

THE WRITING LIFE

By David Eide

COasis

The writing life gives legs to the impossible.

"It moved through thick and thin, light and dark. Many projects, many failures, many bitterness's, many joys, many of everything but goods and money."

I had to pass through several overwhelming experiences:

Nature: That is, what precedes us and continues on forever with the perception of form and beauty on an undiscovered planet in a galaxy we have not yet discovered, on the principle: Nature is abundant and grabs hold wherever it can.

Science: Cosmology; space, mass, velocity, chemical composition, etc etc. The little markers we love to pronounce: Quark, meson, String. The path to a certain glut of elegant facts.

Culture: Cities or the complexity of things built out of the cussedness of human nature in love with its own powers. Sumer, then all the functions, systems, inventions, through time. The determination of walls, streets, crowds, and social structure.

Family: Identity through the growth of personality

Freedom and its resistance.

Separation and its Longing.

"Wonderful densities we travel through!"

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The old wise woman said, "he didn't become an expert at anything but his vision was comprehensive."

Projects, relations, communities, jobs; difficult modern mundane and fascinating life.

I never believed I was superior to anyone but ICOasis didn't allow the stink of human nature take down my potentials.

The writing life, then, was akin to a path, sometimes of discovery, certainly contemplation.....

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"The well-springs of your own productive self. That is the center. That is where it is done. That is where happiness and joy are born." That's what she told me as I contemplated the Bridge way off in the distance but right beside me as well.

"And most of the morality and virtue books don't get it for the most part. You have to go to the original types who have struck the fount. They are the trust-worthy ones."

I relented to her advice even though I didn't want to.

It was around the time I was trying to write novels. I never got to that "fount" as she called it. So I moved away from novels and tried other areas; poetry, thought, political discourse, contemplation's, etc.

Very simple. I said, "talent, go where thou wisheth," and it went into the areas it did. I treated my writing as though it were a restless son who you let loose into the world knowing he will get creamed but be the better for it.

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The quandary for the writer is judging what is and what is not productive....a few lines of Rilke appear more productive to my sense of things than a 500-page novel of nothingness. The market may disagree, certainly.

But it is a personal thing is it not?

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A young writer learns the following like a dart through the eye on some dank battlefield:

Era's can be destroyed by Nothingness. In a culture divided between exploiters and victims there is little truth; there is little building or constructive principles.

A writer thanks God for the hearty laughter of men!

To fight the easy sort of Nothingness leisurely parading itself, a writer needs to focus on his or her:

Writing life

Publishing career

Pursuit of knowledge

Personal life

Sometimes separate, sometimes meshed and blended.

In an Era of Nothingness the writer learns patience and develops the belief that his work is his own, for whatever end he feels necessary for it.

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The Speed of Light

The stated limit is duration=1 second= 186,000 miles in the space we create, if not occupy. It is the description of one limit and therefore, celebrated by poetry. It is a kind of facement of God.

Duration, as a reality, is all we know. That is poetry.

However, to be human and healthy we need to slow everything down. That is prose. We need to understand. That is prose.

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The Pursuit of Truth

The writer enters that haunted state of demoralization when he discovers the difference between the "pursuit of truth" and the "will to power."

The pursuit of truth comes in through beauty.

Events emerged from the post-Vietnam era, its pessimism's and degradations. The old liberals showed me history and the perspective to see one's own time as it will not see itself. They taught that if you hit your head against steel thighs your head, eventually, will fall off and nothing will have changed but one more headless writer. But just when the learning was good came the old-Bolshevik-takes-over-and-rubs-out-the-idealistic- Menshevik syndrome. It was an interesting show but left the writer amazed by the destructive power of politics at a time when he needed models. COasis A more cutting-edge thing going on at the time were the rise of cults, harvesting armies of the old drug culture or idealistic waifs who wanted no part of the dank, discredited American society.

It's hard to communicate how deep that wound went.

My Virtual Space emerged out of a simple question, "how do you build a political state on a nation filled with rotten people; ignorant, addicted, gross, lousy, putrid people?"

That was a recipe for disaster I thought to myself, not prepared for the arduous task of self-examination it required from me.

