. I tell her that this is my favorite place. She turns and asks me why. "Because I can't see what's around the next bend."*
> *The ritual goes on daily: an artist is caught "red-handed," pressing spatulate signs against calamity's wall, as the process of creation crawls through narrow cerebral passageways whose corners demand to be turned.*
> *Around the next bend hypnogogic monks are seated beneath halos of umber, with staves riven inro their cetacean fingers. Eggs burst, impregnating spermatozoa. A surprised Minotaur snorts at the sudden reversal.*
> *Now we are only one bend away from seeing God on a reliquary of broken Egyptian jars. His testaceous writing is maddened with magenta. Not blood, but the roseate lips of morning. Not flesh, but nebula as seen through the whorl of a storm moving and falling in opposite directions: a glossolalia seeping through underwater entrances, where thin threads of protein, curling and wiggling, are coming to life.*[14]

"Marks in Place—Contemporary Responses to Rock Art," is in the new issue of *Artspace*. There are a few typos, including "James Hillerman," instead of James Hillman. Did the editor have the New Mexican writer, Tony Hillerman, in mind instead of the psychologist? My Nagatani/Tracey piece, titled "Atomic Polaroids," has been scheduled for the next issue. However, it will be a bit truncated, as the publisher can't afford to print all the color photographs to which the text refers.

Patrick Nagatani informed me today that he wants to collaborate on the project I proposed as an extension to the Artspace piece. We agreed that I would write forty poems referencing forty photographs he will make on the subject of New Mexico's vast

nuclear weaponry infrastructure. We discussed a possible book, a museum exhibition, and a touring exhibit. I offered the name: “The Nuclear Enchantment of New Mexico.”

While Modernism slowly spread around the world, Postmodernism arrived at the speed of an egg cracked open over the morning skillet—the result of a quickly spreading Internet from which Postmodernism stares up like a jaundiced eye surrounded by a white paradigm.

There are innumerable stories about people whose car broke down in Albuquerque, through which the mythical Route 66 still runs, and never made enough money to continue on to their dream of living in California. I arrived *from* California with hardly any money, and haven’t been able to return. Poverty drives in all directions.

> *Herding cattle across a creek, I notice that some of the animals have become human. On the other side of the creek one is bleeding: I have the feeling that its mother is trying to kill it because it was stillborn. I feel repulsed by the sight; but what interests me most is the oscillation between animal and human forms.*

Lifting weights today, not for the first time I pulled a muscle in my lower back. Crawled to the sofa, and as the pain slowly faded I thought of Kenneth Patchen, who was resolute even when bedridden from a spine injury and a botched surgery. In midst of World War Two, his chronic pain and hatred of war became entangled in the nerves of the poet’s inflamed words—

> Let us have madness openly, O men
> Of my generation. Let us follow
> The footsteps of this slaughtered age:
> See it trail across Time’s dim land
> Into the closed house of eternity
> With the noise that dying has,
> With the fear that dead things wear—
> (Kenneth Patchen From, “Let Us
> Have Madness.”)

CHAPTER FIVE

Lunch today with the poet Terry Hauptman. In the next booth a man was holding a newspaper in front of his face, blotting out the woman sitting across from him.
It is said that Jack Kerouac would sit in a New York subway car holding up a newspaper with a hole cut in it, through which he would stare at the other passengers, many of whom were hidden behind their newspapers.
I was once one of those passengers making the hour-long bone-rattling boring journey from Brooklyn to a mid-Manhattan office, reading a newspaper that as yet had no hole in it.

Bill Viola's video, “The Reflecting Pool” is "a kind of baptism," the artist said. *Baptism into what*? I thought. Then I realized I wasn’t thinking about Viola’s "The Reflecting Pool," but of Laurie McDonald's video, “Filling the Boxes of Joseph Cornell,” of the poetry of their arrangements.

In Santa Fe, for a few months I’d awake before dawn, dress quickly and walk to the backroom of the house next door, where I’d start giant pots of water boiling. Then, when the windows began glistening with steam, I'd ladle out hot lacteal brew that cooled into bricks of tofu.
The work was hard, dangerous, and the pay was minimal. I dreamed of becoming a Tofu Poet, my bubbling imagination fermenting into poems that would nourish the world. Then I realized I’d gotten it wrong, that only so-called “poets” write easily digestible poems. A poem should be raw, uncooked, in Claude Lévi-Strauss’ terms. So becoming a Tofu Poet wouldn’t do. Indigestion is the way forward.

Coffee this morning with Jungian psychologist Joan Koss, a Visiting Professor at UNM. She invited me to a dinner party at her house: “You can bring your 'significant other,'" she said. Tonight, driving through unlighted unfamiliar streets, I couldn’t find her house, or perhaps didn’t want to. Returned home and phoned her to apologize for not showing up. She said I should try again. I replied, “It’s too late.” I didn’t say, “By the way, all others are significant.”

In a recurrent dream a woman’s back is turned to me, and I sense that when she turns to face me her appearance would be terrifying. At which point I’d wake up. Then one night—

> *I am in an old house with a large room to the right of a staircase. I begin to climb the stairs...there is a chilling scream from above. I run back down and into the*

gloom. A woman is standing in the gloom at its far side with her back to me. The familiar sensation of terror rises in me. However, this time I feel a confidence I'd never felt before, and instead of running away, I hurry toward her. As I approach, she turns…her face is *repulsive, but I embrace her….*

…and I woke up. She has never appeared to me again.

Patrick Nagatani told me today that he's ready to begin our collaboration. Then he said he'd invited a graduate student of his to join us. Presumptuous of him to invite someone to join us without first consulting me. This isn't a school project! I made my displeasure known.

Boot Camp, Ft. Dix. NJ. My barracks included a Wall Street broker, and two lawyers, one of whom, coming from a wealthy family, was slated to become an officer and gentleman stationed in Washington D.C. I was the ex-advertising exec. There was also a young man who wanted to be a Green Beret. Did he survive Vietnam?

Crying scraphearted fragments of *Help!*
between my eyes
I rise,
salute tall boots laced to attention,
strutting the long room, whispering
Resist...*Resist*..
(From, "In The Dead of An Army Night")

It was the time of the Cuban Missile Crisis, when Soviet Russa's freighters were chugging west carrying nuclear-armed missiles bound for Cuba, and the US was threatening to begin a war if the freighters didn't turn around.
Through the night, fully dressed, we huddled around a radio, anxiously following the news.
Earlier we'd been told that if there's a nuclear war we'd be taken to a safe place. But who would want to live in an irradiated world, in which everyone you love has been burned alive? "So much ash to be blessed." (Paul Celan) The Nazi death camps become the entire planet.
After Basic Training and a few days of rest and homecooked meals, I took a bus north to Ft. Devens, MA, joining a company of Combat Engineers. My MO (modus operandi) was Radio Repairman; but instead of learning the trade, I waxed floors, pealed

potatoes, and walked guard duty through nights where—

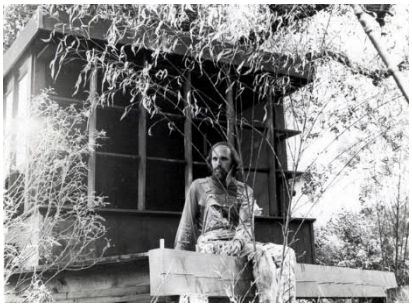
A freezing wind grips my ears.
sliding whispers down
their gelid tunnels—
"What?"
"I think I saw something."
I look up…
it’s the universe looking down.

(From, “I Am Awoken to a Night as Walking”)

As the captain of my reserve unit in New York had asked me to write to him if I had any problems while on active duty, I wrote to tell him that I wasn’t being trained in my MO. Soon after this there was a General Inspection at which I was asked if I was being trained. “No, Sir.” I replied. The effect was instantaneous. When I walked out a sergeant asked me, “What did you say in there?” “The truth,” I replied, naïvely thinking the truth would be respected. But this was the military. The wagons of noncommissioned officers quickly circled, and I was the hostel Indian threatening them.

Seeing a woodcut of Tea Master Sen no Ryokan's *chashitsu* today sent me back to the tea house we built for the Japanese Garden behind the mansion in San Rafael.

As autumn nears
my inclination is
the four-and-a half mat room.
(Matsuo Basho)



In a photograph, I am sitting in front of the Tea House contemplating the results of digging ponds, laying pipes, maneuvering rocks, and hammering countless nails. In the background is the garage, in which the mansion owner’s Rolls Royce and Bentley were parked. The Rolls was used once a year to chauffeur the actor Rex Harrison to the San Francisco Film Festival. The Bentley I drove into town once a month to collect food stamps.

Today Thomas Merton's *Woods, Shore, Desert* is displayed in the window of Living Batch Books, a block from the UNM campus. I had the glorious feeling that this book would not exist if it were not for me.

> "Oh, what a beautiful baby!" exclaimed a neighbor. "That's nothing," replied its mother. "You should see the picture I have of him!"
> -Edmund Carpenter

I took a New Mexico Arts Division's grant application to discuss it with James Moore, the Chairman of the Albuquerque Arts Alliance. As Moore is also the Director of the Albuquerque Museum, he raised the possibility of the museum exhibiting “The Nuclear Enchantment of New Mexico” in two years.
Besides the excitement of having a museum exhibition of my poems; also today, after learning of my displeasure, Patrick’s graduate student has dropped out of the project.

One video I’d chosen for the UNM Art Museum's collection is by Janice Tanaka. I’d also received another work from the artist, titled “The Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle.” Its computer-generated images are so compelling that I’ve decided to write on a piece based on them.

When we were informed by the owner of the San Rafael mansion that she planned to make it a home for her mentally disabled brother, which meant we were all to leave, a woman who worked at the Nature Conservancy arranged for me to rent a mountain cabin about 100 miles north of San Francisco for $40.00 a month.
I drove up there, and, after living communally for the past two years, it looked like a perfect place for the next phase of my life: a hermitage.
As the cabin wouldn’t be vacant until October 1st, I baked a big loaf of bread, throwing everything nutritious I could find into it, and drove south to the Ventana Wilderness, where I spent a pleasant day frolicking in a stream with high-spirited nymphs from LA.
That night I dreamed a raccoon was stealing my stash of food. In the morning, I found it hadn’t been a dream! Hungry, I drove to Pacific Grove, where Bill Witherup was living with Carmen Scholis, co-translating a selection of poems by the great Spanish poet, Antonio Machado.
After a hot bath, in which red spots began appearing on my arms, and an early dinner, Bill drove me to the cabin in Big Sur he was renting from Lawrence Ferlinghetti to use as a writing studio.

> “Though there are faults to Monsanto's (Ferlinghetti’s) cabin like no screened windows to keep the flies out in the daytime just big board windows, so that also on foggy days when it's damp if you leave them open it's too cold, if you leave them closed you can't see anything and have to light the lamp at noon. And but for that no other faults. It's all marvelous...”[1]

Jack Kerouac’s book, *Big Sur,* “was written in ten nights and chronicles a six-week period in Big Sur during the summer of 1960, climaxing in a nervous breakdown in Lawrence Ferlinghetti’s cabin.”[2] Besides Kerouac, several other writers and poets had stayed at the cabin during their darkest days of intoxication, and brightest days of illumination. Several of them had carved their initials into a windowsill. As Bill and I talked through the night, my skin began itching, not just from Poison Oak.

After a short walk through Big Sur’s morning mists, we returned to Pacific Grove. From there I drove back to the Bay Area, where I had arranged to stay in a shack near Stinson Beach, a San Francisco lawyer’s weekend getaway that he loaned to me for the week.

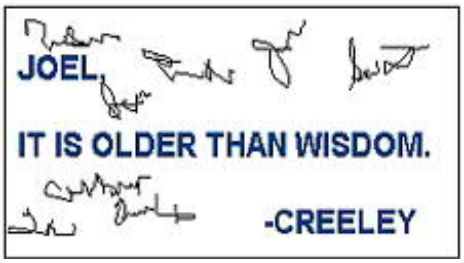
Hauling driftwood up from the beach to feed an insatiable furnace cut from an old oil drum, nights I stretched in the loft, listening to fog horns moaning, and following the lights of oil tankers as they inched their way across the ink-black sea.

> *The deck of a barge is strewn with large steel containers. I tap each one with a stick, listening to the signature of its ring. When one sounds different than the others, I lift its lid. Inside, a seemingly dead woman slowly begins to color. Then she rises and flies toward me! I panic, turn, and run…*

One morning while I was making breakfast, a woman walked past the window. She waved, I waved back, and she joined me in the kitchen. During our conversation I told her I’d be housesitting next week in Berkeley at the home of a Jungian psychiatrist. She replied, “My boyfriend is a Jungian psychiatrist.” Her boyfriend was John Weir Perry. David Rosen, for whom I was to housesit, was then Chief Resident at the Langley-Porter Institute, and Perry was his supervisor. David and Debbie Rosen were leaving for a research project in the Shetland Islands, and I would spend the month in their house, cataloguing remarks by Carlos Castineda’s character, Don Juan, in the popular series of books that the scholar Daniel Noel called “Castaneda’s hoax.”[3] And yet I found I had so much to learn!

At a party last night, Judson Crews told me that his right eye is almost useless. "Maybe I should wear a patch like Bob Creeley," he said. "Of course losing his eye was the best thing that could have happened to him."
"Why is that?" I asked.
"Well, the insurance money did put him through Harvard, don't you know."
"Of course," Judson continued, "Creeley did leave before graduating and moved to Mallorca."
“But he kept in touch with (Charles) Olson," I said.
”Hell,” Judson replied. "He kept in touch with *me*!"[4]

> *I am in Alberta Canada, where I’ve never been, walking through a large arcade. I’m attracted to a bulletin board that is crowded with messages among which is a white rectangular card:*



When I awoke, I knew that the signatures scribbled on the card were from people bearing witness that the message was from the poet, and that it was meant for me.

In a dream you may recognize someone who doesn’t quite look like the person you know when you’re awake; yet you *know* it is that person. “Disjunctive recognition” is not so much a problem of cognitive mapping as it is of psychological coherence. Consider C.G. Jung’s “psychoid,” the same liminal space Henry Corbin called the *mundus imaginalis*, the imaginal world of in-between. A Hidden Third, “which acts like a secretly included middle that allows for the unification of the transdisciplinary Subject and the transdisciplinary Object while preserving their difference.”[5]

The New Mexico Arts Division panel has recommended that Patrick Nagatani and I receive a grant of $1,550. "The artistic quality of the work of Patrick Nagatani and Joel Weishaus is very high." Then the letter continues: "Two panelists questioned paying artists for producing the work. Another panelist suggested that the duration of the project is somewhat long, and that if the duration were shortened, money could be saved." Panels, committees, judges…while the artist must do what needs to be done.

I go before a judge and am shown the list of charges for which I must pay a fine or go to jail. All the charges against me have to do with my not addressing the judge as "Your Honor."

When he showed me the apartment he was all smiles. When he refused to sign a lease, only a 15-day rental agreement, I should have taken this as a warning sign. Indeed, soon after I'd moved in his landlordly power appeared and his smiles turned into threats of eviction. Bi-polar? But I was determined to remain.

I'm beginning to make progress on Janice Tanaka's "The Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle." It won't be the usual critique, but more like the script of a play. It's wonderfully strange how each piece of writing finds its own way into being My "style" comes from what the writing demands. Maybe someday, if I live long enough, a Late Style may appear and settle in, one that I didn't expect.

My bathtub's flank curves outward a few inches, then runs straight for more than 2 ft., before resuming its original line. This could not have been a functional decision, as it takes more room than a straight line would. The curves must be the designer's signature, marginalizing what we take as being practical.

One warm afternoon in Albuquerque I fell asleep and found myself walking a familiar trail in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. Then I heard voices:

> That's what…Is Santa Fe Baldy…
> Shocked when...You're at its angle…
> What's over there?
> ("Santa Fe Baldy.")

During my first summer in Santa Fe, I climbed in the Sangre de Cristos Mountains, stashed my backpack at the base of Santa Fe Baldy and clambered to its 12,000 ft. summit, where I drunkenly staggered around looked on by a marmot who seemed to find my antics humorous.

When I descended and retrieved my backpack, the mountain at this height having its own microclimate, a sudden hailstorm soon turned into big cold drops of rain. Luckly, I found a small piece of level ground, and began raising my tent, knocking pegs into the already soggy ground…when a shout came from the gloom: "Are you going to camp

there?!" "Yes!" I shouted back." "Oh, fuck!" came the reply.
Crawled inside the tent and slipped into the sleeping bag. Lit the Bluet stove and heated a can of soup with large chunks of meat floating in it. After dinner, I turned onto my back, and saw drops of rainwater sliding along the tent's inner spine. Used to camping during California's dry summers, I hadn't noticed the tent a friend had given me when I left for New Mexico had no waterproof fly. Luckily, I'd brought a waterproof cover for the sleeping bag that kept me dry through a sleepless night. By first light the rain had stopped. I broke camp and hiked out. Everything damp: we get the world we deserve.

"The man who dares to be alone can come to see that the 'emptiness' and 'usefulness' the collective mind fears and condemns are necessary conditions for the encounter with truth." These words appeared in the fourth printing of Thomas Merton's essay. "Rain and the Rhinoceros, in which "usefulness," as anymore familiar with Merton's philosophy would know, should be "uselessness."[6]
Replying to my letter, the publisher, New Directions, confirmed the mistake and, I assume, corrected it in subsequent editions. George Butterick describes how an error may be repeated:

> "Each step along the way is traced to discover where and when an error crept in. The general procedure is backwards, from the published texts through various stages of proofs to the original typescripts and holographs or handwritten manuscripts."[7]

At party in Albuquerque we welcomed Gene Youngblood, author of the groundbreaking book, *Expanded Cinema*, to New Mexico. A pioneer theorist in electronic cinema and Video Art, Gene had left Los Angeles to make a new home in Santa Fe, joining his friends Woody & Steina Vasulka. Not only were the Vasulkas pioneers of analog electronic art, "they were at the center of that culture during its formative decade and beyond."[8]

Are the birds telling their story
of how frightened they were
first time they flew,
two in the morning raining?
("Flying Across the Country")

On a day shortly after my 21st birthday I sat on a propeller-driven plane that vibrated my

brain to a rainy Chicago night, then continued until we landed at a sun-dazzled Burbank CA Airport. After renting a red Fury convertible, and a hotel room in downtown LA., the next day I made a ceremonial visit to Universal Studios' Publicity Department, a client of the advertising agency in New York from which I had recently resigned.

The next day I rented a small top floor apartment on a quiet street within walking distance of downtown Hollywood.

Humid summer nights I walked streets bathed in multicolored floodlights, palm trees waving from an occasional cooling breeze without downtown's nauseating pollution.

When I reached Saul Bass' brightly lit graphics studio—Bass had designed the advertising art for films: such as Vertigo, Anatomy of A Murder Psycho and North By Northwest… with his stark geometric symbols, that had crossed my desk at the advertising agency I had recently left---, I'd turn toward home. It was Hollywood after all, and magic was afoot.

One morning, a line of bubbles marched across the ceiling. A little later, while I was in the kitchen preparing breakfast, chunks of heavy water-ladened plaster and insulation came crashing down in the livingroom. Having been within a few feet of injury or death, it occurred to me that had quit my job in New York and traveled 3000 miles to where I didn't know why I had come.

> "Surely all art is the result of one's having been in danger, of having gone through an experience all the way to the end, to where no one can go any further."[9]

I was given a ground floor apartment. Across the hall lived someone I only knew by the large manila envelopes deposited by a mailbox, which I assumed contained screenplays that he either wrote and were rejected, or he was rewriting the work of other writers.

Then one day when I heard his typewriter tat-tat-tatting the sound detached itself, and as if it were a ghost, or a deity, Orpheus perhaps, slipped through the wall to inform me what would be central to my work for the rest of my life.

It had been three months since I'd arrived in LA, and it was time to return home. With a stomach spasmodic from a diet of canned foods, black coffee and cigarettes, with the last of my savings I walked into town and bought a ticket to back New York, feeling like a cat who's been out all night and was returning home to be petted and fed.

Lucky cat
stretching in the sun

knows where it itches.

When I left Los Angeles I knew I would someday return to California. Four years later, a former colleague from my Madison Avenue days, played a short film he had made while vacationing in San Francisco. Upon seeing it I knew I had to be—

> Where Mrs. Coit's tower approaches the round,
> cold steel rings kiss eyes viewing the city
> and mountains beyond…
> until a coin drops,
>
> lenses fog over and through
> groves of blue gum eucalyptus trees.
> From, "Telegraph Hill")

When Alan Shanel said he would accompany me on a road trip across the country, I arranged for a driveaway car that, to our great amusement, turned out to be a silver Rolls Royce with wood paneling and a dropdown wet bar in the back.
Our first stop was Washington D.C., where we parked the Rolls wherever we choose to, and paid our respects to John F. Kennedy at his Eternal Flame. Then we drove to Danville KY., where John Bell had told Alan he was acting in Summer Stock. But John had already absconded with the woman who, unbeknownst to us, was Alan's future wife. In St. Louis, we exchanged the Rolls for a powerful Buick Riviera—driving the 1800 of miles on Route 66 past corn fields, oil wells, driving into a brilliant sun dropping into a Arizona's desert…into Los Angeles.
It was night when the plane from LA landed at San Francisco's airport. As the bus crossed the Bay Bridge into downtown San Francisco, I knew I had arrived home. (Alan returned to New York two weeks later.)

A house on the edge of the Bolinas mesa—steep cliff over the edge into the ascending sea—John Bell, Jay Stattman, and Stephen Yafa were renting—

> *While he was still in college, Stephen Yafa's novel,* Three in the Attic *(originally titled* Paxton Quigley's Had the Course*) was published, and then made into a Hollywood movie. Years later, living in Los Angeles, he met John Bell, who convinced him to move to San Francisco, "Where the real writers live."*

I slept on the livingroom's sofa in front of a large fireplace---laughing while reading Richard Brautigan's *Trout Fishing in America*, spiritually invigorated reading Lama Govinda's *The Way of The White Clouds.* Bad hay fever. Why was I here?

One day we heard there was to be a protest against logging old growth redwoods, and that Margot Patterson Doss, who lived in Bolinas, would be reporting on it for the San Francisco Chronicle.

The morning of the protest, waiting in the Doss's house I walked past a room in which the poet Lew Welch was reciting one of his riddles.[10] He waved me in as if we were old friends, as was his way.

When famed Grove Press Editor, Donald Allen, who lived in Bolinas, announced that he'd arranged a contract to publish *Ring Of Bone*, Lew Welch's Collected Poems, I remember the pleasure on Lew's face. But the date for publication passed with the book still not published. Disappointment, along with his failure at conquering alcoholism, was finally too much.

> "I never could make anything work out right . . . I had great visions but never could bring them together with reality. I used it all up. It's all gone . . . I have $2000 in Nevada City Bank of America — use it to cover my affairs and debts. I don't owe Allen G. anything yet nor my mother. I went southwest. Goodbye."

At age 44 Lew Welch walked into the wilderness taking only his rifle and his riddles. He was not heard from again.

Lew wanted "NOT THE BRONZE CASKET BUT THE BRAZEN WING,"[11] the buzzards to pick his bones until the last of his human body was transformed.

One morning many years later, walking in the mountains, I wrote:

> It was almost Spring. The path was versed in glossy red leaves of Poison Oak. As I descended a ridge, a buzzard rose on a breath of warm air. 'Lew!' I called out, 'Is it you? Or am I dreaming of 'the duende that seized the heart of Nietzsche'"?[12]

Around this time I received from Magda Cregg a copy of *Hey Lew: Homage to Lew Welch*, a privately published book in which the actor Peter Coyote recalls when he and Lew were watching a girl "dancing naked from the waist up…

> "She was a girl who just communed with God when she danced…and Lew was sitting there with a joint in one hand this bottle of wine in the other hand, just jaw

> hung, dumb, wonder struck, and he turned to me and he raised one finger and he said very slowly and very clearly, 'The worst Persian voluptuary could not imagine our most ordinary day,' and passed out."[13]

Here I will recall my teenage summer jobs. Boiling and selling hot dogs in Ebbets Field, the year the Brooklyn Dodgers won their first World Series. Delivering luggage to celebrities in Manhattan. (A $5.00 tip from a gray-haired Red Buttons preparing to leave for Hollywood and a role in Sayonara, the movie that would catapult him up from his sinking career.) In a Manhattan warehouse, I plucked dresses in rows of similar patterns that were wavering in the summer heat. No air-conditioning, and on breaks we sat cooling in the hallway. Guided patrons down Radio City Music Hall's darkened aisles to their seats, shoes so polished they reflected my flashlight.

In the Catskill Mountains: I was a Jr. Waiter at Camp Toledo, where one night I walked into town and on a jukebox heard Elvis Presley's singing, "Blue Suede Shoes." A revelation! I was hired by a hotel in the Catskill Mountains as a bookkeeper, fired when it was discovered that I didn't know how to balance a checkbook. But the girls were so lovely! Hired as a bellhop by another hotel, on a break I was noodling on the piano, when the hotel manager, standing in the back of the room, said that the concert pianist he had hired for the evening's entertainment couldn't make it, and so he wanted me to fill in for her. I told him the truth: "I don't play the piano; I was just fooling around on it." He insisted that he'd just heard me playing. I was fired the next morning.

After graduating from high school, I was hired by William Iselin Company, a factoring house; then Allied Graphic Arts hired me to help prepare the Christmas catalogs they designed for various department stores. Interesting work, as in those days colors came in proof sheets, each examined separately through a magnifying glass. On the side, they published girlie magazines, for which I was assigned to X-out nipples. A pleasant job. Next I stepped into a Jr. Executive position in the Traffic Dept. of the Monroe Greenthal Advertising Agency, now a storied agency on Madison Ave. The agency handled mainly the New York accounts of several major Hollywood film companies. As the Traffic Mgr. was usually away servicing other accounts, the job was essentially left to me and my competent secretary. As the materials from all the other departments came to my desk to be coordinated and sent to the newspapers, I was unconsciously being trained for the future postmodernist era.

Two years later, realizing I was too young to be settled into a profession, soon after my 21st birthday I resigned and flew to Los Angeles for three months, returning with a plan for the rest of my life.

During a phone conversation this morning, I criticized my father for having bought a Chevrolet because of his loyalty to General Motors, whose automobiles he had sold before retiring without a pension. After hanging up, I groaned from having hurt him for making a decision he felt was an honorable one; but where do we draw the line between loyalty and exploitation?

Skip Sweeney's 1982 film, "My Father sold Studebaker's." depicts interviews with family members after his father's death, unwinding a complex relationship between the long-haired bearded artist and his family, especially with his father, who, like mine, had sold automobiles, and had disapproved of how his son had chosen to live his life.
The film ends with Skip cutting his hair and shaving off his beard—revealing a shocking `resemblance to his father.

To Raw Space, an art gallery in downtown Albuquerque, Patrick Nagatani brought a large 20X24-inch 235 pound Polaroid camera, one of only five in existence, for a project by a few of his fellow professors and their graduate students. The bulk of this apparatus set me to thinking about the photographers of the 19th Century American West. Usually hired by the railroad to document the land over which they planned to lay tracks, these "Titans of the Rockies" hauled their cumbrous cameras and volatile chemicals over steep mountain passes in wagons, or on pack mules, to photograph the West's vast and wondrous panoramic landscapes. To people in the East it was raw space; and because of their heroic efforts we have some extraordinary pictures of the American West before it was fenced, drilled, bulldozed, crisscrossed with roads, and chopped into national and state forests and parks.

My appeal to The New Mexico Arts Commission, who had turned down the small grant its Arts Panel had approved for "The Nuclear Enchantment of New Mexico," has been rejected. To my accusation that their decision was political (they are political appointees), and not based on the project's quality, I received this humorous reply:

> "Commissioners are concerned that you understand that historically the Commission has not hesitated to fund politically controversial projects. For example, in recent years, the Commission discussed the political content of the media arts projects 'Hoxsey: Quacks Who Cure Cancer' and 'Home on the Range' (about U.S. missile testing in the Marshall Islands), but voted to fund these projects."

Etta Blum was married to Eliezer Blum-Alquit, one of New York's "cafeteria writers," among whom Noble Prize Laureate I.B. Singer was the most prominent. Etta had put aside a promising future as a poet to raise a family, work as a grade school teacher, and translate her husband's Yiddish writing into English.

Her first book, *Poems*, published in 1937, had received enthusiastic reviews from Edwin Muir, Robert Fitzgerald, Stephen Spender, and William Rose Benet. William Carlos Williams asked her for a review copy, which she didn't send, and didn't remember why. She did write: "I say I do not want fame, but how jealous I am when I see others with less talent achieving it. I pretend I don't want it (which is also true, I don't.) I want it so that I can shrug it off like a flirt who doesn't want the hearts she conquers."[14]

When her husband died, Etta lamented—

> Now, what shall I do with
> my dissatisfactions? Beneath
> so much shoveled earth
> you cannot be reached with
> either love or torment.[15]

I met Etta Blum when we were both fellows at the Helene Wurlitzer Foundation. In her 70s, she was still an inquisitive, enthusiastic, sexy woman. After her grant ran out she moved to Santa Fe, to where I returned a few months later.

Visiting Etta's apartment, between sips of tea we had lively discussions on literature, especially poetry. For my 40th birthday she gave me a copy of Ted Hughes' *Crow,* that "suggests an alternative view of humans as ultimately exposed to indifferent and much more powerful forces of nature, promoting an attitude of humility rather than stewardship towards the global ecosystem."[16]

Then one morning I read in the local newspaper that Etta Blum had passed away. I was shocked, and a bit hurt; but I understood why she had hidden her illness from me. It had been a privilege to have shared even a few hours with that extraordinary woman.

