

Minus Happy & Wit

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You must say words, as long as there are any, until they find me, until they say me,
strange pain, strange sin...perhaps they have said me already, perhaps they have carried
me to the threshold of my story.

Samuel Beckett

...

Something appears out of the unconscious, the kingdom of the dead. It's me, I'm sitting on my bed masturbating. I go into the bathroom to clean myself – the semen on my hand is tar-black. Seeing my face in the mirror fills me with shame, grief and anxiety as I wake.

A dream reopens the trauma – staring at myself in a mirror with my scraggly pubic beard (I'm 21) crying in desperation because I have no control over my mind, my emotional state, I can't get out of this dungeon. The cry is hopeless and futile like someone at the bottom of a well in a dark forest, no Virgil, only demons, but the cry matters.

A voice comes to one in the dark – does a new self emerge out of the old one?

A snake sheds its skin and it's the same old snake. No, after a caterpillar turns to goo in its chrysalis a butterfly breaks free of her cocoon's straitjacket. A new life arises from the hell of melancholia (don't say a phoenix from the ashes) and it's a whole one. Remember Yeats, *nothing can be sole or whole that has not been rent*.

A snake and a hole, the new self can never be whole, will forever have a hole in it because part of the soul has been eaten.

By God, according to Simone Weil, but really melancholia is self-cannibalism, not just self-entrapment (imprisonment) but the mind becoming ruptured, falling into disarray and devouring itself.

A melancholic hardly speaks. The narrative that creates and bolsters identity no longer has any staying power, any meaning. It's a story that doesn't matter.

I haven't experienced any depression for a long time, but I'm still not convinced my story matters, except to me and I guess that's the point. During melancholia my story no longer matters to me. It doesn't matter whether or not it matters to anyone else.

I swallow a bottle of sleeping pills, enter a worm-hole and appear rematerialized in a mental hospital – standing in front of a mirror disheveled, unshaven in a grey sweater with a wolf on it. In the group session everyone has something to say. I'm shaking too much to speak but somehow manage a single sentence: the mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation. I say it out loud.

Simone Weil says affliction is a gift because it brings you closer to God, but it's a gift you pay for with part of your soul – the piece that God eats you can never have back.

Real life is difficult enough without injecting supernatural paranoia into the equation.

Yeats uses the word *rent*, meaning to rip apart but also like renting a house – the tenants may do some damage, but the house is still mine. No part of my soul is sold or eaten, it's just rented for awhile.

You too are a renter, you don't own the house, the ocean does.

I can't make up my mind. I can't choose. Sometimes I feel the truth of Yeats's proposition, *nothing can be sole or whole that has not been rent*. Melancholia rips me open – tormented means to tear open the mind – but I survive and now sometimes feel whole only for having survived the rending. Other times I feel the impossibility of wholeness, like the experience of melancholia robs me of something more crucial than innocence, forever irretrievable, a shark tearing off one of my limbs.

Maybe something's always missing, a hole everyone's born with, maybe the emptiness is spiritual hunger, the locus of this lacuna the origin of meaning.

...

I'm on a grassy slope on a mountain overlooking tropical water – it looks like Honolua Bay with only a few guys surfing. I want to fly down there and I would if I was dreaming, but the suspension of disbelief is so strong I believe I'll die if I jump.

I'm full of anxiety when I wake. It's the reverse of lucidity – instead of believing I'm dreaming and taking advantage of it by doing the impossible, I believe I'm not dreaming and therefore refuse to try what actually is possible.

Anxiety, the dizziness of freedom, Kierkegaard's cliff, you're entirely free to choose whether or not to jump. You must lose everything in order to gain everything, the pain of annihilation actually suffered, to attain God's gift of grace. It's only the ego that dies, or rather, gets exposed as an illusion. But because you mistake your ego for your whole psycho-physiological organism, you never jump.

A dream is preparation for a future traumatic event, a safe place to take risks and experience the associated fear and anxiety without getting injured or killed.

But I don't even have my board in the dream. Why don't I go home and get my board and drive down there?

Because you don't have a board or a home – one is always homeless in dreams. The dream is a house with no walls, no ceilings or floors, only windows and doors. The cliff is a door that leads to either terror or bliss.

One is always homeless in waking life too, but that thought is too terrifying to fathom so you build defenses to insulate yourself, to house the ego so it feels grounded and stable – a hopeless task since an internalized self-image, an imaginary introjection is ungroundable, paranoid of being literally homeless, exposed to the elements, exposed as a fake.

Two wishes are being expressed, my desire to fly and my desire to surf Honolua Bay with no crowd – both are impossible. But in waking life I'd never jump off a cliff. During the deepest throes of melancholia I ponder jumping off a cliff. I take pills instead, the more “feminine” option. I'd never jump off a cliff.

If you did you'd fall just like you fall in a dream, the water rushing up to meet you – just as it hits you feel your bed beneath you and your eyes open. See, the dream is always going on, but you only see it when you're asleep. Think of the horizon line, imagine dreams on one side and waking life on the other, but really there's no line, only a gradual curvature you don't see whether your eyes are open or not.

Anxiety speeds everything up inside causing panic, depression slows everything down causing despair – the combination is lethal, an inexorable force that turns the sun black, the bile black, melancholia. An eclipse, eventually the sun's brightness returns and I'm able to smile again. Steve Miller on the stereo, *you got to go thru hell before you get to heaven*. Only there's no change in location.

...

I think I lose my car keys this morning. I look around for 15 minutes – on the seats, under the seats, in the glove box, the trunk, then they just appear in the passenger seat – I'd looked there at least 4 times and somehow hadn't seen them. On my 4th birthday I get a new baseball glove and wear it for hours. When it's time to play catch again I start looking around for it, under the couch, on the couch and bam, there it is on my left hand the whole time, I've never taken it off.

Whatever you're looking for is always already there. You're already enlightened.

I wait. Is there a hole in this idea? Maybe. I only ever feel enlightened once – it lasts about 20 minutes whereas my fade into and out of melancholia lasts about a year.

If you're tortured for 20 minutes it seems like a year, and if you make love to a gorgeous being for a year it seems like 20 minutes. A long horror scene, a short love scene, all the mind's a stage. Enlightenment and melancholia are the same, opposites on a stage that doesn't exist.

...

Infernal Dialogues (1)

Look, there's a huge mattress sale.

I don't need a huge mattress.

They mean the sale is huge.

Then why didn't they write Huge Sale on Mattresses?

I don't think anyone else is confused by it.

What's the point of a mattress anyway? Does anyone actually sleep down here?

No, it's just to make you suffer a little more imagining how wonderful, how perfectly blissful it would be to fall asleep.

I honestly can't remember the last time I slept. Like MacBeth I must've murdered sleep. I even swallow a bottle of sleeping pills and it doesn't work.

Are you sure? I mean you can't be absolutely certain can you?

Wait, are you suggesting that...

What color are the pills?

Blue.

Baby blue, powder blue, sky blue, turquoise, topaz, cyan, cerulean...

Sky blue.

You should've taken the ice-blue ones, the color of Samuel Beckett's eyes, that would've done the trick. Do you know why the pills are blue?

No, but I know you're about to tell me.

In all the trials blue pills are far more effective than any other color, except among Italian men. Someone suggests it's because the Italian National Football team is called Gli Azzurri, the blues, so the thought of blue gives Italian men a little adrenaline rush not conducive to sleep, but the French National team is also called the blues, Les Bleus, and no such anomaly, no failure of the blue sleeping pill is found among French males.

So why do blue pills work so well?

Because you associate blue with peaceful thoughts and feelings, spiritual beauty, and because the borders of blue objects tend to dissolve – this melting away mirrors falling asleep. All blue things have something in common with the blue sky, something without boundaries, seemingly infinite. But if you see Earth from space you realize the atmosphere is just a thin blue ring against a vast blackness. Dante knows the blue pills won't work for him – the pills Dante takes are black, the color of his bile.

...

It's so easy to lose my focus. I don't mean the black Focus I drive and sometimes forget where it's parked, but then that is what I mean, interruptive thoughts.

Attention is the natural prayer of the soul, but the ego loves to fantasize – a self-defense mechanism – its existence depends upon maintaining psychic supremacy, sitting on the throne of consciousness as the all-encompassing “I” – an imaginary king of an imaginary kingdom.

Language equivocates – take the word *stable*, I mean stability but it also refers to where the horses are, so *Je est un autre*, “I” is a beast as well, whether broken or not.

Being broken reminds me of something Brent says about having a child, it breaks you in ways you need to be broken, breaks down the ego's desires, forces you to give in to a certain amount of chaos, the aspect of having a child that frightens me most, the loss of control connected to melancholia, the annihilation of innocence.

You can't take a single step toward the infinite, you must wait actively, openly with pure focus and God will cross infinite space instantly and enter you. Only God isn't anything external, or in-, it's nondual, your whole being none other than it.

Isn't God a bit of a mixed message?

My high-school football coach says there's no I in TEAM, but he's a sadist (unsurprising since American football is founded on militant conformity, terrified obedience, masochistic machismo and violently repressed homoeroticism). Remember *All the Right Moves* when a young Tom Cruise, after their falling out, meets his coach on the street at night and says “you're a high-school football coach” (claps loudly, ironically) “you're not God.” I identify with the character and the narrative. There's no I in GOD because it's not an individual, nothing specific or singular, not this particular entity or essence as opposed to everything else.

There's an I in TIME (and a ME) because it's personal, and finite.

Let your self-image go dormant so your whole being can become attuned to God, both a process – the evolutionary unfolding of the universe – and the practice of tuning in and realizing you're already a fully embodied feature of that process.

Sounds like a lovely self-help book. There's no I in CHEESE.

Yeah, it's a little sappy but I think there's something to it. I think I know what it means but as soon as I say the words “I think” I realize I don't really know what it means, maybe I can't know.

Maybe the “I” can't know?

Right, but then where does that leave me?

...

I'm lying in bed and notice a few bunches of bananas on the bed, then one turns into a small snake, I take it by the neck and squeeze and some fluid comes out in a jet stream. The other bananas have all become snakes too, so I aim the jet stream at them and they start to dissolve when I wake. The dream is sparked by seeing a vet tech at Arcata Animal Hospital holding a small beautiful snake with the lump of a mouse halfway down its body. A snake is a head and one long neck, esophagus, alimentary canal – a voracious phallic symbol.

Your desire is to become the phallus entering the orifice, snake into hole like cock into mouth, anus, vagina.

But instead of the jet stream being a life-giving force it destroys the other snakes, so the dream uses desire itself to put out the fire of desire, all its little flames. It's not

about destroying desire by totally sublimating it, replacing lust with the quest for enlightenment – it's okay to eat, drink and have recreational sex, what's not okay is to become obsessed with and possessed by desire, addicted, enslaved.

Siddhartha preaches the middle way, mediation between self-indulgence on one hand and self-deprivation on the other.

But he experiences both extremes before coming to the realization of the middle – the more you indulge the more deprived you are, and the more you deprive yourself the more you indulge in a fantasy. So the Buddhist advises moderation – advice is a wonderful thing to give, it should never be taken oneself.

...

I'm driving, Dylan's sitting next to me and the upholstery like wallpaper is covering his face as he shuts his eyes and opens them – I see his eyelids go up and down thru the paper. Then I'm in a room in an old house, there's pubic hair in the bottom corners and cobwebs in the doorway. I feel very emotional when I realize it's Mom and Dad's old bedroom and bathroom – the toilet's yellow with age, in the cupboard are small bars of wrapped soap like the ones in hotel bathrooms. On a very dusty mantle are old black and white family photos I can't make out. Then I'm in the kitchen cooking something, I knock the stove door by accident and the gas flares up – the knob is stuck, I can't turn it back down – I'm struggling with it when the whole thing bursts into flames and I call out to someone in the next room, “Chris!” I think there's a baby in there too when I wake.

It's Chris Still, as in whiskey still. Like the Gillian Welch song, *Tear My Stillhouse Down*.

During Prohibition there's a big proliferation of home stills for making alcohol from anything, including clothes and furniture (distilling wood produces methanol which causes blindness, hence the expression “blind drunk”). Lots of house fires ensue, so the dream is partly about destruction caused by desire, addiction.

The word *still* has a wonderful polysemy – to be calm, centered, relaxed enough to fall asleep and dream. The house is still there after all these years, still as in a photograph, the dusty black and whites on the mantle that symbolize the stillness of death.

The stove sparks the memory of Shrinky Dinks – we color on polystyrene sheets and put them in the oven, they come out like stained-glass figures. Robby really likes them. It's one of the only memories I have of all 4 of us together – Mom, Dad, Robby and me.

Maybe it's those Shrinky Dinks in the dream oven, maybe what catches fire is the memory of the family unit I can never have back. That's why the dream house is full of dust and cobwebs, why the whole thing's about to go up in flames.

Bob Dylan and Dylan Thomas, he's named after both, his parents are that cool. Dylan's a friend from grad school who once says he feels like a lesbian trapped in a man's body. Seeing his eyes shut and open behind the wallpaper-like upholstery reminds me of the movie *Samsara*, when a Hindu dance is performed by girls in extremely colorful face paint that makes it difficult to tell exactly where their facial features are. When they close and open their eyes it's magical, you can't tell at first they're human eyes – little avatars, little Krishnas. It also reminds me of *The Yellow Wallpaper*, Charlotte Gilman's story about a woman trapped in a marriage, imprisoned by gender roles, going mad believing she sees eyes behind bars in patterns of torn wallpaper, a woman, many women trying to escape.

The wallpaper in my closet is torn, revealing a jaundiced San Francisco Chronicle from April 11, 1901. This house is built in 1895, 3 years after the appearance of *The Yellow Wallpaper*.

What do I make of the pubic hair in the dream house?

When I live in that house I'm a little boy, pubic hair is something mysterious and scary. I remember Dad standing at the toilet peeing, holding the nozzle of that limp snake, the stutters of piss its tongue darting.

The dream toilet is yellow with age like the yellow wallpaper, the little wrapped bars of soap are yellow too. They remind me of Julio, Mom's boyfriend who steals them from hotels – the opposite of Dad's big green curved bars of Irish Spring which represent permanence but end up being as transitory as hotel soap.

That house is torn down in the early 90s, the whole block is condos now.

But even if the house were still there, like Gertrude Stein says upon returning to her childhood home in Oakland, *there is no there there*. The repetition mirrors Jack Spicer's, *if memory serves there/ that rock out there/ is more to it*.

There's more to the story than time passing thru us – there's poetry, the memory of a language within, of a dream.

Like the baby in the dream, no name or gender, its potentiality completely open.

Only it's about to die before the whole dream house goes up in flames.

The reason I can't go back to that house isn't because it's all ashes now but because I can't separate time from space. The house could be in the same place but never the same space-time. Going back in dream-time, in the time-machine of the dream, is the only way because a dream does away with the distinction between place and space-time.

...

I'm standing on a cliff at the end of the world holding a half-eaten apple looking into a

cave at a group of men, Irish immigrants from the early 20th century – very dirty, suspenders holding up grimy pants – they're pushing a car off the cliff, I see it fall and land upside-down. Then I'm standing on the ground beside the smashed car, twisted metal and shattered glass when I wake.

Then is merely a convention, signifying an abyss that cannot be signified.

Fall into melancholia, a loss of innocence in which eating the apple amounts not to the knowledge of good and evil but the knowledge of madness, looking into the abyss, being on the know-ledge and falling. *Hello, says the apple. Both of us were object.*

Being devoured by gravity or God, you think you're eating the apple but you're being eaten, or more accurately your mind is consuming itself. But you regain control and become a subject again, that's what it means when the apple speaks.

The Irish men look like coal miners. Exploited by the British Empire then by American Capitalism, their final act of defiance is to push the seminal symbol of modernity, the automobile, off a cliff at the end of the world.

The dream is about what happens to me before I'm born. Industrial Revolution, the great father-son split – the family farm disappears, fathers go into factories or mines so the son no longer sees what the father does all day, doesn't see his work. This combined with the loss of initiation ceremonies common to all tribal cultures leads to a high percentage of sons entirely unprepared for manhood.

...

Infernal Dialogues (2)

Is that a pitcher plant?

Very good, and those are sundews and those are Venus flytraps.

Lovely, only carnivorous plants grow down here.

Here's a morpheumum, in the lotus family, it has hypnoidal and narcoleptic effects.

But you said no one sleeps down here. Does anyone sleep up there?

That's practically all they do.

Wow, I thought they'd all be endlessly absorbed in taking in the infinite array of inconceivably beautiful sights.

No one up there has ever seen anything, everyone is completely blind. Well, the newcomers close their eyes at first so they have a sort of theoretical sight for awhile, but eventually they open them and go instantly blind.

Because of the light you mean, because it's so bright?

Imagine being inside the sun.

You mean imagine being vaporized?

Now imagine infinite distance from God, this way.

...