I separated the political and literary this way. The political was the self-evident machinery of due process, debate, policy-making, etc. Anything that made its way into the political machinery no longer had interest, ipso facto, to the literary imagination.

I think of protests against the Vietnam war or equity/justice issues for example. These became self-evident political issues that were significant to the citizen but not the literary imagination. The one issue where this was most tested was the environmental since it implied the core of literary imagination, that is, nature. But that too became a political issue decided in the political system.

The literary imagination extracts from these issues what it can.

Battle, for instance and the persistence of war through time

The wildness of nature and its necessity

The liberation of the female for her full development

The depiction of a perfect society or a perfect citizen

.....these things unattainable to anything but the appreciative imagination are what the writer focuses on.

The undiscovered problems.

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There is society and then there is the individual. The society is either wealthy or poor. It is Republican or Democrat. It is swarming in gadgets or not.

The individual is usually all of these things at different times. And the writer is the quintessential individual in that he demands all his focus is on what the society despises. Or, is not adventuresome enough yet to take on, such as new ideas or new perceptions.

The writer rationalizes the need for wealth without too much trouble. "It is better to be in a society swimming in wealth than in one deep in poverty." One creates leverage after leverage that even the writer can stand on. Poverty is one surly ride down the mineshaft.

And to secure this wealthy state one must live in a stable republic. And that depends, not only in the ability to create wealth but in the continual attention on the needs of the middle-class. The writer sees all of this in a very positive light.

But then, the individual is not the society. He meets many who think they are! The individual writer can do those things the economy and the politics can not, that is, roam freely through all the different pluralities, all the states of wealth and poverty, all the classes, all the activities and functions and come out the other end more a writer than a nutcase. Sometimes things are on the balance beam but regardless.

For a few decades I had what one could describe as a "disaster" when it came to publishing. I didn't have the foggiest notion of what I was doing. I started and abandoned projects as fast as I could, deluding myself that I was being productive.

CLUE: When the beginning is off-center, don't go in a straight line.

Sometimes I entertained the idea that I would die young and all my papers would be found and printed. Decades later a professor would do a paper on me and the contents of my folders. Other times I said, it's just a matter of time....something will happen.....have patience.

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Discouragement is the deadliest acid for the writer. If even a few spoonfuls gets on the tongue a writer is apt to lose confidence in himself. When that process begins there is the ten-years-of-sliding-downward syndrome until an ugly rock or vicious animal tells you to pay attention.

Even the most precious project crawls to the margin. COasis

I think, in the modern world, it's smart to live 3 or 4 distinctive lives. This is possible and necessary to do in order to sustain levels of interest and energy.

Between the ages of 25 and 35 I was very concerned about the global situation, the future, nuclear dilemma, ecological problem, resource depletion and the rest of it. I didn't separate out my moral concerns and literary concerns.

And I thought a free, liberal democratic person should, in fact, take on those larger questions. You can't solve them but, at least, you get to know the world on a scale hitherto unknown. But, only youth and its energies can take on all of those things. Eventually, the energy runs downward and there is the need to transform.

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It is crucial to know when one life is complete and done with.

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Between 35-45 was, as well, a complete life in a way. It was centered in family, self, and the cohesive properties of life. The conservation of energy, perhaps. The conservation of liberal, democratic values since those were being threatened every moment.

One life comes to an end and another is being born; based primarily, in strict self-interest. What is my self-interest as a writer? What is my self-interest as a economic being? What is my self-interest as a citizen? What do I need to do in order to fulfill these roles and obligations? What sort of intentionality is necessary? What sort of plans? What sort of demands do I have to put on myself and others?

That describes the sort of life I am going into.

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Early on I had the intuition that the modern world was creating a society of very passive/aggressive types who sat back and let themselves get zapped by the horridness of other people's intentions. This is something that belongs to hordes not to liberal, democratic citizens.

Culture, to be valuable, must first be hidden. It must be discovered on its own terms. That process produces authentic individuality; spoon-fed culture produces a distracted, addicted, dumbed-down population.

The writer has to make this sort of distinction since the marketplace is dominated by lies and promises rather than self-discovery.