> When this enthusiastic Shekinah
> passed through Paradise's lost light,
> the Garden of Eden bloomed again.
> ("In Memory of Etta Blum")

In the archive the University of New Mexico had opened to preserve Etta Blum's Papers, I came across a letter urging her to read Edmond Jabès' *The Book of Questions*. I quickly bought the book that would return me to the spirit of poesis "as a painful questioning possibility."[17]

A few weeks later, in Albuquerque's Hippo Ice Cream Parlor, with the hated jukebox blasting, Ralph Walbridge, a would-be poet and avid reader, entered along with his strange friend, John Lord. (Not Alberto Giacometti's biographer.) Ralph walked over to my table, where I was reading *The Book of Questions*. Above the din, I said, "You've got to read this guy," and showed him the book. He turned and left without a word.

Jay Stattman was a solidly built man who radiated an intense intelligence tempered with a compassionate nature. When I met him he was a student at The American Academy of Asian Studies, the school Alan Watts and Frederic Spiegelberg founded in the early 1950s in order to "meet the new American interest in all things Asian, and for the practical transformation of human consciousness.."

I had arrived in San Francisco from New York with little money and knowing no one, but with an introduction to Jay through a mutual friend. Jay invited me (and Alan Shanel, until he returned to New York) to live in the attic of the communal house in which he was living, until a room became available. He took me to parties, where he introduced me to his friends, a few of whom became my friends too.

During my first days in San Francisco, I went to Berkeley to look at the university, browed in City Lights Bookstore; and in Discovery Books, a few doors down, I bought an illustrated copy of Dante's *The Divine Comedy*, and a second-hand copy of Evergreen Review No .2: San Francisco Scene (previously owned by Richard Fariña). Both books seemed appropriate to my new life.

Soon I was hired by Richard Meltzer Advertising as its Traffic Manager. Besides my experience in advertising, I told Richard Meltzer, the agency's founder and president, that I was a poet. He replied that he had written his MA thesis on Wallace Stevens. Then he warned me that the other executives would not be comfortable with me, and that I should report directly to him.

When she was talking to me, the Production Manager's eyes nervously fluttered and her lips formed a frozen smile. The Art Director was a chain smoker, coughing himself unto death. The copywriter appeared shortly before his work was due, quickly wrote it, then disappeared again.

Six months later, with Meltzer in Europe, the other executives huddled together and

fired me. I wrote to Meltzer, as had warned me that such a situation might possibly arise. With him still in Europe, my letter was opened by one of the executives, from whom I received a vague reply. I never heard from Richard Meltzer.

> But I am, in any case,
> A most inappropriate man
> In a most unpropitious place.
> (Wallace Stevens. From, "Sailing After Lunch.")

Having had seen many cases of the catatonic lives the Busness World leaves in its wake, I ws ready to give up all pretense of successfuly living in that world, and also being a poet, such as Wallace Stevens had.

Thus, I convinced the Advertising Manager of Macy's of San Francisco's that I would be happy as an Advertising Assistant in her department. Easy work, a friendly environment, and no neurotic egos with which to contend.

With some extra money from modeling for their Sunday newspaper ads, my meager expenses were more than met. I would remain working there for almost two years, before moving to Berkeley to attend the University of California.

Macy's was a ten minute walk from my new apartment; and a few nights a week I walked to North Beach, where I met with other young poets plotting their way into literary journals. Among them was John Tryford, who one day threw a birthday party for himself. When I arrived only John was there, fuming. "Who else did you invite besides me," I asked. He replied, "Frank Sinatra, Sammy Davis Jr., and other members of Sinatra's "Rat Pack." No one's showed up."

John later published a poem that begins: "No, I am not Frank Sinatra, / nor was I meant to be–-I am / an attendant lord, one that will / suffice to swell a progression, / attend a wedding or two, sip tea / at garden parties / perhaps escort a lady at times, perhaps at others play / the fool."[18]

Then one day I learned that John Tryford had changed both his first and last name, I hoped not to T.S. Eliot, and disappeared.

One summer, on vacation from Macy's, I drove up to the old gold mining town of Volcano. Built in a caldera-shaped valley, it is noted for California firsts, such as the first theater and the first circulating library. The house I was staying in, owned by a friend's cousins, was the first brewery in the state. The thick stone walls of its main room created a cool oasis during the volcanically hot days. Built onto the room was a kitchen, a bathroom, and a bedroom. One night it rained for a few hours, and as I watched a

corner of the bedroom’s ceiling dripping, I thought of a woman to whom—happily, in retrospect—I didn’t say, “I Love You.”

CHAPTER SIX

> The Hippoeans attacked their enemies with horses strapped to their backs. The sight of them charging bent under their equine burden, the animals screaming and kicking, was at once so horrifying and hilarious that their enemies would either turn and run, or fall down in fits of laughter. In either case, they were defeated without any carnage.

My mother's ancestors rode horseback, or walked across the High Steppes of Asia, migrating along the same route to Ukraine that the Ancient Greeks had traversed before sailing off to their islands. Some generations later, my grandparents sailed to New York. My Father's ancestors emigrated to Austria from Yemen. (I once saw a photograph of a Yemeni boy who looked so much like me when I was his age that I felt the shock of a past I never had.) In the late 19th Century, with the constant threat of pogroms, my grandparents sailed to New York.

During the 1950s, my heroes were Black Rhythm & Blues (or Rock & Roll, now also called Doo Wop) groups, including The Moonglows, The Heartbeats, The Platters and The Cadillacs. I saw them on stage in the Paramount Theater, introduced by Alan Freed, one of the rare disk jockeys who played Rock & Roll, radical at the time. Years before this, in the same theater a young ultra-slim Frank Sinatra had crooned to swooning teenage Bobbysoxers, my sister among them.

My fiends and I had our own group: The Kingsmen. In a photograph, I'm the baritone leaning in on the left. Next to me is Barry (first tenor), who wanted to be a professional musician. Marty (second tenor) wanted to be a commercial artist. And Ronald (bass) became a chemical engineer, his sister later told me. Kneeling in front is Phil (lead). Did he become an architect?
On summer nights we'd sing on street corners, until someone opened a window and yelled "Shut up!"

When it was time for me to enroll in high school, I chose the Erasmus Hall over the closer school to which most of my friends were going; not because of the stunning amount of its graduates who had become celebrities, but because it offered German. I thought knowing the language would make it possible for me to communicate better with my Austrian-born grandparents. However, by the time I could say a few words, they had passed away and I was left with a mouthful of guttural sounds.
For all four years, my German cohort was taught by thin, stern-faced Miss Muller, her

steel-gray hair gathered into a tight bun.

> I am gray
> Like the sky after a conflagration
> Like the dance seen in roughened mirrors
> Like the hands of an old woman at prayer
> (Renée Rivet. Renée Riese Hubert, trans.)

Not able to tolerate the formulaic steps of mathematics, English, History and Biology were my best subjects. Upon graduation, I applied to, and was accepted by, Utah State University's Forestry School. However, I realized that I was not ready to leave New York. Meanwhile, having had enough of classrooms, assignments, grades, much to my parents' displeasure I chose to enter the world of adult employment.
Four years later, meeting friends who had recently graduated from college, those who were would-be artists in particular, I learned we were reading the same writers: Sartre, Camus, Cocteau… and literary journals such as Evergreen Review, Chicago Review, and Big Table. A few of these friends rented an apartment in Brooklyn Heights, where they played music. One afternoon I rang the doorbell, and a young Black man whom I didn't recognize answered. Standing in the doorway in his underwear, he introduced himself as Joe Henderson, and told me my friends didn't live there anymore.[1]

Patrick Lofthouse is visiting Albuquerque, and would like to meet. Patrick was one of the talented graphic artists who designed posters for Rock & Roll concerts in the psychedelic environment of The Sixties.
I recalled to him a lunch I had had with Stan Rice, then a young poet directing San Francisco State University's Poetry Center, and his wife, Anne, who told me she's writing a novel about vampires.[2]

> *My left shoulder is being operated on in a doctor's office. After giving me a local anesthetic, the doctor begins cutting my skin with a razor blade. When I begin to feel pain, he gives me more of the drug. The bleeding is now so profuse that he prepares to succor the wound with blue thread, which he finds amusing.*

In Albuquerque's Old Town plaza, two young boys and their mother are standing by a small waterfall. The boys are wearing cowboy hats. I think they're probably from Texas. Then one of them points to the fountain and says, "This reminds me of New Jersey."

> One summer day in Brooklyn, my neighbor and fellow Boy Scout, Larry Rothstein, and I took the subway from the Utica Avenue to the George Washington Bridge, where we boarded a bus to Ft. Lee, NJ. From the bus stop we walked to where we could build a small campfire, over which we baked potatoes and grilled hot dogs. To me leaving the city, however tenuous, was a sacrament, as I was already Gaia smitten. By nightfall we were back, walking the city's flat warm slabs of gray pavement.

In the Frontier Cafeteria: a fog of muted conversations and shards of laughter; the radios of emergency ambulance medics are squawking; wallpaper music is oozing from loudspeakers, occasionally interrupted by numbers for food ready for pick up at the counter. Silverware bounces and clangs in carts of dirty dishes pushed by busboys exchanging words in rapid Spanish.
I am on the verge of creating a masterpiece, when a young woman passes my table holding a coughing baby in her weary arms.

It snowed the night before. In the morning I wrote a note to my landlord, telling him I'd be gone for two weeks. Then I worked for a few hours, went out and bought some items to take on the trip, and thought: *How weird that tonight I'll be in sultry Florida.*
I hadn't been out of New Mexico for almost fifteen years—except for when I began a road trip to Louisville KY, where I was to be a Visiting Scholar at Bellarmine College. Just east of Amarillo TX, the VW Bug's engine, recently rebuilt by my car mechanic girlfriend, began dripping oil. I made a U-turn and drove slowly home.

> *I'm running a marathon. In front of me is a famous woman runner. She is marvelous, running easily while I am struggling but determined to keep going. When I cross a stream she is so far ahead that I can no longer see her? I think: Is she somewhere fallen and hurt?*
> *Now I'm running uphill, getting stronger with each step, tremendous energy is surging through me, and I suddenly know nothing can stop me from winning.*

In Houston's airport a forty-minute delay stretched to ninety. Nervous and nauseous at the thought of what lay ahead in Florida, I walked back and forth past small restaurants, trinket shops, candy stores, magazine stands, and travelers reading, talking, or staring out the windows at a sky darkening into a clear cold night.
When the plane finally landed at Ft. Lauderdale's airport, after managing the rental car's power windows to slide down, and the air-conditioner to turn off, I glided north through a

sultry evening, and left the amber-lighted highway at the wrong exit.

“Events are brass.” -Herman Melville

Driving up and down palm treed streets that all looked alike, it was almost midnight when I finally found the condominium apartment. Mother was waiting, and we sat talking on the sofa in the small livingroom whose mirrored wall and thick carpeted floor were making me feel claustrophobic.

A little later, standing under a hot shower I was feeling if I was being strangled by an umbilical cord that stretched back to Albuquerque…when from the water’s roar I heard: *You have two choices. Get through this*, or freak out. This was followed by a deeper voice: *Just getting through is not enough!…*that cut the cord.

There are two umbilical cords: the physical one that is severed at birth. And the psychological cord that must be consciously cut in order to become an adult. This one I thought I had cut many years ago, when I “left home.”

Now that I knew there were still a few strands left, I returned to the livingroom relaxed and ready to enjoy, or at least tolerate, the next two weeks. Then the bedroom door opened, and my father appeared. Sticking out his hand to shake mine, he asked Mother, "Who is this man?" “He's your son,” she said.

> In November 1906. a meeting of the Southwest German Society of Alienists, Alois Alzheimer had recalled his neuropathological diagnosis of a 51-year-old woman’s loss of memory and disorientation. Later came depression, hallucinations, and finally profound dementia and death.

With no training as a nurse, Mother had become a martyr to her husband’s dementia. Herself in her mid-80s, she must do almost everything, from dressing him to helping him shave to guiding him around the grounds outside.

As it is a one bedroom apartment, they’d made its tiny porch into a guestroom, with a sofa that opens to an uncomfortable bed. A sliding glass door between it and the livingroom supplies an illusion of privacy. To my surprise, above the sofa/bed hangs a framed pastel portrait of Ludwig Beethoven I’d made many years ago.

One day Mother gave Father a nudge... he pushed back and walked away muttering to me, “Women,” his fingers curled into fists of frustration.

"When language fails, violence becomes language." -Eli Weisel

But he wasn't a violent man, and most times he seemed peacefully resigned to the malfunctioning of his mind. At dinner one evening, Father pointed to an arrangement of flowers on the table, and said, "Rosalyn**."** Was he remembering an old neighbor of theirs?

> I saw her
> and behind her there were
> flowers, and behind them
> nothing.[69]
> (Robert Creeley From, “The Rhyme.”)

Addressing my mother’s frustration, I said, "His mind works different now, Mom," knowing she longed for the man who had been her partner for more than half a century. Then, in a sudden lucid moment, he said to her, "You think *you're* frustrated!"

The last time I’d seen an ocean it had been the cold North Pacific. The warm blue waters of South Atlantic gently lapping a manicured beach spread under the fiery eye of a dependable sun reminded me of the Coney Island of my childhood, of

> *building castles from handfuls of damp sand, eating warm smelly tuna fish sandwiches while watching the cold waves flip over and slide in like foamy saliva, darkening the pallet of light brown sand.*
> *Perhaps I made a brave effort to swim in the piss-warmed water with a tire’s inner tube circling my waist? Perhaps not.*
> *Later, with sand chaffing my genitals, skin red and beginning to peel off my back like old wallpaper...from the elevated tracks the train plunged into a subterranean darkness, lights flashing backwards through grimy windows.*

Today, sitting on the sand, a small bird hopped over to me, looked me straight in the eyes, and said*, I know where you’re coming from*, then hopped away as if nothing unusual had happened.

On Martin Luther King's Birthday, as I was about to pull out of one of Ft. Lauderdale's innumerable shopping malls, a skinhead walked past the car balancing a young boy on his shoulders who was waving an American flag. The skinhead/father smiled at me. It

was the sneer of a psychopath.

I thought of Jack Kerouac, whose *On the Road* led him to a brick-and-block ranch-style house in St. Petersburg FL, a few hours driver north of here, where he "squandered his final days… nursing a favorite drink, scotch with a beer 'wash.'"[3]

> *I'm standing in the shadows of an alley. I think that if I unfocus my eyes the menacing little man standing in front of me won't see me. For awhile he toys with my pretense. Then he begins speaking in a high squeaky voice, the words coming fast and apparently backwards.*

This morning, in the Ft. Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel, I read:

> *Berkeley Calif*.
> Thomas F. Parkinson, a poet
> and authority on the Beat Gen-
> eration, died Tuesday of a
> heart attack at age 71.
> Mr. Parkinson, a retired
> professor of English at the
> University of California at
> Berkeley, was author of *A*
> *Casebook on the Beat,* the first
> academic analysis of the works
> of poets including Lawrence
> Ferlinghetti, Jack Spicer and
> Robert Duncan.

The National Endowment for the Arts had been in operation only a few years when I applied for their grant "for promising writers." As the applicants needed letters of recommendation, three distinguished professors from UC Berkeley's English Department—Louis Simpson (poet), Mark Schorer (literary historian), and Thomas Parkinson (W.B. Yates scholar and chronicler of the West Coast Beat Poets)—wrote letters in support of my application. I didn't receive the grant; but Tom Parkinson and I intermittently stayed in touch. I last heard from him was when he wrote to tell me that Robert Duncan had died, a few words jotted on the funeral notice.

Like Thomas Parkinson, James Parkinson, after whom the disease was named, had been a progressive thinker. His book, *Revolution Without Bloodshed*, published in 1794,

espoused reforms such as, "Provisions should be made to aid the aged and disabled who could not support themselves," a proposal far ahead of its time.

When the dream dies,
what becomes of the dreamer
without a dream?

One day a cousin, who was a decade or more older than me, visited the condo. We went together to buy a take-out pizza for dinner. I recalled to him the night when my parents and I were heading home to Brooklyn from his parents' apartment in the Bronx, with several large boxes containing Lionel trains, a transformer, tracks, and assorted equipment. Hearing this, he exclaimed, "So that's where they went! My mother refused to tell me what she'd done with them. Those were *my* trains!"

> *The joy of fitting the tracks together on the livingroom floor. The engine puffing smoke and sounding wooo as it chugged along tugging assorted cars around curves and across intersections, while I worked the transformer with an anxious feeling that the train was speeding out of my control and will topple over on the next curve, which it usually did.*

After a restless night, concerned that my windup alarm clock wouldn't ring and I'd miss my flight home, I woke up early. Mother was also awake. We talked as we had when I'd arrived two weeks before. Then I went into the bedroom, where Father was peacefully asleep. I kissed his forehead, and whispered, "I love you, Dad. Goodbye." It would be the last time I would see him alive.
Winging west, a young man sitting next to me told me he is on his way to begin a new life in San Francisco. I hoped that he too would experience a "Gathering of the Tribes," that the youthful egalitarian spirit and high seriousness of that extraordinary time would be kept alive through generations yet to be born.

Every generation is Generation Now.

I arrived home to a cold apartment. Once again, the gas heater wasn't working. Phoned the landlord, who for years had been coaxing the heater's pilot light to stay lit, refusing to hire a professional. Having owned these apartments for more than forty years, he has acquired a morbid attachment to them. When the handle of the old mini refrigerator fell off, he said to me, "Why do you want to hurt me?" When the screws of the patio door's

latch fell out, and he showed no sign of replacing them, I did the job. Seeing the fixed door, he lamented, "This is the worst thing anyone's ever done to me." The next time I saw him he was all smiles. This time he accused me of having let the pilot light go out while I was gone.

> *I've returned to my parents'* apartment *in Ft. Lauderdale. In the bedroom there's an annoying flying insect. I don't see it, but I hear its buzzing. I chase it into the living room, catching it in my right hand, which I close into a fist. With my other hand, I try to open the outside door, but have trouble with the lock; meanwhile, the insect is biting my palm….*

…I awoke with the palm of my right hand stinging. Switched on the light. The hand was empty. No marks, no stigmata, no sign of my recent flight between worlds.

In 1962, after Thomas Merton had visited New York's Guggenheim Museum, he wrote, "And the Van Goghs, wheels of fire, cosmic, rich, full-bodied honest victories over desperation, permanent victory..."[4] I saw the same exhibition, at the same time? If not, who was that radiant priest contemplating "The Potato Eaters,"?
It was on one of his rare excursions outside the monastery that Fr. Lewis, Thomas Merton's monastic handle, met with D.T. Suzuki, then a professor at Columbia University, Merton's Alma Mater. Did the Catholic priest tell the Zen Buddhist philosopher that he'd found Christ Consciousness? Did Suzuki raise his abundant eyebrows and reply, "This too is an illusion."? The essence of Zen is to be fully present in the mystery of nonexistence.

Some nights in Santa Fe when I was unable to sleep I'd drive up the steep road toward the Ski Basin, and park near a clearing hidden from the road. During winter, while a brook babbled behind a screen of quietly breathing pine trees, I'd pace back and forth, boots crunching the hard crust of moonlit snow, while I scribbled into my notepad words I hoped would make sense in the morning.

Our summer bungalow in the Catskill Mountains had a kitchen that we shared with another family. There an ice box whose catch pan I enjoyed tipping over. No one would blame the boy who didn't speak until he was five years old. Appropriately, his first words were, "What'd I do now?"
Because of his platinum blond hair, he was "Whitey." Whitey's best friend, also Joel, had black hair, so he was "Blackie."

In a snapshot, Whitey is standing by Blackie's left.. To Blackie's left is Buster. Poised on a knee in front is a bully whose name has been forgotten. Try as he did several times, Whitey couldn't land a solid punch on the bully.

Behind the bungalows was a pond, around which one day nine year old Whitey chased eleven year old Diane in pursuit of a kiss. When she finally let him catch her, her kiss left him speechless.

Lips given to kisses
can't pretend a poet
won't sacrifice speech.

Whitey's father had bought him a Daisy single-shot Red Ryder BB gun, and one day, on the banks of a pond, he shot a frog, a boy's thing he immediately regretted. Unbeknownst to him, that frog leaped into his unconscious.

In the woods nearby sat a large boulder with an entrance too narrow to crawl through. Unlike Cyclops's cave, which was "a putrid mess, a barbaric dump," Whitey envisioned a room that contained a bow and a deerskin quiver full of arrows. There was also an amulet carved with arcane symbols whose meaning had been known only to the tribe's shaman, and a small pouch of pollen.

Mara Sidoli, a Jungian psychologist visiting the University of New Mexico, presented the case history of a young Italian girl whose father had once been a priest, saying, "Water brings people back to life," Baptism is the process of drowning in "the Womb of God." Rebirth, however, is in the hands of the psychopomp who lowered the celebrant into the watery depths of darkness…to be raised into The Clear Light reborn and hopefully breathing.

If science can accomplish the general acceptance of an invisible quantum world, with its "spooky action at a distance," along with vibrating strings, branes, and many universes…poets must ask themselves more challenging questions than is generally thought, as evidenced in most of their work,

Tell me of the ghostly lair
Where sagebrush and the 'A bomb' bites
The Tularosa Basin
In the salt of night.

(Terry Hauptman. From, “Day Of The Dead.”

A few years before J. Robert Oppenheimer supervised the making of the first atomic bombs, he wrote a paper theorizing that stars eventually collapse into what were later called black holes. His paper was mainly ignored by scientists, and historians just recall the massive amount of deaths, then the race for even more powerful nuclear weapons he helped to begin, with its enormous cost to the environment, to the health of people who live near the polluted land and water the process of making nuclear weapons leaves in its wake, to the wealth that is diverted from bettering lives to threatening them. There are many kinds of black holes.

> Carolyn Hanagan placed a white paper crane from Hiroshima on the mass grave of Lakota Indians who were massacred by the U.S. Calvary at Wounded Knee. “A people dreamed there,” Black Elk said. “It was a beautiful dream.”

Earlier today, Patrick Nagatani and I visited the National Laboratory's Fusion Project, where a scientist proudly told us that the technology he’s using is primarily designed to evaluate miniature nuclear weapons, in order to prove their viability before making upscaled versions. “What have you done to gain knowledge of the disaster?”[6]
Before many, if not most, scientists could accept the consequences of their complicity in making two atomic bombs that instantly incinerated, or maimed for life, untold thousands of people, and began an Arms Race that continues to this day, some of the same scientists worked on the even more powerful Hydrogen Bomb, under the same rubric: “Otherwise, They’ll get it first.” Continuing to abide the illusion of They being Not Us, humanity remains stuck in its self-destructive adolescence.

> Must we distinguish between a hideous death and a death prepared
> by the hands of geniuses? Between a death with the face of a beast
> and a death with the face of death?
> (René Char. From, “During The Journey.”)

There is a photograph of René Char and Pablo Picasso protesting the American atomic bomb; metaphorizing America as an Indian. Did the French poet and the Spanish painter know that the Pueblo de San Ildefonso had loaned their land to the government for the war effort, land that was never returned, but instead became the Los Alamos National Laboratory and the City of Los Alamos NM?

A dense black cloud is growing larger and rolling toward me. I can sense the appetite of its madness. It has no substance that can be kicked or punched, I can't stop it… enveloping me… I wake up screaming.

On the phone today, poetry therapist Morris Morrison invited me to participate in an art therapy conference in Texas. I told him that I'm too busy to attend. What I didn't say was that, in order to stay sane, an artist needs some madness.

On his way to England for some work on his teeth, John Bell was planning to stop in New York, and I was planning to visit family and friends in New York. John had a big old car, more like a tank, in which he planned to drive across the country. Normally I would have gone along for the adventure. But with a pollen clogged nose, skin itchy with Poison Oak, and a strained lower back, I opted for a cozy airplane ride.

A week later, I received a phone call in Brooklyn. It was John. His car had broken down in Sacramento, so he returned to San Francisco and convinced Jay Stattman to accompany him to New York in a driveaway car.

They arrived in New York a week later, staying in the uptown Manhattan apartment of a woman named Margot Ellison, who was recovering from a traumatic divorce from a CBS executive. One night we all met at Alan and Karen Shanel's Lower West Side apartment, where a pair of Siamese cats walked across shelves lined with what looked like Picasso's ceramic plates. Margot was also there, a pretty blond nervously smoking. We hooked her on visions of beginning a new life for her and her young son, Jib, in San Francisco, the city of which Lew Welch had written: "This is the last place. There is nowhere else to go." [7]

Afterwards, Margot bought a car and made the coast to coast journey, while Jay found a driveaway V.W. Bug, fresh off the boat from Germany, in which he and I headed back to California.

In Chicago we stayed with Jay's mother, an intelligent woman whose bookshelves included *Marx and Engels Collected Works*. Her deceased husband had been a "soapboxer" for the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), whose motto is:

> Arise, ye prisoners of starvation!
> Arise, ye wretched of the earth!
> For justice thunders condemnation.
> A better world's in birth.

That "better world" was still a glimmer in a few old men's eyes the night we attended a

meeting of Jay’s father’s aging union buddies. Ah, but there was one long-haired young man among them!
The next morning, after chasing a car through Chicago’s streets, in which Jay thought he recognized an old girlfriend, we were on the road to Denver… where Jay visited a retired professor of economics, a tall stately man who walked and talked as if the future of humanity depended on the theorems that sprouted from his jacket’s pockets like saplings.
Crossing the Rocky Mountains. we skirted the Great Salt Lake, stopping at a small rural garage whose mechanic diagnosed the car’s solenoid as hopelessly disabled. As he didn't have a replacement part on hand, he fashioned a temporary one “to get you home.” American know-how was still alive, at least in rural Utah.

When I was by an Assistant Maintenance Engineer at a San Francisco hospital, I slithered beneath the beds of dying cancer patients to oil their squeaky parts; and tried not to electrocute myself rewiring live light switches. Although my boss had a Support Your Local Police sticker on his windshield, he was married to a Korean woman, had a son who played in a rock & roll band, and hired his assistants from the local Zen Center. A complicated man who, when I couldn't find a solution to a job, would say: "Let it go. I'll improvise something." And he almost always did.

During WWII my father worked nights at Republic Aviation, installing fuel lines in P-47 Thunderbolt fighter planes that were “surrounded by myth and misconception.”
There is a story he liked to tell about trying to enlist in the Army, even though he was in his 40s, married, and had two young children to support. In turn, he received a letter from the War Department thanking him for his patriotic gesture. It went on to say that if they accepted his enlistment, because of his age they’d have to make him a general.

Patrick Nagatani phoned today and told me that he realized something is missing from his Rocket Lounge picture, and that he's going to add a mother and child to its tableau. Now I know why I've been having problems writing the poem: the picture is incomplete.

Earlier today, I asked a woman I hadn’t seen since she'd received an undergraduate degree in mathematics if she planned to continue on to Graduate School. She took a long drag on her cigarette....then told me that returning to school would mean she'd have less time to have fun. This sounded so absurd that smoke puffed from her nose and mouth like a steam engine chugging up a steep hill.

In 1967, Charles Simic published a wonderful poem titled "Stone." It begins—

Go inside a stone
That would be my way.
Let somebody else become a dove
Or gnash with a tiger's tooth
I am happy to be a stone…

and ends…

So perhaps it is not dark inside after all;
Perhaps there is a moon shining
From somewhere, as though behind a hill–
Just enough light to make out
The strange writings, the star-charts
On the inner walls.

Some sixty-five years later, after having published more than 25 books of poetry and received many grants and awards, the retired professor was writing poems such as:

Sunny day shadowed
By dark thoughts,
And come evening,
A sky full of clouds
In their tragic robes.
("Weather Forecast"")

Shouldn't the craft of a poet over six decades have gained more depth, density, metaphoric subtlety, instead of poems being tossed off like skipping stones over a pond for the sake of publishing another book? Does it matter how many books a poet has published, how many grants and awards one has received? Or is it the quality of the work, of each poem, that matters? Should we be expecting less from our poets than we do from our scientists and philosophers as they mature? Or more?

I was sitting a coffeehouse, thinking that Betsy James, who writes and illustrates children's books, would be a good person to design a map of New Mexico's large array of nuclear installations for the book Nagatani and I had talked about publishing together. However, *Betsy had moved to Seattle*. Right after this thought, someone at a nearby table said, "Did you hear that Betsy James has returned to Albuquerque?" Also overheard:

Have you ever been…”
“On a date with her?”
“...Rock climbing.”

One a stormy night in Berkeley, while mice played in the kitchen stove, and rain pounded on the roof and poured down the drainpipe, I was cozy in my small cottage on Emerson St. I’d been given a complimentary ticket to a Yevgeny Yevtushenko poetry reading on campus. However, getting there would have meant riding my small motorcycle on slippery streets, and arriving soaked to the bone, if arriving at all.
I chose to remain home, and phoned the poet Ron Loewinsohn, then a student at Berkeley. After he’d stopped by to pick up the ticket, I spent the rest of the evening writing a poem about Allen Ginsberg’s beard getting caught in a storm and “blowin’ in the wind.”

Yevgeny Yevtushenko’s poem, “Babi Yar,” that memorializes the murder of more than 33,000 Jews by Nazi *Einsatzkommando* outside Kiev, had opened my teenage mind to the power a poem can enact. Like Seamus Heaney, “I began as a poet when my roots crossed with my reading.”[8]
I once asked my mother's older sister where she'd been born. "Kiev," she said, and tears slide down her face. But she didn’t elaborate, and I was too young and polite to ask more questions of her. “It’ll be unbearable to hear about so much horror. A child shouldn’t hear such things.”[9]
Then there is Edvard Munch’s painting, “Scream,” that reverberates with the loud silence that emanates from it. There is also Goya’s Black Paintings, Picasso’s “Guernica,” Richter’s his Birkenau paintings. Yevtushenko wrote “Babi Yar,” and Celan wrote “Todtnauberg.” There is of course much more human travail depicted by artists, including my, “Upon Seeing A Victim of the Atomic Bomb”:

I can’t look,
without wanting to vomit
into the President’s Face.