I'm overly sensitive and hyper-self-conscious. *The Mousehole* begins “I'm a sick man...a mean man” but this isn't that, I'm not a sick man and I'm not mean. I mean, I do get sick sometimes. I pull out the bottom drawer and don't see a box so I close it and start to walk out, then Jamie says “wait, there's one in here, you need to get your eyes checked.” Jamie's very pregnant and can be a bit snarky but she's not being mean, she's just joking – this is A to Z Eye Care after all, but her comment bothers me for hours. It's debilitating, demoralizing because...I don't know why.

Because your inner warriors are killed off early, when you're a little boy and your parents separate. The slightest blow is like a mortal wound – someone poking your arm is a sword plunged into your heart.

It's a small white box camouflaged by stacks of white cloths. There's a pair of glasses in it that needs to be repaired. I'm a courier, my job is to take the white box to my black Focus and deliver it along with everything else – boxes of books, a cooler full of animal blood, urine and fecal samples – to a shipping container to be sorted and shipped, by truck I mean, not by ship.

I go to a beach where I know I won't see anyone. I'm not a misanthrope – I don't dislike people, I just usually feel better when they're not around. There's a ship out there on the horizon. Why didn't I say I take all the stuff to a shipping container to be sorted and trucked? I'm so stupid sometimes. I internalize everything. My tendencies are personalization and self-blame. I get nervous and anxious around people for no reason. I hear the stress response releases a cocktail of corticoids into my bloodstream, I'm poisoning myself. In the throes of social anxiety I feel like a bug without its shell, and what do you think's going to crush this exposed bug and devour it? Nothing less than nothingness, God, death.

Who is this self you keep blaming? Who is it who's hyper-*self*-conscious?

Freud says the superego does the blaming and the ego gets blamed, often for nothing,

phantom transgressions, but this hyper-self-conscious self may be what Heidegger calls *das man*, the they-self, inauthentic and disingenuous, an illusory construction, a fabrication. Anxiety is a basic human condition. When you see a dorsal fin coming at you your fear has an object, but anxiety has no object.

It's true, when I experience social anxiety there isn't a person I'm actually afraid of.

What anxiety is anxious about, and in the face of, is being in the world, being alive.

Anxiety exposes your individuality, the absolute singularity of your being, your seemingly separate, split self alone and alive in the world.

Every individual is assimilated into society via the they-self, it's unavoidable, but your other, unsplit self is there all along, you only need to discover it, and anxiety provides an opening, a chance to awaken from the illusion of your separateness.

My new goal is to allow myself to experience the profoundly deceptively simple joy of being alive, to have the courage of my tenderness, and to accept everything that happens with simplicity and grace by letting go of any and all preconceived notions, judgments and expectations – in short, to be free.

I'm annoyed by the suspicion that I might live the way I do, might've set up my life this way because it's simply the path of least resistance, the easiest way for me to live.

You also live on the path of most resistance, gravitating toward the point of maximum tension where poetry waits – between the dominant mode of normative grammar and the maternal realm based in rhythm unbounded by grammatical conventions (from a baby sounding out the cadence of a sentence without yet knowing the words to Louis Armstrong scat singing) idiosyncratic, free-flowing, bordering on meaninglessness and psychosis – to be born.

...

I'm sitting on my board in the water not far from a woman with long blond hair sitting on her board waiting – somewhere in Northern California, a backdrop of forested mountains patched with fog, Jacob's-ladder sunbeams – when I feel the surge. I'm prone on my board moving thru the water magically, no wave is pushing me, then I turn back toward the woman and she's being attacked – she's thrashing, trying to kick free but the shark is on top of her. I move in close and start swinging my board at it like an ax when it turns to face me and I wake.

The surge represents anxiety, a speeding up of my internal clocks, but the magical form of locomotion is a wish-fulfillment. The woman is an object of desire desired by me and by the shark. She's also my female other, the girl I'm supposed to be. See, my parents already have a boy, so Mom wants me to be a girl named Shari. As a substitute for me she can be attacked and even killed because she's never born.

Shari and shark.

In the embryonic stage before gender is determined the human is indistinguishable from the fish. What becomes the fish's gills becomes part of the human's inner ear. The history of your biological evolution is written in your genes and can be read back to the ocean. Your body's mostly water and it's salty, bloody saltwater like a scene in *Jaws*.

I always identify with the boy curled up on the overturned boat, a red boat, hugging the keel which resembles a dorsal fin (Spielberg nicely overdetermines the symbol) when he sees the woman swimming toward him and the shark comes up behind and completely engulfs her, one of the most traumatic moments of my childhood, not knowing it would become an extended metaphor for every other trauma – my parents' divorce, my bout with melancholia, alcoholism, every lost love, every death.

...

I'm walking a trail in the woods beside my mother, 2 small boys and a full-grown lion. In a little clearing there's a white claw-foot bathtub (with one broken foot) full of water. The lion steps into it and begins to shrink – it shrinks all the way down to an embryo. I fish it out and hold it in my palm for the kids to see, then I set it down and it grows back to full size, a big male lion with a long mane. We're all excited by this and want to do it again, so we coax the lion back in the tub and he shrinks into an embryo, white and indistinguishable, no way to tell what type of embryo – fish, amphibian, reptile, bird, mammal – I tell the boys it might grow into an octopus, a monkey or a person, we just don't know. I set it down and it turns back into a full-grown lion. Mom is telling us that's enough because it's not good for the lion to keep doing this when I wake.

Walking thru a forest of symbols, in the Oz books the lion lacks courage – tho he's king of the forest, he's afraid, and his fear makes him shrink.

I'm a Leo.

Mom's there to teach me it's wrong to exploit the MGM lion for entertainment, and my theory that the embryo can develop into any kind of creature is wrong – its outcome genetically predetermined, it can only grow into a male lion whose dignity, whose boundaries need to be respected.

I wonder what the absent father has to teach...maybe the lion is the father, maybe it's all about trying to give birth to your own father, and failing.

Interpenetration, no clear boundary between where one thing ends and another begins, they mutually comprise, contain and reflect each other.

It's about fear...of fatherhood, of God. You humans are only afraid of 3 things: other people, the outside world and your own minds. Apart from that you're undaunted.

A womb, the claw-foot tub is another lion, the weak one, the tame meek one who doesn't stand up for himself because he's so sensitive and self-conscious, full of anxiety and fear, he feels unworthy, poor thing – this will lead to melancholia, the lion biting off one of his claws, self-mutilation, self-cannibalism.

If a lion could speak...but it's the ocean's roar I hear, no, it's the silence.

There is I, yes, I feel it, I confess...there is I, on the one hand, and this noise on the other...whether I am words among words or silence in the midst of silence...this long sin against the silence that enfolds us.

I remember dead ends, cul-de-sacs and sarcophagi, all the unproductive self-probing leading to paralysis. I'm incapable of forming a single coherent thought. There's no Hegelian dialectic – for every thought there's an anti-thought, and like those exotic subatomic particles they mutually annihilate each other causing a little psychic shock, like something demonic keeps pricking my mind with a safety-pin, imaginary blood running every direction in overwhelmingly chaotic patterns.

When the pills start working everything goes silent, still, black and almost blank...then I feel and hear a very faint *uh-oom*, a heartbeat.

...

Infernal Dialogues (3)

Do you know that 2,000 people kill themselves every day?

Nonsense, a person can only kill themselves once.

Clever. One man who jumps off the Golden Gate bridge survives the impact but doesn't survive the shark attack that occurs a few minutes later.

Are they listening to you?

No, they don't know I'm here, I'm completely inaudible and invisible to them.

Can they see me?

Yes, they see the real you.

What do you mean?

Imagine looking in a full-length mirror, only the eyes on the one in the mirror are closed. Your right side they perceive as your left side and vice versa, and to them it looks like you're sleepwalking talking to yourself. It has something to do with the blue pills.

Stop fucking with me.

I'm trying to help you understand your situation. See, a mirror is many things, a sword, a shield, an obstacle, Narcissus's nemesis, but it's also a threshold – worm-hole, rabbit-hole, a portal between the living and the dead – it says *let there be commerce between us*.

...

I'm lying on a couch and there's a man standing over me with a knife. I run into another room but the man is already there, then I jump thru a window but it's just another room with the same man in it – there's no outside, only an infinite number of rooms all with this same man. I realize the man is me, and I'm holding a knife because I'm in the kitchen cutting up an apple.

The rooms are real, only they don't belong to me. There's even something illusory about the construction “my mind.” Since the one thing that can't be contained by the mind is the mind itself, it doesn't make sense to talk of being in or out of it.

The ego craves attention and recognition, validation and authority, it wants to be the central commander of the psyche as Satan is the emperor of Hell.

The bout with melancholia lasts so long because I fight with all my being to regain control, but that only fuels the tension, the struggle makes it worse. When a big wave breaks in front of me, the harder I fight the faster I lose my breath because I give the wave my energy. Pop culture says never give up, but sometimes giving up/letting go is not only beneficial but the only way to survive.

...

After sex I see Laura sitting up in bed wearing a wig – I look closer and see the whites of her eyes widen into a screen on which demonic imagery, fiery and bloody, is being projected – it frightens me awake. The wig points to my grandma when chemo makes her bald and scary, a shriveled decrepit horrific image the wig only intensifies, a wig on a breathing corpse – but Laura's still attractive, healthy and fit with long lovely fiery red hair.

Don't fear aging and dying, fear the afterlife exploited by Dante, 20 centuries of scare tactics forcing obedience with an omnipotent threat, the hellfires of everlasting damnation.

Being a Westerner means no escape from the influence of supernatural paranoia – to unlearn it would require unlearning a colonial language. You too have been coerced unwittingly into obedience.

The dream is sparked by a soccer incident, when the ball strikes Laura in the face and injures her eye – she goes to a hospital for eyedrops to prevent the pupil from enlarging further and damaging her vision.

Dilated pupils signal sexual arousal – the dream substitutes the white of the eye for the black, conjunctiva for pupil. The dream's a teacher, I'm a pupil.

The dream's a preacher, you're a pew.

Fear of violence must be related to fear of death, the trauma about which nothing can be said since trauma itself is speechlessness, the death of language.

...

I'm driving Becky, my old Mazda pickup, with Ann beside me looking for parking when I realize we're flying over the coast looking for a beach. We come down a little steeply but manage to land safely in the sand, then we drive to an aquarium where we both work. She's taking care of a rare fish, a big iridescent seahorse with a cat-like face, a tail that coils and uncoils like a fern-frond but also weaves side-to-side – a long lizard-like tail slithers thru the water as I wake.

Remember flying Becky – I'm driving with my left arm straight out the window parallel to the street, Ann's in the passenger seat, her right arm straight out the window parallel to the street, we raise and lower our arms in unison so it looks to the cars behind us like we're flying. We stop flapping and glide, to veer right I raise my arm a bit while she lowers hers a bit, vice versa to veer left.

It's a wish-fulfillment from over 20 years ago, not only flying but being with Ann (my high-school sweetheart) at the Seattle aquarium where we both wanna work back then. I'm grateful for the appearance of the magnificent dream-fish – a chimera, a variation on a creature in Borges' *Book of Imaginary Beings* – representing the soul, something that doesn't exist in any ordinary sense, it only exists in dreams and even there it's endangered, in need of protection, conservation.

The creature's reality is unquestionable. Maybe a dream replicates waking-life experience virally, hijacking its genetic material and cloning it so that “you” – your clone, your dream figure/figment – can't distinguish between a fish and the mind of the sleeping man it swims thru.

...

I hear the word LONGEEF, then someone beside me says “thief” and it turns into a chase scene. I'm watching a car (a man driving, a woman beside him) speed toward a large structure in the street, it's a bookshelf, when the car crashes into it hundreds of books fall on the car. Each thud is a little explosion, it sounds like gunfire, then I realize it is gunfire, several men are shooting at the car for a few seconds, then silence. It's pitch black but I sense a male presence behind me, must be one of the shooters, I'm panicking as I wake.

It's about Thoth, the Egyptian god of both wisdom and magic, hence poetry, scribe of the gods, inventor of letters and numbers associated with Prometheus and Hermes, the messenger. The syllable LONG corresponds to the TH sound, so LONGEEF becomes “thief.” Substituting LONG for the first TH in THOTH you get LONG OTH (LONG-O-LONG, Longfellow). The commitment to poetry is a lifelong oath akin to a marriage – a disordered devotion to the real becomes wedded to an other. Dedicating one's life to Thoth means trafficking amongst ghosts.

The dream implies a connection between poetry and theft, plagiarism – not just quoting

without quotation marks but using found texts from anywhere and rearranging, reappropriating. There's no danger of being shot. It's not that mainstream society will revile you, its authorities track you down and kill you, you aren't a cool outlaw, an anti-hero like Bonnie and Clyde. On the contrary, the danger is in being ignored, marginalized, considered irrelevant, someone who produces esoteric nonsense with no commercial value. You won't hunt me down. I won't be found. I'll be abandoned, isolated, alienated, alone.

Disconnected from the rest of society, a disyllable in a world of monosyllables, a “poet” awakened by the distance between the o and the e (e for everyone, o for other, me) I isolate myself whether I'm writing or not. But I can't just be a passive spectator, I'm complicit, part of the dreamscape. Threatened by shadows at night, exposed in the light, I choose to be a poet partly because it offers an escape from anxiety. I don't choose this thing, accepting alienation as one of its negative consequences, I choose it *because* it's alienating – the paradox is that it often fuses my whole being to the rest of the world.

...

I'm on a skateboard in my underwear holding a laundry basket full of dirty clothes, riding down a sidewalk in downtown L.A. coming to the edge of a high curb when I wake. *One flew east, one flew west and one flew over the cuckoo's nest. Have you ever heard the saying, a rolling stone gathers no moss? Yeah, it's a little like don't wash your dirty underwear in public.* In bed in my underwear unable to sleep for the third straight night I get up at 3AM and take a shower – the sickly yellow light the presence of horror entering every pore of my flesh, steam fogging the mirror so I have no reflection.

During melancholia I become extremely stationary to the point of atrophy, paralysis, gathering moss. I spend most of that time in bed in my underwear not sleeping. In the dream I'm rolling (not gathering moss) looking for somewhere to wash my

dirty clothes, including underwear, in public. I'm able to maneuver thru the city, to survive like I survive the breakdown. I don't know where I'm going, if there's any destination other than back into waking life, the destination of all dreams except Shakespeare's – *for in that sleep what dreams may come*.

...

In the Montrose condo in Mom's room there's no bed, then I notice 2 small beds by the closet and my face in the mirror, blond hair, blue eyes contemplative, distraught. Then I walk to my old room, on the ground by the door a hole with loose plaster and rubble. I look thru the window, there's a man (dark hair and glasses) and a little girl doing repairs on the roof when I wake. Actually there's no roof out that window but a sheer drop to concrete. It's the ledge I perch from in my underwear and almost jump, headfirst.

The hole in the floor's a metaphor for melancholia, the ground being taken out from under me. Remember the rocker from one of the other units trying to impress me by plugging in his electric guitar and playing Ted Nugent – atrocious, my head ringing, his unit putrid, the walls grey-yellow with grime, smoke, burn marks and gouges, missing carpet, exposed concrete gashed and rubble symbolizing the state of my soul. Remember staring at my reflection, crying and punching the mirror, Narcissus with a broken eye and a sack of blue glass, a broken I.

Mom's missing bed and the two small empty beds represent the broken family, lost childhood, loss of the archaic *Thing*. The man on the roof must be Gary Thompson and his daughter Emily, named after Emily Dickinson. Repairing a roof that isn't there they're doing repairs on my soul. Mentor, father-figure, Gary stamps owls on my essays and poems, helps me believe in my writer-self. When the breakdown begins I ask him if anyone's ever gone mad writing poetry. “No,” he smiles, “it's important to keep your sense of humor – writers with mental illness, severe depression, focus on writing to hold themselves together, find relief

and healing in the work.” But it's too late. The last thing I write is *Fight the Demons with Poetry*. Actually a demon writes it, I'm convinced.

I can say this now because more than 20 years have passed. It takes a long time for a whole flock of demons to pass all the way thru your being – they could just as well be owls.

...

A sleeping-pill blue sky, a blue sleeping-bag in the grass under the overpass, Johnny Cash on the stereo, *one foot on Jacob's Ladder and one foot in the fire, and it all goes down in your mind (in yo mind, in yo mind, in yo mind, in yo mind) it all goes down in your mind.*

Driving, listening to music (any genre, style, tempo) I'm struck by something immediately universally human – pulse, lifeline, heartbeat. Music is organized sound, words are music organized into syllables – stressed or unstressed, long or short (or short-long, Shakespeare's iambs). Even a one-syllable word has a musical structure. HOUSE has 3 phonemes. The H and S sounds are short and quiet, barely audible while the OU sound (a diphthong, 2 vowels harmonically fused) is a long loud cry of pain.

Language is the house of Being. I live in this house, a creaky Victorian built in 1895, scraps of the April 11, 1901 San Francisco Chronicle still glued to redwood slats in the closet. I sleep and dream in this house I rent, it doesn't belong to me. Thru the bedroom window I see a strip of Humboldt Bay and a strip of Pacific Ocean, the limits of my language the limits of my world. I'm always in the ocean – it's not mine, I belong to it.