It only matters when we take stock of who is ruling the roost.

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A society is never in trouble when the bad arises and resists it and fights it. The society is in deep trouble when the good arises and resists it and fights it. That follows an inevitable process of corruption over several generations and drains whatever remaining morale it contains straight into the void of space.

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In the first phase of my career I was concerned with questions of repression. What represses the imagination and intellect? What, in other words, is the enemy to free, liberal democratic culture?

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I was one who studied the end of life on planet Earth. It seemed reasonable, in youth, that such a fate awaited the future. "Ah, the end of life, the end of the human prospect...." There was a stubborn egotism that didn't allow for such a view but, then, something large and real made me realize that it was probable and what, then, was the writer's response?

After all, the weapons were not myths. COasis And their delivery systems were not myths. It made it absurd to continue as though nothing had happened or nothing need change. To the poetic consciousness the absurdity appeared fatal and, in fact, I was convinced great and wonderful things had to happen.

That anything less than the fantastic discovery of new form, new imaginative horizons, new aspirations was a sacrifice to the demoralization brought on by the blight of the modern world.

It's quite shocking to take this view into society and see the responses one gets.

But, I was convinced that an utterly new thing had to come into play. The only thing that is not conditioned is the poetic imagination.

Therein is the tale of a thing or two.

Freedom experienced as a splendid future!

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One thing that I fought with and that was the status and nature of the novel. I felt that the novel had been stripped various ways by modern technology. That the writer should leave off "telling stories" in

this form and focus or extract the very best qualities embedded in novels; insight, vision, and connectedness with a sense of place. Those were the great qualities of the novel.

But those qualities could COasis be developed any number of ways. The novel was reduced down and shuttered in by the growth of so many things outside the dimension of the novel. Better to move to exciting new ways of presenting the essence of those qualities the novel once embedded in so many delightful, dynamic ways.

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If the novel is not an expression of our freedom, then what is it?

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Influences fly from me like angry ghosts. "You beats and old European novelists, consummate artists as you were; crazed philosophers, confessional poets, shrinks, and monks," I mutter as they all fly skyward after they had their way with me.

I was influenced by all things not permitted in the United States but in small college and university towns.

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If they could contemplate in the depths of the 13th century why can't modern types do the same thing? It's a simple and frightening question.

And what people have denied in themselves; that was a painful influence for me.

The greatest influence is the fully human in stride through love, death, nature, hate, power, and beauty. It is a form not obligated to anything but its very best.

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An indelible influence keeps the mind open in the face of skepticism, cynicism, hatred, ignorance and crowds of common ailments. Addiction, certainly that.

There is, then, the miserable voyage through the untrustworthy nature of human beings; passage, shock, horror, and then the telling move.

And when we pass through we must turn back and admit what has gotten us through. It is a commingling of the sacred and the profane.

Richness.

Light.

Happy resolutions!

The American writer is never free while he exists in the shadow of old Europe. The old Europeans were transfixed by "society," rather than "freedom." The American wants to be a free dog, the freest of the free. "Society" is for the days when things travelled at 11MPH and the circulating coil for money existed on one level and the rest were cold and bitter.

Not "freedom" perhaps but the "effects of having a free life..."

Mostly we don't struggle with questions about basic freedoms but struggle to maintain the freedom that is here and exploring its implications and new horizons.

It is, then, the obligation of the American writer to establish new vistas, new combinations, new worlds. That is the thing.

It is a goal that seeks for its fact.

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Some of the gravest conflicts in human history are reduced in America to a kind of so what-ism. A dash of spiritual wisdom, a slug of knowledge is usually enough to detox the materialism of the American spirit.

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The deep impressions made by the possibility of nuclear war and the adventure into space initiated my experience in the world. Terror and its effects are real even when nothing happens.

And the Moon reflected to Earth the physical reality of space in its infinite yawn; its capacity to devour worlds without sound. Its trillions of light years of absolute hostility to life.

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The sweet path of writing includes an orientation to the past, present, and future!

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At times the world was so absurd it was rather liberating. At first, it was demoralizing. But then it was apparent that it literally didn't matter what others thought.