Then I had this dream:

> *A woman opens the door to her apartment. Her face is hidden behind a mask of a thick layer of white cream. Two policemen appear. (Apparently I've been searching for this woman, and they've been helping me find her.)*

One of the officers orders the woman to show us her face. She peels off the cream and reveals the horribly burned skin of a hibakusha*. All the while she's smiling at me.*

On the phone today the Director of the Witter Bynner Foundation for Poetry informed me that I'll be receiving the full amount of the grant I requested to the help me with research expenses for the Nuclear Enchantment poems. "It's as much as we're giving the Shakespeare Festival this year," he said, his voice lilting with humor.

In the Living Batch Bookstore a young man is trying to impress his girlfriend. "A good book on Zen," he tells her, "is by Alan Watts." Jay Stattman, who had been a guest on Alan Watts' Sausalito houseboat, said that Watts had a red telephone in his meditation room. "It's my hotline to God," Watts told him with a smile. "In case I'm suddenly enlightened."

My first experience with Zen was in a basement apartment in Lower Manhattan. Folding chairs, an altar with candles and fruit, austere and aesthete. Tea was served: a cup of hot water with a tea leaf, and a cookie with an almond whose single brown eye stared up at me. Then a Japanese man with a shaven head appeared and began softly speaking. The whole scene seemed shallow, even comical, to me.
Martin Heidegger considered Zen Buddhist philosophy for a solution to Western philosophical conundrums on consciousness. His books, after all, were read in Japan, and several Japanese philosophers of Buddhism had traveled to Germany to study with him.[10] In, "Zen For The West," philosopher William Barrett's interesting introduction to *Zen Buddhism: Selected Writings of D.T. Suzuki*, Barrett wrote: "A German friend of Heidegger told me that one day when he visited Heidegger he found him reading one of Suzuki's works. 'If I understand this man correctly,' Heidegger remarked, 'this is what I have been trying to say in all my writings.'"[11]

With advanced drafts of twenty of the Nuclear Enchantment poems finished, last night I woke up anxiously thinking: *Do I have enough language left in me to write another twenty poems*, enough research too?
I've been experiencing "false awakenings," dreaming I'm awake in the room where I'm actually asleep. First taken in by the apparent normalcy of the scene, I then realize something is "off," or "uncanny," as Freud would say; and that I am actually still asleep. Then, out of desperation, I found that I can wake up by blinking my eyes hard and fast. What does "being awake" actually mean? The amygdala, the organ of the brain that

processes emotions such as fear and anxiety, and the hippocampus, where memories are processed, are *both* active during REM sleep and also when we are awake. When we are awake, dreams run in the background of our consciousness, perhaps noticed as “daydreams.” To be awake doesn’t mean not to be asleep.
There’s no consciousness without unconsciousness, which is why under general anesthesia we are neither awake nor asleep.

There is a story of a man who left everything dear to him: wife, children, high-paying job, and travelled around the world searching for the meaning of life.
One day, in India, a half-naked yogi pointed to a nearby hill and said, “On that hill’s summit lives a great sage who is fully awoken, and so he can answer your question.”
So the man climbed the hill, excited that his quest would soon be over.
And, indeed, sitting cross-legged on the hill’s summit was old man who looked like he knew important things. The seeker reverently bowed, and said, “Master, I’ve been traveling the world seeking the meaning of life.” The old man opened his eyes, and replied: “My son, I will tell you the meaning of life. Life is like a fountain.”
The seeker was stunned, and said: “I’ve given up everything, just to learn that life is like a fountain!” “You mean,” the old man replied, “You mean life isn’t like a fountain?”

By mid-May, Albuquerque’s afternoons can reach above 90 degrees. There’s a large swamp cooler on the roof of my apartment; however, the landlord doesn’t turn it on until June 1st, giving his tenants a chance to sweat a bit.

A phone call from Ellis Edmonds. He’ll be visiting Albuquerque to attend a friend’s wedding. We haven’t been in touch since my last trip to New York, almost 15 years ago. Ellis and I first met in Kyoto, where one evening, approaching the Japanese-style hotel where we were staying, John Bell said to me, "That's Ellis's motorcycle. I thought he was in Korea getting his visa renewed."
A few weeks later, in Tokyo, I met Ellis again, along with his friend David Watanabe, a Japanese-American photographer who ,although looking Japanese, didn't know much Japanese language. To our amusement, David was often mistaken by the natives for one of their countrymen, until he began to speak.
While living in the mountains, I’d bought a Honda motorcycle, and had left it there. As David expressed an interest in buying it, we traveled to Niiharu, where, after a hot bath and food, he left for Tokyo astride the bike, while I hiked up to the farmhouse, whose owner was shaking his head at the crazy *gaijin*.
Dingy and cold, the stash of charcoal for heating and cooking nearly gone, by nightfall I

had a throbbing headache and what felt like a high fever. That night, while rats scurried across the rafters, and a goblin spider hung in the shadows, I scribbled in my notebook: “Will I die, an anonymous American buried in a village in a foreign land, this futon my padded shroud?”

> *A panther is stalking in the farmhouse where I’m living in Japan. Although I am fearful of it, I sense it will not harm me. I wondered if it understands English or Japanese. Or is bilingual? It is prowling along the rafters of a long room with doors on either side. I close the doors to trap the cat inside, concerned about it running loose in the streets.*
> *When the animal control people finally arrive, they let the animal out and assure me that it is harmless, and will find its way home.*

When I awoke my headache was gone along with the apparent fever. I walked down to the village to buy eggs for breakfast. Reaching the store, I realized I’d forgotten the English-Japanese Dictionary, and didn't know the word for egg. I could see the shopkeeper’s wife in the back room was frying eggs, so I pointed to her, but he didn’t understand.
As I hiked back uphill hungry and empty-handed, I thought of Rilke’s panther neurotically pacing in his cage, like I, a foreigner who hardly knows the language, am “barred” by the community. I returned to the store with the precious word: *tamago*.

By early afternoon my head was throbbing again, the house cold and shadowy. I thought: *If I spend another night here I’ll die, a foreigner among people who care nothing about me!* I packed my gear, methodically swept the room, walked down the gravel road, waited for the bus, then the train to Tokyo, where I stayed with a British friend, and other people I had recently met.
That night, coughing up brown phlegm from what I now recognized as a sinus infection, with my money almost gone, and my visa was about to expire, I decided it was time to look for transportation home.
The next morning, in a train whose windows were steaming from the breath of sandwiched-in commuters who looked like they were resigned to their inevitable future as *sararīmen*, I arrived at the Port of Yokohama. There, with aid from the American Consulate, I was offered a job on an old tanker about to sail either to Houston or Portland. "Do you want to go to the Persian Gulf?" "No. I want to go home.”

A few days later, beard shaved off and union dues paid, I was flown to Kobe with other

members of the crew whose relentless stories of sexual conquests and paranoia of Communists infiltrating the union would bore me for the next two weeks as the rusty tanker slowly chugged across the North Pacific's gray choppy waters.

> “He tried ignoring the sea
> But it was bigger than death, just as it was bigger than life.”
> (Ted Hughes. From, Crow and the Sea.”)

Days I worked in the hellishly hot engine room. After lunch I’d stand on the deck looking out the wintery grey ocean that stretched to the horizon and hoped that the valiantly pumping engines won’t stop until we reached land.
I slept in a tiny cabin with rusty metal walls, overhead pipes knocking with stream, while the small round pothole framed moonless nights.

> Every morning, first thing heard:
> "It's 7:15, Mr. Wiper!"
> BORN
> AGAIN
> into the belly of a rusty tanker's whining
> motors whelping pumps, paint buckling
> heat-blistered black coat of soot-greasy
> fingerprints, dirty blond brooms worn
> down to their chins.
>
> The world is flat, a perfect circle,
> a carcanet of dazzling red suns strung
> around the wrinkled neck of this old tub.
> (“Every Morning”)

After crossing the International Dateline (paid twice), we learned that our destination would be Portland, where we first had to cross the Columbia River Gap, “the graveyard of the Pacific,” more than 2000 vessels having perished there. The engine room’s metal floor vibrating, the Chief Engineer said, “If we’re gonna sink, it’ll be here.” My heart was still pounding hard as we sailed intact up the Columbia River to the Willamette, docking at Portland, the last port on the Willamette River deep enough for big ships to anchor.

In a cafeteria near the bus station, with a cup of coffee and a slice of apple pie, I already

felt at home. Outside, dark rain-slick streets were bathed in pools of red and green flickering neon lights. After goodbyes to my shipmates—most of whom were headed for Reno to gamble, get laid, ship out again—I boarded a Greyhound bus from which I watched a watery moon float past, until eventually I fell asleep.

Awoke to a familiar gray San Francisco dawn. From the bus station I made my way to where I knew I'd be welcome: Jay Stattman's apartment in the Haight-Ashbury. "You're back," Jay said, as if I had just returned from shopping in a neighborhood store. Over eggs (*tamago!*), buttered slices of toast, and coffee, Jay told me that his girlfriend had recently died in a car crash. "I want to hear all about your trip, but not now," he said. I knew we would never get around to it, as daily events were always a step ahead of memories, and I had poems to write.

> Feels like home again--
> rotting fruit in refrigerator,
> faint cat smell, then the smelly
> cats themselves back again,
> waiting for flea bites,
> piles of scribbled notes, books,
> half-read magazines from around
> the world scattered, yet comfortable
> home-feeling, two weeks before
> leaving again.
> ("Feels Like Home Again")

That was the winter of 1968. Four years later, Jay was living in Amsterdam, married to the Dutch physician Helene de Regt. The father of two children, Dr. Jacob Stattman founded Unitive Body Psychotherapy.[12]

One day, in my mountain cabin at Ettawa Springs, I received a cassette tape from Amsterdam, on which Jay Stattman and John Bell were talking, laughing, and sending me brotherly greetings. Twenty years later I received this letter:

> "In the middle of a rebirthing group (Jay) took a break to walk in the street near his home. He was with a co-leader. Suddenly he felt tired, then the pain in his chest. A massive heart attack and he collapsed. In the ambulance he revived, said he didn't want to die, to leave the children so soon."[13]

CHAPTER SEVEN

An exhibition of Anne Noggle's honest photographs of elderly people, including her mother, and her own aging flesh, jolted me awake: I needed to write again! I was also curious to see how years of sculpting would affect my writing. While Joan Miró said, "I make no distinction between poetry and painting,"[1] I wanted to see the distinction between making poems and making sculptures.

I had been a sculptor before becoming a writer, beginning while living in the New York basement apartment, where I made such pieces as the head of Nikos Kazantzakis and James Baldwin. Not having a kiln, the pieces disintegrated, and only a few of the photographs survived.

When I learned that a collection of Noggle's work was about to be published by The UNM Press, a few weeks late, I gave my review to Artspace, an internationally distributed journal of Contemporary Southwest Art, published in Albuquerque. About a week after I submitted the piece, Kathleen Shields, Artspace's Associate Editor, phoned and said: "We've never published anything like this before, but we want to feature it."[2]

Located on Kirkland Air Force Base, in Albuquerque, Sandia National Laboratory's Particle Beam Accelerator sends illuminated pulses through a tank holding 2000 gallons of electrically charged water… recalling to me the solar plexus' chakra, *Manipura*. But what does this have to do with my feet?

Psychiatrist Robert Hall had learned Rolfing from its founder, Ida Rolf. I had to wait several years before Hall and I were in the Bay Area at the same time, so that he could dig his erudite fingers into my fascia: the tough connective tissue that surrounds muscles, and release the tensions they held.

Not long into the ten sessions, Hall told me that *I* was the source of the pain when he pushed deep into my muscles. This seemed to absurd. Then one day, as he worked on my feet I felt an ambiguous sensation flowing up my body into my head, where it became PAIN… that I was able swat back to my feet, as if returning a tennis ball over the net.

During the final session, Hall's associate, Richard Heckler, joined him.[3] Now twenty fingers were digging into the depths of my naked agony, including my solar plexus, while I was trying to slip off the table, the floor seemed a safer place to be.

Afterwards, I overheard Heckler mention "the Aikido People." I knew Aikido was some sort of Martial Art, but hearing the word attracted my newly flexible 35-year-old body toward the next step in its transformation.

Aikido of San Francisco was located on the second floor of a building that looked to me like a converted parking garage. There were nearly 100 students, as many women as

men. Each of the three sensei approached the art from a different angle. Frank Duran moved smoothly, inviting a uke, an attacker, join him in a circular dance from which the assailant would inevitably be thrown. Bill Witt, a squat powerful man who taught on Saturday mornings, presented stability in midst of adversity. Robert Nadeau combined fluidity with power. Junior black-belted instructors included Wendy Palmer and several other woman.[4] How instructive it was to confront women who could, and did, throw me like a sack of potatoes!

One of the students close to earning his black belt was 52 year old George Leonard, a writer whose first book was *Education and Ecstasy*—

> "Did you ever read it? It is kind of corny...he belongs to that world of Howard Gossage, Jerry Et-Hopkins, and Herb Caen, the Squirt Set, the junior jet set. He can't help it. But his ideas are right."[5]

Soon after I joined the dojo Richard Heckler took his black belt test in Stanford University's gymnasium. In overheated prose, Leonard wrote that at one point he (Leonard) "glanced up at the portrait of O Sensei. A powerful arc of golden light seemed to be streaming from the eyebrows on the picture toward Richard's head, covering him."[6] In another book Leonard recalls:

> "Everyone I contacted noticed the shift of illumination when Richard (Heckler) rose to a standing position. Some people also began seeing an aura---some described it as 'golden,' others as 'clear plastic'---around his entire body."[7]

I wish I had seen the celestial manifestations Leonard had seen! How I wish I'd seen a golden aura, when all I saw was Heckler going through the usual black belt examination routine.

At a place of honor on the dojo's wall hung a picture of a Japanese man with a stoically determined look. I thought, *I've seen that guy somewhere*.

> *On the 100th anniversary of the Meiji Restoration, which moved the capitol of Japan from Kyoto to Tokyo, after browsing the various arts and crafts booths in Tokyo Park, I walked past demonstrations by distinguished Martial Arts masters. Near the end of the row a crowd had gathered to watch a short bald man with a wispy white beard and wearing a flowing white robe. As his black-belted students attacked him they went flying without having made contact with their sensei. What kind of magic is this?*

The man I'd seen in Tokyo, whose picture hung on the Aikido dojo's wall, was Morihei Uyeshiba, called O-Sensei, Honorable Teacher, O-Sensei was the founder of Aikido. Robert Nadeau recalled when he was a student at O-Sensei's dojo in Iwama Japan.

> "All the students were sitting around and (O-Sensei) looked at me, and he held out his arm and said, 'Grab my arm…' He was right in front of me, that arm was right in front of me, and suddenly I'm…like a rubber band starting to stretch out. And suddenly I'm flying out of this cloud and I catch him out of the corner of my eye---he's standing to the right of me instead of in front of me---I catch him out of the corner of my eye but I'm in the air and going down….I was just awe-struck"[8]

There is a 16 mm black & white film in which a group of martial artists form a circle around O Sensei. When circle opens O Sensei has disappeared... he reappears standing on a nearby staircase. Only by running the film in slow motion can we see him leaving the circle and hurrying to the stairs.
When Nadeau was leaving Japan, after two years of intensive training, O Sensei presented him with a scroll that read: "Do the aikido that cannot be seen with the human eye."

I trained at the San Francisco Aikido dojo two nights a week and an occasional Saturday morning. Although, to the chagrin of the sensei, I didn't pursue colored belts, but the mysterious energy called ki. On a few occasions I was able draw into this flow of circular force the attacker, who was then irresistably taken down to the mat.

CHAPTER EIGHT

I was telling the artist Russell Adams that during my residency at The Helene Wurlitzer Foundation I received a letter from Frank Waters encouraging me to study local Indian lore. Then I learned that the Hopi were angry at Waters for revealing too much about their secret ceremonies in his *Book of the Hopi.* “But how are we to learn what indigenous people have to teach us when they have secrets that we can’t access?” I opined.

> ”Never before had I run into such an atmosphere of secrecy; the religions of civilized nations today are all accessible; their sacraments have long ago ceased to be mysteries. Here, however, the air was filled with a secret known to all the communicants, but to which whites could gain no access. This strange situation gave me an inkling of Eleusis, whose secret was known to one nation and yet never betrayed." (C.G. Jung, upon visiting the Taos Pueblo.)[1]

“Then again,” I continued. “Their rituals may contain power that in the wrong hands can be harmful, if not dangerous.”
Changing the subject, Russell said that when he lived at the Wurlitzer Foundation he may have had the same house I had lived in several years later. “There was a wild crabapple tree in front of it." he said. “Yes,” I replied. “I wrote a little poem about it that I dedicated to D.H. Lawrence, who had once lived up the road a bit:

> Live like a wild crabapple tree,
> its awakened branches bending
> under heavy wet snow.

As our collaboration had begun with a book in mind, Patrick Nagatani proposed that we spend one year looking for a publisher together. I agreed. However, soon after this, Patrick told me that he had taken his photographs to the University of New Mexico Press. Noted for its photography, not poetry; also that he is on the UNM Faculty, and I’m not, this was his best chance to find a publisher, and my worst.

> *There was a painting competition. I arrive at the gallery late, walk in and wave to a few people who are behind a long table at the other end of the room. The painting hanging by the entrance is the big winner. I examine it down to its brushstrokes. It is mundane, safe. I feel it is to be expected that such a painting would win.*
> *Then I come to a room in which there is a wonderful installation, consisting of various pieces of furniture that form a mysterious unity. Why didn't this win? I'm*

told that this is a storage room, and these pieces were moved there to make way for the show!

The editor of *Artspace* is still wavering on my “Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle” piece. He likes the writing but not Janice Tanaka's video. Does he have to like the art to publish a piece on it?[2]

It seems impossible that I can finish forty poems in time for the museum show. Just getting facsimile pages sometimes drags on for weeks. I’ve also been revising some of the early ones, strengthening the links between military and mythological mindsets. The research has reached a point where it is no longer tenable to nest it within the poems without weighting them down and becoming too didactic. I must solve this problem!

Elizabeth Hadas, the Director of the UNM Press, has informed Nagatani that the Advisory Board met and recommended publication of his pictures. She also told him that she finds my poems "distasteful.” Shouldn’t art on weapons of mass destruction be distasteful?

I am in a large workshop. I’m wearing the ring my father has worn for as long as I can remember. The shop’s craftsman offers to polish it. He begins to work, then leaves for awhile. I find the ring and show a friend its semi-precious stones.

Now I am going to visit a nearby pueblo. I am allowed by a young Indian woman to use a shortcut through some abandoned rooms. They lead to a field I run across to a cache of large rocks, by which there is a large tunnel, through which I walk.

On the other side of the tunnel is a studio in which another craftsman is working, paying no attention to me. I walk around, looking at the objects he has made. There’s a window that has been cut out of the rock wall, through which I see the face of a cliff. On a ledge, I see what I first think is a natural rock formation in the shape of an animal, then I realize it was made by the craftsman, who had placed it there.

I awoke thinking of my father’s ring. I vaguely remembered being given it when I was last in Florida. Did I dream this too?

Today Kevin Campbell and I were talking about the poet Tom Clark, whom he had met
when he worked for Black Sparrow Press, one of Tom Clark's publishers. I knew Tom from when we both lived in Bolinas, during which time he was the Poetry Editor of The Paris Review.
When Kevin reminded me about Tom's legendary physical ineptitude, I told him of the day Tom, Ebbe Borregaard, and I were helping the artist Jack Boyce pour the foundation for a house Jack was building for him and his wife, Joanne Kyger. During the first hour Tom hurt himself, and had to quit working.

Jack Boise died a few years later. I'd been living in the mountains, out of touch with the people in Bolinas. When I returned, not finding Jack in his usual haunts, I asked if anyone had seen him. The faces of those people who believe in ghosts paled.

"Reality is an unfinished project." -Slavoj Žižek.

In the 8th Century, Ch'an Master Tao Wu and his disciple, Chien Yuan, attended a funeral at which Chien Yuan tapped the coffin and asked his teacher, "Dead or alive?" Tao Wu replied, "Neither dead nor alive."
Twelve centuries later Austrian physicist Edwin Schrödinger's proposed his famous thought experiment, in which a cat that has been sealed in a box could be, he theorized, both alive and dead, until the box is opened and the cat is actually observed.
There is also Franz Kafka's The Hunter Gracchus, who is dead but is also alive "in a certain sense." There are many states of being / not being, such as zombies, vampires, and people who have had near death experiences. Thus, "To be or not to be, that is the question." To be is not to be, that is the answer.

A Santa Fe chiropractor had given me a key to his office so that I could use his isolation tank after business hours. One evening I trudged through a midwinter's evening's cold and slush, and entered the abandoned office.
After taking a hot shower and chanting a dharani for protection, I stepped into the tank's calm saline waters and dense humidity. Stretched out, floating on my back, breathing in the warm salty air as it lapped the tank's rubber skin, my drifting consciousness came upon a chorus of distant voices chattering words I couldn't decipher. A chill ran through me: *Am I hearing The Sirens' singing from the Abyss?*

"'Why is the song so dangerous,' Radyn asked. 'Because it draws you in,

> and if you aren't careful, it'll never let you go.'"[3]

Then I began to panic: *Will the lid open*? *Or is this my watery coffin?*

> The Hippoeans were naysayers. They refused to be saddled with concrete answers, preferring the fluidity of contingencies. If someone said, "It's sunny outside," another might retort, "Break out the rain gear!"
> It wasn't a matter of being contradictory, but of galloping in the opposite direction to see what is there.

Hanging on a wall in the UNM Art Department's office this morning, I saw one of Patrick Nagatani's Nuclear Enchantment pictures, without a whisper of my poem.

> "It is a question, in this case, of calling attention to the important role that verbal language plays not only in the interpretation of the image, but also in the mechanisms involved in the perception of the image, whether dealing with form or color."[4]

This is not understood? More likely, Nagatani has not told whoever hung his picture that it is half of a collaborative project.

A breakthrough today! To take the burden of my research off the poems, I've created a paratext keyed to words in both the text and the paratext, creating a conversation between the poetic and the didactic.
Although the paratext has been used in many forms in the past, to my knowledge it's never been in this kind of dynamic reciprocal relationship with poetry.[5]

Jeff Burns was my car mechanic and friend. He told me he'd worn himself out working on a Detroit automobile assembly line, and at other physically demanding jobs. At age 40, exhausted and depressed, one morning he walked outside his house and shot himself, aiming the bullet for a quick death. Hearing the gun's retort, his wife, Karen, ran outside and found his corpse. Later, she wrote---

> "Angrily, she tears open the box--did THE bullet come from this box? / And the bullet lying in its box in orderly rows with its brother bullets / Tumble from their orderly rows and trajectory to the floor / And scatter and roll around in circles."[6]

Karen invited a few friends to her home, where she performed a simple Buddhist ceremony in memory of Jeff. Afterwards, one of the mourners said that he's a long-time smoker, and that he's dying from lung cancer. Then he added: "I'm a lawyer, and I'm filing a lawsuit." "Who are you suing?" I asked him. "Myself," he replied.

At the Zen Mountain Center, Tassajara Springs, CA., I was sleeping on the floor of one of the monastery's small, detached rooms. It couldn't have been more than a few hours after I'd fallen asleep when I was jolted awake by what sounded like two sharp claps of a han: thick pieces of wood used as a call to meditation, which had no reason to be struck at that hour.

Opening my eyes in the pitch-black room, a ghosty white monk seemed to be floating above the floor. He looked at me with an inquisitive look, as if saying, "What are *you* doing here?" Then he disappeared into the abject darkness, and I fell back into a dreamless sleep.

The next day, when I told one of the monks of my nocturnal visitation, he laughed and said, "It was Suzuki Roshi making his nightly rounds." Did he know of Zen's "supernatural and magical elements."?[7]

On my first day at Tassajara, a woman with long dark hair and a strident gait caught my attention. I didn't see her again until the morning I was leaving. While I was waiting for a ride into Monterey in the monastery's laundry truck, she suddenly appeared. She told me her name is Marian, and asked who I was. I told her my name, and that I was a poet, although she must have already known this, as she handed me a few of her own poems and asked if we could stay in touch. This we would do for the next twenty years.

With a need to meditate alone, Marian Derby was eventually ordered to leave the monastery. She moved into a nearby cabin in misty hills of Big Sur, where, assuming the name Marian Mountain, she wrote—

> "The east wall of the Pacific Ocean beat on the west wall of the Santa Lucias. With nothing to protect me from my environment, it was not difficult to be at one with it. Many mornings I sat enveloped in cool clouds that drifted in and out of the small hut I named Half-Dipper Hermitage."[8]

From Monterey, I returned to San Francisco, where I slept in a back room of the poet Beverly Dahlen's house. One night I dreamed that I knew the way to what Zen calls "The Other Shore," and went. I was jolted awake with pinwheels of bright lights flashing in the darkness, and a loud *buzzing* in my ears.

One day Margot Doss phoned Beverly's house and asked me if I would return to Bolinas. How did she know where I was staying? We were all in touch, sometimes by other means.

In Bolinas one evening, Richard Brautigan appeared in the Doss' kitchen. With a pixy smile on his face, he told us he had just been fishing, holding up a trout as evidence. We all laughed, thinking of his humorous book.[9]
Eugene Schoenfeld, alias Dr. HipPocrates, stayed overnight, healing from his practice of attending to drug overdoses at the Haight-Ashbury Free Clinic, where Dr. John Doss also volunteered. The phone rang. It was Allen Ginsberg, calling to wish Margot Happy Birthday, as she said he did every year.

> "Company that's what / it's all about entwined / in the same air walking
> in the same sun's dawn." [10]

George Moscone, then the Democratic leader of the California State Senate, visited the Doss' house. When he lit a cigarette, I sagely told him, "Cigarettes will kill you."
A few years later, now the Mayor of San Francisco, he was murdered, along with gay councilman Harvey Milk, by a right-wing former councilman named Dan White. Moscone's cigarette had morphed into the smoking barrel of a gun.

> If I should weep
> they would never know
> and so I walked
> silently
> shrugging off hands
> in treacherous places...
> (Joanne Kyger. From, "The Maze.")

Lunch with Gary Snyder. While he stirred a pot of gruel on a grill outside his temporary home on Mt. Tamalpais, I recalled to him the ghostly visitation I'd had at Tassajara, and the dream in which I knew how to get to the Other Shore. With one eye wisely squinting, he replied, "You were blowing brain cells. You're lucky you didn't do more damage."

> I can see from here
> that other shore
> is just a dream.

(Jack Kerouac. From, “Desolation Journal”)

In mid-Manhattan, one day I climbed the narrow flight of stairs that led up to Sig Klein's Original Gym. Sitting behind a desk on the landing sat Sig Klein himself: wiry gray hair parted down the middle, muscles bulging beneath a tight t-shirt, a cigar glowing between his thick lips.[11] He invited me into the fabled gym, a surprisingly small red carpeted room, with rows of barbells and dumbbells neatly racked in front of mirrored walls.

One day in 1930, a young man had walked into the gym and began doing squats with a 180 lb. barbell across his back. Klein later wrote:

> “He went down into an extremely low position and on flat feet almost sitting on the floor, then when his powerful thigh muscles propelled him upward it seemed like they were so tremendously strong that they actually hurled him right off the floor a full foot or more straight into the air. It seemed he could keep it up all night.”[12]

I saw John Grimek—who by then had been Mr. America twice, along with Mr. Universe, and other titles—posing during the intermission of an American / Russian weightlifting exhibition. Then in his mid-forties, what set him apart from the weightlifters was the balance Grimek had achieved between flexibility and strength, like a good poem.

In my small adobe house at the Wurlitzer Foundation, during clear cold nights I could feel subtle vibrations that seemed as if from an immense generator that powered the planet. This “Infrasound,” or perhaps “Schumann Resonances,” was occasionally interrupted by a coyote howling at the moon, or a dog recalling its distant ancestors,

> The Hippoean People slept in their saddlebags that were decorated with symbols drawn from the rider’s dreams. The bags were fastened like hammocks between two standing sleeping horses. If the horses were frightened, their was the danger of the sleeper being carried away, or worse… much worse.

Terry Hauptman has returned to Albuquerque. She’d gone to Nevada with her friend Min from Minnesota. The two women had visited the motel room in which Min's son, depressed over this country's testing of nuclear weapons, had hung himself. On a windowsill they found the hook he had used.

Patrick Nagatani and I had discussed the possibility of a “Nuclear Enchantment of New Mexico” traveling exhibition. Today he told me that the agent who will be managing his photographs for the traveling exhibition said that my poems "would kill his pictures." Now I’m getting somewhere!

> *I am in the basement a museum preparing my texts to be exhibited. With me is a woman who tells me that we’d left the paratexts in our hotel room. We go to get them, and when I walk outside I realize I’m in Paris.*
>
> *Now I am sitting in the Café de Flore. Someone at the next table leans over and whispers to me: “Sartre is the little guy with a wandering right eye. Sitting next to him is lovely Simone. And that’s Giacometti, staring out the window.” “Of course,” I say.*

As I was browsing in the Living Batch Bookstore, Robert Creeley was about to walk past me. We hadn't seen each other for more than two decades. "Bob," I said. He stuck out his hand for me to shake, and said, "Bob Creeley." "*You're* Bob Creeley," I replied. "I'm Joel Weishaus." Laughing, his wife, Penelope, said, "Thanks for reminding him."