Dawn, gold-orange sun beginning to top the ridge, first rays sweeping an ink-blue surface, I'm sitting on a beach watching head-high glassy hollow waves break. My

shoulder is healed and I'm itching to paddle out, but one of my booties is torn so I walk back to my truck to get another one. Walking back to shore I notice one of my fins is broken, so I return to the truck to get another one. Walking back to shore again I have a premonition, something else will go wrong, I don't know what, I'm feeling a rush of anxiety as I wake.

It's an admonition against going back in the water too soon. The opening scene – lovely morning, perfect surf, my fully healed shoulder – is a wish-fulfillment but I'm unable to surf for a different reason, equipment malfunction which seems trivial. The torn bootie and broken fin fungible metaphors for the repressed shoulder injury, for every psychic action like repression there's an equal and opposite reaction. A wish is granted – Freud whispers *be careful what you wish for* – indirectly and that indirection or change of direction (Newton's definition of stopping – changing direction) has consequences, unforeseen and negative.

According to Freud you're exceptionally adept at self-deception.

Obstacle after obstacle continually deferring the satisfaction of desire, the fulfillment of a wish, the Derridean trace – an endless deferral linked to the endless chain of signification. A word gets its meaning by differing from other words and by deferring its ability to have meaning in itself. Each word requires other words to define it – it's strictly forbidden to define itself.

But being an American means inventing yourself, defining the invention and refining it. When you realize, after 20 years of remodeling and editing, that your invention is not only not a work of art but that your identity is founded on nothing, grounded in nothing, then the ground itself begins to fall away.

...

Infernal Dialogues (4)

Where am I?

Have you ever been to a cemetery?

Yes, lovely gardens.

Have you ever been to Wales?

Ah Leviathan...and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short compared to the hot-blooded beasts, the emperors of ocean, of ice-cream, compared to that exquisitely green countryside.

Where do you think we are?

A minute ago I was on a green cliff overlooking a blue sea eating ice-cream. Now I'm back here in this wasteland. Is that an alley? Those look like trash cans.

That shimmering blue thing you were looking at isn't an ocean, it's a sleeping pill. This will take you awhile to understand. Meantime there are people in those trash cans. We can go talk to them, but they don't speak English.

What do they speak?

Well, it's not Welsh or Gaelic or anything Celtic, but they look very Irish. In their strange language they say the same thing over and over: *there's nothing funnier than unhappiness, there's nothing funnier than unhappiness, there's nothing...*

No, I'm not feeling well now and they'll only make it worse.

...

I walk down the hall into my room and notice my desk is missing, which produces a panic attack and a sickness in my stomach. I throw up what looks like oatmeal on the floor before waking.

My desk is where I write, where I'm writing this right now and this is a crucial aspect of my identity, my main coping mechanism. The desk hasn't been stolen, "I" have either moved or died, so my dream figure/figment is a ghost and the realization makes me sick. Oatmeal is what my father has for breakfast. The desk belonged to my father's father. The disappearance of the desk, of me, signals the end of the family line (and the written line). Remember Roderick Usher, only I'm not haunted by the ghost of a sibling or an ancestor but by the sudden understanding that "I" am already dead.

When I swallow the sleeping pills I really don't want to die. I accept it as a possible outcome, but what I want is to sleep – *to die, to sleep, perchance to dream* – the one can only dream if one is alive, with brain waves, a beating heart. If I know with certainty that the choice is between spending the rest of my life in a state of melancholic insanity or death, I choose death in a heartbeat. I can't imagine ever being healthy again because I'm so far gone. But I don't have any certainty. It's doubt, it's not knowing that saves me.

Maybe I don't die simply because I don't want to. I'm not ready to jump off the window-ledge because of a strange fear of Hell (which I'm already in) the hell of not dying but becoming a vegetable – failing at life, failing at suicide, then not being able to attempt it again, needing to convince someone else to do it for me, to me. Maybe the pills can't kill me because I'm 21 and fit, my heart young and strong. I'm absolutely certain that I don't know, that not knowing is fertile.

Yes, a psyche can survive its own eclipse. Everyone has both a healthy person and a sick person inside – never underestimate the strength of the sick one, the weakness of the healthy one.

Quiet strength, the ego needs to be strong and secure enough to go dormant (Latin *dormire*, to sleep). Siddhartha sits under a bodhi tree at twilight, meditates thru the night and in the morning finally his ego falls asleep and the Buddha awakens.

But the stronger the ego the less likely it is to allow itself to be subdued, and the more time it spends in the imaginary realm. Some other, more mature aspect of the psyche must subdue the ego, which won't go to its room and be quiet on its own. A parent must send it there, where of course it will resort to fantasy.

When I ask my father what he's up to he invariably says *work, work, work, work, work, work, work* – always 7 repetitions (7 days a week) always the same cadence. When you're busy working all the time (except while trying to fall asleep) you don't have any time for unproductive self-probing, self-induced stress – you don't have time to sit around thinking, which is what I do but it's hard work, a labor of love, tho sometimes love's labor's lost.

You don't know...I'm fully expecting *what love is*...what work is.

He who works shall give birth to his own father.

...

I wake up and see Mom standing in the doorway naked with her legs open to me, then I actually wake. It's a frightening image, a death image, as if I'm being beckoned back into the womb, into oblivion, the death before life with no hope of being born again. She's monstrous in the doorway, almost as tall as the ceiling – the devouring mother, a Kali figure. But the image also expresses the mother's fertility, fecundity, the goddess Astarte. The Oedipal moment spread-eagle in the doorway, she's totally vulnerable, willing to sacrifice her whole being for the well-being of her son. During the breakdown Mom does everything in her power to help me, protect me, save me, but she's completely drained because melancholia is

more powerful than love, but love is all she has.

When actively practicing unattachment and self-denial I'm spiritually awake. Driving home from an AA meeting alone late at night thru a forest I say *God, are you there?*...there's a hiss, no, it's a yess criss-crossing around and thru the space between me and my not-self. It's the sound of my wheels turning, an answer welling up from the unconscious, I'm awake in a region of the psyche outside the ego's control.

I'm driving thru the woods at night, headlights in my rearview growing brighter and brighter becoming a single blinding glow, I turn left and the road keeps curving sharper and faster so I must be going in circles, my anxiety decreasing slightly as I realize I can just let go because I don't really have control of the car anyway, it's on some kind of track being powered by an external force. Then I'm driving a boat on Puget Sound when it rises up out of the water and I'm flying, then I'm hovering behind the boat holding onto it by a rope, then the rope starts to twist and the boat begins to flip over and spin – it looks smaller now as if further away from me like I'm holding the string of a kite which is spinning and flipping around in the air when I wake.

It doesn't occur to me to let go of the rope.

The blinding headlights recall the final scene in *Silkwood*. The circles recall *The Inferno*.

The circles also remind me of Seatac Airport which, along with Puget Sound, represents my father. Letting go in relation to him means not identifying myself in opposition to him. All the Oedipal energy expended, there's so much at stake for the ego, as if survival depends upon distinguishing itself from its father. Of course this is an illusion. I say “of course” as if it's easy for me, the responsible writing subject, to distance myself from my ego. Maybe that distance is crucial, but I have no guarantee that it's there, here.

Letting go of the whole chain of assumptions and being in freefall like the moon around the earth around the sun around the black hole at the center of the Milky Way, everything's falling away from everything else, and yet...

The infinite calmness that holds up all the falling reminds me of what Laura says about using anxiety, harnessing its energy to positive effect – it doesn't always have to be debilitating.

Think of the trillions of actions a body must perform constantly, almost none of which “I” have any conscious control over, dreams fueled by crowd energy.

Don't notice them, ignore them or be annoyed by them, they are like you...who don't like to see your own self-interest reflected back to you blackly.

Don't remember your dreams because you don't want to. Fear the shadow you call night, fear the black energy of the unconscious.

Freud's is a dungeon full of blood diamonds. Suzuki's is empty, formless, pure and luminous.

...

I'm lucid, walking in a crowd of women looking for someone, I'll know her when I see her – face after unfamiliar female face passes. Then I see her and suddenly we're in a big dim concrete warehouse. Briefly I think I'm being fellated, I think I'm ejaculating but I'm urinating. Then finally she's on her back wanting me. During coitus her face morphs into the faces of the women I just passed on the sidewalk, then it turns into an old man's face, I'm unable to change it back. I go outside to my car and see someone has gone thru my wallet – the contents are there but disheveled. There's a cop parked behind me, it's Matthew Broderick with a fake mustache and I'm realizing he's the one who went thru my wallet when I wake.

It's all a farce being caught on candid camera – I'm secretly being filmed, but by whom?

Awareness oscillates between the one being recorded and the one recording.

During lucidity awareness seems to occupy both positions at once, but apparently no one, neither my dream figure/figment nor the camera operator, has control over the dreamscape. There must be a director, but it can never be identified or located, certainly not in the mirror.

A dream is structured by symbols, the subconscious thought process far removed from any civic or legal identity. Who dreams the dream? The question assumes an agency that isn't there. A dream is an event with no one in it. No one is dreaming, yet no one but me experiences this particular dream. Dreaming or being dreamed, I'm homeless in the house of Being.

The repetitive failure to fulfill a fantasy implies that desire isn't mine, it's where my volition ends. Desire threatens to annihilate the ego, which tries to grab the reins but it's futile, desire a force of nature, a wild horse.

Male *jouissance* always attached to an object, a sex-object a dictator, my will is foreclosed and I'm enslaved to the sex-drive.

Is the opposite of desire self-discipline, self-denial and unattachment?

In *The Inferno* we yearn for what we fear.

The yearning isn't yours, it belongs to the species, the other, the not-self.

My wallet contains my identification, my legal identity. It's been tampered with by a fake cop, a pop icon, ego-identity being formed and manipulated by image-obsession, the irrational movement of projection-identification, the loss of self inherent in desire where one's identity isn't merely tampered with but nullified.

Only when you begin to inhabit your not-self will the world begin to open and reveal itself to you, as you.

...

Being someone who writes down their dreams and interprets them, treats them like poetry, what's the point?

It's extremely important to me, tho how useful it is to the community, the culture I can't say. To live a reflective life means first discovering what's relevant and what's not relevant to that life, what matters and what doesn't, then being able to intuit the difference while always remaining open to possibilities.

But what's the point?

To what purpose, April, do you return again?/ Beauty is not enough.

I'm supposed to want certain things, a wife and kids, a career (Dad thought I'd be a doctor) without any critique of why, it's just the way it is, like driving on the right side of the street. If I don't drive on the right side of the street in this country the consequences will be traumatic, but if I don't get married and have kids, if I reject the notion that what is valuable, meaningful and valid (in terms of what one ought to want) is purely determined by tradition and convention, then the consequences will be...

The difference between what I want and what others want me to want is spreading.

To what purpose, Anxiety, do you return again?

The absolute singularity of my being is not enough, but if you could see a black hole it might be the most beautiful thing in the universe.

I'm standing by a second-story window with two black cats on the ledge. I push one off and it falls all the way to the ground without righting itself and dies. Then I push the other one and it twists itself around in freefall, lands on its feet and walks away when I wake.

Jack is a black cat I don't want and I'm secretly glad when Alan has him euthanized. A perfect euphemism, the first syllable the homophone *youth*, the dry scientific tone of the word sterilizes it, removes it from the realm of killing and death. When I catch Jack scratching vigorously against my records I kick him. I feel guilty whenever I see the shredded spines of my Cat Stevens albums, as if Jack had targeted them, saying *I'm the real cat, motherfucker*.

Jack has terrible flea problems – disgusting, inflamed red bald patches. Medication works for awhile but they return with a supernatural vengeance.

Jack has a horrible tooth infection, a purulent black golfball on the right side of his face so he can't see thru his right eye until it pops, pussy and bloody, the vertical black pupil-slit and yellow iris visible again but the pain must be overwhelming, he stops eating much or moving much toward the end.

I don't like Jack and I resent the responsibility of having him here (he's not mine), feeding him, cleaning up after him, fighting the fleas. The guilt is the worst part – guilt for feeling resentful, for not liking him, for being relieved when he's gone, “put down,” they say, murdered.

It's proof that I'm not really compassionate, I'm selfish. Janet tells me I could never love another person because I'm so in love with myself, shortly after which the breakdown begins. She plants the idea and I extrapolate – I'm so egotistical and narcissistic I'll never love another human being, I'm sick, a sycophant, malignant, pusillanimous and nefarious, I'm the wicked witch, the black cat, I'm evil and I deserve to die.

There's a guy in the psych ward about my age, 21, who believes he's possessed by a child, his "inner child" at the moment of the cataclysmic loss, Julia Kristeva's loss of the archaic *Thing*, Mom and her breast, God, cosmic oneness, childhood itself which will henceforth be substituted for by language, the inauguration of ego-consciousness, individual subjecthood, memory, a life-story, the illusory narrative of a uniquely fabricated *I*.

A ghost child who refuses the deal ruptures the psyche and haunts the gap.

He's just as lethargic and lugubrious as I am. There's a hollowing out of all that used to have affective content, words have no voltage, no emotional torque, I'm unable to identify with anything or anyone. When words lose their libido I'm expendable, useless, my self-image defamed, libeled. Narcissus throws a rock at the mirror, the rock sinks, the mirror returns, there's no escape.

After losing Marci, Dylan tells me I'll land on my feet. Dylan's a cool cat, he has time, extremely useful for a musician/composer. Set up your life in such a way that you have time to think about and prepare for, anticipate...death, the ground rushing up toward you as you fall.

When I'm hyper-self-conscious in the throes of social anxiety I don't have time, everything speeds up, my internal clocks race. Having time, being in the world with no discrepancy between internal and external – a clock can't be fast or slow in relation to something open indefinitely, something infinite.

...

Infernal Dialogues (5)

I'm thirsty. Is there any water down here?

Sure, the rivers Acheron, Phlegethon, Lethe, Styx, the Euxine Sea – an ocean full of euxenite, from the Greek *euxenos*, meaning kind to strangers – it's a black sea, I'm not sure black water would be very kind to your innards, it's likely toxic, potentially lethal.

Like the river Lethe, how poetic. Would you say water speaks poetry or prose?

Water doesn't sing or speak, it seeks – Sikhs whose turbans are sleeping-pill blue.

Are you deliberately trying to confuse...

Silence...do you hear that? It's a waterfall. Listen closely you'll realize there's a theme.

And what exactly is the theme?

The principal melody, plainsong, or *canto fermo* in a contrapuntal piece, or the disposition of the heavenly bodies at a particular time, the moment of a person's birth for instance – you're a Leo, as in leopard – or the topic or subject at hand, in this case avarice, symbolized by the leopard. Chaucer's theme is *Radix malorem est Cupiditas* – the root of evil is avarice, insatiable desire for wealth and/or sexual conquests. Because of Cupid, some come to believe that the root of evil is love. Some poor souls are here because of a simple mistranslation.

I remember the pharmacist, a Sikh named Singh in a light-blue turban, and I remember saying I love you to Janet on the phone but I don't mean it, I feel guilty, even evil because I only want to have sex with her, so I cheat on my girlfriend and I have to drop out of school because I can't sleep, I can't sleep, I can't...

...

I'm swinging from a rope over the ocean, no land in sight but there's a boat, I swing toward it and see a family, they want me to come aboard but there's not much room so I decide to swing away. Then everything goes blank as if the film cuts to black, then I see myself walking around the side of a house looking for my surfing gear when I wake.

There's nothing to stop the top of the rope. It's not anchored to anything up there (just gravity) and yet you're here, you're alive for as long as the rope holds. Trusting the rope is a leap of faith, a paradox, letting go while holding on.

I want to join them, be part of the family, but I don't want to give up my personal space – a basic need, the first one.

Remember the big lie of the personal.

Blankness represents not knowing – who you are, where you're going or why.

But I know who I am and where I'm going, back to the ocean, to a freedom both frightening and rejuvenating, to feel attuned to natural rhythms, in sync...the homophone *sink* points to the blackness at the bottom of the drain.

In Jonathon Edwards' *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God* a spider dangles over a black cauldron, dangling over Hell the sinner held up by the thinnest of threads, the grace of God. Robby's a born-again fundamentalist Christian, the family on the boat must be my own, but I don't see the sea as Hell even if it contains great white sea-monsters.

Ocean is the origin (Earth's origin, cosmic ocean) of death, the ocean you return to, the one you never really leave, the ocean of time within and all around – even if you live a thousand miles from the coast every continent is surrounded by water like every rock jutting up above the sea, Earth itself an island.

*No man is an island, entire of itself. Each is a piece of the continent...*but every morning I awaken within the confines of my prison, my ego-consciousness a life sentence. To awaken in a book is romantic, when Aurora separates recto from verso and lights the lines of these leaves, when dawn blooms in here I am no longer me.

Something black awakens in the psyche and rises, a black malevolence billowing, a small part of a wing of something far too large to be seen in totality, cuts me off from everything and everyone, isolates me within the black cage of an infinitely solitary confinement. A reification of a premonition that the transcendent horror is loneliness, excluded engagement in the self, the paranoid hallucination has come true – a closed circuit, the current both applied and received from within.