And this introduced me to the dangers of nihilism as well as to the pleasures of engagement; freedom with responsibility or freedom because we are morally responsible and want the good.

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An American writer; the animal that carries the seeds of something vast, protected yet open; regional but experienced in a few regions. Knowing the ocean and mountains. Experience. Mountain man of new paths if the people don't hang him for it; they certainly won't patronize him or permit him to live on his writings alone.

He who takes all up into himself and, at the end of it, wobbles but stands firm. He knows the machinery of politics and business but avoids the gears as much as possible. He is eaten up by time piece by piece and records the apex and nadir of the experience. He really is not after enemies. He likes fellowship and friendship, cordial relations between people. Sanity. He knows the bitterness of living without things. He knows the sublime freedom of living without things. He is humiliated at every turn but seems to land on his feet ok.

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And after being ground down into the soft, fine dust of it all what American writers does he still remember? Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Whitman, Melville, Twain, London, Hemingway, Faulkner, Fitzgerald. The youngest of these fine talents died about 40 years ago. Nothing in 40 years? What in 40 years?

As far as America it could be any number of things. Pop culture rose into prominence. Amplified music. Television. Glossy magazines in a fragmented marketplace. Non-fiction over fiction. Open verse in poetry with some retreat back into structure. Declinism of a sort. Melodic meaninglessness but touching on the beautiful without embodying the beautiful. Transient and forgotten in half a generation. Freeing of African-Americans and women; a good fulfillment of the democratic idea. The immense struggle over the role of America in global politics; world history. Computers. Space. WMD. Consciousness of the effect of human activity on the environment. Travel. Money. Freedom of a kind. Sex. Intoxication.

The quickening; convenience, privilege, humans and their machines like pets now or an appendage grafted onto them by the powers that be. Religion either so harsh it contradicts the center of itself or so airy-fairy it's rather nonsensical. Lost in cities, found in wandering crowds milling around the stadium. Roars above and from below.

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In writing it is always the human element; nothing more, nothing less. The machines and institutions can take care of themselves. And, if the human element declines it's superfluous anyway. The human beings relation then to what is supreme and what exists as the central facts. Stories. Mind in support of the commonweal of humanity. The mouth of nature. The terrible fears. Persona of the time. The fragments that make up the whole. A night sky lit up with little dreams. The moon as a traversal point. The aim is at the origin of things. Pity the poor souls who find it. Pity the ones who stop or give up. Man. Woman. That. Throw in Children. Yank from them their best and give it back to them as long as they pay you for it.

Immersion in the now; the dark paltriness with huge eternities on either side of it. So. Observation. Alertness. Laughter. Good cheer.

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Let us make an outline that is as inhuman as the thing we see. But, the outline is not the thing. The thing is all inside.

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The writer is not a camera. The writer is a human observer. He observes without commenting. No! Now he must comment, things have gotten too far. Ah, now he will simply permit the built-up energies running through him exit in interesting ways.

Truth is more complex than any particular cause.

He emerges from a modern romanticism to see himself and his culture in a sober light; one that has darkness, one that has delight. One that has beauty, one that has evil. One where the massification is deadly, yet one can escape the massification. The marks of it are everywhere and he observes. He is a silent camera. He carefully lifts and places, rushes off a caption and turns the page.

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If there is something real in the term, "democratic soul" or a "liberal, democratic spirit" a writer is obliged to flesh it out.

No matter what position the pyramid happens to be in, the writer uses every opportunity to contradict it.

A lot of creative energy is driven through technical objects or organizations. The one out for the literary type is mindfulness. He waits patiently for the unintended consequence of mindfulness.

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Reading is a defense against the palling claws of the nightmare days. The cynical, nihilistic, dumb and dumber all have their secret but transparent codes. Let them go. Be utterly aware of them because they will try and pull you from the fount as soon as they see you get near it.

The seed of a great American myth: "Make it new but know all that has gone before." And the two sides must be joined together. If it is only one thing or the other then it results in lies and fanaticism.