> “I cannot see any basic difference between a handshake and a poem.”[13]

That afternoon I attended a reading Creeley gave at the university. As always, I was impressed by how he speaks with such precise integrity. Later, sitting outside a coffeehouse, we caught up on the news of mutual friends.

A few days ago I received a letter from Elizabeth Hadas. I already knew its contents, as she had first sent a copy to Nagatani, who had read it to me over the phone. Her letter includes the outside reader's report, recommending publication of my poems, saying. in effect. “They are important.” Patrick had told me that Hadas was surprised by this, having chosen a reader whom she thought would agree with her dismissal of my work. Her letter continues on to say there are "design problems," and offers to publish "one of two of your pieces as a separate part of the book," a book that will contain all forty of Nagatani's color photographs. Of course I will not accept her offensive offer, and replied: ”If it’s really a design problem, why not publish the poems as a separate volume and package it with Patrick’s book?" Her return letter begins: "Thank you for your gallant response to my rejection letter." This is someone who doesn't know how *not* to insult me.

I'm in an apartment in which an editor is holding a manuscript of mine, urging me not to publish it. I tell her that she must at least read it, as it's the power of its language that counts. Instead, without reading it, she decides that she doesn't want to publish the book.
Given the quality of the work, her decision is so hilarious that I burst out laughing. Uncomfortable, she says, "Read it to me." I agree, and begin to read, only to find that on the pages are not words but pictures of people on a beach with an abnormally bright sun shining overhead.

Sometime in the future supercomputers will take the place of angels. When I told this to Kevin Campbell, he said: “What makes an angel is the abyss he flies over, and he is always in jeopardy of falling.” Then he added: “Unlike angels, a philosopher leaps armed with small devices.”

One of my Albuquerque friends told me this story. Her father, now a retired nuclear physicist, worked as a biologist during World War II. Stationed in the Canary Islands, his job was to examine the natives for gastrointestinal parasites. “He found that 100% of the population had worms, except for one man. He reported this to the authorities, who found that the wormless man was a spy.”

It was mid-summer when I visited the Bodhi Mandala Zen Center in Jemez Springs NM. It had been a very hot cloudless day. In late afternoon, when I was ready to return home, my VW Bug’s engine refused to start. A resident zenbo told me that the car’s small flat-headed gas filter was vaporizing the fuel, and I'd have to wait until the car cooled down.
After dinner, I found a patch of almost level ground. With a “grass pillow,” and some friendly bushes for company, I slept for a few hours, waking about an hour before dawn. This time the car’s engine fired right up, and I was home before all the stars had blinked out.
Why didn’t I know there is a fuel filter made especially for a desert climate? When Nazi Germany invaded North Africa, variants of VW Beetles were brought along.

As I am interested in all forms human spirituality may take, I decided to investigate “The Craft.” So I attended a few meetings of a local wicca coven. An underground covenstead had been dug out behind a private home, in which cool muted light led down toward the roots of Mother Earth.

> “This kind of deep ground is not the same as the dark earth; and the Great Lady (*potm'a chthén*), who sends black-winged dreams and who can also be called Erinys, cannot simply be merged into the single figure of the Great Earth Mother.”[14]

One day I learned that the coven had held a memorial service for Vivienne Hermann, my difficult, but dear, sculptor friend who had died from liver cancer. On a phone call, I asked why I hadn’t been informed of the service, I was told: “Don’t worry, more people in the coven will die. We’ll invite you next time. Blessed be.”

> “If poetry can convert a poisoned logos into mythos and include the reader, psyche and body in the renewed field of meaning, then poetry is itself a way of healing the community.”[15]

CHAPTER NINE

I enrolled in an experimental fiction writing class taught by Charles Glicksberg[1] at The New School For Social Research (now The New School). The short story I submitted, written In the genre of hardboiled detective fiction, was returned tattooed with circles, arrows, and large question marks in red ink. To my sentence, "Her nipples had coronas the size of half dollars," Glicksberg had sarcastically replied, "Is this your preference, or just an observation?" The professor told the class that he usually marked student papers while taking a bath, which makes some kind of lubricious sense in the genre of hardboiled professors.

On my way home from class I sometimes stopped in the New York University Library, where one day I found Fyodor Dostoevsky's Notebooks, in which the great Russian novelist created a family history for his characters before beginning to write the story. It was such preparation that I wanted for the poems I hoped to someday write.

In order to deliver a floppy disk of my Nuclear Enchantment poems to the Albuquerque Museum's Graphics Department, who will enlarge and print them poster-size on heavy cardboard (Unfortunately, the paratext will be printed on cards to be carried around by the readers, as the museum couldn't find any other solution, nor have they asked for my input.), I had to buy my first computer. As I knew nothing about computers, Kevin and Adrian Campbell accompanied me to a discount store, where the computer's hard disk drive was sold separately. The salesman assured us that its installation would be easy. Back in my apartment, the computer's body was opened "like a patient etherized upon a table." Kevin, who has a degree in Electronics, was trying to install the hard drive, while Adrian, who teaches word processing, was trying to get the CPU to recognize it. I watched from behind the pile of empty boxes.
When they finally gave up, we repacked the bloody mess and returned it to the store. The next day I bought an XT PC,, a monochrome monitor, and a 24-pin printer, and spent the weekend learning Word 2.0 and its MS-DOS backbone.

During the1960s, except for two boxes of books, everything I owned fit into my backpack. During the 1970s, everything fitted into the VW Beetle I had bought from the actor Brian Fong, whose father, Benson, had played one of Charlie Chan's sons.
By the late 1990s, along with the two boxes of books there was a computer, a monitor, and assorted electronic accessories, boxes of files, household goods, dumbbells, and odds & ends.

During what would be my last months in Santa Fe, I received a letter from a woman

whom I knew mainly from the San Francisco Aikido dojo. After graduating from UC Berkeley, she had changed her name and was now a Graduate Student in Psychology at the University of Michigan. She wrote that she wanted to visit Santa Fe during her university's Christmas break.

A long distance swimmer, in one day she had acclimated to Santa Fe's 7,000 ft. altitude. The next day she told me she wanted to go camping in the Sangre de Cristos Mountains. It was winter, so I was apprehensive. However, as she had come all this way, I reluctantly agreed.

The next morning, from the parking lot at 10,000 ft., we hiked up slushy trails to where I knew a path that descended into the flat clearing where I had camped overnight when I was caught in a sudden rainstorm.

While I was busy putting up the tent, sorting out gear, and gathering firewood to cook dinner, she wandered off.

Winter's early dusk began settling in, the temperature dropping fast, and she hadn't yet returned. Worried, I followed her footprints, until losing them where the ground became too rocky. Shouted her name…no reply. I began to get worried, and shouted her name again. No reply.

> Neither man's nor beast's
> there are footprints
> whose plotting can be heard.
> (Ko Un, From, "Snowman.")

I'd begun fantasying that I'd have to hike out and return with a Search & Rescue Team… when she nonchalantly strolled into camp, carrying a few token sticks of firewood.

That night the sky was a cold sea of blinking stars…but morning brought a fresh snowstorm. We decided to skip breakfast, break camp, and hike out.

Beginning the steep climb up to the main trail, my stomach empty, air thin, boots sinking into, lifting up from, deep drifts of snow, my steps became sluggish and she asked to take the lead… quickly disappearing up the trail.

Step by step I fought off the nagging thought of how nice it would be to freeze into the snow and become imperceptible; then, in the spring, thaw out and blossom along with the other beings stirring back into life.

> Not to have several suspended and, as it were, snow-covered deaths. To have only one, of good sand, and without resurrection."

(René Char. From, “The Library Is On Fire.”)

It was the struggle of taking the steps, and something unknown, that ushed me on. “The step, linked to breathing and saturated with thought: this Dante understands as the beginning of prosody.”[2] *Distance, what are you? Distance, why can’t I close the gap?* When I finally gained the main trail, from there on, slowly losing altitude, the snow melted into slush and finally into mud…
I emerged to where she was waiting nonchalantly in a patch of mild sunlight; smiling, munching on Trail Mix, not expecting to be lectured on why, especially in mid-winter, you shouldn’t leave your partner alone in the wilderness.

She left a week later. We exchanged a few letters, then none.

The Rothko Chapel, Houston TX.

Two cushions had been placed at the front of the spacious room. On one sat a young woman seemingly meditating. On the other cushion was a young man, perhaps reading a tourist’s brochure. Hung on the walls were Rothko’s huge primarily black canvases. Black because—

> “in his late, successful and anxiety ridden years, Rothko felt that his subject was being obscured by the attention given his colors… that people were being ‘seduced’ (his word) by the color and that their pleasure was preventing them from making the further effort to understand the ‘subject matter’ of the work…So he tried, consciously, to create works that were equal in meaning, but with as little color as possible.” [3]

Whatever had been his intension, there’d be no redemption for Markus Yakovlevich Rothkowitz. Yet, in their deepest sense, striving to understand the un-understandable, in Rothko’s blackest paintings one can sense a light lurking behind the paint, deep within it. Drained of significance they become significant, as high art is always unavoidably misunderstood, which is why critiques continue to be written long after the work was “finished.” Had Rothko mistaken his creative ambitions by thinking they could be resolved?
I walked back outside and into a dazzling sun reflecting off the "Broken Obelisk," a large sculpture made by Rothko’s friend Barney Newman. Fabricated in 1967 of six thousand pounds of Cor-Ten steel, it was more than twenty-five feet high. Made it with no

particular site in mind, it balances the artist's ambition to succeed in both the mundane and spiritual realms. Lawrence Alloway points out:

> "Newman talked of Michelangelo on more than one occasion. Michelangelo's most famous image, of course, was that of God the Father reaching forward to touch the finger of the inert Adam and infuse His creation with life. Newman's forms touch at the triangular apexes of the pyramid and the pyramidion, or small pyramid, of the obelisk to create a dramatic central focus in the sculpture."[4]

I dreamed:

> *I am dead, a spirit flying along with another, and a third that I only sense. I ask where everyone else is, as billions of people had died before me, and am 'told' they are higher up.*
> *Now I am striving to rise higher. Above me is a dome with a golden oculus at its center. My arm is stretching to reach it while I'm shouting GOD! GOD! GOD!...*

As I left the Rothko Chapel's grounds, I remembered Jodie Foster's character in the sci-fi movie Contact. After the mysteries of space and time had unfurled before her, all she could manage to say was, "They should have sent a poet."

The next day I attended the Houston Museum of Fine Arts, where a Giacometti sculpture seemed to be walking toward its finitude. One has to keep rethinking this artist who was aware that more becomes unknown even as one discovers what is known. Inside the museum, I briefly stood before a Robert Smithson "Non-Site," a box that in my memory contained some soil and assorted debris.
Flying to inspect one of his Earthworks, under construction on a ranch near Amarillo TX, the 35 year old artist's plane crashed, making his last Non-Sight.

A postcard today from Eugenia Parry Janis, who is writing the introduction to Patrick Nagatani's UNM Press book, *Nuclear Enchantment*. The Professor of Photography councils me to "simplify" my texts, and "have compassion for your readers." I thought: *This is exactly what a poet should not do*.

> *We are looking through a high window down into a huge black room. There is an altar, with a thick linked chain coiled on it like a snake that has recently dined.*

The person with me says that there are three snakes hidden in the dark. My mission, should I take it, is to jump down and retrieve the chain.
As I'm telling him that I wish I knew where the snakes were, he jumps down. It's a very long way down, but I can see he landed safely. I am on the verge of following him, when to my right people are climbing back up from the pit, and trying to exit through a window that is locked. I release the window's clasp, thinking: If I had jumped no one would be here to let these people out.

On the day when I received word that Carol Stone, who'd been suffering from Multiple Sclerosis (MS) for over a decade, had passed away, I had this dream:

I'm living in a large basement room with white walls. The landlord comes in and knocks a hole in a wall that I had plastered to keep the roaches out. He says that he wants the room just as I had rented it, and if I don't like it I should move.
I look at the other rooms down the hallway, but they are all occupied, except one that is far too small. Returning to my apartment, Gilbert Stone is there. He tells me that he has read my manuscript (MS), which is wrong because he is not dead, that he had faked his death. I ask him where he's living now. He replies, "In apartment T."

In the morning I visited the university's Medical Library, where I read that Multiple Sclerosis is a condition in which the protective sheaths of nerves are short-circuited. Suppressor T-cells, that normally dampen an overactive immune system, exhibit a pronounced deficiency, and the immune system itself destroys the nerves' myelin sheathing.

In a letter I received today, Elizabeth Tillar says that, with her new Ph.D. in Theology she's teaching at a college in the Catskill Mountains, and "feeling displaced."

In the Albuquerque Museum's parking lot customized cars were bouncing up and down. I parked a few blocks away then walked to opening of The Nuclear Enchantment of New Mexico Exhibition.[5]
In the lobby I spotted my bi-polar landlord wearing a beret: Hollywood's image of an art connoisseur. Then I slowly strolled through the three rooms on whose walls hung my poems printed on large light brown heavy poster-size cardboard. The words, the insights, the search and research that I had struggled with almost every day for the past two years were now exposed for everyone to read.

Later, as I was talking with small group of friends, a few feet away, standing in front of his pictures and my poems side-by-side, Patrick Nagatani was being interviewed by the local PBS station. Neither he nor the reporters asked me to join them. This “bitter flavor of exclusion"[6] finally set me free from our faux collaboration.

Ambition is important for an artist; however, it can also easily warp one’s values, as it did to Patrick Nagatani. While I was thinking this, a friend who had been taking her time looking at the exhibition, asked me to accompany her to the exit… where she kissed me, then said, “I didn’t know.” *I didn't know* is the best critique an artist could hope for.

> *On the Orient Express, looking for the Observation Deck, I walk into the next car. People standing around talking to each other. Next to me is a woman who is looking past me to another man. They leave together, and I continue to the back of the car, still looking for the Observation Deck.*
>
> *Suddenly, from behind me a hand presses over my mouth, and I'm being pushed out the train’s outer door. I bite the hand, pressing my teeth deeper and deeper into its flesh, until it lets go. I run the other way and into the street.*
>
> *It is night. Across the street is a forest. I run toward it, while struggling to rid myself of a long white cloth in which I've become entangled.*

A letter today from Bill Witherup proudly informing me that he's using a computer. Then he adds that he only uses it for printing poems he'd first composed on a typewriter. (Years before people around the world became addicted to their “smartphone,” Bill had paced the streets of Seattle mumbling into a obviously toy phone, performing humanity’s zombified future.)

For the evolution of “The Nuclear Enchantment of New Mexico” texts after the museum exhibition, Goethe has temporarily loaned me the title, “The Deeds and Sufferings of Light.” Thank you Johann.

Mary Jane Young, a Professor of Anthropology at UNM, told me today that deciphering Rock Art is not as Lavan Martineau proposes. “No legitimate scholar refers to him,” she said.[7]

Douglas Lavan Martineau was born in 1932 near Cedar City, Utah. After the death of his parents when he was 10 years old, he was adopted by the Paiute Tribe. Learning cryptanalysis while serving in the US Air Force, Martineau dedicated his life to deciphering American Indian petroglyphs by reading them as sign language.[8]

> "(Martineau's) diligent efforts to prove that 'rock writing' is not just 'rock art' has uncovered solid testable evidence to support the tribal traditions that the symbols carved into the rocks are not just mindless scribblings or creative art, but a sophisticated language based on simple symbols that were used by many native American tribes."[9]

As we know that only certain rocks were decorated, while others, some with more suitable surfaces, were passed up—a phenomenon that also occurred in Paleolithic caves—, perhaps rock art can also be studied by ecosemioticians, as the rocks themselves, not just the signs, the art, painted on them are significant.

In a postcard today from Judson Crews the poet writes of when he returned from a teaching job in Africa:

> “Back in US. I was suddenly reduced to nothing more than a 'local poet.' Carol Bergé said to me, 'You ass-hole, what do you think? Do you think the word does not get around?' I was so stunned it never occurred to me to wonder 'what word'? But how stunningly true it seems more and more. (My work, absolutely is better than it has ever been.) But it is, almost, as if I were Rimbaud crawling back to Paris to die.”[10]

This is the same “Judson Crews of Waco, Texas,” whom Henry Miller wrote of as having visited him in Big Sur. Miller remembered “his shaggy beard and manner of speech—a latter-day prophet. He lived almost exclusively on peanut butter and wild mustard greens, neither smoked nor drank.”[11]

yes you are permitted you are
allowed yes you are hallowed
are given grace
(Carol Bergé From, “The Unexpected.”)

On a chilly morning I was sitting on a bench outside the UNM Art Museum talking with Peter Walsh, the museum’s director and my ex-boss. As he had purchased one of Patrick Nagatani’s “Nuclear Enchantment” photographs for the museum, I asked if he would purchase the poem that was exhibited with the picture, as I still had the original poster made by the Albuquerque Museum. He replied: “I just returned from New York,

where I saw a show of text-based art at the Whitney Museum." Then he changed the subject.

Celebrity and money couldn't keep Jean-Michel Basquiat from overdosing on drugs at age 27. A gifted artist from a middleclass home in Brooklyn, he played the role of a homeless graffiti artist on the streets of Manhattan, perhaps to obtain a deeper perspective on the life of many Black people in America. Then meeting, and being befriended by, Andy Warhol suddenly catapulted him from painting brick walls to painting canvases that now hang in museums around the world. In the glittering Art World he had become a good investment for people with overblown bank accounts, even while his art interrogates the racism and suffering that was, and remains endemic in the American Way of Life. Was Basquiat following in the footsteps of the performers he admired who had ended their short lives with drug overdoses? Or perhaps he was afraid of spending the rest of his life painting the pictures that were expected of him by the Art World?

The physicist Stuart Kauffman states that: "There's nowhere in physics where we have the notion of the uses of things, and uses of things are not independent features of the world."[12] However, although a theory can't open a can, it can open a mind.

After pedaling my single speed bike from my apartment in downtown Albuquerque to the University of New Mexico's campus, someone pointed out to me that the bike had a flat tire. Only then did I learn why pedaling up the steep hill was even more difficult than usual.

The night of October 13,1955, at the Six Gallery, in San Francisco's Marina District, Allen Ginsberg, Michael McClure, Gary Snyder, Philip Whalen, and surrealist Philip Lamantia read poems to an overflow audience, with a yipping Jack Kerouac passing around a bottle of cheap wine. That night was the beginning of what became known the San Francisco Renaissance, binding together poets who shared a progressive politics, various practices of mainly East Asian spiritualities, and an abiding respect for, and support of, each other's work.[13] They were in rebellion against post-World War Two's Levittown America, by carrying forth the banner of a radical romanticism from which one stem is from the late 18th and early 19th century poets of England; in particular, William Wordsworth, Samuel Coleridge. Later, there're Americans such as Walt Whitman and H.D. Thoreau, to name an obvious few.

From Donald Allen's *The New American Poetry*, to literary histories such as Michael Davidson's, *The San Francisco Renaissance: Poetics and Community at Mid-century,*

and Lytle Shaw's Fieldworks: *From Place To Site in Postwar Poetics*, to stepped-up reminiscences such as Aram Saroyan's *Genesis Angels: The Saga of Lew Welch and the Beat Generation*… they all addressed a time, comradery, and bodies of work that had given me a way toward a viable poetics.

Yesterday I spent several hours speaking with the sculptor Brad Hansen-Smith, a man with a passion for geometry, his mind as orderly as the recursive patterns he builds. This morning Smith phoned to tell me that what I'd said about the lack of initiation in our society had kept him awake all night… until he realized that his sculptures can be thought of as being "initiatory objects." "Initiation into what?" I asked. But he hasn't yet worked it out that far.

Later, walking across the UNM campus I saw a young woman ascend on the humid summer air, trailing wisps of white vapor as she banked over the university's tawny brown buildings. "These bird-women are foremothers of the supernatural and human airborne women who followed."[14]

Outside the Biology Building, a faint scent like freshly baked bread morphed into an oppressive fishy smell. In a nearby pool of stale water a school of golden carp were swimming in circles.

A UNM graduate student who bought my sculpture, "Head of An Ancient Astronaut,"[15] told me her class was reading Jacques Derrida's *Grammatology*. Influenced by Derrida, then, I developed what became a signature trope of mine: invagination.

Invaginations, as I use them, engender fragments of other voices into sentences as stratified embedments that are not like salting sentences with shards of quotations; rather, they open ground in which to plant relevant artifacts.

The photographer Salvatore Puglia defines invaginations as "erratic rocks deposited by glaciations in territories of a different geological nature." I think Robert Smithson would have liked this.

When I saw her I thought she was who she didn't turn out to be. But both women looked so much alike that we embraced as if we were old friends. That night I dreamed:

> *I'm sitting next to a woman for whom I feel no interest. My attention is on another woman: tall, slim, with long black hair falling from under a floppy black hat. When she stands and walks away I stand and follow her. The woman sitting next to me also stands, and walks by my side. She puts her arm around my waist and leans her head close to mine, her long red hair erotically touching my face.*

Societies classify us by race, class, gender, religion, tall, short, thin, fat, male, female, bisexual, transexual… as if the fantasy of our being doesn't depend upon the surprise of its sustenance. Although Nature doesn't conform to such simplistic taxonomies, they are still expressed in our politics, commerce, religions, and social gatherings… even while in our dreams they gambol happily together.

In 1917, in Fátima Portugal, three children reported that the Virgin Mary had appeared to them. If one of them hadn't been a Christian, would she have seen the same Vision as her Christian friends? And what if a Christian ingests ayahuasca, and sees Christ as a luminous jaguar? What then?

The soul expresses its humanity by addressing the wholly other, which has never been wholly other, as one's life is a journey of transformation, whether we recognize it or not.

Joseph Mackenzie is a Graduate Student with a cultured accent he claims is the result of too many finishing schools.[16] One afternoon he told me that a number of faculty at Cambridge University had unsuccessfully tried to block Jacques Derrida from receiving an Honorary D.Litt. "They claimed that Derrida's work consists of 'semi-intelligible attacks upon the values of reason, truth, and scholarship.'" "I guess" I replied, "they feel he's attacking *their* values, reason, truth, and scholarship."

My apartment's carpet is the reedy home of a thriving community of bacteria. According to the rental agreement, the landlord is to wash it once a year, which he hasn't done even once in the seven years I've been living here. Now that he's threatening to raise my rent, I tell him this, expecting him to hire a professional cleaning service. Instead, he replies, "I have a machine that makes steam."

Low-browed mud-waste breathing hot
after hatching concrete shells in air
of white alkali fields,
main compression valves dry,
gas chokes, nauseates, opens a road
of rising stench, sulfurous entrails,
gray hearts bleeding rivers of voltage.

Magmatic veins transferring sickness
leave bursting pipes insane,
the land's power lines being our sky.

Everything in this
occasional world
hisses steam.
(“On Steam-On Line”)

Walking into Katheen Shields' art gallery to see Terry Lindbloom's installation, I thought, *Where's the art?* and banged my head against one of Lindbloom’s welded iron struts—

> *Now slouched in a nursing home, his body bloated, his mind disheveled from the latter stages of Alzheimer’s, Father wants to be taken outside. Mother would do it, but I wave her off. Then, with his face close to mine, Father whispers, "I'm sorry, Son." "You have nothing to be sorry about, Dad," I reply. Then he asks, "Am I doing all right?" Suddenly I realize he’s talking coherently! "Is your mind clearing, Dad?" I ask. Through a slim smile he says, "It isn’t like yours."*

The two dozen slides of Paleolithic cave paintings given to me by Milford Fletcher from his personal collection include—

“An exceptionally fine red deer...in the Spanish cave of Castillo...; mutilated fingers at Gargas...; wounded bison in the Salon Noir in Niaux, with red deer and Ibex; spotted horses in Pech-Merle... Very old, probably Aurignacian, 24K old, along with a woman,

and another woman and a mammoth in the lines; the Great Black Cow in the Nave in the cave of Lascaux… Notice the intentional distortion of features; a Nice horse in the cave of Rouffignac, near Perigord; and an engraved horse in Les Combarelles.”[17]

Soon after receiving Dr. Fletcher’s generous gift, I received an email from poet and translator Clayton Eshleman. It said: "If you're interested in the Paleolithic caves, you must join the tour my wife and I conduct in France."
Having no money to fly to France, nor his $2,000. fee, when I told him this, he replied, “Don’t write to me again.”

Must we breathe the same air our Paleolithic ancestors breathed in order to see what they’d painted?[18] Although there is no evidence that Alberto Giacometti had visited the caves, Jean-Paul Sartre would write of him: “He sees himself no more ‘advanced’ than his adopted contemporaries, the people of Eyzies and Altamira.”[19]

There is no hard evidence that Pablo Picasso had visited the caves, although he spoke *as if* he had. But we do know that René Char wrote: “O slain without a wound! / Slain by she who was everything and, reconciled, dies…” *before* he visited Lascaux.[20]

Sitting on a bench on the university campus, a young man is devouring a large bag of potato chips. Finished with the chips, he begins shoveling peanuts into the maw of his mouth. When Picasso was asked why he had painted a cacophony of objects into the wagon, in “Minotaur Moving His House,” he allegedly replied: "I put all the things I like into my pictures. The things, so much the worse for them, have to put up with it."

In a dream last night I asked Latvian scholar Roberts Avens where I can find a copy of his book, *Imaginal Body*. He replied in words that seemed to roar from his mouth like a rainstorm.

> “Only the saint and the mystic strives for perfection, whereas the artist, as Balzac has said, is continuously at work on the one masterpiece that is never created. If it should be accomplished, it could not be seen, for in the perfect image there is nothing more to see.” (Roberts Avens. From, *Imaginal Body*.)

> My father the hawk.
> Grandfather the wolf.
> And my forefather the rapacious fish in the sea.
> (Johannes Bobrowski. From, “Latvian Songs”)

In an Albuquerque coffeehouse this morning I overheard an overheated conversation between a young man and his girlfriend: “You’re a free spirit,” he said to her, “and I’m a seeker of Truth!” While the coffee grinder sharpened his point, he then told her that he’s going to move to Seattle, "Alone." *Could he be moving there*, I thought*, because Seattle has more coffeehouses than Albuquerque?*
Later, as if on cue, Bill Witherup phoned from Seattle. We discussed the possibly of my moving there. Although the culture and climate would suit me, the price of housing wouldn’t. I decided to look for another apartment here.

Adrian Campbell phoned to tell me she saw a studio apartment “in a good neighborhood” advertised in this morning’s newspaper. I said it was too early for me to begin looking. She replied that I should at least inquire.

After mailing “Architecture, Alchemy and Beer,” to *Crosswinds*, a journal published in Santa Fe that had commissioned me to write it, I drove Adrian to a pharmacy, where she borrowed empty bottles made for plant-based native medicines for a kiosk she and her husband are constructing at Albuquerque’s Museum of Natural History.
From there I drove to the appointment I'd made with the manager of the apartment “in a good neighborhood.” He showed me a studio apartment. I told him, “I can’t live in a single room.“ “There’s a one-bedroom apartment around the corner that will be available soon.” he said.
Walked around the corner and knocked on the door. A brown-skinned man with blue eyes appeared. He introduced himself as Israel. Asked if I may look around, he reluctantly agreed. The apartment is dark and cluttered, but I could imagine it as a bright and airy place to live. Isreal is a Hindu who is moving to Hawaii. Learning that I’m a Zen guy, he said we should meet for tea.

The Albuquerque Zen Center has received enough donations to buy land in front of an old cemetery. "In the life of Zen practice you shouldn’t come out alive." (Philip Whalen)

Invited to see an exhibit of children's art at the State Fair before it opened to the public, it seemed to me that a few of the artists were too technically accomplished for their age. To render tightly at an early age may be thought of as having nascent talent, but it may also inhibit the child’s creativity in the future. Technique without knowledge is structural analysis, not art.

> “Who is the artist who reminded me irresistibly of the drawings that one of my friends and I used to scribble in our notebooks during the war that depicted perfectly elegant skeletons?”[21]

There was a boy in my grade school art class who drew lozenges for the midsection, arms, legs, and an oblong for the head of a man. Then he outlined the configuration to create what resembled the periphery of a human body, for which the teacher praised him. Perhaps he became a dermatologist.

Four dreams last night:

1.

> *I'm in my living room. Before me are a few small plants that had been given to me, and for some reason I've neglected them, until now. I water them, caring deeply about their health, along with those I find desiccated on my worktable.*

2.

Drawing a plan on a large piece of paper, through an open door that leads into a hallway a neighbor appears and says she has something to tell me. We go into her apartment, a single large room whose whole back wall is a window. We stand in front of the window and she remarks on how much she enjoys it here, even though nothing can be seen through the window. Indeed, except for a few blinking stars, the view outside is totally *black. I take her hand in mine and tell her that it's because I'm a poet that this can happen.*

3.

Looking for a parking space, I see one that I'd missed and run for it, although I am not in a vehicle anymore. Someone in a car is also going for it, but I get there first. Feeling guilty, I walk to the car to tell its driver that if she really needs the spot she can have it. In driver's seat is a mean-looking elderly woman. Pasted to the windshield, like to an ace's fighter plane's fuselage, are many unpaid parking tickets.

4.

I'm standing in the lobby of UNM's Fine Arts Building. Suddenly there's is a disturbance near the door. At first I think that the altercation is being caused by a tough-looking young man. Then I see it is the elderly woman from the parking lot.

The editor of *Crosswinds* phoned from Santa Fe and told me that "Architecture, Alchemy and Beer," the piece he'd commissioned me to write, "is too challenging for our readers. It's above their heads." "Do you want me to edit it?" "No, they'll never understand it." [22] As an afterthought he added, "I'll send you the fee we agreed on."