David Foster Wallace accurately describes it as a level of psychic pain wholly incompatible with human life, a sense of radical and thoroughgoing evil not just as a feature but as the essence of conscious existence, a sense of poisoning that pervades the self at the self's most elementary levels, a nausea of the cells and soul. All the alternatives associated with human agency – sitting or standing, doing or resting, speaking or keeping silent, living or dying – are not just unpleasant but literally horrible.

During melancholia, psychotic depression, death isn't suddenly appealing – the person in whom *Its* invisible agony reaches a certain unendurable level will kill herself the same way a trapped person will eventually jump from the window of a burning high-rise. When the flames get close enough, falling to death becomes the slightly less terrible of two terrors. No one else understands the jump simply because they don't see the flames.

Someone on TV says seeing people jump from the windows of the twin towers (two are holding hands) gives him hope, they maintain their agency to the end, their choice. Someone else describes it as absolute hopelessness. A melancholic who commits suicide is in the same position as the people on the window-ledges of the

twin towers, only there're no terrorists or planes, no explosions or crumbling buildings, only a piercing blue sky, the blue light of consciousness.

Melancholia, black bile, black sun, what it extinguishes is the blue light, not consciousness itself. I'm acutely aware that this isn't a dream, I won't gasp awake saying thank God it wasn't real. And I'm absolutely certain I didn't take anything, I'm not having a bad drug-trip that will eventually wear off. No, this is really happening, I'm in Hell – no light at the end of the tunnel, this blackness infinite.

Mom says *this too shall pass*, echoing George Harrison's *All Things Must Pass*, but I have no access to anything experiential here, no emotion – it's an outline only, a sensible concept all hollowed out, nothing alive inside it. With an open wound, a physical wound, you clean it, rub some ointment on it, bandage it, eventually a scab forms then gradually fades away leaving behind a scar, but here it's the other way around – no focal point, what's painful is existence itself, a wound the size of your whole being doesn't heal over time, it penetrates deeper and deeper until your tortured soul is utterly and thoroughly possessed.

Solipsism, anhedonia, death in life, you haven't rotated away from your star and are simply moving thru the shadow you call night, no, you're falling thru empty freezing black space trillions of light-years from the nearest star, no, some diabolical finger has pressed the red button and turned off all the stars in the universe – demonic afterimages ambush your psyche.

I haven't slept in weeks, I can't sleep because my mind is racing, the nightmare in which something or someone is after me has come true, I'm awake in a continuous panic state. Because I can't see who or what is attacking me every object in my immediate environment is malignant, everything part of the overwhelmingly ominous malevolent force closing in on me, I'm collapsing, being eaten alive from the inside, a cancer of the psyche.

I'm sitting in a nondescript chair at a nondescript table in a psych ward cafeteria trying to eat a bowl of cereal, but I'm shaking too much to get the spoon all the way up and into my mouth. A big bald unattractive guy says *Quit shaking, yer freakin' me out*, which of course makes me shake more. I don't remember what kind of cereal. It doesn't matter, it's all the same. During melancholia your favorite foods are utterly indistinguishable from everything else, everything tastes like mush sprinkled with ashes, the ashes of your former self.

I live in a continual state of receptivity to the silence, the absence of God.

I mean God the self-created, self-contained entity, a closed system, the individual supernatural being with an agenda, the child's internalized earthly father projected into cosmic space where He dictates, speaks the world into existence, proclaims its laws and enforces them eternally, rewards with endless bliss or punishes with unending torture in the hellfires of melancholia, the superego that threatens the ego with judgment, uses guilt as a weapon for self-affliction, to be made in His image the apotheosis of narcissism and hubris – such a God could only be a monomaniacal bigot, nepotistic, sexist, racist, homophobic, xenophobic, a cosmically psychotic monster.

A westerner finds it almost impossible to experience something genuinely Zen, let alone *satori*, because the combined magnetic and gravitational fields of individual identity and ego-consciousness are simply too powerful.

...

Kaarin and I are having an intense conversation, she's emotional, her face elongates, distorts, grows grotesque as I wake. Kaarin is my girlfriend in college, the most beautiful young woman I've ever seen. Our last night together, a summer night in '99, after sex in the back of my truck in Berkeley I drop off Kaarin at her car in the Taco Bell parking lot near the Mills campus. I notice her face isn't immaculate and

angelic, it's ordinary. Maybe I'm fooling myself, maybe I'm developing a positive coping skill realizing she's not a goddess, accepting her as a human being at last before she vanishes from my life, but the dream goes too far the other way projecting the hideous hag, the witch.

Shakespeare compares a play to a dream – If we shadows have offended,/ Think but this, and all is mended,/ That you have but slumber'd here,/ While these visions did appear./ And this weak and idle theme,/ No more yielding but a dream – and Freud compares a dream to a play, only the distinction between players and audience breaks down. Disguises, displacement, distortion bypass the censorship to fulfill a wish that can't be fulfilled directly because there's a taboo attached to it. For me distortion protects against fear of emotional vulnerability inherent in an intimate relationship – the word *commitment* makes me think of a mental hospital.

I live in an imaginary realm where women are goddesses or witches so I don't have to deal with the complexities, contradictions, vicissitudes of human emotions.

But what you don't deal with eventually deals with you.

Intimate relationships disappoint because fantasy projections become untenable and the screen invariably turns out to be a human being with flaws, idiosyncrasies some of which are attractive, some of which are decidedly not, a person with both rational and irrational fears and insecurities who's mature in ways you aren't or immature in ways you aren't, there's resentment either way.

It's possible to use nonattachment not as self-denial, overcoming the illusion of a separate self, but as a means of rationalizing and enhancing one's own narcissism. I dissociate, I refuse to participate, I take pride in distancing myself from *the they*, from social media, I'm committed to living a solitary, reflective, meaningful life (whatever that means).

It's the ego that takes pride in distancing, distinguishing itself. Dissociation is a cutting off of the self from the self, the separation of a mental operation from the main body of consciousness. Maybe who you are when you're with someone in an intimate relationship is a necessary feature of your being, which needs to be fulfilled in order to be whole. Maybe the myth of romantic love is an attempt to fill the lack that haunts the ego.

Robert Bly calls it a soft male, sensitive, life-affirming and life-preserving but not life-giving, that's me. I'll never have children, never summon the courage to go out there and make a difference, become an activist or teacher. I'll likely just sit here quietly being transformed into words, my ink effigy encoded, inscribed.

But you don't have to go out there to make your mark – make it here.

The difference between here and there is a *t*, a cross – it doesn't represent being torn between reason and passion, public and private, intimacy and isolation, it represents the tearing itself.

My friend you have revealed your deepest fear, I sentence you to be exposed before your peers. Tear down the wall.

Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall.

Zazen, sit quietly in front of the wall, thoughts bounce incessantly, the monkey swings, leaps, scurries. Keep polishing the wall, maybe one day a tiny crack, an opening, a realization that the wall is translucent like a pane of glass, keep polishing the pane, maybe one day a wider opening, an awakening, the glass completely shatters and you realize there is no glass, no wall, no-mind.

Everything unendurable is in the head, is the head not abiding in the present but hopping the wall and doing a recon and then returning with unbearable news you then

somehow believe.

Living in the continuum between pulses, the space between two heartbeats – a breath and a second, the pause and gather between each cramp, an endless now stretching its gull-wings out on either side of your heartbeat – you've never before or since felt so excruciatingly alive. It's AA's gift-that-keeps-on-giving, the continuous present.

Or it's Gertrude Stein's gift, like her method of counting, not one two three but *one and one and one*. The gull-wings remind me of walking on the beach this morning, each bird a single bird, no such thing as two, no numbers in Nature, but each word counts, I'm an obsessive compulsive neurotic, counting syllables, heartbeats, *days I don't drink – I add them up, line them up end to end as if each day is a car Evel Knievel has to clear – one car, two cars, before long it's a staggering number, jumping over fourteen cars, and the rest of the year, looking ahead, hundreds and hundreds of cars, me in the air trying to clear them – how did I ever think anyone could do it that way?*

Maybe they shouldn't hand out reward chips then, but I'm glad they do. Addicts tend to have the kind of pride that exacerbates their illness – the chips can provide an authentic sense of pride. I still have my green chip for three months of continuous sobriety. TO THINE OWN SELF BE TRUE. Which self? The question is still salient, but in the context of alcohol addiction the self I've chosen, the one who doesn't drink, hasn't let me down for nearly thirteen years. How many selves manifest in the last sentence? I'm still learning how not to count.

...

I'm walking thru a crowd of people – some seem to know who I am and are after me for some reason. A teenaged girl with red hair and freckles is walking beside me, she's my guide. I notice everyone there is disabled in some way and I'm starting to realize I must be as well, I'm unable to speak. Then I realize the girl is my

daughter, I gesture to her that I know she's my daughter and she starts crying, relieved and happy. Then I wake up in a big bed with a canopy and posts, there's a mirror on the wall, I approach it and see my blurry reflection, I say “there was a was” and feel determined to face something. It's very dark but I open the door and walk down a hallway, upstairs to another hallway and stop, I'm filling with anxiety, almost paranoid, running toward me from the other end of the black hallway are demonic wraiths – I notice a balcony to my right, a white light from outside, I crawl over to it and let myself fall, I'm in freefall when I actually wake.

My guide thru the underworld isn't Virgil but a red-headed freckled teenaged girl who turns out to be my daughter, from Marci or Laura, or else she's Shari Michelle, the girl I'm supposed to be, who attains a kind of sovereignty in my dreams – perfectly capable and bright, she knows the way.

My inability to speak speaks to melancholia, being already dead, but I reawaken in Mom's bed ready to face my life and take responsibility for it, only my reflection is out of focus, I'm not focused enough to really face it, but I can speak – “there was a was” reminds me of *fuzzy wuzzy was a bear*, being a child and playing with words, something I still do.

Does it mean the past actually occurs, my memories relate to some reality even if those memories are distorted, blurry, faded by time? Not there *is* a was but there *was* a was – the double past-tense emphasizes that it's no longer happening, the events my memories correspond to, even tho memory occurs in the present whether I'm dreaming or not, even tho memory's as pliable as a self.

If you could only stay in the black hallway a little longer and face the wraiths, grab onto one and look it in the face, you'd see a frightened little boy.

The dream upholds the child's archaic worldview, Zoroastrian, light and blackness, saved or damned – steeped in trauma, a worldview which is itself traumatized.

I'm walking down an empty tree-lined street at dusk when I become lucid and decide to fly toward the sun. When I get up above the tree-line it's dark, then I seem to be waking to a blue light, the sky thru my window lit a pale pastel blue, then I actually wake in the dark.

The blue light of consciousness is fickle. I must be flying east toward the dawn like planes do in the evening to shorten the night.

What a cosmologist says about the distribution of mass in the universe, only 10% is luminous, the other 90% is dark. Your ego-consciousness can only colonize 10% of your psyche, it keeps going over and over the same ground, lighting up the same pathways.

I want to say I reject a personal God as a means to my personal salvation, the eternal existence of my self-consciousness, life isn't a personal thing, neither is God, but who's really wanting and who'd really be saying it?

The I that posits something, forms a thesis, floats around in the psyche with everything else, flashes in and out of consciousness. It's not in charge, what's in charge is the belief that it's in charge.

When there is for you in the seen only the seen, in the heard only the heard – first I heard *herd* and saw sheep bleating. Did you say bleeding? Here's the scene, crown and scepter, a specter with a voice, it's not mine, it's related to me by blood.

If one speaks or acts with a pure mind, happiness follows like a shadow that never departs. The shadow of happiness haunts me all my life. Kierkegaard the great Dane, I don't mean he's a dog but melancholia dogs him all his life – my melancholy is the most faithful mistress I have known; no wonder, then, that I love in return.

To learn to love the shadow, is that the real leap – thoughts which wound from behind, faith as a resolution to personal despair? The dog isn't called Shadow. She's a black Lab named Etta after Etta James. Etta can you leap? She leaps...at her highest point she's perfectly parallel with the floor, as if standing on an invisible ground 3 feet above the actual ground.

...

Infernal Dialogues (6)

That's a suicide tree, if you break off a branch it bleeds, not sap but blood.

If you commit suicide you become a tree? If only Thoreau and John Muir had known, they'd have surely done themselves in. But this is only for self-strangulation victims right, those who hang themselves...Dave Wallace?

Yes, Mary Karr says *screw my church who'd roast in Hell poor suffering bastards like you, unable to bear the masks of their own faces*, but later she says *every suicide's an asshole – there's a good reason I'm not God, for I would cruelly smite the self-smitten*.

What about those who leap from cliffs, buildings or bridges?

See those shapes up there above the black ridge, they're falling forever.

But they're going in circles.

Ellipses, they're falling in orbit around an orb of dark matter, invisible, like a black sun. Now see that thin strip of pale blue amidst the blackness?

Yes, the color of the pills, I get it.

There are three options, either the blue glow stays like that, fluctuating in thickness but remaining sandwiched in blackness forever, or the blue light grows and grows, glowing brighter until it fills the whole sky, or it turns off, extinguished, never to return again.

How do you know which one will happen?

That's up to you.

...

A writer is a schizophrenic with agency to arrange the voices. Whether they're his or hers, yours or mine (they're theirs) is immaterial. Their hours count me, mute, mutate me. *In reality I said nothing at all, but I heard a murmur, something gone wrong with the silence, and I pricked up my ears, like an animal I imagine, which gives a start and pretends to be dead. And then sometimes there arose within me, confusedly, a kind of consciousness.* I'm still here. I failed. No matter, I'll fail better. You'll feel better? No.

There is no use indicting words, they are no shoddier than what they peddle. So I indict myself. I take no credit, I lay no claim to this arrangement, I take the blame. That *little black blur in the depths of the skull-pit, in a daze of baseless unanswerable self-reproach,* is me.

I have no voice and must speak...with this voice that is not mine, but can only be mine, since there is no one but me, or if there are others...perhaps they are watching me from afar...watching me like a face in the embers which they know is doomed to crumble.

I'm staring into the fire possessed, having just written 5 pages of blather, I'll keep a single phrase, *the curled steeple of a leaf*, a fire image, the rest will burn – 5 scrunched balls of paper, 5 more flame faces flare up, scalding eyes scold me. With the water of Lethe I self-medicate to forget, it doesn't work, I forget what I want to remember and remember what I want to forget. It would work if I could have volition, be the one drinking instead of the one being drunk – a primitive coping mechanism, douse the pain with alcohol, rip up the enemy's guts with your bare hands, wait, it's me you're poisoning.

I have to puke my heart out too, spew it up whole along with the rest of the vomit, it's then at last I'll look as if I mean what I'm saying, it won't be just idle words.

I don't feel a mouth on me, I don't feel the jostle of words in my mouth, and when you say

a poem you like, if you happen to like poetry, in the underground, or in bed, for yourself, the words are there, somewhere, without the least sound, I don't feel that either, words falling, you don't know where, you don't know whence, drops of silence through the silence, I don't feel it...I don't know what I feel, tell me what I feel and I'll tell you who I am.

Someone keeps asking how I feel, a different someone each time, this time it's Julio, he says you always know how you feel, but I don't, I must be doing it wrong. More self-reproach. An inextricable tangle of confused...what, cognitive emotions, affective cogitations, conflagrations? It's not cohesive, not a single thing coheres. They tell me you think with your head and feel with your heart and I believe them, why would they lie, but they're conflated, an amalgamation, who am I? Guilt and anxiety melded together in a blast furnace, aorta and cerebellum in the same blaze, but no precious metal gets separated out, it doesn't work, it's all for nothing, these metaphors, these voices, these words that belong to no one.

...

No one makes me say that I can't be Worm, the inexpungible. I am he perhaps, as they are. Now I seem to hear them say it is Worm's voice beginning. Do they believe I believe it is I who am speaking? To make me believe I have an ego all my own, and can speak of it, as they of theirs. Is it possible certain things change on their passage through me, in a way they can't prevent?

We say it's the awakening, the beginning of Worm, for now we must speak, and speak of Worm...who hears, and trembles, and is delivered over, to affliction and the struggle to withstand it. Yes, let us call that thing Worm. Poor Worm, who thought he was different, there he is in the madhouse for life. Where am I?

In the ocean's mouth, one of its countless mouths, riding a grey-green barrel prone and coming out with the spit, Chad calls it The Worm. I'm happy when it happens, a

chance to smile the way a worm will smile when it finds my still tongue, done with words.

I'm listening to *The Wall* again, *waiting for the worms to come. There must've been a hole there in the wall when I came in.* No, I'm not surfing at The Head when the shark attack occurs. *I am in a head, it's terror makes me say it, and the longing to be in safety, surrounded on all sides by massive bone.* Worm, will I ever get born?

When I come out of a glassy hollow silver-blue tube we get all childlike – into the womb of Thetis and back out again, reborn. We're stoked, but she can't heal the pain in my heel from kicking so hard to get in and out. *Perhaps that's what I feel, an outside and an inside and me in the middle...* on the one hand the mind, on the other the world, I don't belong to either.