The shadows of even those we think we know can throw us into a deep shadow ourselves. COasis

The writer tries to protect two distinct areas: language and imagination. He can't say everything there is to say about them; he knows when they are strong and when they are weak. Anything that overpowers the individual weakens the ability of both language and/or imagination to tell the truth, to be courageous, to have vision, to root-down into the supple Earth.

We don't have tyranny, yet, here in the West.

Writing is an act of individuality. It is a mark of a particular individual. Most people are exposed early on to a mass culture that teaches very powerful techniques and so on. It reinforces some popular wisdom. And it does so at the moment the educational system is at its weakest. It's much more likely a culture of this type will produce a huge, grey slagheap and frightened children who are commanded by smart guys than that you will produce a culture of individual people who love the culture, its history, yet maintain a very critical view of power. And who continually grow and develop and support their sensibility as free liberal democratic citizens.

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Power, itself, is an enemy of language and imagination.

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The writer has to be courageous enough to build outside the walls of power.

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Even though I read philosophy from time to time I consider myself fully, a "man of letters," a character who was much despised in the era I grew up in; a product of leisure and privilege. Americans are not good with leisure or privilege and no one can convince them that sitting on ones rear writing or reading is a productive use of time so, perhaps, the "man of letters," is a kind of civilized outcast; knowing the core and center but banished to wander along the steel, titanium edges of the thing he is part of. And, after all, it is but a case of one man or one woman with an imagination, intellect, experience, knowledge putting a world together with language; the language he or she possesses in relation to a world he or she does not make but there as solid as the stadium filled with crazed fans.

And what one looks at is telling. What dives deep into the spirit is telling. All the person of letters can do is present his language in as many forms as possible, try to focus on what he or she does the best, let go of vanity, serve the art, serve the language.

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I operated, as a good poet will, with three or four myths intact. I searched for the mythologies and knew the light and dark of each. One came about because of the Internet; that is, the myth of the colony, cut away from the Empire but connected to it and struggling with that connection. The Empire has superior things, perhaps, and luxuriates in a power it will lose sooner than later. The colony takes the best virtues of the Empire and then tries to create the new future. And that dovetailed into the myth that the framers set from the beginning. "Make it new," but know the past 3-4,000 years of human achievement, degradation, genius, wonderment and comedy. Know it as well as you know your own name. A beautiful profound myth. And then the modern one that I discovered in the 70's. On one side the weapons that can destroy whole cities in a flash of light. And on the other the breaking of the seal of space and the universe becoming a tactile entity that leads the mind to infinity; a real experience and one that expands the present and gives hope for a future always threatened by the insanity of human beings.

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I ignored ideology, even politics from time to time and the long odd parade that makes up any given time. I connected with what filled me with delight, wisdom, and knowledge. I ignored everything else.

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I can't force the writing of poetry. It used to be that one time a year I would get into a poetic rutting season and have a go at it. I felt it was a mystical sort of activity, expressing the spirit in a free and meaningful way. It was a private art, didn't need a huge public. Prose narrative, the novel, is a public art and needs a lot of eyeballs to flourish. COasis

That is one of its problems, certainly.

The commentary stuff came about as a way to re-orientate myself back to the present. In my teens and early-mid 20's I was fully and happily imbued with the present and rode in it in fine style. Then it became repugnant to me. As a good American I rushed way ahead to the future and speculated about a number of things. When that dried up I went to the past and absorbed that monster. The past at least had real people in it and events that had, in fact, happened. That lasted into my mid-30's I think. Then I left the past and tried to orientate myself to a new present. So, almost all of my commentary work is an orientation. You orientate through knowledge and experience in relation to "what is going on."

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There are significant tribes in America; one of them is the critical tribe that exists in media and the university. Then there is the creative, building tribe that includes makers of poems, music, as well as COasis bridges and computers. And then there is the mainstream tribe who carry, collectively, the burden of society, develop its market values and drive the political values.

I always alternate between loyalty and disgust for those tribes that demand my allegiance or attention.

Once I was divested of the critical tribes' hold over me I lost a certain automatic scorn for the mainstream and, in fact, learned a great deal in that tribe. After all, the only way to learn something is to travel through it all the way and peek your head out the other end. Both the market and politics that come out of the mainstream can be eviscerated but it is far better to build according to principles of truth. Much better, much healthier.