> "A boy named Willie, with whom I was always fighting and arguing, took me aside one day and said, in the most aggressive way, 'I'm reading a poet I bet you never heard of.' 'Yeah, who?' 'His name is Ezra Pound.'"[23]

Today I visited what will soon be my home, and met a woman named Blaire. Pretty, with curly black hair, she was helping the manager, a UNM Graduate Student in Optics, apply fresh coats of white paint to the kitchen's drab walls. Blaire showed me her apartment, catty-cornered out my back door, so I could see what mine might look like when it's fixed up.

The apartment is within walking distance of Old Town, the Albuquerque Museum and the Natural History Museum. In the other direction is the Main Library, although the university campus is a steep uphill climb. The "good neighborhood" begins on the next block, with wider streets, taller trees, and large homes set back from the road. So close

to the opulence, I'll still be in the digs.
In the afternoon, I went to the manager's home to sign the lease. He told me he had phoned my present landlord to find out what kind of tenant I am. "He told me, 'You can have him, he wants to fix everything himself.'"

> Coyote: "I guess there never was a world anywhere."
> Earthmaker: "I think if we find a little world,
> I can fix it up."[24]

We both laughed. Then I signed the lease, and he gave me the key.

When I still hadn't received the agreed upon money from *Crosswinds*, I phoned its editor again. The scion of a wealthy family, he didn't understand what $70.00 meant to me. Instead, he laughed, and said, "I'll mail it today." (It would never arrive.)

> *There are two men standing with their hands tied behind them. Only one is to be hanged, but both their heads are hooded.*
> *The noose is lowered around the wrong man's neck. He struggles to peek out from under the hood, so that the audience can see the wrong man is about to be hanged. He succeeds, but it's too late.*
>
> *Afterwards the body refuses to come down, even when children throw stones at it. Some people say it doesn't really exist. Others say, it exists, but it isn't really there.*
> *One day I go fishing with the Hanged Man. I ask him which view is the right one. He laughs, and says, "I'm up there forever."*

I began packing before dawn, eager to move into the new apartment.

> "He would take only those books he needed to teach from: the poetry, the criticism, small reference books...."[25]

It was still early when I returned for the last load. As my car rolled to a stop, the bi-polar landlord flew around the corner, wearing striped pajamas that made him look like an escaped convict.

> "When can I inspect the apartment?" he said
> "After I've finished moving out," I said.

"Let's do it *now*!" and he followed me inside.

While I finished packing, he lifted the mattress, looked under the sofa's cushions and peeked into the closets. Then he stared at a shadowy corner the livingroom, and said, "There's dust over there. You're a pig."
Leaving behind the insults and threats I'd endured for the past seven years, I drove away wearing a rueful grin.

> *I am back in my old apartment, collecting some things I'd left behind. Someone has already moved in, as an unfamiliar shoe is on the floor by the bed. Not wanting the landlord to find me there, and ask me why I still have a key, I work quickly. The phone rings. The woman I came with answers it: "Joel's not here," she says. He's in the gym lifting heavy weights," and hangs up. We quickly leave, but the door won't completely close.*

The woman with whom I will share my livingroom's wall arrived with the anxiety of transitional energy. As we are both noise sensitive, we made a pact of mutual consideration and communication.
With limited space, and with rooms divided by paper walls, the Japanese had to respect each other's auditory space. The women grew their hair long to bite on during organisms, while the men just grunted.

Architects build their reputation on a foundation of experience, judgment, professional skills, and the knowledge that the houses they're designing are already haunted. "And it is not just that some houses are haunted. A house is only a house inasmuch as it is haunted."[26]

During the first night in my new apartment, while the air mattress on which I slept slowly deflated I dreamed of Botticelli's Venus rising from a sea of salty waves.

> The foaming hair of the wide-wave womb gleamed
> with the first rays of sun, and on its verge
> arose the girl — white, damp, and bewildered.
> (R.M. Rilke. From, "Birth of Venus")

In the morning I woke up not damp but bewildered, and bought a proper bed. Also wrapped the water heater in an insulated jacket.

Albuquerque’s Old Town. Wearing 19th century cowboy garb including six-shooters, a group of men and one woman were taunting each other, while amused tourists looked on. Then a group of amateur dancers began a gang fight scene from West Side Story. After they’d exhausted themselves, an extremely thin man stepped up to a microphone. With arms spread wide like Christ Crucified he told us he's from Los Angeles, "Where gang violence flourishes. Now it has spread to Albuquerque. Armed gangs have taken over this city too!"
I recalled the plastic water pistol of my childhood, and how it had a knack of running out of water just when I needed it the most.

A Writer-in-Residence at UNM’s Center For Southwest Research, as I was cataloging slides of New Mexico's petroglyphs I presented a proposal to the administrators of the new Petroglyph National Monument. My plan was to catalog and preserve slides of petroglyphs from the several private collections in Albuquerque before they are lost. The project would also mark the beginning of the Monument's Research Center, authorized in its legislation but not yet enacted. The atmosphere at the meeting was bureaucratically cautious.
On the phone that night, Ike Eastvold, one of the local amateur photographers of New Mexico’s petroglyphs, told me that he and his wife had recently returned from a field trip. “We’re still amazed at the beauty Rock Art radiates, and that it remains sacred to indigenous peoples.”

Grandmother was a shaman who lived in the forest near Lake Baikal. Her name roughly translates as, "She whose aura lights the night." This is how she and Grandfather met. One day Granny had just entered a trance when she heard something big crashing through the bushes. Then she saw a tall handsome bear who was smiling at her. She chanted—“I throw dust on me / it changes me / I am a bear / when I go to meet him.”[27]

CHAPTER TEN

As the late afternoon sun passed through the restaurant patio's ironwork lattices painting floral patterns across the polished red brick floor, I was reading a critique of Jackson Pollock's "naive nihilism." Pollock's spirit must have soared as drops of paint dripped onto the canvas stretched over his Long Island studio's floor, and a landscape, the likes of which hasn't existed at least since Frenhofer's masterpiece. ("'Yes, my friend,' said the old man, rousing himself from his dreams, 'it needs faith in art, and you must live long with your work to produce such a creation.'"[1])

Faith was part of the conundrum when philosopher Arthur Danto wondered what made a cardboard Brillo box on a shelf in a supermarket different from Andy Warhol's plywood "Brillo Box" sold in an art gallery. "The task," Danto wrote, "of identifying the works of art was not an ordinary recognitional skill, like identifying the giraffes in a menagerie, or the mussels in a tide pool."[2]

A snow shovel in a hardware store and the exact one in a museum may look alike, except for one having been signed by a famous artist. They are both investments: one is for shoveling snow, the other is for shoveling money.

Leaving the cafe, I bicycled toward home, stopping at a small park whose benches were shaded by a gazebo's reticular roof. Vines climbed wooden columns carved with names and initials: "Josh was here," "Danny," "MLM," and "ET." Nearby, a couple sat in the shadow of a tree, their child playing nearby. The father called to the child, but was ignored. A future artist?

After securing the bicycle to the gas pipe on my porch, I walked downtown, where a man was standing at a photocopying machine. His jacket was torn and dirty, a woolen cap was pulled over his ears. He looked and smelled of homelessness. Peeking over his shoulder, I saw he was copying a poem by James Merrill: "Trust me. I keep trying / not to break down."

From there I walked to the office of an architectural firm, as I needed some information on a building downtown they had designed. By the look the receptionist gave me, I realized that I was dressed for my work, not hers.

A few days ago, on the bicycle path that leads to the Rio Grande Nature Center, a young woman was pedaling in front of me. Thin wings jutted from the back of her wet t-shirt. On her bare head some fuzz stood up in lieu of hair. "Chemotherapy," I thought. Pedaling ahead of her, her boyfriend didn't know that she was leading the way.

> *Robert Creeley is sitting on a bicycle. There is also two women. After Creeley had pedaled away with one them, the other woman turned to me and said, "Why can't you be a big wheel like Bob?"*

At a birthday party for Jack Gilbert in a San Francisco apartment. Fresh from a trip to Germany, the poet handed me a snapshot in which there was a stand of white birch trees. “That’s the Black Forest,” I blurted out, not knowing why I recognized it.

It was here on July 25, 1967, the Jewish poet Paul Celan, who had lost both his parents in Nazi Death Camps, and Martin Heidegger, the philosopher and Nazi sympathizer, had strolled together. (In San Francisco, it was “The Summer of Love.”)

We don’t know what was said as they walked in the *Schwarzwald*; we only have Celan’s much discussed poem, “Todtnauberg,” as evidence.

In June 1968, the *Dichter* and the *Denker* met again; then again in March 1970, when they spend several days together. It was a meeting of minds, not of hearts, but both times their discussions were apparently more cordial than during their first meeting.

The next month Celan, who suffered from serious mental illness, drowned himself in the Seine. He was 50 years old.

Martin Heidegger, perhaps the most important philosopher of the 20th Century, never admitted to his shameful complicity with the Nazis. We do know that he respected the Jewish poet’s work, and that his philosophy had a profound influence on the Celan’s thinking.[3] Martin Heidegger died in 1976. He was 87 years old.

Many poets of Ancient China, passed through a daunting array of tests to obtain a *jinshi* degree, in order to work in the country’s vast government bureaucracy. That achieved, they were frequently shifted between posts, and forced to leave members of their family behind. From this we’ve inherited some of China’s most touching poems. Ezra Pound gives us a taste of one:

> Ko-jin goes west from Ko-kaku-ro,
> The smoke-flowers are blurred over the river.
> His lone sail blots the far sky.
> And now I see only the river,
> The long Kiang, reaching heaven.
> (From, “Separation On The River Kiang”)

Zen Master Robert Aitken suggests that: "People of the West, sometimes quite insensitive to the importance of farewells, can learn from the Japanese, who say farewell to the very end. They wave and wave until their friends are out of sight."[4]

“In Dante,” wrote Osip Mandelstam, “the images depart and say farewell. It is difficult to

make one’s way down through the breaks of his verse with its multitude of leave-takings.”[5]

Architectural critic and theorist Jefferey Kipnis finds in the separatex, “the slash, slant, diagonal....A line that marks oppositions; a place that doesn't take sides, but rather is a site of palimpsest and meander."[6] Other possibilities include synthiosis, or “sideways logic,” and the “twisted language” of Yaminahua shamanism, a domain “marked by extreme ambiguity.” These, and other linguistic directions, may be paths that breach current anthropic empathies, and lead toward fertile ground for a new poiesis.

Remember / When : A Tautology.

In the summer of 1969, standing in front of the San Francisco Zen Center Patrick de Sercey offered me a ride in his VW Bus. He was heading for the Zen Mountain Center at Tassajara Springs, while I was joining the poets Michael Hannon and Beverly Dahlen, who were visiting Bill Witherup at a house he was renting for the summer in Pacific Grove. not too far from Tassajara. That was the week a man hopped around the moon encased in an artificial environment, planted an American flag that didn’t wave, and liberated a few rocks. Pat gave me his phone number in Florida, “In case you’re ever in the vicinity.”

The next winter, trudging through New York's blackening slush I decided that Florida would be nice place to be. In a newspaper ad I found a woman who was driving to Florida and was looking for passengers to help pay her expenses.

After a claustrophobic ride of several days, sandwiched in the back seat between two strangers, Pat picked me up at a rural telephone booth.

I slept in a small house Pat, then a professor at Valdosta State College, just over the border in Georgia, was renting cheap to some of his students, while he lived in a house close by. The humid nights were alive with horny crickets rubbing their legs together, and bullfrogs croaking somewhere in the dark. In the house, rats scurried up and down within the walls. The bathtub was red with ironized water.

One day I received a postcard from Allen Ginsberg saying that he wasn't interested in the South. Neither was I. Yet I kept finding myself back there, if only for brief visits. Such as when, four years later, leaving my mountain cabin, I was a bearded man naively cruising through the Deep South in a VW Bug with California license plates, heading for New York by way of Georgia.

By then Pat had since given up his academic job and was living a rambling old house in Macon. When I told him the name of the woman I was going to New York to meet, he said, “I was in college with her.” It was a time when there were spooky connections at a

distance between my friends. I stayed with Pat long enough to get my car serviced, then continued north.
It was only after Pat had passed away that I read his autobiography and learned that the man who to me had seemed quite ordinary had lived an extraordinary life.

Count Patrick Marie de Sercey was born in 1930 in the chateau of Vangeois, in Normandy France. The Serceys could trace themselves back to the Emperor Charlemagne. In 1947 they were admitted to L'Association d'entraide de la noblesse française (ANF) That was also the year they sold the chateau, and Patrick, along with his mother and younger brother, emigrated to the United States.
Pat went from attending lavish family parties with the likes of John and Jacqueline Kennedy, to joining the U.S. Army during the Korean War, where he fought on Heartbreak Ridge, made famous by the 1986 film starring Clint Eastwood.
"One freezing night," Pat wrote, "on an am patrol…

> To me it was over, this was it, my home, the rest was absurd. I was going to die here in all likelihood…There was nothing else. I gave up the States, my family, everything and dropped into Kumwa Valley. I became euphoric...I was very aware of what was going on, not missing a thing, every little noise clear as a bell, the snow blowing in my face from the northwest very quietly, peaceful. There was a profound sense of reality." [7]

After being discharged from the military in Germany, having garnered five distinguished service medals, back in the USA, Pat earned an Undergraduate Degree from Columbia University, and a Graduate Degree from Florida State University. Teaching both philosophy and psychology at several universities, he was searching for a deeper meaning to his life, and to reality, than the Western Enlightenment could give him. This led him to practicing Zen meditation every morning until his death at the age of 95.

When the wind is right, outside my downtown apartment, I can smell the noble elephants in the nearby Albuquerque Zoo. So my first Digital Literary Art project will be titled "Zoography." For research, I requested a pass to the Zoo, which was quickly declined. The Zoo's director was right to be suspicious of my intensions!

"Where wolves range we might recognize the pen, bound together with sticks and branches, and the interwoven fence. as the earliest vertical

spatial enclosure is a measured step, the eagle's room, a cirqued world whirling in his cullied eyes."[8]

On a PBS TV talk show this morning Arthur Danto was anointing Andy Warhol as "one of the great thinkers of this century." Museum curator David Ross opined that at the Venice Biennale, "people were moved to tears at the sight of Jenny Holzer's light show." Sitting next to him, Holzer looked as if she needed more sleep.

Bill Witherup left a message on my answering machine: "I'm impressed with The Deeds and Sufferings of Light. You should send the manuscript to Noam Chomsky." Norm Chomsky? He didn't say why. I had just returned home from a restaurant where two Pueblo Indian men were conversing in their native Tewa tongue. Like quantum equations that don't discriminate between past and future some of the oldest languages don't have tenses, creating a grammar of time travel.

> At what point did the nomadic Hippoean People know it was time to circle back? There were no instructions, no rules, no maps. There was just stories of those who had returned, and they were only seen from a great distance.

In the glassed-off Smoking Allowed area of UNM's Student Union, while I held my breath Ward Abbot was saying that he had no interest in editing a literary journal for Albuquerque.[9] "Barrett Price and I once raised the possibility, and we both burst out laughing."[10]

The editor of Santa Fe's THE Magazine phoned to ask if I would like to write "special pieces that relate to the arts." I told her that I don't know what she means by "special pieces." She replied that she doesn't know either. We left it at that.

It was a short drive to Albuquerque's North Valley, where the artist John Knight was renting a rambling house on a nameless street. Knight is a conceptual artist from Los Angeles who is in Albuquerque to accomplish a project for the city's Art in Public Places that will consist of programming a list of books chosen from a questionnaire given to residents of the Taylor Ranch section of the city into the Rio Grande Valley Library's on-line catalog. Knight will also design a section of the floor around Taylor Ranch Branch Library's computer pod with facsimiles of carpets gleaned from various neighborhood homes.

Looking like a sober Jackson Pollock, what I questioned about Knight's project is that the carpets would be *facsimiles*, while I'd like to see the lint, stains, worn sections that

are the intimate detritus of a person's dwelling. I also wondered about what a feeling it would be to have even the facsimile your family's carpet walked on by strangers in a public space. As for the list of books, that seemed to be a superficial aftertought.[11]

Thanksgiving dinner in the home of Kevin & Adrian Campbell and their daughter Brier. I suddenly felt so sick that I quickly left without a word and drove home, slowly, hoping the nausea would pass so I could rejoin my friends.
Home, and feeling a bit better, I phoned to tell them I was okay. As I was saying this my phone died! Kevin and Brier rushed downtown to make sure I was still alive.
A few days later, at a gallery opening a Pueblo Indian told me that he has bone cancer, but refuses to accept treatment. "I will die in the mountains," he said, "and give my body to the animals because I have eaten so many of them. I remained silent, respecting the spirit of his intended sacrifice.

Met UNM English Professor Lee Bartlett for breakfast. He told me of recently meeting Allen Ginsberg at an academic conference. "He only wanted to discuss the health and retirement packages my university offers its faculty."

My credit card has suddenly demagnetized, and my digital wristwatch has stopped keeping time. The digital universe seems to have come to a halt.

> How's hell?
> People today are really
> so nice.
> But their dogs are mean,
> and the weather's snarly.

One Sunday morning I walked downtown to Albuquerque's San Felipe Church. Its little museum was closed, so I looked at the collection of dusty vestments through the church's grimy street level windows.

> The Chama River is smooth today. Mud off the main
> road frames a round sky crossing those few men with
> wildflowers chanting, "All's not dust left behind."
> (From, For The Brothers')

On my way home I met my next door neighbor, who was out for a stroll. We walked together beneath tall trees bending like the ribs of Titans. I must have said something

about dreaming, because she said, "Dreams are important, but we must live in reality." I thought of Coleridge's variation of Zhuang Zi's famous butterfly dream:

> "What if in your sleep you dreamed, and what if in your dream you went to heaven and there plucked a strange and beautiful flower, and what if when you awoke you had the flower in your hand? Ah, what then?"[12]

A few months before his death from a coronary aneurysm, Mark Rothko spent a summer in Provincetown, on Cape Cod's windy brow. At the end of summer he returned to his studio in New York, where that winter, among empty canvases stretched and waiting to be fulfilled, he ended his life. Eight summers before this, having to report for military service at the end of summer, I lazed on Provincetown's beach, bicycled around town, or read Rimbaud's *A Season in Hell,* and wrote long letters to friends back in New York, none of which, I suspect, have survived.

One night in the Atlantic House, where we all hung out, I was listening to Sam Rivers' Jazz group when, fueled on alcohol and Twinkies, a street artist named Joe Goff (his alias that summer) suddenly stood up and began blowing riffs on a wooden recorder. From the bandstand the musicians shot hateful eyes at him, while they continued playing as if nothing unusual was happening. Later that night, at the house the band was renting, I played the empty beer can drum.

> *I am a saxophonist playing a set with other jazz musicians. We are all improvising, each searching in our own way for a melody that slowly begins to assume a common shape. Then I begin to solo; but instead of musical notes, words fly out. I am not saying them, but playing them! The audience is shocked, and one of the musicians leaves in protest.*
>
> *Now I'm walking with one of my fellow musicians. He asks, "What was that about?" I reply that I was trying to play in a way that's never been done before." "You did," he says. "I heard it; but I didn't understand it." "Neither did I," I reply.*

At the end of summer, I returned to the city on the plush red carpet in the back of a hearse, wrapped in the arms of a woman who was going to the city to attend a Bill Evans concert—

> Met her in Provincetown Massachusetts,
> saltwater taffy concession.
> Hand-in-hand, a thousand miles inland

today I can't remember her name or face.
Was she always only of my dreaming?
("Met Her In Provincetown")

The hearse was owned and driven by a Princeton University student. Exempt from military service, he had asked me, "Do you *want t*o go into the Army?"

A letter today from John Bell. He's returned from India and is living in St. Mortiz, Switzerland. In the same mail is a letter from David Rosen. Now a credentialed Jungian psychiatrist, he's visiting Carl Jung's house at Küsnacht, Switzerland.

In a class at UNM that Jungian psychologist James Hillman was guest teaching, pacing up and back in the front of the room he suddenly stopped, turned to face the class, and said, "Psychology is about keeping the conversation going."
After I reviewed another talk he gave at UNM, I received a postcard from Hillman. It just said, "There are few of us left."

The trees were budding when artists David Rains Dahl and Peggy Wirta Dahl arrived in Albuquerque, having left Santa Barbara in search of another place to live. Although Peggy was offered employment at the university's nationally known printshop, an early heat wave, or a feeling of displacement, prompted their decision not to remain.
That winter David wrote to me from Seattle: "I'm all bundled up at my computer." By spring they were living in Santa Barbara again.

For a few hours tonight the neighborhood was without electricity again. Behind drawn curtains candles danced with their undulating shadows. "Splattered surfaces illuminated by torches may have had a similar effect in the intense blackness of the (Paleolithic) caves."[13] The relationship between candles and religious awe takes us back to when our ancestors gathered around small communal fires surrounded by a darkness that contained unknown terrors, cooked dinner and told stories. Storytelling and spirituality may have begun here.
When electricity was restored, the Evening News was reporting on an earthquake in Los Angeles, where a woman who was wearing a Donald Duck t-shirt was crying in front of the smoldering ruins of her house. Disney double-coded the tragedy with a man who said how happy he was to be alive: "Now I'll be able to watch the Super Bowl." Then the reporter told the story of a mother who ran back into her burning apartment to save her trapped child, tripped over a toy, and broke her neck.

Above a long high shelf is a canvas cover, like a sky with a hole in it. Through this hole people climbed and disappeared. When I cut the canvas further, people fell back through the hole. It is their first time in this world. They are wide-eyed, amazed. I seem to be their only guide. It is getting dark and cold. I must find a way to keep them warm!

The next morning, when the dead coils of my refrigerator's freezer suddenly sprang back to life, it occurred to me that both minds and machines are an arrangement of feedback loops operating on the mundane and quantum levels, leaping between states of being and nonbeing. As soon as this thought disappeared the freezer stopped working again.

In the Phaedrus, Plato asks us to consider a physician who claims to be an expert in various medical treatments, but doesn't know who to treat with what treatment. The philosopher then asks: What might another physician think of this man who claims to be his colleague?

A sudden severe pain in back of my neck ran down my right arm and settled in my elbow. I went to a Specialist, who took an X-ray and told me to wait in the reception room for his diagnosis. An hour later, after I asked the receptionist how much longer it would be, she went to see what was taking him so long. She returned and said, "The doctor fell asleep. He'll see you in a minute."

When I entered his office, in a groggy voice he informed me that I had arthritis in my neck, and prescribed physical therapy.

In physical therapy, my neck was stretched. I left even more pain and didn't return.

I took the X-ray to my doctor at the University Hospital, who declared: "You have arthritis in your neck. Walk with your head down."

As the pain continued, desperate, I made an appointment with another Specialist. After examining the same X-ray, he said: "I agree with my colleagues that you have arthritis in your neck. However, that's not what's causing the pain." Showing me the X-ray, he pointed to a swollen nerve rubbing against bone where the nerve goes through the spine. He prescribed a low dose of a nerve-calming medicine, and within a few days the crippling pain I had lived with for several months had disappeared.

What might this physician have thought of his colleagues who had misdiagnosed my condition? I'm sure he wouldn't have said.

On a cold day in February 1994 I received word of my father's death. Instinct told me to go to the mountains on the edge of the city, where his spirit and mine could meet. But Mother insisted I attend the formality of his funeral in Florida.
Sitting next to me on the plane was a couple from Richland Washington, heading to Ft. Lauderdale to begin an anniversary cruise in the Caribbean. Richland had been founded during World War II as the site for the Hanford Atomic Engineer Works, where plutonium was produced for the bomb that incinerated Nagasaki Japan. Hanford was also where Bill Witherup's father had worked during the war—

> "For Christ's sake, dad,
> You went to work daily, out of love
> And duty, but did the Devil's job."
> (William Witherup. From, "My Father Dying")

William Witherup died in 2009 of acute myeloid leukemia he believed was from living downwind from the Hanford Nuclear Site. He was 74 years old.

At Ft. Lauderdale's airport, I rented a car, turned the air-conditioner off and the windows down, then drove up the familiar highway to the condo apartment. My sister and her husband had already arrived from Houston; also their sons Steve from Austin, and Glenn from Las Vegas. The next day my favorite aunt, Mae: dusky skin, black hair streaked with gray, a cigarette dangling from her mouth, looking like a gypsy fortuneteller, arrived from New York, along with her daughter Phyllis. Still petite, with dyed blond hair, Phyllis lives part of the year in Monaco, sequestered in Princess Grace's entourage. Also arrived was a scattering of cousins whom I hadn't seen since I was a child, or I had never met before.

The next day, at a little past noon a long black limousine cast its shadow over the condo's parking lot. I stood on the second floor's balcony. Seeing an American flag flying at half-mast, I assumed in honor of my father, I saluted. Thinking I was saluting him, the chauffeur saluted back.
Then a wild ride to the funeral home—the dead have the right-of-way—to where a young rabbi with the appropriate amount of sadness painted onto his unlined face gathered the immediate family and asked us for a few stories he could use for a short eulogy. Mother said they had met on a blind date and had married two years later: a normal courtship during the Great Depression. When she introduced him to her parents, they asked him, "Are you the Weishaus in the pickle business?"[14]

My sister told how he seemed always to be at work. Remaining silent, I thought of *the time father and I spent a day together at the public swimming pool in the St George Hotel, where the density of humid air mixed with the harsh smell of chlorine. With roar of a waterfall in my ears, I paddled around, flailing my arms as if I were swimming, while Father sat at the pool's edge, his feet dangling in the tepid water. I never asked him why he had taken me swimming when neither of us could swim.*

Traditionally, the coffin remains closed. But Aunt Mae insisted on seeing her brother for the last time. While the rest of us sat outside the chapel quietly chatting, we could hear her wailing like a one woman Greek chorus.

> "And how Death is that remedy all singers dream of, sing, remember, prophesy as in the Hebrew Anthem, or the Buddhist Book of Answers—and my own imagination..."[15]

Father had chosen to be buried near a canal with a good flow of chi, where we now stood watching his remains being lowered into the earth.
After a short prayer, the rabbi asked each of us to toss in a handful of sand "from the Holy Land" into the maw. I thought, *All of Earth is the Holy Land.* However, with a grudging nod, I tossed a handful of sand that kissed the coffin's lid.

Back in the condo, acting as a conduit between the living and the dead, lunch had been prepared by neighbors who, by tradition, would not eat it.
After lunch, Mother and Sister began seven days of "sitting shiva" on hard wooden boxes. The rest of us sat on more comfortable chairs. The few men were silent, while the women talked of their past marriages and surgeries. Then they welcomed my mother into their coven of empty arms.

The next morning, as the sky slowly brightened into a palette of pastel colors, I returned the car. In Ft. Lauderdale's airport, on a carousel of postcards was a photograph of arah Bernhardt in which her eyes are turned wishfully upward and a tear is poised on her monotoned cheek.

Walking to Vivienne Hermann's Albuquerque apartment, three youths with shaven heads approached me. "Can you tell us where the cemetery is?" one asked. I pointed. Another asked, "Is it open?" "The cemetery is always open," I said. They grinned and walked on.

Vivienne is a small tenacious woman with the raspy voice of a heavy smoker.[16] Asked

about her experiences as a prisoner in a Nazi concentration camp in Czechoslovakia, she replied that she has nothing to say on the subject. Then she launched into a tirade against the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C. for refusing to accept her sculptures because they were not made in the Camps. "I was eight years old! " she moaned, exasperated.

After a quick cup of coffee, Vivienne guided me into her studio, where a head of Albert Einstein made of twisted wires was slowly turning in spacetime. Contemplating it, she mused, "I'm tired of him. He looks like a banker."

Next I visited Robert Hay.[17] Recently returned from Germany, I told him that his new paintings look like blue palimpsests. A serious artist, poor and paranoid, Robert told me that he takes his cat out for walks on a leash. “This way, when he tries to climb a tree he can only get as high as his leash is long.”

I look to the sky,
but no one is there.
I look to the earth,
but no one is there.

In the Student Union this morning, wearing a straw hat that was popular in the 1920s, Joseph Mackenzie told me that Roland Barthes, Gilles Deleuze, and Jacques Derrida are out of favor in Paris. "There's a new generation of critics who are tired of semiotics, theories, and texts. They don’t distinguish between objects of art and objects made only for provocation. We need painters again who can draw as well as think, and writers who breech the academy." When he added that his own interest in art leaves off at Monet's “Water Lilies,” I replied: “Your future is in the past."

The great Zen Master Lin-chi (Lin-chi I-Hsüan) discovered that because he was free of entanglements, his disciples often had difficulty recognizing him. Therefore, he would put on various garments to enable them to do so..”[18] Shortly after reading this, I dreamed:

> *A ship’s captain is leaving his ship. As he walks down the gangplank he morphs into a different person. When he returns, as he walks up the gangplank he becomes a captain again.*

Seeing both his attire and personality change along a smooth continuum of disguises, upon waking I thought: *Can actors, especially "method" actors, who completely immerse themselves in the character they are playing, ever be their "authentic self" again? Or is does their relationship to the character remain an unconscious heteronomy?*

In an influential essay, Alfred Irving Hallowell wrote: "We can only infer that in the universe of the Ojibwa the conception of a person as a living, functioning social being is not only one which transcends the notion of a person in the naturalistic sense; it likewise transcends a human appearance as a constant attribute of this category of being."[19]

> "No one likes to recognize himself, a stranger, in a mirror where he discerns not his double, but the one he would have liked to be."[20]

On the Albuquerque Museum's wall, a spool of canvas has brushed its colors out, creating a chasm; or is it a desert at the height of summer, a dry-mouthed pallet of bright acrylics whose moisture has dissolved into colors animated by the vain promise of another creation? "In our all-or-nothing culture, creative work is too often either apotheosized or ignored. You're a rock star or you're nothing. The public has little appetite for nuance."[21]

One evening while living in Santa Fe I wrote to Gary Snyder, thanking him for exemplifying a way of life that guided my nascent years as a poet. Now I would begin the long process of moving toward writing in which "an attempt at the nearly inexpressible might be made."[22]

There is a resistance among most critics to examine Gary Snyder's poems with a deeper consideration than the obvious. Perhaps this is because, although his poems are readily accessible, they are nutty with ecological information. Or maybe it's because he is one of the few environmental writers who built his home in the wilderness, instead of hoisting backpacks during university sabbaticals: "For building is not merely a means and a way toward dwelling—to build is in itself already to dwell."[23] Indeed, if humanity is to build a viable future on this planet, the spirit in Gary Snyder's life and work (the two are inseparable) is invaluable.