From nowhere to nowhere my life's a bridge, not the bridge I drive across every day to check the surf, Samoa Bridge with its reversible beginning and end. *There's no end to me, I don't know what it is, it isn't flesh, it doesn't end, it's like air.* Walt would be proud, lacy jags and all. Elizabeth's disembodied voice says *identity is so slippery, so dependent upon whatever you're reading.*

No need of a mouth, the words are everywhere, inside me, outside me...I'm in words, made of words, others' words...the air, the walls, the floor, the ceiling, all words...I'm the air, the walls, the walled-in one...wherever I go I find me...nothing ever but me, a particle of me...this dust of words, with no ground for their settling, no sky for their dispersing, coming together to say, fleeing one another to say, that I am they, all of them...and nothing else, yes, something else, that I'm something quite different...a wordless thing in an empty place, a hard shut dry cold black place, where nothing stirs, nothing speaks, and that I listen, and that I seek, like a caged beast born of caged beasts born of caged beasts born of caged beasts...

Please O, let me be close to you, I say, not really knowing who's speaking or who or what

the speaker is addressing. It's not important, I keep saying it, it relaxes me, helps me fall asleep, helps me stop hearing the voices, something inside starts to disappear, something that was never real, never really there.

There I am the absentee again, it's his turn again now, he who neither speaks nor listens, who has neither body nor soul...he is made of silence...he's the one to be sought, the one to speak, but he can't speak, then I could stop, I'd be he, I'd be the silence, I'd be back in the silence, we'd be reunited.

Please O, let me be close to you. You don't have to say what the words mean. You don't have to say anything.

He speaks of me, as if I were he, as if I were not he, both, and as if I were others, one after another, he is the afflicted.

I'll say it's I, perhaps it will be I, perhaps that's all they're waiting for, there they are again, to give me quittance, waiting for me to say I'm someone. “Write down your thoughts, you're somebody too.” But I'm not and never will be. It's not what I want anyway. They want me to feel like being a poet is a metaphor for being no one, having nothing to say and saying it. No, I don't know what they want. When they tell me I'm Nobody I say, How dreary – to be – Somebody! / How public – like a Frog – / To tell one's name – the livelong June – / To an admiring Bog!

You're not replaced by text, your flesh doesn't become words...but all there are are metaphors, replacements, the words can do nothing else. *Else*, it's a stand-in, like a stunt-double in a bad movie, but a stand-in for what? Who's the real actor? No, not someone else, it's you.

Dad thinks it's a lifestyle choice, being single, working part-time as a courier, surfing and writing poems instead of having a family and a real job, a career profession, setting up a life for play as opposed to work, being immature and self-indulgent,

O he's just finding himself...at 44? For me work and play are often the same thing, a sign that I may be succeeding, but if I've learned anything for certain it's how to misread the signs.

Please O, let me be close to you. Tell me what the word means, please. Let me let go, no, let me go.

I'm still in it, I left myself behind in it, I'm waiting for me there...perhaps it's a dream, all a dream, I'll wake, in the silence, and never sleep again.

...

I'm in my livingroom when my clone walks in with short hair wearing the blue fleece sweater I've had for about 20 years now. I try to kiss him, hoping to have sex with him but I'm arguing with myself, not about the morality of fucking my clone but about the possibility of psychosis. If an inner projection has become externalized and materialized as if standing before me in the flesh then I must be having a psychotic break, but if this is only a dream then it's okay to fulfill my master fantasy, then I realize my clone has disappeared, I'm looking around the room confusedly when I wake.

A dream is a controlled psychotic break, it's safe to have one in there since you're asleep and you'll awake intact and sane.

No, it's okay to have a psychotic break in a dream only if I know I'm dreaming, if enough consciousness has entered in and I'm sufficiently lucid, then I can manipulate it to serve the ego's narcissistic master fantasy, the master fantasy of Narcissus himself.

Who is it who's dreaming and who is it who knows?

Staring at the blue fleece, that's me you're pulling the wool over, it's me looking thru your

blue eyes.

There's a photograph of me on Marci's fridge in Vermont, 2003, I have short hair and I'm wearing that blue fleece sweater, an image of Marci's love-object. In the dream that image materializes and becomes my love-object, Marci becomes me, the alchemy of loss.

It's I who am doing this to me, I who am talking to me about me...they were never there, there was never anyone but you, talking to you about you.

When my clone disappears my dream figure/figment doesn't realize that it too is a clone, a ghost who wants to exist, to awaken. When I open my eyes I disappear.

Obviously I can't control it, the dream itself is proof. It's not being controlled by the ego but by the Other, whose motives I can't be conscious of. They run counter to my whole being's well-being only if they're connected to the death-drive.

I believe one of the Other's motives is to teach me about the state and nature of our soul, lessons which can only be learned thru dream recording and analysis. I don't want to die but...

Enough of this cursed first person...but what then is the subject?...any old pronoun will do, provided one sees through it. But sees through it to what?...the one outside of life we always were in the end, all our long vain life long. Who is not spared by the mad need to speak, to think, to know where one is, where one was, during the wild dream.

...

I'm standing on a mountain trail and see a horse walking toward me, hauling a telephone pole on its back and something else wrapped in blankets, we make eye-contact,

she looks to be imploring me for help but keeps going, trotting away. I walk down the trail toward a town, lots of animals around, cattle, goats, sheep. What looks like a wolf turns out to be a dog, then I see a bear so I start running the other way down a dirt road, I turn around, it's following me but can barely keep up, now it looks more like a big old dog than a bear, I stop, she stops, I wake.

Telephone poles outside my window connect wires that connect distant voices, but the pole the horse is hauling is disconnected. *The black telephone's off at the root, the voices just can't worm through...*but wires aren't necessary. One part of the mind tries desperately to communicate with another part. Is it light years away or is something blocking it? I wanna be as grounded as a wire.

What's under the blankets, the corpse of the horse's rider?

As a boy I'm afraid of the dark. I ask Mom to leave the hall light on at night but it's not enough so I hide under my blankets, not realizing it's actually darker under there. I'm still scared so I hide in my mind, not realizing it's even darker in there.

The horse isn't asking for help, she's asking you a question, why are you carrying this load and where are you going?

My heavy load, the dead weight of the past, this indecipherable burden.

Remember the photo of Laura on horseback in cowboy hat and boots looking sexy in the Sierras, the dreamscape looks more like Montana or Wyoming, remember Rilke's animals always facing into the Open.

The dream reifies anxiety, translates it into an object of fear (wolf, bear) an illusory object subject to transmutation. How irrational and unwarranted are my fears, this anxiety I carry around in my chest, it's not a bear attacking me, it's an old dog, innocuous, she wants my company, wants me to feed her and play with her.

I place them inside a little invisible chamber, hermetically sealed, my emotions, when I'm a boy and my parents separate. Opening it now the contents are still fresh, brand new but grossly outdated (pearlescent but obsolescent) no longer appropriate to the context. This is why I misappropriate things, I've always been confused about what goes with what, I often guess and I'm usually wrong.

Here, for instance, I'm only guessing that this goes here. Neuron galaxy (internal and ex-, the distinction merely grammatical).

...

It's not my "genuine, authentic voice" amidst all the other voices dying to be born or struggling for recognition, begging to be heard, no, it's the idea of my genuine, authentic voice moving thru the silent darkness with all the other ideas, each with its own voice, it's this idea of a singular voice (*the bright light of shipwreck*), a unique original voice – perhaps the illusion one can't live without – that I cling to so tenaciously, we all do, like barnacles on the back of a whale we can't keep from going back under.

What I speak of, what I speak with, all comes from them. It's of me now I must speak, even if I have to do it with their language, it will be a start, a step towards silence and the end of madness.

Fear the unborn child, unable to cope with family life, psycho-emotional overload, going mad, yes, fear of madness is stronger than fear of death – inexorable force incapable of mercy because it's not a person who can say OK, I'm feeling bad about torturing you like this so I'll stop now.

But it is a person, it's you – these debilitating feelings are products of your own mind. Have mercy on yourself, don't forfeit your right to your own silent stillness. Serenity is yours to give away or keep, they can't take it without your consent, and

conversely they can't grant you clemency or peace of mind by saying what you want them to say and behaving like you want them to behave.

Who told me I was they, who I must have tried to be, under duress, or through fear, or to avoid acknowledging me.

I live in the liminal, in thresholds. Nostalgia, I inhabit a glossy memory, the anxiety of that time removed because I'm no longer present there, and the anxiety of the present removed because I'm not really here but there in the memory. The ego's absorption in identity-markers – I'm a writer, a surfer – acts as an analgesic like nostalgia against the anxiety inherent in being alive, except in dreams where identity is multiply displaced, no anchor for the illusion of stability and control.

They say I seek what it is I hear, I hear them...something is wanting to make it clear.

Fear the Other inside, never more clear than in dreams, disclosing over and over my otherness to myself.

A sign on a door, I can't make it out, I turn away then look back at the text and it's changed, I still can't read it but it definitely says something different. I open the door and see a young man lying on his back in bed mumbling, trying to speak but incoherently, maybe he's disabled, nonverbal. I walk thru the bedroom into the bathroom and see a dim abstract shape, a swirling blanket of steam slowly dissolves, coming into focus is a tall woman with long white hair, red lipstick and blue eyes. I approach her, we embrace, kiss, I pick her up and start fucking her when I wake.

The red, white and blue theme, a truck with an American flag is passing. A photo taken from Mom's balcony of a 4th of July party across the street in 2002, railings in the foreground like it's taken from behind bars, my distance from the party and what the symbols represent – *whether one's distance from them, the People, does not*

also increase – my alienation, this big huge liveness, sacrificing all of the person with it, Spicer intrudes, the abysmal toyshop intrudes, it is Hell where no one guesses another, the toyshop a metaphor for poetry (the foul rag and bone shop of the heart) playing with word-toys but no one knows how to play with them and no one listens to poetry.

When you think you know what it says it says something else, meaning can't be pinned down to words on a door that opens. It mumbles incoherently, developmentally disabled, nonverbal, no, he must be saying something beautiful in a language no one else knows.

It's not I speaking...let us go on as if I were the only one in the world, whereas I'm the only one absent from it.

...

You can't just make thoughts and feelings disappear, but you have some control over how you respond to them, whether you respond at all. It's possible to be unmoved, to not be the plaything of doubts, anxieties, judgments, memories, fantasies, the running list of chores, interruptions, distractions, in short the everyday mind, ordinary consciousness, the they-self, inauthentic and disingenuous. You can't go over, under or around, you can't transcend it – the only way to inhabit your fully integrated no-self, Emancipation-Mind, is to go straight thru the ordinary mind, the they-self, by realizing that this distinction, this duality like all dualities is an illusion.

Lessons I'm too young to learn but learn later (*life can only be understood backwards but must be lived forwards*) a dream's a dress-rehearsal of this process in reverse, taking what I know now and projecting me into a future made up of rearranged past events, memories recalibrated and reprojected – the time-machine itself gets recalibrated and reprojected during the dream.

In the marsh today a woman with long white hair and blue eyes staring at a great blue heron, I try to silence my steps too late, huge gorgeous wings spread, it makes a dinosaur sound and flies off, the woman's hair white as the sunlit cumulus overhead – it's not her, the one in the dream in a swirling blanket of steam.

After watching a holocaust documentary I fall asleep and wake up in a movie theater, the scene is pornographic, all women, then a single woman on her back naked but she doesn't have a head and there's a penis protruding from her throat. Then I'm outside sitting on a sidewalk with a blanket wrapped around me, I see Adam across the street, I don't want him to come over so I pretend to be sleeping. Then I'm walking home along some train tracks back to where I live with Marci who's upset when I arrive because we're late for something, I wake.

How many times I stumble home from the marsh drunk across rusty train tracks back to Marci, hurt and angry at me, more in love with alcohol than with her.

Train tracks lead to the camps. Younger attractive women are pulled aside and placed in a “brothel” for the German officers. Two men for each woman, one grasps her wrists, the other her ankles, OK on 3, they swing her in – grotesquely emaciated naked female corpse falling into a 6-foot pit roughly the size of a football field, a pit full of grotesquely emaciated naked corpses.

Freudian censorship, the ultimate taboo is necrophilia, being aroused by dead genitals, porn a metaphor for total objectification of the female body, no person, only an object to be penetrated whether young and vibrant or dead. Voyeurism, image-obsession, projection-identification, two-dimensionality is another kind of death, the death of surfaceness, the hiss, the hole.

One director of the holocaust documentaries is Alfred Hitchcock. After seeing the most horrifying reality he'll ever see he begins constructing imaginary horror scenes.

A healthy naked woman showering outside after the war ends and the camps are liberated, remember the young attractive ones in the beginning set aside, these images are bookends but it's too late, the image in the middle explodes the boundaries, explodes chronology, shrapnel penetrating the contemporary psyche.

Adam is repulsive, the homeless artist in his stinking paint-splattered sweat pants – I don't want to be associated or identified with him but that's exactly what happens, I'm homeless, repellent, wrapped in a blanket pretending to sleep on a sidewalk. Six million. Adam, the first man, we're all related to this homeless artist, all his children – the naked female corpse headless but with a penis protruding from her throat, from where a man's Adam's Apple would be, sexual knowledge equated with knowledge of good and evil, knowledge of madness.

Tho we arrive prematurely, what we're late for in the end is our own lives.

...

Infernal Dialogues (7)

What are they looking for in that tunnel over there?

Exotic particles. A few years ago they found the God-particle.

Where was it?

In the Large Hardon Collider, I mean the Large Hadron Collider.

Who are they?

Das man, the they, for whom everything has always already been interpreted, for whom there's never anything new under the sun.

There's no sun down here anyway. Wait, I thought they were looking for new particles. I thought they were experts.

What's an expert?

It's someone who used to be a pert but no longer is, so he's an *expert*.

What's a pert?

It's a kind of shampoo.

So an expert is someone who used to be shampoo?

Exactly. No, I think it has to do with pertinence, relevance, being germane.

An expert is a German?

No, germane you idiot.

Who's Jermaine?

He's an expert idiot like you.

Awake the pert and nimble spirit of mirth. Turn melancholy forth to funerals. Pert means saucy or talkative, in the 16th century it also means quick, lively, subtle, in Cambro-British it means elegant or beautiful, from the French *appert* or the Latin *ad peritus* – prompt, skilful, *expert*.

So you're an entomologist now?

That's someone who studies insects. You mean etymologist.

I know what I mean. Don't tell me what I mean. I mean someone who studies big hairy dung beetles like you.

Shut up you large hardon.

The Large Hardon Collider – it's a profound image, two big erections going opposite directions around an underground tunnel approaching light-speed before smashing into each other into a gazillion pieces, one of which is God.

I lied to you before. They're not looking for particles, they're looking for pills, the blue ones – they can't seem to find them and I think you know why.

...

I'm standing on a porch behind some guys I don't recognize looking out at a bright blue ocean, 2 people swimming, a big dorsal fin approaches, they start screaming and thrashing toward their boat, their boat is a VW bus, it's heading full-speed toward the fin trying to scare it away. The guys on the porch don't notice, they don't notice me either, then the bus drives up on shore which is smooth concrete, I'm expecting to see a bloody mess under the bus but there's nothing, the side door slides open and 2 boys jump out as I wake.

It's me and Robby, Dad's VW bus, fear of drowning in my own mind, being devoured by melancholia. The guys on the porch don't notice me because I'm not really there, I'm already dead. We drive that VW bus from L.A. to Washington in the summer of '78 – Mom, Dad, Robby and me – the porta-potty's pretty blue fluid that smells so bad, the family unit intact, the force pulling it apart illegible beneath, nothing beneath the bus, its mouth opens and the brothers escape.

My favorite story in my Children's Bible is the story of Jonah. In the illustration Jonah swimming in the foreground is larger than the whale spouting in the background. It doesn't say what kind of whale. Tho orcas are dolphins they sometimes attack and kill great whites, but the movie *Orca* isn't nearly as scary as *Jaws*. Neither is *Moby Dick*, Atticus Finch splayed across the white whale like Jesus.

...

It's raining hard outside, I'm sitting on the couch in my livingroom beside autistic Austin so I must be working, taking care of him, when I feel a water droplet from the ceiling, then more drops, it's dripping, I look up and see a bare patch where water's collecting, I scramble around trying to find something to catch the drops or patch the leak but the more anxious I get the worse the leak gets, it's raining inside now, puddles in the hall and all over, I'll lose everything, all my work, I'm in a panic when I wake.

I see Austin at the beach the day before, the guy looking after him doing a better job than I ever did, singing to him while strumming an acoustic guitar, Austin looking pretty placid.

The dream mirrors the scene in *The Mirror*, the long mystical slow-motion scene with long streaming hair swirling in a basin, her dramatic dance, silver water droplets from the ceiling splashing on the floor, but autistic Austin, loud and unruly, is the antithesis of Tarkovsky's mother-lover (the same actress in both roles to make the Oedipal element salient) and my anxiety speeds up the scene, fast-forward instead of slow-motion.

Fearing an inability to control my environment and take care of myself, I'm equated with Austin. I fear less the loss of my house than the loss of my houses/poems, "and deeper than did ever plummet sound, I'll drown my book." But Prospero willingly hurls his staff off a cliff, "this rough magic I hereby abjure." I don't want to drown my book, I haven't finished it. I don't want to destroy my staff, I haven't yet produced any rough magic.