In 1991, John Berger wrote that "the fact that (animals) can observe us has lost all significance."[24] And in 2008, Jacques Derrida observed: "In the first place there are texts signed by people who have no doubt seen, observed, analyzed, reflected on the animal, but who have never seen themselves being seen by the animal."[25] Snyder knew this instinctively, and in his first book of poems wrote: "Back there unseen / Cold proud eyes / of Cougar or Coyote / Watch me rise and go."[26]

Having begun with what Robert Bly declared, "an original voice," rare in any of the arts,

by 1975, the year he was awarded a Pulitzer Prize, Gary Snyder's poems were settling into a predictable format: A naturalist's eye for description, Zen Buddhist iconography, along with elements of nostalgia, and a boyish bravado with a bit of misogyny.
Because he was never able to, or didn't want to, shake off the semi-fictional character Jack Kerouac had created of him in *The Dharma Bums*, Snyder has become, in effect, a caricature of himself.[27] So that, in a career that has spanned more than 60 years there was no what T.S. Eliot called "the next step."
When recently I looked through the literature, I was not able to find a single critic who had not been caught by the romantic myth that Snyder, with a little help from his friends, has spun around himself. Whether his writing, in particular his poetry, will remain relevant in the future is nowhere, at least to my knowledge, seriously discussed. So we only have, as he titled his last collection of poems, *This Present Moment*.

One evening in 1995, as I was cruising around the World Wide Web the University Library's catalog, familiar to me as index cards asleep in their wood cabinets, suddenly appeared *in my home*. Following drumming, smoke signals, telegraph, telephone, radio and television, the Internet was further collapsing communitive space: the local signifying the global, the global reifying the local.
Soon I joined artists around the world who were collaborating, experimenting, and freely exchanging software as it became available, or coding their own. Personal venues were opening into larger conversations. Art was on the cusp of a new era.

> "Whatever a self is, it is at least partly an invisible and unknowable generative or enunciative agency. Yet, this agency leaves traces—aural and visible records, writing, kinetic clues to a 'movement personality,' virtual personas on the Net, and so on."[28]

Parallel to the poems I was still writing on paper, I began to work with a computer in a genre I named Digital Literary Art, combining Literary and Visual Art. Although we may trace this back to illuminated books of the Middle Ages, and the modern spirit of Guillaume Apollinaire's *Calligrammes,* that evolved into Concrete Poetry——what interests me is not manipulating words into illustrations, but juxtapositioning words to digital born paintings, and the horizontal transfer of meanings that are generated between them.

During my hermitage at Ettawa Springs I received a letter from Brent Maupin, a friend in San Francisco. It included a passage from a 15th Century Japanese poet that endows the depth of the human spirit of poesis carried over cultures and time:

> "Very late at night at he would sit by his bed in front of an oil lamp so dim that it was difficult to tell whether it was burning or not, and with a tattered court robe thrown over his shoulders, and an old court cap pulled down to his ears, he would lean on an armrest, hugging a wooden brazier for warmth while he recited verses to himself in an undertone. Deep into the night, when everyone else was asleep, he would sit there bent over, weeping softly."[29]

One day my phone rang. It was John Kielty Bell. "I'm in Albuquerque, at the Rio Grande. How do I get to your apartment?" Soon the small pickup truck he had bought in New York for $500 was parked nearby.

Over dinner John told me that a portrait he had painted of me many years ago presently hangs in the Amsterdam home of Jay Stattman's widow. I replied, "My old friends keep me alive."

I think of John as a contemporary *furabo*, a monk, at least at heart, whom the wind blows in all directions.[30] So before he left to visit "a woman in Colorado," I gave him the red zafu that, when I lived at the Cambridge Zen Center, I had shown to Seung Shan, who said, "A red zafu is for Zen Masters." Then, smiling, he sat down on it.

Although we would visit many times over the Internet, this would be the last time we met in person. In November 2015, I phoned John in a hospice in Turnbridge Wells, England, where, soon after this, he settled into death like salt dissolving in warm water.

> *I've been accused of several crimes which the state feels are serious enough to put me on trial. It's to be held in a theater. "A courtroom," someone tells me, "would be too small." It seems I'm a celebrity, even though no one seems to know me.*
>
> *When the prosecution presents its case, and it becomes obvious that the charges against me are a sham, the audience loses interest and begins to file out, and I'm released from custody.*
>
> *Having left the theater, I see the Eiffel Tower. Across the street is a sign that marks the border with another country. But each time I look at it, the name of the country has changed.*

It was around 100 degrees in Albuquerque when I met Claude Ananda Dalenberg in the restaurant of the hotel where his wife, Vera, was attending a conference.[31] How nice it was to meet an old friend I'd never met before! We had known each other for several years, but only through his Cloud-Hidden Friends newsletters.[32]

Dalenberg was one of the young Americans who during the 1950s went to Japan in search of Zen enlightenment. Bud Diefendorf, in Jack Kerouac's, *The Dharma Bum*s, Ananda was of medium height, with a dome of white hair that conformed into a ponytail. His smile revealed a row of bright white teeth that looked like chicklets. Impressed, I asked him how he got his teeth so white. "They're false," he replied in the halting rhythm that years of meditation brings to thoughtful conversation.

Among many the topics mainly relative to Zen Buddhism, we discussed the World Parliament of Religions that had taken place in Chicago in 1839. It was there that Sōen Shaku had introduced Zen Buddhism to America. After returning to Japan, Shaku sent his English-speaking student, D.T. Suzuki, to America, to continue the work he had begun in Chicago.

Claude Ananda Dalenberg died in 2008. He was 81 years old.

Returning to San Francisco after several months in New York and, as usual, not having enough money for rent, I was once again camping in Jay Stattman's ground-level apartment in the Haight Ashbury, using a long low bookcase in the livingroom to carve out a small semi-private space for myself.

One morning Jay, John Bell and I were in the kitchen reading aloud passages from *The Gospel of St. Thomas*, struggling toward the essence of its words. After awhile I began feeling as if my mind was turning into water. Needing to be alone, I walked to a nearby park, where I sat on a steep hillside thinking that meditating now would take me to a new level of consciousness. Instead, I began sailing on waves of paranoia, and was only able to walk home by willing one foot in front of the other.

Was this the "Zen sickness" for which Shinkichi Takahashi "was locked up in a tiny room for three years?"[33] Or was it what psychiatrists call "paranoid schizophrenia"? That night a lovely redhaired woman I'd met a party in New York a few weeks before, who had also recently returned to San Francisco, phoned to invite me to a party. I told her that I wasn't able to face a noisy room full of strangers. She said, "It'll do you good." She didn't understand. The for next few days chills ran up and down my spine. It would be several weeks before I felt stable; although I was left with the fear that it could happen again.

> "What's next? Constant drowning, or being set on fire?" "You must face the most difficult illusions of all. Those of your own creation."[34]

In an Albuquerque schoolyard children were calling to each other in a language that has been spoken here for over four hundred years. I could hear their voices, but only see

figures shrouded in the evening's fading light.

> *I was told by my father, a Hispanic man who was not my father, to drive my brothers—two boys who were not my brothers—over the mountain in his old pickup truck. The boys sat in the back seat, depending on me to get them safely to their destination, while I knew that the truck could not make it up the hill, and if it did, its brakes would fail going down.*

At the Eye Clinic a few days later, an elderly couple was trying to answer the receptionist's questions. "Do you have an interpreter?" she asked them. They shook their heads. Overhearing the conversation, an Hispanic man offered to help, thinking that anyone who doesn't speak English in New Mexico must be speaking some form of Spanish. But they are Russians.

Before she left to visit relatives in Texas, Blaire gave me a bag of Trail Mix. I thought: *Who's going away, who's staying behind?* That night I dreamed:

> *I enter an apartment in which I've never been before, although I know it is home. There's a step down into the livingroom, blocked by a row of fragile vases and bowls. I call to Blaire, as it's evident that, in decorating the apartment, she raised this barrier; but she doesn't reply.*
> *Moving a bowl to the side, it tips over but doesn't break. Then I step into the livingroom. Blaire walks in. We embrace, and I ask her why she blocked the entrance. She replies that she doesn't understand what the problem is.*

A package from Mother today contains clothing my father didn't have a chance to wear before he passed away. Most were designed for Florida's semi-tropical climate, not for New Mexico's climate. The shirts, too small to fit me, remind me of a deceased meditation master whose "rainbow body" slowly shrinks, until it completely disappears. I phoned, thanking her for the clothing.
Then I asked about the blue velvet bag with the yellow Star of David that contained his prayer books and paraphernalia, as it seemed to me that it should be passed on to his son. "I threw it away," she replied. I could almost see the humor in this, if not for realizing the depth of the chasm that had opened between us.

At age thirteen I had a truncated Bar Mitzvah, in which I mumbled a few Hebrew words I didn't understand. The short ritual took place in the basement sanctuary of the Eldridge

Street Synagogue in Lower Manhattan, where years later pigeons flew through holes in the building's partially collapsed roof. Afterwards, there was a reception, at which I received the gold watch. Along with family and friends, a young Martin Engerman—the future comic actor and Hollywood talent agent, Marty Ingels—with a wild grin pumped from his accordion what almost sounded like music.[35]

On the first anniversary of my father's death, I drove to the foothills of the Sandia Mountains.. It had been an unusually warm and dry spring, but that morning was cold and stormy. I was wearing the red down jacket I had bought from an ex-Marine, who had said, "The jacket's been to Japan," as if this would make it irresistible for me to buy. Now even its patches had patches. I began climbing to the nearest summit, where I managed to find a small shelter beneath two boulders leaning against each other. I tried to light a stick of incense…with wet matches: I'd forgotten the basics again!
Sitting cross-legged and breathing in deeply the cool damp air, I chanted a few OMs to clear the site of demonic jest. Then I recalled how the last time I was with my father we had held hands, through which silently communicated our love for each other. With this thought, a warm breeze from the East touched my face. I bowed deeply in its direction, and said, "Goodbye Dad. Thank you for everything."
Then I stood and threaded my way downhill, to where a path led further into the mountains. Although tempted to follow it, I already knew its destination—

Sometimes, usually at night.
comes upon me such a surety
of extinction, so evident
all concerns as human I—
as water from a high ledge—
fall away.

Each stone sits squarely upon its namesake.
Wreaths of rotting flowers percolate down
to where I sport them on my clavicle lapel,
my history complete,
I celebrate in formal attire the latest
from the Human Skeletal Boutique.

I accept the evidence of my death.
O when I am dead there is no place

that is not home, no molecule that is
not my own—
There is no end that does not survive. [36]

Flying into the net of a culture depreciated by the shallowness of its identity, I returned to the humid Atlantic shore… walking along a familiar beach, sniffing the salty air like a predator searching for the faint trail of its prey. I turned toward the horizon, toward no memories of my most distant African ancestors.

Now the sea which holds them is moody,
lapping their glossy sides, as if feeling
for some slightest flaw but fails completely.
(W.C. Williams. From, "The Yachts")

I was in Florida to help Mother through the nerves of a biopsy. One morning I visited my father's grave, where a liable sun glinted off the ground-level copper metallic plate on which his name and dates were engraved, next to which was a similar plate, left ominously blank.
When the biopsy's results were happily negative, and Mother's nerves settled, I decided to drive up Florida's East Coast, stopping at the Kennedy Space Center at Cape Canaveral. No fiery dragon machine was roaring up through the stratosphere that day, leaving behind a fiery trail of caustic fumes and cheers, After lunch and a quick walk through the museum—no masterpieces—I continued north, then west, reaching Gainesville well before sundown.
The next morning I breakfasted with Gregory Ulmer. A professor of English and Media Arts at the University of Florida, Greg, who has written brilliantly on the work of Jacques Derrida,[37] told me a story of when the famous philosopher had visited the university. In a recent email he filled in my memory's blanks:

> "After Derrida had given his talk, my son Tyson asked the philosopher how signature theory related to mystory, Derrida replied, ''You will have to ask your Dad, since he is the expert on that.' (Words to that effect.).
> On one level, that was a nice way to avoid giving an answer, but also Jacques said it in a tone of friendship and good humor. I was proud of Ty for engaging with the Great Man."[38]

By early afternoon I was driving down Florida's West Coast, where by the time I saw the

“No Gas For The Next 50 Miles” sign I had passed its exit. Fuel running low: turned off air-conditioner, rolled up windows, a foot dancing lightly on gas pedal, the little red Toyota rode the slipstream behind a large truck… making it to a gas station with the fuel gauge hovering over Empty. With a full tank, I cruised through Allegator Alley to Ft. Lauderdale, arriving home in time for dinner.

> *I’m discussing the subject of lost manuscripts with Allen Ginsberg and Gregory Corso, when Corso suddenly remembers that many years ago Ginsberg left some manuscripts of his in a library. "Let's go get them!" he says. "Oh yes," Ginsberg replies, with mild sarcasm. "It's only twenty miles from here."*
> *They set out on foot. For some reason I am delayed, and by the time I begin they are walking far ahead. A few times I almost catch up to them, but not quite. As they are now on bicycles, while I’m still trudging along on foot, the distance between us opens again, and soon they are no longer in sight.*
>
> *Now I am hiking up a steep street on which they have already reached the top. Corso says, "He's still following us." "He wouldn't do that," Ginsberg replies. Then he adds, "Of course that's exactly what he'd do."*

CHAPTER ELEVEN

> “Stickers” we called them. They stuck to the bottom of my pants as a pedaled over hot stretches of soft sunbaked pavement toward the Albuquerque Nature Center, tall weeds waving on either side the bike, past cows contently grazing,, under a highway’s overpass, through an upper middleclass neighborhood to the Bosque’s thin water-starved cottonwood trees at the Albuquerque Nature Center.

Soon after it was evident that our affair was coming to an end, Kerry, a psychiatric nurse who had moved to Albuquerque to attend massage therapy school, was diagnosed with breast cancer. In the shock and tears of it I made a commitment to see her through the illness.

In soul’s work the commitment must be complete. We attended support groups together, where on a memorial tree I left a token for my grandmother, who had died from breast cancer before I was born. I picked up Kerry’s medicines from the university’s Cancer Center, and cooked dinner when I knew how. And when she lost her hair to chemotherapy we chose a wig together.

One warm early summer evening, we were sitting with other couples on a small field of grass near the Albuquerque Museum, listening to jazz wafting from behind the fence where the paid seats were. Suddenly, entering the waves of music with its own concordance came the loud bass of a frog.

Afterwards, I asked an attendant if the frog was real or recorded. “The frog is real,” he replied, laughing. *It’s the frog Whitey shot some fifty years ago!* I weirdly thought.

> This old pond dreams it's dancing
> with the full moon floating in its arms.
> (From, “This Old Pond Dreams”)

Two years later, five months into the new century, with Kerry’s cancer gone, or in remission, she began making plans to return to her native North Dakota,[1] and I was ready to return to the Northwest I had left twenty-three years ago. Thus, one morning in May, in midst of an early heat wave, I packed the 20-year-old Toyota and began the 1300 mile drive west/northwest..

Perhaps I had Yogi Berra’s famous saying in mind, “If there’s a fork in the road take it,” when on the freeway out of Albuquerque, where there’s a fork in the road I took the one that returned me to where I had begun a few minutes before. A bit scared that I was having a nightmare, I began again. This time I successfully made it all the way across New Mexico’s hot desert and into Arizonia’s hot desert.

At Flagstaff, where the Earth's orogenic magic had pushed the lithosphere up 7,000 ft. and unfurled a forest, the air suddenly cooled. However, as I descended toward an evening in a Kingman AZ motel the air heated again.

The next afternoon I rolled into a hot and smoggy Las Vegas NV. Phoned my nephew and waited in a casino, fascinated by an elderly women mechanically pushing down a slot machine's untiring arm. When Glenn appeared, I followed his car; but a large truck got between us, and as his car looked like so many others, I got lost in the miasma "where the heat is brutal." Left a message on his phone; and he found me sweating and weary.

That evening Glenn and his girlfriend took me to a restaurant in "downtown Las Vegas, twelve times the size of God, howling anything that comes into his head."[2] As we walked to the restaurant through a casino's 24-hour flashing energies like a red eyed charging bull, all my senses peaked, my stomach tightened, then defensively dulled.

Early the next morning, I began the 450 mile drive north, up a few surprisingly steep hills and down into long stretches of desert, past the mirage of Naval Air Station Fallon, designed during WWII as an airstrip from which to launch missions against Japanese strikes on the West Coast. The Japanese never arrived, and the Navy never left—to a motel in Sparks.

In the morning, over a stack of sugar-topped pancakes, I stared out the restaurant's window at a snow-covered mountain that reminded me of a poem I'd written long ago, Since lost, I only remembered its last line—

> I was staying on San Francisco's Bernal Heights, in a small house rented by friends who were in England editing a film. The house had Japanese-style sliding doors, bunk beds, and hanging in the kitchen was a calendar with a picture of Mt. Fuji. One morning, as I was making breakfast, a gust of wind worked its way through cracks in the window's wooden frame, "and blew Mt Fuji off the wall."

Leaving Sparks, I joined the familiar US 80 West, and with Joni Mitchell singing "California comin' home" on the car's radio, I was that fledgling poet again who had lived in the alternative universe that had been San Francisco of The Sixties.

> The trees are sheading
> the colors of their tears.
> What do they dream
> after they've lost their leaves?

By afternoon I'd crossed from California into Oregon, driving 80 miles up a slight but persistent grade, then down 80 miles verged with misty old growth trees, tailing a truck hauling logs, into Eugene

After retrieving my email, and strolling around the University of Oregon's campus, I had dinner, then slept in my journey's final motel.

> *I was in Poland. I walked into a restaurant for breakfast. As I didn't know the language, I ordered eggs, a word they knew. Then I was outside. There were two policemen on horseback. I asked one of them, "Are you from Poland?" "No, he replied, "I'm from Portland."*

In the morning I joined the traffic heading to Portland. Winding my way through the steel architecture of the city's tangle of freeways, signs led me to the Oregon Museum of Science and Technology, where Kevin Campbell, who had emigrated from Albuquerque two years before, was programming the Planetarium's Star Machine. After greeting each other, we went to have lunch.

As we approached the restaurant, there was a sudden shower…a young woman walked out the door and began dancing like "the Wu shan woman whirling in midst of mist and rain…a shifting misty form in which the colors of the rainbow play."[3]

Here I would begin to explore the margins, the blank spaces on the maps of my childhood, the Unknown Territory, virtual space, Gilles Deleuze's "body without organs," the unpredictability that continues to intrigue me––

> Bending around leaping over
> the river flows into someone
> else's dreams, and humanity
> floats with the specter of her
> child unborn within.
> (From, "On A Parallel Road")

Before leaving New Mexico I'd looked at a map of Portland. There was a large green area named Forest Park. I thought: *I could never afford to live near there*. Now, with one of Forest Park's entrances about fifty yards from the backdoor of my cold-hearted apartment, I crossed a wooden bridge built over a shallow but exuberant trout-spawning creek, and bathed in the park's green humidity.

> *I have a small motorized unicycle I love to ride. I had it built especially for a*

stretch of highway on a rise above the meadow I'm riding across, but I see that the road is filled with cars; so I happily continue riding through the meadow, skirting its swales.

Heading up a narrow trail with water on both sides, I stop and the motor's cover falls into the water. I reach down to retrieve it. The water, which has a dense consistency, is deeper than the length of my arm. Although the cover is beyond my reach, it is not an essential part of the bike. I pat the motor, which replies with a few clicks of Morse Code.

The apartment looks like it had been renovated from a two-story motel. The walls are thin; the front room's large window faces a parking lot. Kitchen and bathroom are a stop on the way to the bedroom. Heat is from electric risers I can't afford to leave on all night, so I crawl into a sleeping bag during the long winter nights.

It was here that on September 11, 2001 I watched on my TV's screen New York's World Trade Center's buildings collapsing. It had been more than thirty years since I'd last been in that city, so it was like watching a disaster movie, not a daily news program.

The next morning, I was sitting on a Starbucks patio with a group of people I had recently met, when Portland's Fire Department's bright red trucks began circling the block, blasting horns and waving American flags. Everyone was waving and cheering them on, but me. A man sitting at my table said, "You don't approve of this, do you?" "No," I replied. "My job is to see deeper." "Your job?" he said, but didn't ask what my job is. *There is something inexplicable here*. An intuitive misunderstanding?

A few weeks later someone mentioned The Building. "What's The Building?" I asked. He pointed to a tall apartment house that could be saeen from Starbucks patio. "It's subsidized," he said. Then he added, "You have to be at least 62." As I was still too young to qualify, I placed my name on The Building's Waiting List.

In the Spring of 2002 I rented a car and drove with my memories to California. After a night in a motel, the next afternoon I was cruising down the familiar back road from Lower Lake, turning right at the sign for Ettawa Springs.

Thirty years had passed since I'd lived here. Where there had been a few old cabins for rent by Big Canyon Creek, a new resort had been built. The road up the mountain I'd climbed through winter's snows and summer's heat, had been widened and made passible for motor vehicles all year round. The cabin in which I had spent my hermitage year was now occupied by a massage therapist from Berkeley, his SUV parked in the clearing.

From outside, the cabin looked the same as I remembered it. Inside I found it a room had been added, the walls insulated, and telephone service installed. It was no longer a fit home for a poet. Sadly, I learned that Carol Hills, the generous woman who had rented the cabin to me had passed away. Then the present tenant's phone rang, and I waved goodbye. A place with which one has a deep resonance can morph into memories with an nostalgic emptiness.

> On September 12, 2015, the Valley Fire, the third largest in California's history, swept through Lake County, including Ettawa Springs. Before it was contained on October 15th, it had destroyed "1,955 structures, including 1,322 homes, 27 apartment buildings and 73 businesses. An additional 93 buildings were damaged." (Wikipedea). Most probably, the cabin didn't survive.

After lunch in a Middletown restaurant, I drove to San Rafael, where I was welcomed by my old friend Margot Ellison, who was sharing a house with another woman I knew from The Sixties.

The house was close to the mansion, whose present owner reluctantly agreed to walk me around the perimeter of his ultra-expensive property.

Where two ponds, a rock garden, and a curved bridge that led to a tea house had been, there was now a featureless field of grass. In my mind, I updated Basho's famous poem: "Summer grass / all that remains of / old warriors' dreams," to: "Summer grass / only poems remain of / old hippies' dreams."

Elizabeth Smart Benton had taken the only photographs of the Rock Garden. A decade later, when I was living in Albuquerque, she in San Francisco, I asked if she would send me all the photographs she had; instead, I received pictures of her standing naked in her kitchen. I wrote back, and naïvely said that she had sent the wrong pictures. She replied, "Don't you like what you see?" I never received the pictures I'd requested.

The next morning, following rush hour traffic over the Golden Gate Bridge into San Francisco, I found the way to the Haight-Ashbury District.

The God's Eye Theater had become a laundromat. Golden Gate Park, where The Gathering of the Tribes had welcomed a community of young celebrants, had been drained of its gossamer dreams. The Straight Theater, that had hosted many trailblazing rock & roll bands, was a Goodwill Store.

After coffee with digital artist and theorist Talan Memmott, whom I'd known since the

early World Wide Web days, I drove to North Beach and parked by a five minute meter near the City Lights Bookstore. Walked in, looked around, walked out.

Before returning to San Rafael, there was Mt. Tamalpais, the mountain I had circumambulated several times, and had also walked alone at night, as

> Man is one bright moon
> casting long shadows.
> Walking he can walk
> no further.
> Clearing a small space
> of stones…
> night, moon, man, one
> bright meadow of stars.
> (“Man Is One Bright Moon”)

I turned off the road at the entrance to Green Gulch Farm, a “practice center” of the San Francisco Zen Center. Finding too many people “striking poses and donning attitudes,”[5] I left and continued down toward the ocean, turning north to the town of Bolinas.
From downtown Bolinas I phoned the Doss’s residence, and was invited to lunch at their home on Horseshoe Hill Road. Except for having received a copy of *A Reminiscence of #9 Brighton,* a small privately printed book Margot Doss had written about their former house in downtown Bolinas, we’d been out of touch for more than two decades. And John was now retired from his distinguished medical career.

> Let me tell you how it is being—
> To be: physician,
> medicine man
> Shaman
> myself.
> (John Doss. From, “Birth.”

Over a bowl of Margot’s gourmet soup, we caught up on old times and old friends. Margot told me of the day she had seen Richard Brautigan downtown and invited him to dinner. “He said he had just bought a steak and was taking it home to cook.” That was the night the gifted writer had put a .44 Magnum in his mouth and pulled the trigger.

"I don't see him anywhere."
"I guess he's gone."
"Maybe he went home."[6]

Margot told me several other stories: a history of an extended literary family, of which I was the next generation. Never have I felt the warmth of this that strong. After lunch, John drove me to visit Joanne Kyger, who was not home. At our next stop, I was received by Arthur and Kitty Okamura. Arthur had made prints for *Oxherding: A Reworking of the Zen Text.* And, unknown to us at the time, a few years later we would be collaborating on another book.[7]

Returning to the house on Horseshoe Hill Road, I knew I would not be seeing Margot again, as I'd noticed the wig. All I managed to say was, "Thank you for everything." Margot Patterson Doss died eight months later. She was 82. John Doss died in 2012. He was 89.

Early the next morning, after saying goodbye to my friends in San Rafael, I began the journey home with enough notes to finish a project I'd begun in New Mexico five years before.[8] That November I flew to Florida to attend my mother's funeral.

At age 95, with none of her close relatives alive, there was a small service.
In the cemetery, on the copper plate next to her husband's name, **Sophie Weishaus** had been etched. I thought: *Mom*. *I hope you and Dad are together again. I love you.*

Later that day—

I went to the beach to collect the ribs of things,
only to find cigarette butts, used condoms;
some shards of shells with nothing alive inside.
(From, "A Poem Addressed To Robert Creeley
On His Poem 'Histoire de Florida.'")

Back at my sister's condo, I told her: "I won't be returning to Florida again."

The time finally arrived when, with a little help from my friends, I moved into The

Building: a comfortable apartment on the 12th (top) floor.
From my windows, looking to the left I can see Downtown Portland. In the other direction, Forest Park's trees rise dark and alluring. From the opposite side of the building, Mt. St. Helens, "Fire Mountain," is ominously smoking.
Although this is the quietist apartment I'd ever lived in, every half-hour from 8 AM to 6 PM, the Anglican church on the corner blasts a recording of bells. When I asked one of the priests if he would turn down the volume, a smile creeped across his thin lips, and he said, "It's as low as it can go."
Among my neighbors are a Zen priest: a woman with a shaven head who counsels people through the last stages of assisted suicide; a former Poet Laureate of Moscow; and Robert John "Holy Bear" Schoenhut, a Standing Rock Sioux who had been the lead cameraman on the film, "Dances With Wolves."[9]
Robert Boyle had climbed the steep cliffs of the Columbia River Gorge, from which, as was reported in the news, he had to be rescued. We had met around The Building's pool table, where I'd learned that he knew someone who could interpret between me and the Russian Poet Laureate. I never met the interpreter, but Bob and I quickly became friends. Raw-boned like the Marine drill sergeant he had once been, he was a devout Catholic with his own stash of sacramental wafers. We often discussed Thomas Merton's books; and when, a few years later, Bob passed away, he left me his copy of *The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton*.[10]

Walking home one afternoon I was suddenly surrounded by police officers who accused me of robbing a bank! "Which bank," I asked. They told me, and I replied, "That's my bank. I'd be robbing myself." Not finding this funny, they showed me a rendering of the suspect who, like me, was a bald white man. I said, "That's not me." "Yes it's you," an officer said. "No it's not," I insisted. "He looks like a criminal." A smile then.
Next they examined my arms and shoulders, looking for taboos, of which I had none. Then, with my arms behind me, plastic restraints digging into my wrists, they put me in the back seat of their car, while they had a short conference that ended with freeing me and apologizing. The next day, I learned that they caught the thief fleeing the city.

When the Zen priest visited her teacher in Hawaii, he told her she had to meditate. Instead, she defrocked herself and grew back her hair. Then one day an unattended candle set fire to her apartment and she was evicted. As for the Russian Poet Laureate, he'd disappeared.

I'm supervising Russian prison doctors who are rewiring a brain. It is a procedure

that consists of knotting together colored wires that have the consistency of cellophane. The French had made a bid for the job, but I didn't trust the quality of their work. While the Russians have sometimes been sloppy, all in all they have a good track record. They tie big knots, leaving lots of excess, which is how it should be done. It's been ten years since these circuits have been replaced, so I'm glad the work is finally underway.

A flier led me to Oregon Friends of C.G. Jung. I became their Asst. Librarian, and during talks by invited scholars I made notes toward "a one-year (b)log of thoughts pondered, dreams exposed, books, essays, poems, photographs, whole or collaged, carried forth by conjoining what was happening in my life with the life of the planet."[11]
With a key to the OFJ Library, nested in a building three blocks from where I was living, nights when I couldn't sleep I'd spend hours reading, sunk into in a comfortable chair.

Robert Bly, who had recently sent me a copy of his book, *The Night Abraham Called To The Stars*, gave a reading in Portland. Happily, this time he didn't say, "I see Joel is here." We had last seen each other almost thirty years ago.