Who do you think makes it rain in the dream?

Your wish is not my command...a sleeping creature at the mercy of a dream, my wish is self-alienating.

...

I don't understand how or why my life falls apart, I fall apart and very nearly die and I don't want to remember, don't want to try, so I get drunk for many years. When you bury something you don't want to face it doesn't disappear, the seed grows underground. When that nasty weed (*fleur du mal*) chokes out everything else in the garden you can no longer ignore it, pretend it doesn't exist, drink it away, you either drown or face your life head-on without crutches.

I'm standing in a hallway, a woman at the other end facing me, long dark hair and blue eyes, she's pregnant holding something in her right hand, a comb or a knife, I'm frightened, I turn and run down a winding staircase thinking, what if she takes the elevator and beats me to the bottom, when I wake.

Comb as tool for grooming (Mom combing my hair), knife as both tool for food preparation – Mom cooking for me, Dad and Robby – and weapon, will she kill the fetus or have the child and groom it?

When Robby is conceived Mom is 16, abortion not an option. After Ann's abortion we feel guilty but know it's the right decision. Had she had it, I wouldn't have gone away to school, I wouldn't be writing this.

I can't pay for it, I don't have a job, I'm 18. Ann's older brother Matt takes her to the clinic. In *Fast Times*, Stacy's older brother Brad takes her to the clinic. After Damone impregnates Stacy he plans to pay for half by scalping Cheap Trick tickets – “the dream police they come to me in my bed,” “your mommy's alright, your daddy's alright, they just seem a little weird, surrender, surrender, but don't give yourself away” – he fails. Scalping sounds like scalpel.

Maybe my fear is ridiculous, a pregnant woman chasing me with a comb, but the feeling of horror is palpable. Remember *The Ring*, I'm sitting on a couch watching a woman sitting on a couch watching a little girl on a screen walk up toward the camera, no, it's the screen itself, she's crawling thru the TV from the inside, she's standing on shattered glass in the livingroom, her face concealed, she parts the curtain of her long dark hair, ice-blue eyes a frozen terrifying stare.

Ann has long dark hair and blue eyes. I'm not afraid of the pregnant woman with her comb-slash-knife, I'm afraid of what's inside her.

Marriage, the ring, family life threatens my comfort zone, solitude, sanity at stake –

unable to provide, to endure, overwhelmed I'll break.

It could have the reverse effect, bring you out of yourself giving you a predominantly external focus, it could be a godsend.

Dreams aren't just motivated, they're motives, motivations, future estimates of past projections. Their intentions edit you as they go.

...

On my board prone going down river, rapids approaching, I'm ready but the landscape turns white, fog erasing mountain and river, I'm heading straight for a huge waterfall, I turn hard right and manage to make it down a series of smaller falls. Then I'm in a dark dorm room organizing a protest – in 100 days a group of us students are going to commit suicide by jumping off the cliff beside the waterfall. Then I have a realization and decide to call it off, I turn on the lights which have been off a long time, we've been living in darkness. They're excited to hear me speak, I say something about being a writer and refusing to die for a cliché, comparing ourselves to salmon is hackneyed, trite, they're with me, ready to call it off when I wake.

I see a PBS show the day before about an Amazonian tribe planning a mass suicide if the company clearcutting the surrounding woods encroaches any further – the forest and their culture being inextricable, they choose to maintain their dignity by not severing their beings from it.

80,000 dams in America, a wildlife biologist calls farmed salmon Yanni-fish. Instead of Bach, Monk and Beck we get Yanni, Yanni and Yanni – extreme loss of habitat, of genetic diversity in cloned fish unfit to complete their life-cycle, all those wild capillary streams, origins nonexistent or inaccessible...but Yanni's a talented musician and farmed salmon are better than no salmon.

It's a wish-fulfillment, leading a protest against ecological destruction, accusing the American educational system of churning out Yanni-fish, an old argument put forth ironically by the system itself during its more self-reflexive moments, even in pop culture, *Dead Poets Society* and *The Wall* – masked school-children on a conveyor belt getting ground up into sausages, Yanni-sausages.

To create independent minds or consumers with a uniform ideology, please propagate, please donate, don't worry, you'll pay your debt before you die.

Tension between death-drive and survival instinct fuels the dream.

Wanting something meaningful to die, to live for.

100 days, arbitrary, the number of pages in several of my projects, the idea is Poe's, works ought to be short enough to read in one sitting, but no one reads 100 pages in one sitting, no one is my target audience.

...

Something loud wakes me up, voices outside, I walk downstairs into a lobby and see Marci, I duck away, then Brett appears, we start talking, then he's sitting at a table with Marci and another woman who works in radio. I ask Brett how the music's going and he asks me about the writing, I say I haven't published anything and I'm not teaching. Looks of pity spread, they try to be supportive – maybe you could apply here or there, I hear they're hiring, maybe you could send work to this journal, I know the editor – I'm standing there nervous, embarrassed, anxious, hyper-self-conscious the whole time, then the radio woman hands me a big flimsy card like a duck-bill, a free gift from the station, it has a head-sized hole in it so I put it on like a hat, a very goofy-looking hat, and start to walk away when I wake.

Why am I in a hotel, where am I going?

Why go to graduate school and get an MFA in poetry if you're not going to be a published writer and you're not going to teach?

I'm homeless, my poems don't have a home, an asinine expression, I'm going nowhere.

If I say publication is problematic because it's ego-driven and my work is about subduing the ego, am I being disingenuous? No, but I still send stuff out on occasion, not enough to get published, enough to get rejected and remain conflicted.

They act like I'm an actor not getting called for any parts. The dream's a play, we're all actors, but Brett's an actual musician who makes albums and performs concerts, Marci's a published poet and a teacher, the radio woman is based on Yon from Mills and Jordana from Glendale High, gregarious, popular, pretty, hip, smart and excellent at networking. Each one at the table has a public persona they're confident inhabiting without anxiety, all chosen as counterpoints to me.

No one's without anxiety, they just use it to positive effect while you're used by it. Anxiety is freedom's actuality as the possibility of possibility. They actualize their potential by acting while you're acted upon.

My excuse for not pursuing teaching is performance anxiety. Exposure is the only remedy, getting used to being in front of people. Getting used?

Hyper-self-consciousness morphs into psychosis. Paranoia on one mind, self-evolution on the other, an adaptation to bridge the gap between a private and a public self – it's the same mind, no-mind, any separation an illusion.

A public persona as author authorized and validated by society, capitalism, producing a commodity and selling it, success defined by the number of books published and sold, not artistic merit however it's measured...complain about patriarchy all you want, your father's not in the dream, the real tension, real longing, an absence you

want filled with his love, his pride of you would make publication unnecessary.

Hyper-self-conscious guy inhibited by anxiety who can't develop a public persona
because of a confidence crisis, I'm being type-cast by the dream-director.

They're sitting at ease, I'm standing but can't stand the pressure, the humiliation of their
pity symbolized by the goofy hat, a consolation prize for trying to play but failing.

Your chagrin is fueled by paranoia. Since it's founded on aporia, forgetting, the ineffable
and unknowable, all knowledge is paranoiac. You don't know what you're capable
of, not because you don't know yourself, because there is no self to know.

Cobain's voice, *just because you're paranoid don't mean they're not after you.*

It stems from a self-judgment I must've learned somewhere – being nervous, anxious,
embarrassed, hyper-self-conscious is not okay, it's wrong. I'm not just meek, I'm
weak, inferior, chicken, sissy, pussy.

Dad calls me back and asks if I'm okay, my voice on the machine sounded, well, nervous.
My stomach drops, fills with that imaginary black fluid, guilt.

I press the red END button, sit on the edge of my bed and cry. It's cathartic when I realize
nervousness isn't a crime, I'm crying and laughing at the same time, how
ridiculous and self-debilitating these judgments, how completely unnecessary, but
they don't go away.

...

Infernal Dialogues (8)

It's a crime, that's why we say *commit. Felo de se*, a felony against oneself, self-murder. If you succeed, your property will belong to the king and your corpse will be buried at a crossroads with a stake thru its heart.

So suicides are vampires. Okay, you say my corpse, but where will I be?

Right here as always.

I've never been here before, I don't recognize anything – that tropical blue swath looks like water, it's nice whatever it is, peaceful.

In Scotland if done in public it's a breach of the peace.

Peace has never been a general condition in my lifetime. I hope it will be in death.

If you attempt and fail you're fined and put in jail.

That'll make me wanna go right out there and live.

For those who assist, the punishment is severe, draconian. They aren't merciful and compassionate, helping end someone's suffering, no, they've gone over to the dark side, collaborated with the enemy, anomie, Death itself, the source of supernatural paranoia. They've broken the social contract – if suicide is permitted, assisted, then everything is permitted, anarchy.

What does that have to do with me?

You aren't absolutely absolved in infinite self-dispersal. You're the epicenter, judge and

jury, you decide the case.

I don't need to be forgiven, I haven't done anything wrong.

A sin of selfish ungratefulness, a crime against the conflation of creator and creation, of which you are a unique individual albeit almost completely insignificant part.

Selfish? How ironic, how can self-annihilation be self-serving?

You unburden yourself and leave all that psycho-emotional pain behind for your loved ones to wallow in.

A living corpse, a paranoid zombie, a psychotically depressed invalid is a much bigger burden. Financially too, my parents can't afford a psych ward, multiple daily doses of Zoloft and Klonopin, nobody can.

They'd spend everything, go bankrupt, they'd sacrifice their own lives to heal you.

This isn't making me feel any better.

It's not supposed to. Look, the point is that you fail, therefore everyone succeeds, including you. If you succeed then everyone else fails.

Including me?

No.

...

I tell Laura I'll go get the car and come back for her, I'm walking up a sidewalk unsure where it's parked, I go back the other way, then I'm running on a dirt road that used to be a street, lots of heavy construction – tractors, scaffolding, hard-hatted men – I must be going the wrong way so I turn around again, then I'm sliding down a steep hill with lots of bushes in my way, I use the bushes to slow me down so I don't lose control, I'm on the Mills campus when I wake.

You think you're moving toward a particular goal when in fact you're going the opposite direction – self-deception.

Not only do I not know where it's parked, I don't know if it's Laura's car or mine so there's no hope of finding it, the quest doomed from the start, I'm destined to enter the underworld. A dirt road that used to be a street moving into the past, it's 1999, I'm in grad school at Mills in Oakland working weekends for the Neptune Society in Emeryville (lots of construction underway, freeways, buildings). I work the graveyard shift in the crematorium for beer money, a biohazard sign on a steel door behind which numbered cardboard boxes stacked neatly on cold shelves, I open one of the boxes a thousand times in my mind.

I'm building something, a structure to inhabit.

You inhabit your being-toward-death. It's always under construction.

Omniscience, I'm not the author but a character with no more agency than a woman waiting for a lost man running from a cardboard box, a hard-hatted man balanced on a plank 50 feet in the air, the stuff dreams are made on.

Using the bushes to slow me down, to slow the dream down so I can wake, am I overriding the director, going off-script and improvising, or is whatever happens supposed to happen?

If anxiety (speeding up) is self-created then the agency gained (slowing down) is self-created too, but whose self, which self – the sleeping being there on the bed, awake here on the page?

There's a funeral home a block away from my home. I don't plan it this way. Hearses always look archaic but never obsolescent, like death itself.

Dreams are the royal road to the unconscious, not the unconscious itself – empty, formless, pure and luminous – no, it's not that, I wish it was, but it's not full of chaotic shapes made of darkness either.

...

An Anna's hummingbird hovers at eye-level inspecting a strangely shaped flake of dust trying to determine if it's alive, zooms left, stops, zooms left again. The flake will fall forever and never touch ground.

It's not a dream, his whole head suddenly turns bright hot-pink, marvelous, real, like the violet-green swallow on the ledge outside the kitchen window this morning, I've never seen one so close, and the tall alder in the backyard yesterday stuffed with cedar waxwings playing musical chairs, they too return every spring.

You want everyone to know you know the names of these creatures, you're so smart. An immortal illusion can't be slain, removed from the universe, no, Ego shall have dominion over the birds of the air, shall subdue and cultivate Psyche, butterfly-winged beloved of Eros...a painted lady lands on my goldenrod.

A psyche not under the spell of an ego has a dream to teach you the ultimate source of your being, the unconscious. The goal is to keep the portal between ego and unconscious propped permanently open for the continual absorption, for the final realization that there is no portal, no-mind. The origin of consciousness is the

body, the origin of bodies (biological, mineral, celestial) is the unconscious.

Only in writing, because writing is a conscious critique of Ego, is Ego kept in check.

I'm Eric, a man, America Man! America, I'm Erica, I'm sick of Ego's insane demands, a tyrant maintaining its reign by immersing the whole psyche in fantasy fueled by capitalist advertising. You're permanently immature and maladjusted to a healthy spiritual life. There's a way to be in the world without Ego dominating, the goal is to discover it, Tao, Middle Way, Emancipation-Mind. Useful concepts because my way, not Sinatra's, leads over and over again to frustration, the quaking mess, the same stubborn, jittery state of mind, the same inexorable will.

To fall awake into a state of mindfulness, even briefly, requires continuous access to the bottomless wellspring of patience. But I'm scared of falling, and I'm afraid to engage – the republic threatens, publicity threatening – fear of loss, losing myself in the eternal privacy words offer.

...

I should know something's wrong when I realize the devil is my therapist. If you think about it, I mean really think about it, the devil is the best of all possible therapists. Ann thinks my problem stems from thinking too much. She quotes Billy Joel: should I try to be a straight A student, if you are then you think too much.

Maybe she's right, I should take Nike's advice, just do it, don't think about it, thinking's bad, overthinking's evil, no-brainers are good. I'm wearing Nikes right now but I'm not thinking about it. From now on I'll think less and act more, be more spontaneous, impulsive, less patient, I'll buy more things, it'll be good for the economy, an act of patriotism, spending money I don't have on things I don't need, I'll become a multi-tasker and do several things at once poorly (drive text eat) as opposed to concentrating on one thing and doing it well, boring and unAmerican.

The truth is I never should've read *Notes from Underground*. Of course I identify with the narrator paralyzed by thought (doubt, anxiety, cynicism) envious of men of action who move thru the world and do things, not totally thoughtlessly and carelessly, not completely happily either but they accomplish things, git'r done, fuck and fight, make the world go round.

...

I'm walking beside a suited, official-looking older man. Then I'm in the backseat of a car looking out the window at another car full of people, the same suited older man in the backseat between 2 others, then another car pulls up beside theirs and there's gunfire exchange from very close range – people in both cars are dead but I think the older man's still alive. Then I'm alone running away, I don't know which way to go, I think it's the edge of a military base, torn filthy clothes, blankets and trash in the dirt, maybe it belongs to a terrorist group, I think I'm in Afghanistan and I'm starting to panic when I realize the older man is the only one who can help me but I can't go back or I'll be shot. I'm wearing a black hoody to cover my long blond hair, afraid if anyone sees it they'll label me American and kill me. I have no food or water, no one here speaks English, all are likely hostile, I may be trapped, I may need to commit suicide, I wake.

Josh Benzer, long blond hair and blue eyes, surfs every day, I don't see him for about a year then he appears, shaven head, determined face, no smile, he's joined the Marines – the world was incomprehensible before, now it's hopeless.

Pop culture's image of PTSD's primal scene, the American soldier in Afghanistan, the suited, official-looking older man (general, sergeant, colonel) a father-figure whose expectations I can't, I can't live.

Torn filthy clothes, blankets and trash in the dirt point to the homeless camps here in Eureka, the so-called third world only a few blocks away (Cobain's voice

screaming *the denial the denial the denial the denial...*). Dehumanize without the slightest movement of thought, abdicating one's responsibility to be a thinking, feeling being – Arab, Muslim, Black, Indian lumped together subconsciously labeled *inferior* – fear the interior other, your own blood theirs.

My inner metalanguage only capable of informing me I'm trapped, the enemy is in your own country, from whose borne no traveler returns, Hell. Hide my long blond hair, ego-symbol, surfer, American, an enemy of this land, the enemy in your own psyche must be attacked, a psychological immune response, friendly fire. You must kill yourself before they kill you, but they are me so I'll be killing myself either way. Suicide, slightly less terrible than being beheaded, the separation of mind from body, individual subjectivity the common sense assumption of all surface experience, an illusion.

Individual subjectivity belongs to no one in particular, two words in a language, a social medium that structures consciousness, not yours or mine but consciousness itself.

Threatened by the loss of individuality I fear madness, being captured and tortured in a foreign land, my own mind.

I don't know who or where I am, who the suited, official-looking older man is, which side he's on, whether he can save me or not, who the torn filthy clothes belong to, whether anyone in the region speaks English, who's hostile, friendly, indifferent, whether I could find food, water, shelter, what would happen if I exposed my hair, I fill in all the unknowns with a fear-driven narrative based on popular news coverage of the war in Afghanistan.

Rumsfeld fails to mention unknown knowns – things you know, only you don't know you know them, because what you don't want to know you hide from yourself.

American manhood at war with itself, football player soldier on one side, surfer poet on

the other, they inhabit an imaginary realm with real pain.

...

A drop of water falls on my bed, I'm sitting at my desk looking up at a computer screen on the wall, Mom's standing quietly behind me, I can't seem to close the screen, I'm clicking the x in the upper right corner but nothing's happening, then the screen changes, I can't change it back, there must be a virus, screens are now changing rapidly on their own and water's trickling out of the wall above the screen, the bulging wall ready to burst, my anxiety peaking as I wake.

My psyche's browser hijacked, the ability to accept or veto a mental image, the illusion of control, I lose. Thoughts twisting back on themselves in knots, the racing mind fills with horror.

Meditation, to not cling to a thought, extrapolate – when the clinging mechanism develops a mind of its own, paranoid fantasies reign. Meditation and cognitive behavioral therapy are powerless, banging pillows against steel.

Mom's powerless too, but I'd never have a screen on the wall like that, it's not mine, this self, this mind – only the racing and twisting, constipation, the bulging wall willing to burst.

These voices are not mine, nor these thoughts, but the voices and thoughts of the devils who beset me.

All words, there's nothing else...they're going to stop...I can feel it, they're going to abandon me.

The body atrophies, I can't cut my nails or comb my hair or smile, I smell, bed sores and swollen psyche sores oozing, capillaries in the whites of my eyes break.

Being face-to-face with the death-drive and almost giving in, wanting to, trying to terminate being attacked by the psychological great white shark. Not just a mangling of the ego, a total breakdown of the whole inner life, I have to rebuild from the bottom, the ground up, but there's no ground.

One of the therapists in the psych ward, a mother-figure, wears a red shirt with white block letters, KLONOPIN.

Mood-stabilizer, I can't lift my chin off my chest because my head is a boulder.

In the field of mental health the pharmaceutical industry makes a killing prescribing extremely powerful, highly addictive, insanely overpriced narcotics to “mentally” ill patients most of whom don't need them, they treat only the symptoms, not the underlying causes. Candy for the demons turns us into catatonic zombies. They, the staff, understand nothing of the underlying causes. We, the patients, understand them perfectly because they talk to us, only we can't speak.

Yes, they talk to us. When I'm contemplating jumping from the window-ledge headfirst one of them quotes the Nike ad, JUST DO IT.

...

The coward's way out, it's the most courageous thing I've ever done. I can say this because I fail, I survive.

I drink a gallon of cranberry juice to cleanse my system of Zoloft and Klonopin, the first step toward recovery, some semblance of agency.

Grandpa Joe rues the fact he never chooses a path and sticks with it. I remember his fingers gliding gracefully across piano keys, mellifluous before the drink kicks in and slammed keys punctuate a drunken rant. His father's a well-known concert

violinist (Mom has an ivory bust of him) named Vladimir Lenski which changes to Saunders when the Nazis rise. Joe won't follow in Dad's footsteps, he becomes a Presbyterian minister instead but, disillusioned by hypocrisy amongst church leaders and congregations, he quits, telling his daughter (my mother who tells me) *God is in your heart*. He tries various business enterprises but nothing pans out, he ends up a grumpy bittersweet curmudgeon who dies fairly poor insisting there be no funeral.

An admonition about the importance of receiving your calling, what you're “made for” and devoting yourself to it completely – a plunging into in the form of a fleeing from, but fleeing from what, a life of indecision without purpose or meaning because without commitment? What if you're not dedicated to any particular career or label but to a mode of being, or to simply living well which of course isn't simple at all – the goal to be free and whole, simple words, it takes a lifetime.

Yes, I still go around missing someone I've never actually met – my emancipated self, the one who doesn't need to dissociate or avoid other humans when anxiety clutches – no, I have met him, it's someone I actually am but only intermittently, he never sticks around for long.

It's the fault of the pronouns, there is no name for me, all the trouble comes from that, that, it's a kind of pronoun too, it isn't that either, I'm not that either.

...

Standing, trying to explain to a group of seated people that the face itself is the mask, I repeat it. Then I'm in an airport looking for a bathroom, a woman points down a hall and says *be careful, it's wet*. Standing at a urinal water's leaking from the ceiling, now it's coming down like hard rain, I'm sopping, wondering if it's okay to get on the plane when I wake.

On Halloween a boy in a skull mask – the skull masks the face and the face masks the skull.

One mask points to death while the other masks it, concealing emotional vulnerability, fearing weakness. Substitute sobbing for sopping, release, catharsis. After a good cry it's no longer a mask but a plain honest face revealing feeling. If it stays locked inside it rots, water damage to the building's interior.

God, why are you rotting in me?

Standing at a urinal heightens anxiety, I'm hyper-self-conscious about my penis. I thought this feeling would gradually fade as I became an adult. Do I blame society, Mother, Father, no, I blame myself, my birthright, no one else has the right to blame me.

A wish-fulfillment, being a teacher explaining something about face-masks, no, not football. Maybe what's interesting is the mask, not the reality behind it. No, that the face masks an emotional interior isn't the problem, it's shame of nervousness.

Unable to bear the mask of my own face, all the masks, no time to prepare a face for all the faces I meet, my bare naked face shrivels in the flames.

...

A protective emotion preceding fear, the blocking of any vital drive denying a possibility, or anxiety is the source of all creativity, the propellant toward the realization of new possibilities, it keeps us sensitive to each other. It keeps me hypersensitive to myself and disconnects me from others. Others experience it too and find it difficult to manage, they turn away from mine because it reminds them of theirs.

No crime in being sensitive – *a hypersensitivity so copious in words that it continually*

shrinks from acting.

Eigenwelt, guilt over denial of my potential or failure to fulfill it – I'm only mediocre, *I coulda been somebody.*

Always put your best face on, best foot forward and appear confident, confidence is attractive, they feel it too, it's called mirroring. Now I'm conscious of the mask, it doesn't fit, none of them fit, I'm a fraud, I belong in the 8th circle where the sins of fraud are reckoned.

Dylan's singing *a hard rain's a-gonna fall*, but I'm boarding a plane to Sumatra where the weather and surf will be perfect – a daydream, escapism the opposite of a night dream. Before deciding on Homo Sapiens, Linnaeus considers Homo Diurnus, Day Humans as opposed to Homo Nocturnus because he's heard tell of a race of albinos in Africa who only come out at night. Homo *Sapiens*?

...

I'm awake now driving a windy mountain road, on the shoulder up ahead an odd shape I can't identify. To rid me of the discomfort of not knowing, my subconscious fills in the blank – hitchhiker – but as I approach it comes into focus, a tree branch.

Maternal, the dream births me, everything is alien (*unheimlich*, unhomelike). I'm a newborn presented with moving shapes and shades, my task to give each shape a name and form a narrative. I can't be wrong, which is why I'll say I had a dream about my mother but looking back it doesn't really look like her, the one in the dream is taller or shorter, has a different hair color, but I “know” it's her.

Whenever I see a thumb I think of my ghost lost on a road somewhere hitchhiking, but no one stops, they're just as scared as I am.

Why is the thought of an intimate relationship so attractive and repulsive at the same time? Keep the moon close, at a distance. A lost shade in Hades, I yearn for what I fear, the burning.

Anxiety, culprit, a derogatory term signifying guilt – diabolical alchemy, anxiety infused with guilt creates a burning black despair, the sickness unto death. It must be evil to feel so much anxiety, why else would everyone be in denial of it, do anything to cover it up as if covering up a crime, a sin.

I'm sitting eating dinner, a cat is trying to steal my food, I'm pushing him away, then I accidentally spill the food on the ground, it looks like a mouse, the cat grabs it and starts to run off but I'm able to push him into a big pile of sand in the middle of the room, I keep shoveling more and more sand to bury him but it starts to part, he's digging himself back out, about to reappear when I wake.

When winter erodes away a dune, the rusty shell of a car emerges on a California beach. An old man probing with a metal detector, Freudian sand, repression necessary for “civilization” – what comes back up is rusted, distorted, accusatory.

A cover-up, bury the cat alive...for stealing my food? The memory of having Jack murdered slugs my gut. My civilized human food on a plate becomes a mouse on the ground, or it was a mouse all along, I'm a cat, Leo, the difference between wild and domestic disappears.

Impossible to bury anxiety alive, it digs itself out of the sand like a zombie from a tomb, the zombie of Nazareth. For every Westerner the anxiety-guilt complex a stone waiting there at your birth, you get to carry it all your life.

I'm guilty of having been born, of being alive. *Habeus Corpus*, I am the body, I am the sole perpetrator of the ongoing sin of my existence.

It's no more your fault for feeling anxiety than for being a human being, it's not your fault for feeling guilty about it either.

Only once in my life the weight of the stone lifts, in sunlit woods near a small waterfall in the Olympic mountains, the opposite of gravity pulling me into the grave, call it levity or grace, call it mercy.

Firs, cedars and big-leaf maples, their roots holding fast, they aren't levitating and neither am I, the ground is pressing up against my feet but my feet are no longer pressing down against the ground because the stone's weight, for 20 minutes, vanishes.

And reappears, no gift more precious than the stone. Push it away, find the tomb empty, imaginary, your tomb is full even before you die.

Do I forgive myself for adding to its weight?

...

I'm 7 when Mom and Dad announce the separation. Robby cries, I stare at the floor, an overwhelming negative emotion pervades my being – the feeling I have after doing something wrong and being punished for it, or not doing something good enough for my own high standards and punishing myself for it.

I feel either good or bad, negative emotions are lumped together, I'm incapable of differentiating between them. Anxiety, internalized guilt, the complex stone firmly in place, it takes me nearly 40 years to learn what the words mean.

When they announce the separation I'm bisected. The house where Robby and I play under the protection and love of both parents is being split in two, half a house on one side and half a house on the other, with a big space between them. Since I can't really split myself in half and place my left side in Mom's house and my

right side in Dad's house, I remain in the space between, a roofless space. I need a makeshift. Like a good hermit I find a shell, I've been decorating it ever since.

Tina, my stepmom, tells me Dad always feels like he has to walk on eggshells with me.

The shell protects me from the elements, overwhelming negative emotions. If I stay in here all my life I'll never get born. At least Robby gets born again.

I drag my carapace around everywhere (my high-school nickname is Turtle). I'm so used to it it's part of my being, protecting me from things I don't need protection against anymore, things which can no longer hurt me, but it's so sturdy, so beautifully designed, so precious I can't break thru...or crawl out from under, maybe that.

Ann plays the role of best friend, lover, mother, my shell, she plays it willingly and devotedly but the play ends. *It's not a play*, she says. I know, I know. Without my security blanket I'm not safe, with no hiding place and no outlet my emotions can only turn against me, consume me.

Wisdom lost in knowledge, knowledge lost in information, life lost in living, I lose everything, the identity I've built, the narrative, the whole edifice crumbles to rubble, I'm in ruins, a single rock in a once glorious city, London after the war, *Choruses From The Rock* – I'm an English major with the right to invoke Eliot, invoking suspicion.

The Rock. The Watcher. The Stranger who knows how to ask questions, what is the meaning of this city? Where the bricks are fallen/ We will build with new stone...Where the word is unspoken/ We will build with new speech...Out of the formless stone, when the artist unites himself with stone...the soul of man joined to the soul of stone.

In London I take the Underground everywhere. The desert is squeezed in the tube-train

next to you,/ The desert is in the heart of your brother. Every day I walk past the office where T.S. Eliot works for Faber & Faber, every day Ann getting further and further away.

Language, the crowning glory of civilization, cities are built with it. When a city is bombed to ruins the effects on language are profound – grammar and syntax warp, the subject-object relationship is uprooted, and the sanctified notion of a stable speaking subject with agency, volition, control breaks down. Where are the words we have lost in speaking? Trauma makes us, leaves us speechless. They haunt me, not you.

I reject you Sir Thomas Stearns. I reject you Mr. Eliot, white anti-Semite patriarch, founding father. I've learned from you the crafting of an exquisite phrase or two but I reject you, your petrified tradition and your tone, I reject your gospel, your desert and your stone.

Noise without speech, food without taste, until I need them again your words are corpses.

...

A melancholic is in denial. The substitution – of words for whatever other they replace – malfunctions. The substitute teacher doesn't care about me, he's a fraud, a stepfather, I reject you...*use your words, honey*...I deny the words, I want real things, not symbols, not substitutes, I want you, I want you back...but these are words.

If words no longer matter then how can I...I can feel them retreating further and further, vanishing in the distance.

I'm sitting in a jam-packed classroom on the first day terrified, petrified, totally and completely overwhelmed, I can't write down a single word in the open notebook

in front of me while the professor speaks in rapid riddles about what the course will entail, some kind of environmental science class, everything sounds impossibly difficult or incomprehensible, I'm having a panic attack but I don't know what that means, I'm paranoid, I know what that means.

At 4AM the next morning I run away, wearing the light-grey long-sleeve Yosemite shirt Ann gives me, as if I need her warmth around me, demons are swarming through every room of my psyche, I need to go to the safest possible place, Mom.

When Ann comes to visit she compares me to one of her patients in the convalescent home, enervated and atrophied, my libido drained away. Her presence draws me up toward the surface, leads me back up a few infernal circles, but she has to return to the man she'll marry and have children with. She drives off in her blue Malibu, I contemplate the blue pills then return to Canto XIII.

The poisoned prison of my psyche now contains the external world, no difference between out there and in here – the walls, ceiling, floor, closed closet, closed door, this bed, this body, the open window-ledge I covet, the freedom to do it.

She's in the closet, the exterminating angel, Khali-pili khalaas. *Whos is this ymage, and the wryting aboue? Diverse yimages lyke terrible develles.* I don't understand them anymore, the words, they hiss at me.

Looking for Bagalamukhi who rips out the tongues of demons, *this tongue is not mine, this voice which has denatured me.*

The clocks have all stopped. They aren't real, drawings all pointing to different times and none move, none change. The seconds must be alike and each one is infernal.

...

Infernal Dialogues (9)

You're both apart from and a part of, individuality and interbeing two sides of the same coin – your absolute singularity inextricably interwoven into the structure of existence, its beginningless endless metamorphosis. You feel alienated, isolated, torn away from the fabric, imprisoned in a solitary self utterly alone, but the distance between the prison bars is infinite. There's no real boundary between where you end and everything else begins, the air you inhale and exhale, the food you eat and excrete, I want you to feel it now, the distinction between inside and out dis...appear. Dis is a city in Hell, don't worry, we won't be going there, you're already here.

My apartness is absolute, every connection short-circuits, I can't access a single one. It's terrifying because everyone else is on the surface, I see their blurry reflections, I'm the only one underwater. I try to escape by shutting down the isolation chamber, a desperate attempt to connect with something, anything, ghost fish, inert matter, the kingdom of the dead, worms.

It's not your fault, you didn't do anything wrong.

Then what am I doing here? Either I'm here to be punished or I'm here to be forgiven.

You've punished yourself more than enough already, you don't need forgiveness from your loved ones, you don't need it from some supernatural being and you certainly don't need it from me. You need to forgive yourself.

But I haven't done anything wrong.

Then why are you here?

...

A man is a city. The earthquake is big, every bridge collapses, each house falls, I crawl out from a lucky cave. I'm crying from grief and fear of aftershocks, my hand is shaking, I can't do it, I can't make it stop, the harder I try the more it shakes. I don't want it, I don't want a lot, I just wanna be OK. I need something to hold on to, something not broken, something not dead.

Driving past a plaza, apartments, downhill toward T Street I see a fawn on the lawn beside the road, he's beautiful, white-spotted, so young and alone amidst all this traffic. When he darts off thru the grass toward the slough I see myself as a child.
Run, honey, run as fast and far as you can.

It's no use, they're inside me.

I need a change of scenery, Puget Sound, sound as glassy water, safe and sound, the sounds of words come back to me, dissipating fear, the difference between loneliness and solitude becomes clear.

I walk the shore contemplating all the broken shells. Maybe everyone's broken. Some are born that way, *some are born to sweet delight and some are born to endless night.* Eventually everything breaks, dawn.

Trolling or drifting around forested islands alone in the Sound, I'm not threatened to assume a pose, an imposter in my own skin, self-recrimination. The threat sinks into the Sound, I'm on the surface looking down at my reflection, I'm not down there looking up at the blurry light going out.

When the mind slows down enough, I can breathe. I fall asleep for an hour, the first time in 5 months. When I tell Tina she looks quizzical. I lie in bed most days and all nights, so what am I doing if not sleeping? Thawing.

I'm safe on the surface, I don't wanna look beneath it ever again so I start drinking. Why

are you using a crutch if nothing's wrong with your leg? You don't understand, there's a shark. But we're on land.

I don't rebuild the city, I build barriers to protect the behavior. Alcohol blocks a confrontation with the trauma, the process of processing it. The barriers form a wedge between me and Marci, a wedge made of my denial. When I surf The Wedge it pounds me into the sand, sand in my crotch, nostrils, ears, mouth.

...