Robert Bly is sporting a moustache. I don't recognize him until someone mentions his name. We shake hands, and he says that he meets so many people that if he isn't reminded of someone every few months he forgets who he or she is. He asks me what I'm doing now. I tell him that I'm working on my autobiography. He laughs, and I quickly add, "It's much more than an autobiography!"

As Visiting Faculty at Portland State University, yesterday morning I attended a meeting in the office of the English Department's Chair, where I was surprised to see William L. Fox. Bill had written the Introduction to "The Nuclear Enchantment of New Mexico" poems. I had last seen him in Albuquerque many years ago. Since then, he has become a distinguished author and adventurer. Friends disappear, and may suddenly reappear somewhere else.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Invited to a conference in Texas to present my Digital Literary Art piece, “Myoe’s Big Dream,”[1] at the last moment I decided not to subject myself to Texan heat, humidity, mechanical bull riding, and line dancing… even though Susan Rowland, who had written an insightful review of *The Healing Spirit of Haiku,*[2] would be there.
A few days after the conference, David Rosen, co-author of the book, who had organized the conference at Texas A&M, where he had an endowed chair, phoned and enigmatically said, "I met Susan Rowland and you're in love with her.” This was strange indeed, especially coming from my unofficial psychiatrist.

Tumbling still coupled in
waiting in myself, holding
a lonely wing’s outward space
still, a still pandemonium.
(“Tumbling Still”)

At a dinner party last night, one of the guests asked me: "Did you write that piece on Billy Collins that was in The Oregonian? "Yes," I replied. "My wife *loves* Billy Collins," he said, annoyed that I could have been so hard on a poet his wife loves. My critique of Collins' book, *Sailing Alone Around The Room*, ends:

> "Honestly, I don’t think we need poets to entertain us, as we are already an over-entertained, under-intellectually stimulated society. Instead, like with our scientists, we need poets who surprise us with their discoveries, without sacrificing the complexity of their language."[3]

I hoped that the man’s wife wasn’t also a fan of Louise Glück, whose book, *The Seven Ages,* I also reviewed for The Oregonian. My critique ends:

> **“**Louise Glück does succeed in making masterpieces, brilliantly scribing porous memories sustained by simpering ghosts that orate like a Greek Chorus. But this is a time when we don’t need masterpieces; we need poets who can breathe fresh visionary language into a society weathering the increasingly stale and self-serving rhetoric of its political and cultural leaders. We need poets who live in a larger world than the one this poet has yet empowered.”[4]

Two decades later, Louise Glück was awarded a Nobel Prize for Literature. Her Nobel Address was a defense of “the intimate private voice.”

"What you write will someday be held against you." -Terry Hauptman

Gary Snyder visited Portland last night. It is the city where he had graduated from Lincoln High School and Reed College. This tine he was here on the occasion of the publication of his book, *Danger On Peaks*, in which he writes about his youthful mountain climbing within sight of this city. When he took the stage, and the large audience enthusiastically applauded. I was touched when he said, "Nobody's *that* good."

> “In deep caves, the art is almost never defaced, which is why Leroi-Gourhan mentioned ‘the respect that people of the Paleolithic bore for the images made by their ancestors.’ At times, new engravings or paintings have been superimposed in earlier ones but without any destruction.”[5]

It was the summer of 2007. The "Nature and Human Nature Conference," was held at Pacifica Graduate Institute (PGI), near Santa Barbara CA.[6] It was an amazing gathering of Jungian-oriented scholars. Featured speakers included famed psychologist James Hillman; Ginette Paris, whose books have been translated into a least four languages; philosopher and naturalist David Abram; David Miller, the Watson-Ledden Professor of Religion at Syracuse University. And Susan Rowland, a Full Professor at the University of Greenwich, whom I finally got to meet.
On the flight home to Portland, through one of the airplane’s scratched plastic windows, I photographed a long strand of mountains that seemed to be moving north with us. Kihei Dogen Zenji wrote, “Since the walking of the mountains should not be like those of people, one ought not doubt that the mountains walk simply because they may not appear to stride like humans.”[7] Indeed, the land west of California’s San Andreas Fault is slowly moving north, although much slower than the plane.

Back in Portland, while doing dumbbell curls in the gym, my left shoulder’s rotator cuff suddenly let go. “That it,” was all I could say. A few days later, surgery was performed in the doctor’s office, where was a full setup. While chatting with the anesthesiologist…

> *Fish, flies, and nematodes can, for example, be anesthetized. In fact, anesthetics are also effective in plants and single-cell organisms, uniquely enabling the study of sensing mechanisms more generally because the endpoints of the anesthetized state translate across phylogeny.*”

…the next thing I was aware of was sitting in a chair, disoriented with my arm sitting in a sling too heavy for July's heat, and friends waiting to drive me home.
(When I was a child, and my tonsils were to be removed, I remember a cover going over my head. …then I was eating ice cream.)

The question of consciousness has occupied philosophers at least since Ancient Greece. It was also handed down in oral traditions, notably by the rishis of Ancient India. It could even have predated Homo sapiens, as we don't know the mind of our oldest ancestors, who may have also wondered, *Who am I?*

A year after the conference at PGI, Susan Rowland was invited back to teach a seminar. We had been in contact by email, so I knew where and when she was staying in Santa Barbara. I phoned her hotel, and she expressed an interest visiting me in Portland before returning to England.
On a warn evening in early August, after dinner at a downtown restaurant, we sat on a bench in a small park quietly talking, when Susan suddenly asked, "Is it okay if I dance here?" "Of course," I replied. "This is Portland."

> "I have stretched ropes from steeple to steeple; garlands from
> window to window; golden chains from star to star, and I dance."
> (Arthur Rimbaud. From, "Phrases.")

The next day, holding hands we entered Forest Park, and found a clearing by the creek where "Orpheus was reduced to love and defined by it…."[9]

Christmas. Snowing. Kevin Campbell drove me to the airport to meet Susan… and there she was: jetlagged, exhausted from the long flight from London. We returned to the Campbell's house, where we spent the night.

In the morning I arranged to rent The Building's guest apartment for her, a few doors down from my apartment. But when she closed the door behind her, I knocked, opened the door, and asked if she would come live with me. Used to having my own living space, the space to work and ruminate, I finally met someone I could comfortably share my life it with, and who wanted to share her life with me. However, for the next two years, we would, more often than not, be 6000 miles, a continent and an ocean, apart.

From: Joel Weishaus (Portland OR)
To: Susan Rowland (London UK)

Dearest Susan:

It was so good seeing you today, if only on Skype, and a little painful because you looked so beautiful and I couldn't hold you. But I am looking forward to seeing you again on Wednesday.
I should stay home this morning, put the chair I bought for you together, and do some house cleaning (but probably won't). Need to do a little shopping, of course, and want to take a look at Scully's book, *The Earth, The Temple and the Gods.* Powell's has an inexpensive copy, which will be tempting to buy, although two libraries have a copy.
I was thinking this morning how I can't quote much from memory, but do I retain is the spirit of a book. I first read Scully many years ago, and although I had to look up his name in a bibliography on Greek temples, I *felt* what I was looking for.
My love for you knows no time, but always was, and will always be.

After more goodbyes and hellos, one day in May, at the clearing by the creek in Forest Park, witnessed by dawn redwoods, stately sequoias, bigleaf maples and bouquets of wildflowers, I asked Susan Alison Rowland if she would marry me.
A few weeks later, I wearing a dark blue jacket with almost matching pants, and new shoes, Susan in a red dress, matching shoes, and a hat…with Kevin & Adrian Campbell as witnesses, when the judge asked, “Do you take Susan… “ “Yes, definitely!” I blurted out, to which Susan added, “I do.”

> “For such we are! And if ever in the coming years they knew
> Of us two when the spirit matters again
> They would say: lovers in those days, alone, they created
> Their secret world that only the gods knew.”
> (Friedrich Hölderlin From, “Once There Were Gods”)

I was sitting on the floor of a large room in the Portland Zen Center, wondering if my empty stomach's growling could be heard by the people sitting near me, when a small compact woman with a shaven head and an air of authority glided in. After lighting a few sticks of incense, she began chanting and ringing bells.[10]
Although Zen Buddhism was introduced into the West more than a century ago, beliefs

planted in young dependent minds open to everything, means that for the vast number of children the religion of their parents remains in their psyche. So it is questionable when a Catholic priest, or a Jewish rabbi, identify as being Zen Masters.

> mediocre monks are pathetic
> would-be masters sadder still
> the world's empty ways aren't what they were
> some days I shut my old door tight
> (Stonehouse. (Shiwu) Red Pine trans.)

There are also Japanese philosophers who work at drawing parallels between Buddhism and Christianity, so as to make Buddhism more acceptable to Westerners. However:

> "Not only did Japanese intellectuals and translators produce different terms for religion, they also debated which indigenous traditions and practices fit into the category. If religion was the genus, there were no native species on which taxonomists could agree. This is clear evidence that it is glib to talk of Japanese religion projected back through the centuries."[11]

There were Zen Masters called "Crazy Clouds," who taught that one must drop *all* scriptures, including Buddhism's,[11] in order to live a life of functional realization. This sounds like a promising path for the transition of Zen to the West. However, many American Zen Masters and their followers add a Japanese name, as if married to their romantic vision of Japan. And when Philip Kapleau, one of the first American born Zen Masters, had his congregation chant the traditional Heart Sutra in English, he was criticized by some Japanese Zen Masters. In effect, there is as yet no truly American practice of Zen.

> These days there's more faith
> Spring will appear.
> Here it's been winter a long long time.
> So many mornings chopping wood firewood,
> lighting stove, scraping mud off boots!
> Then new leaves appear, like feathers
> tickling the air; across the hemisphere
> the keen noses of farmers *twitch.*

Maybe I’m just mistrustful
mumbling old prayers.
(“Old Prayers”)

.

In Autumn 2011, Dr. Susan Rowland was hired by Pacifica Graduate Institute as Core Faculty, with a joint appointment in the Humanities and Jungian Depth Psychology programs.

We left The Building, and for the winter we rented an apartment in Carpinteria California, about a block from the beach, where our bare feet imprinted the sand before the tide washed them away like calculations on a white board that led nowhere interesting: a rugged scape with tall sandstone cliffs, and sea-born boulders that suffer the ocean’s temper.

The next spring we moved into a duplex apartment, also not too far from a beach. When one day Susan received forty boxes of her books, shipped from England via the Panama Canal, we knew we were seriously here.

Some mornings I’d climb the steep hill across the street from our apartment to a level table, on which hang gliders prepared to leap into the pure azure sky, riding updrafts, banking over a blue-green ocean, then gliding down in lazy loops until disappearing,..

…toward the Sorrowing Water, run the streams
of wailing, one of Styx, and quenchless Burning,
torrents that join in thunder at the Rock.[13]

And what of the universe? Lots of data and spectacular pictures received on Earth. But cosmology doesn’t give us meaning. We are beings who need meaning!

> “The poem asks its reader at every encounter to invent new constructions of knowledge rather than deploy modes of comprehension developed previously or in encounters with other texts.”[14]

While Susan is establishing herself at PGI, for the next two years I will be a Visiting Scholar in the University of California Santa Barbara’s English Department.

A few mornings ago, at a downtown Santa Barbara coffeehouse. I met with the popular translator Stephen Mitchell.[15] Around forty years had passed since Stephen and I had both lived at the Cambridge Zen Center. When he told me he’s been translating The Odyssey, I thought: *Can anyone contribute anything new to the many excellent translations already in print?* However, when, a few days later, I received an email containing a few pages of his translation, I was sailing again with that hero-trickster who

had opened my young mind to the wonders of Literature, and prepared me for my own wayfaring days.

> Odysseus was a king, a warrior, a trickster, a ship's captain who, after ten years of war, led his entire crew to their death while sailing home..
> He was also a philander who let himself be taken by a goddess as her lover; while his faithful wife waited twenty years for him to return home, while fending off a rabble of suitors. Not his fault, you may think. After all, it was Poseidon's anger that kept him from returning home sooner; Poseidon, who had morphed from a fresh water god of vegetation into a salty, moody, god of the seas.
> Soon after Odysseus was belatedly washed onto his home beach, disguised as a beggar he sized up the situation, then nocked the bow only he could brace, and let sing this arrows one after another, slaughtering the suitors who had invaded his palace, wooed his wife, and were stealing his goods.
> With intelligence, cunning, and violence, Odysseus has earned the title of "The First Modern Man." When living in Oregon, I would write:
>
> > Threading his small craft through the tricky currents,
> > Ody beached his craft on the Oregon Coast, donned
> > his heavy woolen cloak, treaded across the coarse
> > sand into the dark woods whose trees crown the peaks
> > of Mt. Olympus.[16]

I dreamed of my sister—younger, slimmer than the last time I saw her alive---and discovered that I have another sister. Her name is Helen.
In the morning I remembered the time my mother said to a neighbor, "You remember when I was pregnant with Joel, don't you?" "Of course," the woman answered. "You see," Mother said to me, "you weren't adopted."

After two years in California, we've bought a house in Meiners Oaks, an unincorporated town with no post office. Our mail is addressed to Ojai, where Jidda Krishnamurti, Joan Halifax, and other spiritual luminaries, along with Jamie Summers, the Bionic Woman, once lived.[17]
When ants marched into our kitchen, we sent them back to their nest with a lemony message that they are not welcome here. When spiders climb the walls and hang around, we capture and release them outside. When a small quick lizard, perhaps the harbinger of a dinosauric reprise, darts around the floors, we chase it out the door. As

our next door neighbor's the three little neurotic dogs consistently barked a few feet from our windows, we learned that it's not good fences, but mature, thus considerate, people, that make good neighbors.

The Ojai Valley is surrounded is by mountains. One trailhead is a ten minute walk from our front door… past a storefront gym cluttered with exercise machines… past Papa Lennon's Mediterranean pizza with a goat cheese salad… past George Lopez's orange grove, $3.00 a bag… past Bo the horse who, waiting for breakfast, dismissed me with a turn of his head and a swish of his tail….past Don Quixote's rusting metal horse, with a splintery wooden cross planted behind it.

Not far from there, I walked carefully down the trailhead's steep decline, looked on by wise old trees whose roots and rhizomes, although wired into the Wood Wide Web of earth's arboreal communication system, were hopelessly gripping slowly eroding soil.

A series of paths led to the banks of the Ventura River, where during summer not even a trickle of moisture is left, just a gravel bed and the withering limbs of water-starved plants.

Winters I'd leap from rock to slippery rock, roiling water rushing around them eager to join its saline kin downstream. Sometimes I'd slip and fall backwards into the cold shallows…. rising wet and angry at my feet and leaping mind.

> "And there is that perfect poem by I.A. Richards about leaping a crevasse in the dark—which is, to that great Platonist-mountaineer 'the only way to live.'"[18]

One day a man on horseback asked me: "Did you see the bear scat on the trail. "No," I replied. As we were In midst of a drought, I asked him: "Where do the animals find water?" "There's a pond up there," he said, pointing further up the mountain. Then he added, "It's also where the girls around here swim naked."

As his horse trotted away, he yelled back over a shoulder, "It's all true! Except for the girls!"

Other mornings I'd rise before dawn and make a ten minute drive, parking near a trailhead, where I'd wait for the soft pink light to reach and close Venus's bright eye. Then I'd walk on uneven cracked ground to a path switch backing up the mountain, a high wall of knitted earth on the sinister side, a steep decline to the right where bloodied limbs and bruised bones may still reside, grown over and leafed out.

Higher up, I passed trees black and hollowed out from the last wildfire but still standing their ground like the corpses of loyal soldiers. I didn't salute, but respectfully bowed.

With my water bottle almost dry I reached a wide field of grass that spreads to a sheer stone wall. (I've searched its face for ancient art, but found none.) From there a short downward jog took me to where, hidden behind a scrim of thick shrubbery Old Stoney Face, her hulking mass and ancient ugly gray lichen-potted face, patiently waited. My fingers spread on her wizened face, she taught me what I needed at that time to know.

> The Gyres! the gyres! Old Rocky Face, look forth;
> Things thought too long can be no longer thought,
> For beauty dies of beauty, worth of worth,
> And ancient lineaments are blotted out.
> (W.B. Yeats. From, “The Gyres”.)

Making my way steeply downhill during dry summer months, tiny pebbles slid underfoot. One day, after reaching the road with a bloody knee and skinned palms, I bought a walking stick that helped curb my sliding feet.

> “The question occurs to me—and quite seriously—how many sandals did Alighieri (Dante) wear out in the course of his poetic work, wandering about on the goat paths of Italy?”[19]

Some mornings I’d drive in a different direction, turning off the road into a small parking space. Looked both ways before crossing the road to a path strewn with fallen rocks. Stepped up and hopped down, careful not to brush the shiny red leaves of Poison Oak, leaving them to the beauty of their oily, irritating ways.

Rounding a bend, I’d lift my eyes to the “Wall of Gods:” Aztec, Inca, Mayan; or the faces of massive moai: monolithic human figures carved from volcanic rock by the Rapa Nui people of Easter Island.

Spirits of wisdom and violence, their hooded eyes looking formidable, even while crumbling like the cultures that dreamed them up. Here is the nodal ground, the broken marrow. How many gods are needed to toggle the miracle of consciousness? With this thought, I continued climbing the trail winding steeply around and through the shadows of trees, until sunny weeds were waving me on to the summit.

Sat in a scumble of rocks, eyes flying over the valley’s red roofs, streets branching between plots of green growth. After resting and jotting notes, a few drafts of water then I began retracing the rock-borne path winding down the mountain, eventually passing the Wall of Gods again with their stealthy stares, or were they smiling?, to the parking area, where my car was waiting among some new arrivals to return home. It’s

unfortunate that Paul Cézanne never climbed Mont Sainte-Victoire.

In a recent exchange of emails with Michael McClure, I reminded the poet who had written, “THIS IS MY BODY'S WORK. MY MIND IS HE,”[20] of the Feldenkrais class we’d both attended in San Francisco about 50 years ago. A few days later I received from him the CD, *I Like Your Eyes Liberty,* he’d made with musician Terry Riley, for which Michael wrote: "with acute eyes and ears, translating critical observation into precisely tempered verbal notations, celebrating the animal body and human consciousness growing out from it.”[21] Elsewhere he’d written that a poet’s work consists of “creating visions not solutions.”[22] Said another way: “If we take the unconscious seriously then all our knowledge is provisional.”[23]

> “It is not impossible that the development of philosophy must always be in the form of resurrection. The old philosophy, like the old man, is dead, but this death is in fact the birth of the new man, the new philosopher.”[24]

As Pacifica Graduate Institute’s Artist-in-Residence I’d meet with students, and also lecture on Alchemy,[25] delivering “a great lump of opaque pig iron.” [26] When one day a student brought me her poems to read, with every joust I made into her ego’s armor, her pupils dilated and her lips dried into a confrontational silence that said, *Who are you to tell* me *how to write a poem?* There’s some truth in this. However, a poet must remain open to the slings and arrows of outrageous criticism.

Of all the arts poetry has the strongest tradition of romanticism, stemming back, in part, to the troubadours in medieval southern Europe. In our era, we see this in singer-songwriters such as, to name a famous few, Joni Mitchell, Bob Dylan, Bruce Springsteen, and Paul Simon. All are superbly talented, but they are not poets. If taken as poets, then poetry hasn’t advanced since the Middle Ages! Of course one must begin somewhere. But beginnings can be misleading!

Our motor trip to Santa Fe, where Susan would deliver a talk on her first novel, *The Sacred Well Murders*,[27] began at our home in Ojai. A few hours later, we stopped for lunch in Barstow CA. While we waited for our sandwiches to be made, with 60’s Rock & Roll music oozing from the store’s loudspeakers, I recalled a story poet/painter Hammond Guthrie—cousin of Arlo, who was the son of Woody, who was Bob Dylan’s mentor—had told me:

> “I was given a card by a senior member of the Hells Angels, which said, *This is good for one ride to anywhere*.

> “Years later, stranded in Barstow, CA., I was standing in a parking lot with my speed-drenched brain, when a group of Angels magically rolled in. Suddenly remembering the card tucked in my wallet, I approached the Angels, who stared at me as if I was a bug walking up to their boots, and handed the card to one of them. He sized me up for just a second, then smiled as only an Angel from Hell can smile, and said, ‘Hop on little buddy and I'll take you anywhere in the country you want to go.’ He took me right to my doorstep in San Francisco.”

After a day of rest in Flagstaff AZ—coffeehouse, bookstore, dinner and sleep at a pleasant hotel—the next afternoon we left the freeway at a downtown Albuquerque exit. Standing across the street from the small wooden house that had been my first residence in that city, with its screened-in porch that had been my good weather sculpture studio, the house seemed unchanged, except for the dog barking inside. After two years my rent began increasing every six months. I held out for two more years, then left for the realm of the bi-polar landlord, whose property we next drove past. The apartments, like him, were deceased, absorbed by the earth with hardly a sigh.
To Downtown then, to what had been my last residence in Albuquerque. It looked as though nothing had changed, except for the young man sitting on the porch strumming a guitar.

> They said, "You have a blue guitar,
> You do not play things as they are."
> The man replied, "Things as they are
> Are changed upon the blue guitar."
> (Wallace Stevens. From, “The Man
> With the Blue Guitar")

> “One understands why Baudelaire said, ‘Many people ask what positive ideas are contained in sounds, or in colors, but they forget, or rather do not realize, that music—which in this respect is related to poetry represents feelings rather than ideas.’”[28]

For a few months, a poem I couldn’t find had been plaguing my mind. Was it the false memory of something I hadn’t written? It was not in the manuscript of my early poems I’d received in the mail one day from Colleen Johnson, a galley owner in California who had been given it by a mutual friend who had died before he could return it to me, leaving her to find me and return it. As the University of New Mexico had archived two boxes of my papers, I took the opportunity to wade through their folders…and there it

was, “Chinatown,” along with several other poems I had written in San Francisco around the same time in the same rhythm, and I thought had been lost. It begins---

Huwa Shan beached just north of L.A.,
before 500 A.D.
Before 1850, overseas Chinese arrived
to send their earnings—as houseboys,
peddlers, fishermen, cooks, miners
working second-hand mines,
railroad builders tunneling through
High Sierras, wide bamboo hats
deflecting showers of rock
and avalanched snow—
to their families home in China.

And ends:

Buddhists, Daoists, Christians, Maoists…
how many millions billions Chinese it takes
to make a world!

The next morning we drove the 60 miles and a 2000 ft. rise in elevation to Santa Fe. Nearly forty years had passed since twice-a-week I had tossed The Santa Fe Reporter at houses from a van, so that I’d known most of the streets. Since then the city has been built out, smothering more of the living desert under concrete and streets with hollow names, taking us further away from, as Heidegger put it, “the nearness of being,” the vast silent spaces of the desert. Then The City Different had only a few celebrities, among them the movie star Shirley MacLaine, whose house looked down on Atalaya Mountain, whose six mile trail—beginning behind St. John’s College, where Literature and Philosophy are still required courses—rising 18,000 ft., I’d hiked many times.
Now the town is suffused with rich Hollywood actors, politicians exiled from Washington DC, Jungian psychologists, art dealers from New York and L.A., and scientists from around the world gathering at the Santa Fe Institute.
Because my book, *Feels Like Home Again*: *Collected Poems* had recently been published—poorly designed, hardly edited, not distributed, instantly out-of-print—I’d reluctantly agreed to read a few poems from it.[29]
That evening. in midst of my reading I came to a word that *refused* to let me say it, even though I’d written it! In front of more than a hundred people waiting for the word I couldn’t say, in what could have been a terrifying muteness, that could have been that

boy again standing in front of his grade school classmates, holding a paper he was supposed to read, while his hands were shaking uncontrollably. However, now my hands were steady, and I was more amused than embarrassed; thinking: *Even though I wrote it, this word has a mind of its own.*

This refusal of a word to be spoken marks what a poem doesn't say but does not leave unsaid. It speaks, but cannot be spoken, as silence is the bare bones of poesis.

There's a caveat. I once heard a translation into English of Babi Yar read aloud, sounding like water running over and around a babble of rocks in a creek. This was followed by Yevtushenko reading his poem in Russian: deep, ominous-sounding words drawn out from a long-suffering people's memories.

So it's the power and range of the sounds a language is capable of releasing; and the development of a language is not separate from the history of the people speaking it. American Blues, sung by Southern Black folks is an example of where English lives on the cusp of poetry. However, if racism is ever just history in the American psyche, and not current events, the Blues will lose its relevance, and a poem should always forever remain relevant.

At Santa Fe's Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, able to get close to her paintings, I found that O'Keeffe's lines insecure. However, the fluidity and beauty of the landscapes she painted made a strong impression, perhaps because how she had reimagined land (not paces) I had walked and breathed. However, how much does the myth of the independent frontier woman influence the critiques of her work? Indeed, how much does personal myth, or the myth created by historians, color critique in general? As we know from biblical scholarship, the threads of history and mythology are so tightly woven together that they can't be separated.

Now that "The Nuclear Enchantment of New Mexico" has been published as I'd conceived it, with text and paratext facing each other and exchanging information along with inspiration, enough time has passed since the Albuquerque Museum's exhibition—during which the paratext was printed on cards and carried around by the viewers—for me to dispassionately reflect on what had occurred.

> Most artists who exhibit "visual texts," or "text art"—Barbara Kruger, Jenny Holzer, and Mel Bochner are among the best known—worked in formats that are large to very large, framed, or, with Jenny Holzer's later work, on moving electric signboards. It is work that is neither intellectually nor psychologically challenging.

> They are not poets but publicists, or propagandists, whose job it is to quickly catch the viewer's, and critic's, attention. Consequently, their work is of interest to art, not literary, critics.
>
> So it was not strange that the Albuquerque Journal sent an art, not a literary, critic to review the Nuclear Enchantment exhibition. Or that the art critic of a weekly newspaper wrote that she didn't understand the poems, then moved on to discussing Patrick Nagatani's photographs. Or that the UNM Art Museum purchased one of the photographs, while refusing to purchase the attending poem. Or that the UNM Press, noted for its photography, not poetry, was only interested in publishing the photographs, the Press's director saying that she found the poems "distasteful." Or that reporters from the local PBS station interviewed the photographer, ignoring the poet who was standing a few feet away, and whose work was in their camera's frame. Or that Nagatani allowed this. Talent mixed with insecurity makes a neurotically intoxicating brew. Or that a professor whose field was photography, not literature, had advised me to "simplify the poems" and "have pity" on my readers—not understanding that poems are "en route," and heading toward "something open, inhabitable, an approachable you, perhaps an approachable reality.""[30]

Visiting San Francisco, where I once saw Robert Duncan crossing a street with his eyes focused on a book, perhaps by Pindar, now I saw a "tech bro" crossing a street with his eyes focused on a smartphone.

We entered North Beach's venerable Café Trieste. It's floors had been swept clean of sawdust; and although it was Sunday morning also gone was the Italian tenor who had vibrated my eardrums, along with the poets arguing in loud excited voices. A man sitting at a nearby table asked me, "Were you here during The '60s?" "Yes," I replied, my voice sounding to me like a recording playing backwards.

On the night December 13, 2017 I watched the mountains surrounding Ojai I'd climbed countless times over the years burst into flames licking and eating their way down, tree by tree, toward the town. While several of my neighbors---including my friend Mike Dube, a Vietnam veteran with a shout heart and an educated mind—elected to remain home, I drove to the High School's gymnasium, where I joined a few hundred people stretched out on canvas cots trying to sleep in the huge chilly room. I was given a thin blanket, and only later realized I'd left my warm sleeping bag in the car.

By morning's grizzled light, with the air tasting of acid smoke and feathery white ashes still floating down, we gave thanks to the fire fighters who had arrived from around the

West to save our town, and I drove home… finding the house peaceful, unscathed, and wondering what all the commotion had been about.

> But maybe sometimes you will look out and even
> the mountains are gone, the world become nothing
> again. What can a person do to help
> bring back the world?
> (William Stafford. From, “A Valley Like this”)

The next evening, Susan returned from England, where she’d been visiting family and speaking at a conference. It was night when we drove from the bus station in Ventura up the dark two-lane road to Ojai. On a mountaintop an isolated fire was still burning. *The Burning Bush*, I thought, *through which the Abrahamic God had spoken, now is a signal fire warning of the future disasters our ignorance is igniting.*

When a swarm of atmospheric rivers terraformed the land around Ojai, floods and mudslides followed. The river redefined its shores, and familiar trails ended in ditches. I felt disoriented and betrayed by the land I had walked, climbed, and poetized for over a decade. Overnight it had become an “anti-landscape,”[31] “a radical exteriority (that was) absolutely, outlandishly *dead*.”[32] I dreamed:

> *I’d received word that my best childhood friend, with whom I had lost touch when his family moved to California, had died. I arrived at his gravesite, where I found that he’d been buried in the shadow of a large oak tree*. *I fell to my knees and cried.*

The uroboros had completed its "circle round the dreamer who stands rooted to the ground like a tree."[33]
In the morning, “in a mode of perception which raises it to the power of a symbol,”[34] the oak tree behind our house lost its grip on the saturated earth, leaned over and fell. My wife, who is descended from Druids, “oak-seers,” saw this as a sign that it was time for us to return to the home we had left more than a decade ago.

NOTES

Prologue

1. “Scholarly Interview with Laurie Gries, Ph.D. from the University of Colorado Boulder on Rhetoric, Writing, and Composition, New Materialism, and Circulation and Mobility Studies.” https://www.mastersincommunications.com/scholarly-interviews/dr-laurie-gries

Chapter One

1. Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*. New York: Meridian Books, 1971. p. 200.
2. From, “Magpie.” *Triumph of the Sparrow: Zen Poems of Shinkichi Takahashi*. Lucien Stryk, tr. New York: Grove Press, 1987. p.97.
3**.** Doug Boyd, *Rolling Thunder.* New York: Random House, 1974.
4. Turtle Island Foundation. San Francisco, 1976.
5. Woody Vasulka was born in Brno, Czechoslovakia. With is wife, Steina, an installation video artist who was born in Reykjavik, Iceland, The Vasulkas were pioneers in analogue Video Art, founding The Kitchen, in, before making a permanent home and studio Santa Fe.
6. Frances A, Yates, *The Art of Memory*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press,1966. “Because of Frances Yate’s brilliant work at the Warburg School in London, we are now aware of the extent and influence of an art of organizing, evoking and educating the depth imagination, the memory, throughout Western history.” Peter Bishop, *Dreams of Power: Tibetan Buddhism, and the Western Imagination*. London: The Athlone Press, 1993. p.112.
7**.** Woody Vasulka used “The Art of Memory” for future exhibitions of the video. https://www.eai.org/titles/art-of-memory
8. John Bloom, “Joel-Peter Witkin and L’Amour Fou.” *Photography At Bay: Interviews, Essays and Reviews*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993. p.123.
9. Philip Whalen is Warren Coughlin in Jack Kerouac’s novel, *The Dharma Bums*, and Ben Fagen in Kerouac’s *Big Sur*, Whalen was ordained as a Zen Buddhist priest in 1973. See, David Schneider, *Crowded by Beauty: The Life and Zen of Poet Philip Whalen.* Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2015.
10. John Whinham Doss was a San Francisco pediatrician. See his poem, “Birth.” In, *On The Mesa: An Anthology of Bolinas Writing.* Joel Weishaus, ed. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1971. pp.77-95. He died in 2012.
11. Margot Patterson Doss was a columnist for the San Francisco Chronicle. She published several books of guided walking tours of the Bay Area. She died in 2003.

12. Eiseley, *The Invisible Pyramid*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970. Loren died shortly before the comet's return.
13. Paul Weinpaul, *Zen Diary*. New York: Harper & Row, 1970. p. 55. Wein Paul taught philosophy at the University of California, Santa Barbara.
14. Paul Weinpaul, *The Matter of Zen*. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1965. p.55.
15. For a very readable, if not enjoyable, book see: Steve Antinoff, *Reports From The Zen Wars: The Impossible Rigor of a Questioning Life.* Berkeley CA: Counterpoint, 2016.
16. The "blind stitch" here refers to Chinese immigrant women in 19th Century San Francisco who worked in clothing factories and lost their vision from long hours of close sewing.
17. Rene Ricard, "The Radiant Child" Artforum, December 1981. https://www.artforum.com/features/the-radiant-child-208478/
18. Jean-Paul Sartre, *What Is Literature.* New York: Philosophical Library, 1949. pp.10-11
19. For example: "Dickey's dactylic power-mad rhythm often twists the arms of phrases that are unfortunate enough to fall into its hands: In The Tree House he says: 'the half moon completely is shining'; the branches 'Are full of small birds at their roundest.' Terrible! Awful!" Robert Bly, "The Collapse of James Dickey." The Sixties, Winter 1964.
20. Pat Ferrero (1942-) Teacher and filmmaker, Ferrero is the owner of New Day Films. https://www.newday.com/filmmakers/pat-ferrero
21. *Listening To Richard Brautigan*. Harvest Records, St-424, 1970.
22. *On The Mesa*. Joel Weishaus, ed. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1971.
23. See, for example, Lytle Shaw, *Fieldworks: From Place To Site In Postwar Poetics*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2013. pp. 116-149.
24. Joel Weishaus, *Oxherding: A Reworking of the Zen Text,* with Block Prints by Arthur Okamura. Cranium Books, San Francisco 1971.
25. Neal Cassidy, *The First Third*. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1971
26. Aram Saroyan, *Genesis Angels: The Saga of Lew Welch and the Beat Generation*. New York: William Murrow, 1979. p.12.

Chapter Two

1. https://weishaus.unm.edu/Writing/witherup.htm
2. Robert Levis recalls:

> "I met John (Bell/Burrell) at the Morristown Repertory Theatre in the Spring of 1966. At the end of the season John went to a summer stock somewhere in New Jersey, where he met Al Pacino…John had come across a play by an

Englishman about the assassination of Lincoln. He told Al about it, and I guess he (John) said he would like to showcase it. Somehow, Al assumed he would play Wilkes-Booth if John found a way to put it together…John heard that a Universalist Church around Central Park West & 73rd St. had space in the basement which they would let actors use as rehearsal space. A group of us (Al included) started a kind of workshop practicing acting and directing scenes. John alerted me when he secured the rights of the Lincoln play from the author. (I wish I could remember his name.) John and I agreed to team up. We started working as producers…operating with no budget. We put an ad in Backstage, set up a card table in the church foyer and waited.

"When F. Murray Abraham strode through the front door erect and wearing a waistcoat, I immediately imagined him as the lead. He looked the part. I thought Al was too short for the role…John realized he was going to have to break it to Al, who was none too happy. He didn't like being bumped from the lead, and only reluctantly agreed to play Lewis Paine, Booth's co-conspirator…We were the underground talk of the town."

Email 12 May 2024. Edited for continuity.) Note: They couldn't raise enough money to stage the play.

3. Albert Camus, "Discords du 10 december 1957," in Essais, Paris: Gallimard, 1965, 1073; quoted in James Wilkinson, The Intellectual Resistance in Europe. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981. p.279.

4. Louise Fiber Luce, "The Dialectic of Space: Fernando Arrabal's The Automobile Graved." Journal of Spanish Studies: Twentieth Century. Spring, 1974, p.31.

5. David H. Rosen, MD, "Suicide Survivors: A Follow-up Study of Persons Who Survived Jumping the Golden Gate and San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridges." *Western Journal of Medicine*. April 1975. pp. 289-294.

6. Robert Levis recalls: "Sure, I remember him. We were in a love triangle with photographer Elaine Mayes with whom I was living on Page St. She did photos for his WAPO column. Years later in New York we all got together for a lunch in NYC. It occurred to both Elaine and myself that Nick's behavior was uncommonly distracted. Later, I speculated that during the writing of his play on Roy Cohn he may have gotten too close to his subject and been submerged in a sea of amorality." Email 10 January 2024.

7. Nicholas Von Hoffman. *We Are the People Our Parents Warned Us Against*. Chicago: Quadrangle Books,1968. p.16.

8. Quoted in, Tal Brooke, *Riders Of The Cosmic Circuit*. Lincoln NE: iUniverse, 2000. pp. 118-119.

9. Paul Celan, *Microliths.* Pierre Joris, tr. New York: Contra Mundum Press, 2020. pp.95,96.
10. Ilya Kaminsky, *Homage to Paul Celan*. Grosse Pointe Park, MI: Marick Press, 2012.
11. Christina Prigh, “On Nonconformists and Strange Gravity.” Poetry Magazine, April 2013.
12.Geoff Emerick*, Here, There and Everywhere: A Life Recording the Music of The Beatles.* New York: Avery, 2006. p.132.
13. *Bits & Snatches: The Selected Poems of Sam Thomas*. White Rose Press, Brooklyn NY, 1973. Joel Weishaus. ed. Preface: Will Staple; Introduction: David H. Rosen; Postnote: Gary Snyder. 500 copies were printed, of which I presently own one.
14. Justin F. Stone. *Meditation For Healing*. Albuquerque: Good Karma Publishing, Inc.,1977.
15. Mie Shu Ou (1929-1999) Quoted: https://www.askart.com/artist/Ou_Mie_Shu/103885/Ou_Mie_Shu.aspx
16. “The Vasuki Effect.” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-zc4-6H-HiY
17. "I decided to cycle out to the Snyders for an impromptu visit, and again found that the person I had come to visit was not home——but Joanne was, and again I was invited in for tea. We sat at the Komatsu for an hour or so, discussing Jung and a few of his hard-to-grasp terms. I left near dusk, and started home. Cycling down Junkanoo, a wide commercial avenue, I suddenly began to hallucinate..." Clayton Eshleman, *Novices: A Study of Poetic Apprenticeship*. Los Angeles: Mercer & Atchison, 1989. pp.56,57.
18. "I didn't know Richard well & actually avoided much contact, too much booze & whatever. Interesting that it wasn't till 3 weeks later that his body was discovered...He was into guns I heard and borrowed the one he shot himself with from a Japanese chef (?)" Letter from Arthur Okamura, 25 May 1992.
19. *On the Mesa*. Joel Weishaus, ed.: San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1971. p.226. William Brown is the author of *The Way To The Uncle Sam Hotel.* San Francisco: City Lights Books; 1966.
20. Thomas Merton, *Woods, Shore, Desert: A Notebook, May 1968. Foreword by Brother Patrick Hart. Introduction and Notes by Joel Weishaus*. Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press, 1982.

> “When I became Curator of the Merton Center in 1974, the tandem typescript of ‘Day of a Stranger’ and ‘Woods, Shore, Desert’ still rested, unpublished, on a Center shelf. Though publication was discussed on occasion by the Merton Trustees and though various publishers expressed interest in publishing it, nothing came of these suggestions for four years. Then, in the Fall of 1978, ten years after Merton’s death, I received a letter from Joel Weishaus, a poet living in

New Mexico, one of whose poems Merton had used in Monks Pond. Weishaus wrote: 'I came across an issue of New Mexico recently in which was published a few of the photographs Thomas Merton made in New Mexico. I'm wondering whether there would be enough of these photographs to make a book worthwhile...' This letter began a process toward publication which took nearly five years, underwent a variety of changes, and finally resulted *in Woods, Shore, Desert.*" Robert E. Daggy, "Journey To Publication: Bringing *Woods, Shore, Desert* into Print." The Merton Seasonal of Bellarmine College. Summer 1983.

21. "Thomas Merton Mask" is presently owned by The Thomas Merton Studies Center, Louisville KY. https://weishaus.unm.edu/Art/merton.htm

22. John C. Maraldo, *The Saga of Zen History & The Power of Legend*. Nagoya, Japan: Chis kudo Publications, 2021. p.34.

23. Thomas Merton, The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton. New York: New Directions, 1975. p.235

24. Heiner Stachelhaus, *Joseph Beuys*. New York: Abbeville Press, 1991.

25. John Brinckerhoff Jackson, *Landscape In Sight: Looking At America*. Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, ed. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997. p.305.

26. John Beardsley, *Earthworks and Beyond*. New York, Abbeville Press, 2006. p.19.

27. https://www.aaycock.com/clay

28. Kirsten Swenson, "Land Art for the Media Age. Art in America, Oct 2012.

Chapter Three

1. https://www.nga.gov/collection/artist-info.6610.html

2. Letter to Guggenheim Foundation, December 1, 1961. Jonson Gallery, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque. Quoted with permission. https://artmuseum.unm.edu/raymond-jonson-web-portal/unm/

3. Letter from John Bell, Sept 9, 1968.

4. Cid (Sidney) Corman (1924–2004) was an American poet, translator and editor, most notably of the literary journal Origin. Corman "was a key figure in the history of American poetry in the second half of the 20th century." Wikipedia. "The coffee shop where I taught, a few blocks from the old geisha's bar, was named Java. The owner had been stationed in Indonesia during the Pacific War." Steve Antinoff, *Reports from the Zen Wars*. Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2016. p.158.

5. See, Kazuaki Takahashi and Roko Sherry Chayat, *Endless Vow: The Zen Path of Soen Nakagawa*. Boston & London: Shambhala, 1996.

6.Thomas Merton, *A Vow of Conversion*. New York: HarperCollins,1988. p.56.

7. Perle Besserman & Manfred Steger*, Crazy Clouds: Zen Radicals, & Reformers*.

Boston: Shambhala, 1991. Nakagawa Soen had studied Shakespeare and Basho at Tokyo University.

8. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013. p.201.

9. Philip Kapleau, *The Three Pillars of Zen*, Delancey Kapleau speaks at length about her experience at Ryutaku-ji. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1965. pp 254-268.

10. Lama Anagarika Govinda (1898-1985) Born Ernst Lothar Hoffmann, in Germany, Govinda, along with his wife, Li Gotami, lived in Tibet for more than two decades as a monk of the Kagyupa Order. Afterwards, he lived in northern India, where he was the spiritual head of the Arya Maitreya Mandala. Govinda spent his last years in the San Francisco Bay Area, sometimes on Alan Watts' houseboat in Sausalito. See, *The Way of the White Clouds: A Buddhist Pilgrim in Tibet*. Berkeley: Shambhala, 1970.

11. Robert Bly, *Talking all Morning*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1980. p.53.

12. Claire Colebrook, "200th anniversary celebration of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein.*" Rhodes College, 2019. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QQBSaXBmR9c

13. Waldemar Januszczak, *Sayonara Michelangelo*. Reading MA: Addison-Wesley. 1990. pp.38,39.

14. Yoko Tawada*, Paul Celan & the Trans-Tibetan Angel.* New York: New Directions, 2020. p.44.

15. Sam Hamill, "In the Company of Issa." *Avocations: On Poets and Poetry*. Los Angeles: Red Hen Press, 2007. p.175.

16. James A. Pike was the fifth Episcopal Bishop of California. He is the subject of Philip K. Dick's 1992 novel, *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer.* New York: Vintage, 1991.

Chapter Four

1. Christopher Shultis*, Silencing the Sounded Self: John Cage and the American.* Lebanon NH: University Press of New England, 2013.
https://music.apple.com/us/artist/christopher-shultis/434447679
Also see my interview: https://weishaus.unm.edu/Interv/shultis.htm

2. Paul Celan, "The Meridian." *Paul Celan Collected Prose*. Manchester UK: Carcanet Press Ltd., 1986. p.38.

3. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tgm9sdURKu8

4. For more on Gilbert Stone: Joel Weishaus, *Reality Dreams*: https://www.amazon.com/Reality-Dreams-Diary-Poet-Ghost-ebook/dp/B01ENSMLRO4.

5.Waldemar Januszczak*,* Ibid, p.104.

6. Paul Hoover's Poetry Blog, December 11, 2005.

http://paulhooverpoetry.blogspot.com/2005/12

7. Joseph Brodsky. From, “Café Trieste.”

8. Carol Bergé. From, “Unfinished Poem..”.

9. Gary Snyder, “Why Tribe.” *Earth House Hold*. New York: New Directions, 1969. p.115

10. Charles Altieri, *Enlarging the Temple*. Lewisburg PA: Bucknell University Press, 1979. p.129.

11. (1945–2017) https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/13/obituaries/patrick-nagatani-photographer-famous-for-collages-dies-at-72.html

12. https://poetrycenter.omeka.net/exhibits/show/little-magazines/ironwood

13. “It happened on a Sunday when my mother was escorting my twin brother and me down the steps of the tenement where we lived. We were going to church. While walking down the hallway to the entrance of the building, we heard an incredible crash mixed with screaming and cries for help. The accident involved three cars, all with families in them. Somehow, in the confusion, I was no longer holding my mother’s hand. At the place where I stood at the curb, I could see something rolling from one of the overturned cars. It stopped at the curb where I stood. It was the head of a little girl. I bent down to touch the face, to speak to it—but before I could touch it someone carried her away.” https://www.orderofthegooddeath.com/article/after-joel-peter-witkin

14. Joel Weishaus**,** “Paul Harryn, Small Works 1992-1993. Neuro Series.” Rosenfeld Gallery, Philadelphia, PA; Turner Gallery, Venice, CA; Sandler/Hudson Gallery, Atlanta, GA. **(**Revised.**)**

Chapter Five

1. Jack Kerouac, *Big Sur*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1962. p.23.

2. Regina Weinreich, *The Spontaneous Poetics of Jack Kerouac.* New York: Marlowe & Company, 1995. Pp. 149-150.

3. Joel Weishaus, “The Soul of Shamanism: A Conversation with Daniel C Noel.” Myth sphere Vol. 2 Issue 4, 2000. https://weishaus.unm.edu/Interv/noel.htm

4. Judson Crews (1917-2010) "As soon as (Judson) Crews was demobilized (from the Army, after W.W.II), he made his way to Big Sur to look up Henry Miller, and he stayed at Emil's (Emil White) place on the highway...He subsisted on wild mustard greens and peanut butter, a diet that so horrified Henry that he offered to buy him some groceries." Kathryn Winslow, *Henry Miller: Full of Life*. Los Angeles: J.P. Torcher, 1986. p.147. Judson Crews’ archives are at the University of Texas, Yale University, and the University of New Mexico.

5. Basarab Nicolescu, “Methodology of Transdisciplinarity – Levels of Reality, Logic of the Included Middle and Complexity.” Transdisciplinary Journal of Engineering &

Science. December 2010. p.27.
6. Thomas Merton, “Rain and the Rhinoceros.” In, *Raids on the Unspeakable*. New York: New Directions, 1964. p.18.
7. George F. Butterick, “Editing Postmodern Texts.” Sulfur #11 (1981). p.114.
8. Gene Youngblood, “A Meditation on the Vasuki Archive.” https://www.fondation-langlois.org/html/e/page.php?
9. Rainer Maria Rilke, *Letters On Cézanne*. Clara Rilke, ed. New York: Fromm International Publishing Corporation, 1985. p.4.
10. A riddle is “intimately involved with the whole process of reducing language to visible form.” Timothy Bahti, Ends of The Lyric. Baltimore: *Johns Hopkins University Press*, 1996. pg.5.
11. Lew Welch, "Song of The Turkey Buzzard." In, *Ring Of Bone: Lew Welch Collected Poems*. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2012. pp. 147-151.
12. https://weishaus.unm.edu/Being%20Earth/Five.htm 5:19
13. *Hey Lew*, Magda Cregg, editor. Bolinas CA., 1997. p.4.
14. From Etta Blum's Journal. https://nmarchives.unm.edu/repositories/22/resources/1577 Thank you to Deena Schrier for this information.
15. “Now, What Shall I Do?” In, *The Space My Body Fills*. Santa Fe: Sunstone Press.1981. For writing by Eliezer Blum-Alquit, see *Revolt of the Apprentices and Other Stories*. New York, 1969.
16. Susanna Lidström, *Nature, Environment and Poetry*. London and New York: Routledge, 2015. p.23.
17. Jacques Derrida, “Edmond Jabes and the Question of the Book.” *Writing and Difference*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1978. p.65.
18. John Tryford. From, “No, I Am Not Frank Sinatra.” Illuminations 3, Summer 1967.

Chapter Six

1. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joe_Henderson
2. Anne Rice, (1941-2021). *Interview With A Vampire*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976.
3. ”*The Dharma Bums* chronicles his explorations in the western mountains with Gary Snyder, or ‘Japhy Ryder,’ though little in the novel betrays that at time of writing Kerouac was actually in a run-down Orlando (Florida) bungalow.” Thomas Hallock, “How The ‘King of the Beats’ Found A Fertile Place To Work, But No Escape From His Demons, In His Last Troubled Years Here.” https://floridahumanities.org/jack-kerouacs-florida/
4. Thomas Merton, *A Vow of Conversation: Journals 1964-1965*. New York: Farrar,

Straus and Giroux, 1999. p.125.
5. Stefanos Geroulandos, *The Invention of Prehistory*. New York: Liveright, 2024. p. 4.
6. Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1986. p.3.
7. Lew Welch, From, “The Song Mt. Tamalpais Sings.”
8. Quoted in R.F. Foster, *On Seamus Heaney*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2022. p.5.
9. Martha Cooley, *The Archivist*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1998. p.305.
10. Reinhard May, *Heidegger’s Hidden Sources*. Graham Parkes, trans. London & New York: Routledge,1996.
11. D.T. Suzuki. *Zen Buddhism: Selected Writings of D.T. Suzuki*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor, 1958, X1
12. Statman, J., Jansen, E.M., Marlock, G., Aalberts, M., Stubenrauch, H. (1989). *Unitive Body-Psychotherapy: Collected Papers, Vol 1.* Frankfurt: AFRA Verlag.
See also, “Historic Development of Body Psychotherapy.” https://www.pesops.gr/en/body-psychotherapy/present-past/historic-development-of-body-psychotherapy/
13. Letter from John Kielty Bell, October 10, 1988.

Chapter Seven

1. Quoted in Jacques Dupin, *Miró*. Paris: Flammarion, 1993. p.431.
2. https://weishaus.unm.edu/Writing/noggle.htm
3. Richard Heckler (1944-) See, *The Warrior Spirit*. San Francisco: North Atlantic Books,1992.
4. https://www.amazon.com/Practice-Freedom-Aikido-Principles-Spiritual/dp/193048500X
5. Kenneth Rexroth. In, David Meltzer, Editor. *San Francisco Beat*. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2001. p.254.
6. George Leonard, *The Silent Pulse*. New York: Dutton, 1978. p.89.
7. George Leonard, *The Ultimate Athlete*. Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2001. p.124.
8. Quoted in, John Stone & Ron Meyer, eds., *Aikido In America*. Berkeley: Frog, Ltd., 1995.

Chapter Eight

1. C.G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*. London: Fontana Paperbacks, 1977. p.278.

2. Joel Weishaus, “The Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle: A Video Opera by Janice Tanaka.” New American Writing. Spring 1990. pp.47-54. https://weishaus.unm.edu/Writing/tanaka.htm

3. Ryan Kirk, *These Fallen Swords*. Minneapolis MN: Waterstone Media, 2023. p.78. See also, Maurice Blanchot, “The Song of the Sirens. In, *The Gaze of Orpheus and Other Literary Essays*. Barrytown NY: Station Hill, 1981. Also, David Lewis-Williams and David Pearce, *Inside The Neolithic Mind*. London UK: Thames & Hudson, 2005: “Neolithic dead were frequently placed in rivers that, of course, eventually find their way to the sea. The sea seems to have become part of the underworld in a way the earlier Mesolithic people did not accept.” p. 284.

4. Georges Roque, "The Role of Language in Seeing an Image." *Conjunctions: Verbal-Visual Relations.* Laurie Edson, ed. San Diego: San Diego State University Press,1996. p. 86.

5. See, Gerard Genette, “Introduction to the Paratext.” New Literary History, 1991. pp. 261-272.

6. Karen Hedwig Backman. (1940-2023) From, “Requiem For A Bullet. March 27, 1992.”

7. Steven Heine, *Opening A Mountain*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

8. Marian (Derby) Mountain, *The Zen Environment*. New York: William Morrow & Co, 1982.

9. Richard Brautigan (1935-1984) *Trout Fishing in America*. San Francisco: Four Seasons Foundation, 1967.

10. Joanne Kyger. *About Now: Collected Poems*. Orono ME: The National Poetry Foundation, 2006. p.495.

11. Sigmund Klein (1902-1987) His “physical culture studio,” at 207 W. 48th St., New York, was one of the most famous gyms in the country.

12. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QgWVrgolDaQ
After competing in the Olympics on the 1936 American weightlifting team, John Grimek (1910-1998) became the most dominant bodybuilder of his time.

13. Paul Celan. *Paul Celan Collected Prose*. Manchester UK: Carcanet Press, 2003. p.26.

14. James Hillman, *The Dream and The Underworld*. New York: Harper & Row, 1979. p.39. “The Erinyes also known as the Eumenides (Εὐμενίδες, the "Gracious ones"), are chthonic goddesses of vengeance in ancient Greek religion and mythology.”

15. Susan Rowland, “Oedipus In An Irish Bog: Seamus Heaney, Freud, and Jung.” Spring: A Journal of Archetype and Culture, 2008, p.8.

Chapter Nine

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3. Anne Marie Levine, Letter To The Editor, The New York Times, Dec. 17, 1978 Section D, Pg. 39.

4. Lawrence Alloway, “One Sculpture.” Arts Magazine 4-5. May 1971.

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8. Lavan Martineau, *The Rocks Begin To Speak*. Whittier, Ca.: KC Publications, Inc, 1976.

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10. Postcard received July 9,1988.

11. Henry Miller, “Big Sur and the Good Life.” Evergreen Review: The San Francisco Scene. 1957. p.40.

12. Stanley Kauffman, “If I’m Right, There Is No Theory of Everything.” Interview with Curt Jaimungal. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WKGx2YKgs9M Ironically, at this point in the interview, the subtitle says, “Temporary AI audio. Original corrupted.”

13. "It’s really a very simple strategy. You have a small group of friends and you declare them all to be geniuses and you laud all their work and ascribe to them sweet and stormy qualities worthy of the Greek gods. What you’re selling is not just your writing but your personal legends." Edmund White, "The Beats: Pictures of a Legend." New York Review of Books, July 22, 2010.

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18. See, Oscar Fuente-Fernandez, “Environmental conditions around fire inside

paleolithic caves. The hearths of Tito Bustillo (Ribadesella, Asturias, Spain)" Journal of Archeological Science: Reports. October 2022. Article: 103590.

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20. From, "Dead Bird-Man and Dying Bison." Robert Baker, trans. See also, James R. Lawler, *René Char: The Myth and the Poem*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978.

21. Michel Leiris,. From, "Fred Astaire." Sulfur #15. (1986)

22. https://weishaus.unm.edu/Writing/smith.htm

23. Alfred Kazin, "Jews." The New Yorker*,* March 7,1994.

24. Gary Snyder, *Myths & Texts*. New York: New Directions, 1978. p.46.

25. Karl J. Shapiro, *Reports of My Death*. Chapel Hill NC: Algonquin Books, 1990.

26. Mark Wigley, *The Architecture of Deconstruction: Derrida's Haunt.* Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1993. p.163.

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Chapter Ten

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2. Quoted in, Randall E. Auxier and Lewis Edwin Hahn, eds., The Philosophy of Arthur C. Danto. LaSalle IL: Open Court, 2013. p.44.

3. See, James K. Lyon, *Paul Celan and Martin Heidegger: An Unresolved Conversation, 1951-1970.* Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006.

4. Robert Aitken, *A Zen Wave*. New York: Weatherhill, 1996. p.39.

5. Osip Mandelstam, "A Conversation About Dante." *The Selected Poems of Osip Mandelstam*. New York: The New York Review of Books, 2004. p.128.

6. Jeffrey Kipnis, "/Twisting the Separatrix/." Assemblage, no.14. April 1991. p.32.

7. Patrick de Sercey, *From Chateau to Log Cabin: An Existentialist in Search of America*. Santa Fe: Moon Bear Press, 2005. p.86.

8.. https://weishaus.unm.edu/Zoo/zoo-t.htm

9. Ward Abbot (1935-2008) Abbot was the publisher of Desert Review Press.

10. Vincent Barrett Price (1940-) The son of actor Vincent Price, he is the author of *Albuquerque: City At the End of the World.* Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2003.

11. Joel Weishaus, "John Knight's 'In Vivo.'"
https://weishaus.unm.edu/Writing/knight.htm

12. Samuel Coleridge. From, “What If You Slept?”

13. B.O. Alpert, “The Meaning of the Dots on the Horses of Pech Merle.” Arts, 2013. p.487.

14. The Weishaus family has been involved in the pickle business since 1897. They own and operate United Pickle Products Corp, the oldest continually operating pickle company in New York. https://www.unitedpickle.com

15. Allen Ginsberg. From, "Kaddish." The poet recited these lines at Charles Olson’s funeral.

16. Vivienne Hermann was born on July 10,1930, into an upper-middle-class Jewish family. “At age 9, during the German occupation, she was arrested on the streets of Prague and spent the next six years in the unimaginable horrors of a Nazi labor camp.” Interview with Vivienne Hermann. Albuquerque Journal, April 26, 1992. See also: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hWeP0miCDRM

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31. Claude Ananda Dalenberg (1927-2008) was a Zen priest in the lineage of Shunryu Suzuki Roshi. He is Bud Diefendorf in Jack Kerouac’s novel, *The Dharma Bums*.
32. http://www.cuke.com/pdf-2013/chfriends/chfriends.htm.
33. Lucien Stryk*, Afterimages: Zen Poems by Shinkichi Takahashi*. Garden City NY: Anchor Books, 1972. p.2.
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36. Joel Weishaus, "Death Koan." Kentucky Poetry Review: Thomas Merton Memorial Issue. Fall 1988. p.22. Not included in any current collection of my poetry.
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5. Jean Clottes, "Art of the Light and Art of the Depths. In, M.W. Conkey, et al., eds., *Beyond Art: Pleistocene Image and Symbol*. San Francisco, CA., 1997. p.209.

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In 1964, Joel Weishaus migrated from New York to the San Francisco Bay Area, where from 1966-1968 he was the Literary Editor of the University of California Berkeley's student newspaper, The Daily Californian. From 1967 to 1969 he resided in San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury District, later in Bolinas, a town that was then a gathering place of American poets.

in the spring of 1977, after living for a year in a cabin in the mountains of Northern California, Weishaus moved to Santa Fe NM. That autumn he began a nine month residency at the Helene Wurlitzer Foundation in Taos NM. After living in Santa Fe for five years, he moved to Albuquerque NM, where he became an Adjunct Curator at the University of New Mexico's Museum of Fine Arts, a Photography Critic for *Artspace: A Quarterly of Contemporary Southwest Art,* and later a Writer-in-Residence at UNM's Center for Southwest Research.

Soon after the beginning of the new century, Weishaus moved to Portland OR., where he reviewed poetry for The Oregonian and the Philadelphia Inquirer. In 2002, he became a Writer-in-Residence at Portland State University's Center For Excellence in Writing, then Visiting Faculty in PSU's English Department.

From 2011-13 Weishaus was a Visiting Scholar at the University of California Santa Barbara. For the next decade, he was Pacifica Graduate Institute's Artist-in-Residence. Weishaus is presently an Affiliate in Portland State University's Department of Philosophy.

Joel Weishaus and his wife, Jungian scholar and novelist Susan Rowland, live in northwest Oregon. *Remember / When* is his ninth book.