I'm waiting for a bus late at night when I realize it's not coming. The others, dirty and disheveled, are leaving in a beat-up old van but it breaks down a block away so they push it back here, then wander forlornly into the station looking for somewhere to sleep. I start walking down a dark empty hallway in the station, look up and see an enormous hawk landing on what must be her nest, a black alcove the size of my bedroom. When the hawk lifts off I see the alcove is empty and black as a coal mine, I'm staring into the blackness when I wake.

It's the inside of my shell but there's no egg. I'm the hatchling. No, you're a ghost, you'll never get born, you'll stay in the blackness forever listening to their voices, saying what we tell you to say.

No, I'm not inside the shell, it's inside me – my dream figure/figment standing in the black alcove listening to disembodied voices, trying to understand you, to learn how to love the alcove. It's easy to love the hawk, totem animal, spirit mother who incubates the precious egg; deadly hard to love a coal-black soul that smells of sulfur if it smells at all, a tomb I've always inhabited because it's always inhabited me.

The body is born young and grows old, but the soul is born old and grows young...if it isn't sold.

Coal, pure carbon, carbon-based life-forms love each other, eat each other, beat each other, kill each other, birth each other.

Cowboy Junkies in my head, *heart like Gabriel pure and white as ivory, soul like Lucifer black and cold like a piece of lead, misguided angel, love you til I'm dead*, but the heart's a fist wrapped in blood beating inexorably, aimlessly beating, being eaten, beaten violently, silently beating, beating musically, beating you.

I'm 14, I often take the bus to the beach, 2 buses, the connection in the heart of downtown L.A. – homeless people, addicts and dealers, prostitutes and pimps, raw humans with traumatized souls. Tho I don't look like it, I'm one of them. Memories are products of PTSD, pain the most powerful mnemonic.

The dream's a Beckett script, all of us displaced, disheveled, homeless, waiting for what will never come. Inspired by a 3-year ordeal in Southern France during the war, he's a courier/translator for the resistance, highly attuned to a malevolent but amorphous, incomprehensibly senseless threat. The Vichy government collaborates with the Nazis, no telling which side a particular Frenchman is on, ally or axis, friend or foe, faux uniforms, faux rags, everyone in the dark as to who's who, what's around the next bush, stone or eviscerated structure (what's that, a barn, train station, let's stay here *faute de mieux*).

No telling where the next meal or makeshift bed, when will it end, will I never awake, am I already dead, who's speaking – all the subterfuge, entropy, attrition, secrecy, madness, waiting, waiting for what, for the war to end, a return to some semblance of safety, normalcy, sanity, but they return to a botched civilization, cities of rubble, a language infused with skepticism, cynicism, a language never to be trusted again.

Yes, you got born, congratulations, but you're still stuck in some defunct station, now what?

I'm lying on my back in grass looking up at 2 hawks circling above sycamore trees, then I look over at a pond and see a big white goose approaching, very cross and aggressive, 10 feet away, 2 feet, yelling and pecking toward my face. I somehow manage to quell my fear, reach my left hand gently up against her right cheek and she calms down as I wake.

It's Zeus in the form of a goose coming to seduce me. No, he seduces Leda in the form of a white swan. Close enough, same genre, waterfowl avatar.

The landscape resembles an English countryside, fresh green grass, a pond full of beautiful birds – wood ducks and harlequin ducks, black swans and white geese. Sycamores in England are called plane trees but they aren't plain, like common mergansers, anything but common. I experience an actual white goose in attack mode running and shouting at me, too close to her goslings. I only wanna pick them up one by one and kiss them, but she doesn't understand, she's not an avatar, she's a curvy ball of feathered fury.

Two hawks circling (link to the enormous hawk in the previous dream) point to the osprey nest in the lookout tower near the jetty – mother and chick, now a juvenile nearly the same size as Mom, catch fish together and circle back, we see them every surf session.

The dream's not about bird-love or bird-fear. Anxiety is reified, transformed into an object of fear, an angry goose or a bear in an earlier dream, but anxiety has no object, even the dread of death from which it springs isn't an object, it's nothing, Kierkegaard's great nothing of anxiety. When the juvenile osprey sees no sign of Mother in the whole sky, the nest abandoned, what will she be afraid of, anything, everything...nothing.

To manage anxiety and channel its vast energy toward serenity rather than tension (so as to be having a gentle moment with the goose instead of fighting her) you have to

get comfortable being uncomfortable.

That's easy for you to say, you don't exist.

...

I'm flying unaided above a small coastal town, my flight slightly impeded like I'm underwater, my arms straight out in front pulling the air away from my face but it isn't blurry, it's perfectly clear, I just can't fly very fast. Then I see thru a window people seated in a second-story restaurant, they look concerned, they don't think I'll make it up over the building, I don't think I'll make it either so I land gently on a sidewalk near an empty table and chairs when I wake.

You're not ready yet.

Sitting at a table in a restaurant with a small group of people can be excruciating, my internal clocks race uncontrollably, sweaty-palmed hands shake, I can't eat, the infernal clock hisses, I wanna jump out the window.

Anxiety fuels the flight but it also inhibits, impedes me. Escape, be a high-flyer, above it all, you little ones down there...but all I want is to sit there at ease with everyone else and connect.

Not sky, not water, the dream advises you to take the middle way, land on land, now sit outside at the table, maybe a friend will come along.

...

Marci and I are hovering in a seated position but there's no helicopter, we're flying unaided 15 feet off the ground past small groups of people and dogs. A little higher and faster now above a bridge a powerful force pulls us south over a river,

I try to turn us right toward the west coast but we can only go straight south. Then I'm alone walking on a pier, I look up at an enormous structure against a steep cliffside, an ancient red-brick castle mostly intact. I'm at the end of the pier, the rest crumbled into the sea, I briefly contemplate jumping then decide against it. Now I'm standing in a small group of elderly people, one is Robert Bly, they're talking about how the castle is built, how it's insulated and I'm nodding as if I'm following but I don't really understand when I wake.

A fulfillment of a wish to fly undermined by my inability to control the direction of the flight, our relationship is going south, the force pulling it apart addiction atop denial and repression. Marci stays longer than she should but eventually flies east. I continue south alone to the end of the pier, Kierkegaard's cliff, I'm entirely free to choose whether or not to jump, the yawning abyss of freedom from which anxiety continuously births itself. I choose the intoxication of sobriety.

The pier crumbles into the sea regardless of your choices.

The elders know an alternative to flight – being grounded, centered, balanced, they know how to build a stable life like an ancient red-brick castle against a steep cliffside.

The castle crumbles regardless of your choices.

They understand how to insulate a life, they know about boundaries, where and when you need them, where and when they get in the way, self-reliance and self-denial interfused.

Since my culture has no initiation ceremonies (prom? high-school football?) I'm starting to learn in my 40s what I should've learned in my late teens, early 20s.

The dream castle's mostly intact, it's no use repairing the broken or missing bits, replacing them with new words, they aren't made of words to begin with.

No sense being angry at your emotionally repressed father, he can't give you what he doesn't have because he didn't get it from his father, who didn't get it from his, and so on. You can be angry at the patriarchy, emotional repression the foundation of oppression, colonialism, capitalism, empire, but that's no use either, all your anger won't make you a man, all your sadness...but there's no end.

...

Sitting beside a little girl with long strawberry blond hair, a few freckles and clear blue eyes, I'm trying to show her something on her PC, she already knows, she's drawing with the mouse (I don't know how to do that) some kind of creature I don't recognize. Then I realize I'm holding a fishing pole, I have a bite, a salmon, I reel it in, now it's flopping in the kitchen sink and I'm looking for something to kill it with. I hit it over the snout with a knife-handle and the salmon's head turns translucent, all the color drains away so we can see thru it, still alive. I look in a drawer for something heavier, a metal can-opener, I whack the snout a few times, no, I cut into the head and accidentally poke an eye, it's all bloody, still alive, now it's becoming darker and more scaly, the scales are thick and it looks bigger like a little crocodile, I'm frightened when I wake.

It's Alisha, the most adorable little girl I've ever seen. It's perfectly understandable how one could fall in love with her, want to be near her, watch her grow up, help her, guide her.

No, it's Shari. When Mom tells me she's trying for a girl named Shari Michelle but has me instead, I start dreaming of a little girl with long red hair and many freckles, long strawberry blond hair and a few freckles or long blond hair and no freckles, always clear blue eyes. My hair and eyes are satisfactory but I have the wrong privates. I feel guilty being male, a failure before I'm born.

The livingroom's an ocean, I live in it, the ocean of memory.

I want to be the parent but I'm the child, the teacher but I'm the pupil, the predator but I'm the prey.

It's her dream, she knows what's going to happen, she's drawing it for me with a mouse, from fish to crocodile to mouse to human, she understands everything, Ovid, evolution, impermanence, no-self, no-birth, no-death, the conservation and equivalence of matter and energy, emptiness, not a single thing created or destroyed, only flux, a flowing now, an interminable metamorphosis.

The salmon's head turning translucent is the first sign – I don't succeed in killing the fish but in inaugurating its transmutation.

I always struggle to open cans of tuna. The can opener represents sexual frustration, wanting to open her up and get inside...no, it symbolizes your emotional life, hermetically sealed.

My father teaches me how to fish. To catch bullheads wrap a little ball of bacon around a hook and drop it to the bottom. Place the knife-tip between the fish's eyes, pierce, puncture, penetrate the skull, the crackling crunch of cartilage makes me queasy.

Now slice the bullhead's right and left flanks into 2 triangular strips of bait, my stomach unsettles – affixed to a moving hook the dead flesh wriggles in the water mimicking a live fish. Stick the knife back into the skull incision and toss the bloody mutilated corpse back into the Sound.

To catch salmon while trolling use flashing spoons and either a spinning lure or fresh bait, the bullhead strips. Hold the salmon firmly and whack it with a 2-by-4 over the snout until it stops moving. The blunt thump, the sound of the snout snapping gives me full-body chills.

Killing myself doesn't make me queasy, partly because I take a more feminine option,

blue sleeping pills.

Even if it works, you kill a bullhead, cut it up for bait, catch a salmon with it and eat the salmon, does that justify killing all the bullheads or just that particular one?

How do I escape the impulse to escape?

Crocodile karma, I don't hate myself, I don't hate mankind, you would have them rational animals and are angry at being disappointed.

Scale the salmon's flanks from head to tail with a slanted knife, the scales like glistening ash-flakes float in a pool of filthy saltwater.

Scales are for weighing things like flesh and justice. On the scales of poetry the pan containing "I" must not dip lower than the pan containing "not-I" – Pan approaches the Salt River, he presides over shepherds and flocks, delights in rural music, he represents the all, an impersonation of Nature, pantheistic, he's the author of sudden and groundless terror, panic – air *ich*, Eric!

...

Infernal Dialogues (10)

This is the 10th circle, the mirror sphere, a glass globe or crystal ball but black on the outside, doorless, windowless, an enclosed room composed of a single spherical mirror. You'll be alone, I can't accompany you.

I was just reading about these people constructing a mirror for the largest telescope ever built.

You'll see countless black holes, pupils, eyes of the cosmos, your eyes looking back at all your warped selves, some being stretched apart like taffy, some shrinking to a point and turning inside out, infinite regression in every direction, but they return to you, all converge on the being in the middle, all conflate, integrate, unite.

Why can't I see galaxies and quasars, why can't I see something other than me?

You think you're disappearing from yourself, or making yourself disappear, instead you succeed in multiplying yourself exponentially.

So I can't escape from myself, alright, why else am I here?

To understand that all the reflections are projections of your own mind, the mirror sphere's only light source. You're here to understand the purpose of memory, liberation from both past and future, expanding love beyond desire.

My memory typically does the opposite, it must be faulty.

There's nothing wrong with your memory, it's your relationship to it that's faulty. When you feel the presence of self-forgiveness you'll be free to inhabit Emancipation-Mind and realize that really there's no self to forgive, no self to escape from, no self to find.

...

Being young and dipped in folly, I fall in love with melancholy. Alone in the land of the dead without even another ghost to accompany me, I see my reflection in the TV and realize I'm wasting my life. The sad astronaut floating in a lonely capsule, his tears can't fall, they swell up into salt crystal balls, he sees a future forever destined to have no content, nothing but a burning blur.

Am I remembering a dream or a film? Comparing is misleading. A film is limited by the technology used to create it, a dream is limited only by the symbolic imagination and the depths of feeling in the human soul.

Another sex dream leaves me feeling empty, used, discarded. Sexual relationships alter only the surface of loneliness – they can't penetrate deeper into its core, a pun a stiffening in meaning. The core can never be reached, a fundamental fact of human existence, absolute loneliness necessary for pure poetry, for madness, but...

Dreams turn against everyone who dreams. To objectify another is to objectify oneself. When you devalue and dishonor another's subjecthood (a person with thoughts, feelings, dreams reduced to a few body parts to be exploited, penetrated) you also devalue and dishonor the fullness of your own being. That's why the dream leaves you empty, feeling the severing of subject from object – any attempt to fill in the gap only makes the hole wider.

An inability to control being controlled by desire leads to actually desiring it.

Deracination perceived as pleasure, the desire to be both slave and ghost is the death-drive – Kama and Mara, erotic love and death, two aspects of the same god.

Because I'm divided, dissected into parts that make me feel the ache of lack, a deferred hurt, a numbness at being cut off from, a phantom limb, I long for the fullness of being whole.

Keep the darkness close, if you run it'll engulf you again – it's so generative, so necessary, the smithy where change is forged. I'm shining like a new dime on a dead man's eye.

Descry, cry, it's safe here in my kitchen, why am I crying, because I can't keep my hands from shaking, my thoughts from racing, I don't mean now, not now, I'm fine now, I mean then, in the psych ward cafeteria, looking at that big fat bald ugly scary man telling me to stop shaking but I can't, I want more than anything to stop, to say something, tell him to leave me alone, punch him in the face, but I can't do anything, I can't cry, can only shake in silence, but now I'm not shaking, only crying, it's safe, it's shiny.

...

Dreams perpetuate a feeling of helplessness. Vicariously thru my dream figure/figment I experience situations and events beyond my control because I'm asleep, but how is waking life any different?

A writer is written by the discourses available to her. Dreams are a form of writing in which the author is asleep. The author is awake when she recalls the dream and writes it down, transcribes it from memory, but then it's being written by the discourses available to her, traditional syntax, normative grammar and linear chronology, none of which are there in the dream.

Dreams as problems of perception and description, problems of writing – when I recount a dream I do so according to the logic of conventional narrative. If I could accurately transcribe it syntactically while it's happening, would it make any sense? When a dead person speaks, what does understanding mean?

To stand under, to lie down underground, you make the choice that chooses you.

Waking life as a problem of perception and description, a problem of writing.

Between smoky lavender-grey storm clouds, silver swirls into light bluish-white, a sky like the inside of an abalone shell. Passing the church's bright white sign board, He rose from the grave for you! I wanna add The Zombie of Nazareth loves you, He wants to eat your brains! George Romero is laughing in his grave.

...

I'm in a grassy yard playing football with Buddy, several others and a black bear. I stop running and realize I have a wound on my stomach where the bear swiped me, it's bubbly, white and tender. Buddy comes over and says, *just lick it like a pussy*. Then I'm on a big beautiful beach, kids playing soccer, older people walking, I see a strange shell and lean over to look at it, something starts emerging, sliding smoothly out, soft gooey white flesh long and glistening in the sand, so vulnerable, I start running along the shore feeling light and free when I wake.

Buddy and I play Pop Warner football for the Glendale Bears, we watch the UCLA Bruins on TV, when we play high-school football he succeeds, I fail. I get injured in the first game, hip-pointer, Coach Shoemaker humiliates me in front of the whole team (for getting hurt? not playing hurt?) then punishes me for the rest of the season, tries to get me to quit. I don't, I take it, I don't break, the breakdown is deferred for 3 years.

Hazing, an American male initiation ceremony, several big strong varsity guys pin down a junior and try to force a broomstick into his rectum while he kicks and squirms and screams. It builds character, helps him become a man.

When you're injured on the gridiron battlefield you're supposed to lick your wounds and carry on like a man, a soldier, a bear (the Chicago Bears play at Soldier Field). You're supposed to take it like a man, suck it up, take it in the mouth and take it in

the ass because yer a fag, yer a pussy.

While playing soccer shirtless someone scratches my stomach, no blood at first, when it surfaces I lick it, sweaty salty blood. The dream-wound resembles a white jellyfish, it foreshadows the white snail-flesh on the beach. Remember geo-ducks on Puget Sound beaches, how incredibly long they are emerging from their shells.

The stomach wound is a birth metaphor. So much buried emotion denied, repressed, deferred, so much painful shame stuffed inside, all the swallowed pride, sadness, grief, despondency, madness, dissociation, alienation, isolation, hallucination, paranoia, desperation, resignation, hopelessness, helplessness, loneliness, despair and fear, the anxiety-guilt complex, the stone – that soft tender naked gooey white flesh forcing the stone thru its siphon down into its gut – there's anger in there too making the creature stronger, ready to come out into the light but it's scary out here, radiation, predators, I'm completely exposed, vulnerable, free.