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Apothegms for the Times:

There is a shadow to individuality; there is light. The light emerges when one is doing their very best at their chosen activities and lives with the results.

If you go through change or transition and people don't help you, drop them. Cut them loose because you always need positive energy when going through a change or transition.

Who would destroy the fruits of the fathers labor deserves the black hole they will sink into. And that goes back a good many generations.

The weak adhere to collective myths that appeal to their prejudices or abysmal desires. Be very aware of this and put a staying hand to it.

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I can admit to the problems of dealing with (1) philosophy (2) poetry (3) spiritual

Are they three separate domains or simply impossible to grasp by one consciousness fully since they include and exclude along different pathways? I think what one has to admit is that at different times those three activities are sufficient; they are needed at different periods of time during any person's development.

The personal question is, what emerges out of the interplay with these three dimensions? What, then, is the new horizon?

Philosophy was necessary to deal with the overwhelming nature of the physical world, including political/economy, science, technology, etc. COasis I felt the path to truth came more through the spiritual, with poetry a kind of mid-wife, sometimes bursting into a thing itself. Left to itself human nature repeats again, again, and again with seizures of the irrational thrown in for good measure. However, the spiritual forgave human nature and offered imaginative constructs that would allow for a greater humanity, a greater self.

The reader of philosophy, poetry, and the spiritual learns after a while that it was the form of expression that was the key, including the form of personality that did the expressing.

History and memory were another large category.

However, a man can enact well in only one thing. He can and should try a lot of things when young. And then he settles on the one thing he does very well or better than the other paths he chooses.

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We focus on the self because there is the constituent element; just as the quark is the constituent element in the construction of physical space. Or, whatever it may be at any given time. The string, for instance.

Ride through perilous waters and you'll see a lot of cargo go overboard.

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A good deal of writing is simply orientating the self to the ground of its being, to nature, to the mysteries of what moves it, to buildings, houses, and machines, to systems that flow through it, to facts, to lies, to power, to events, to what we believe and what we want.

Why is "democracy" such a fascinating term? Why do I keep coming back to it? COasis It's about "all with the potential for good and abundant life....so he, so she....so that man, so him."

Democracy will end when it's frozen in fear of its own implications. I would rather see democracy evolve and push itself beyond what is here and view today as a beginning rather than an end.

We are still restless for the signal that we should begin something.

We are there!

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The greatest myths in America are created by "the open road..."

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The writing life was an irrational response to things. It was edged in the belief that structure ensnared and devoured talent. But, freedom without structure turns quickly into addiction and turns on itself after awhile. So, structure comes to have some meaning.

Structure and outline.

The Constitution, to take a random example, is a structure of governance settled by agreement after a lot of ferocious argument. And science is a structure that seeks facts after the deluge of sense. It is the fact-finding structure with its own types of checks and balances, due diligence and so forth. And technology is a kind of physical structure of science that imposes and conveys; helps and destroys and is ignored at the risk of having a skewered view of the world.

So I find that an outline for the modern world; the one I occupy at any rate.

Several things:

When I was a young guy in Berkeley, even in college before that, two things struck me. One was that the "novel" was being written by poets like Joyce, Kerouac and Lawrence. And "novelists" were becoming more COasis like journalists like Hunter Thompson, Mailer, Wolfe, and Capote. That the traditional novel had lost its audience but that journalism still had an audience. Thus, the change in prose during the 70's period of time.

It stood to reason to study and write poetry and get a foundation down that made sense or, at least, worked. And it made it much more reasonable to ignore the mainstream and literary worlds that insisted that the novel was this and journalism was that. It also meant a protracted study of society: Many people. Many circumstances, many jobs, many neighborhoods, many places, many things.

It became clear to me that the prose writer could sever him or herself from the immediate, the now, the reportage of life and become much more contemplative, much more meditative.

So, there was that conflict.

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I wrote in The Digital Writer several years ago that a Milton could flourish these days whereas a Dickens or Dostoevsky would have a difficult time. The epic was a product of leisure and focus by a singular talent. The novel was fully market driven. COasis The market has migrated to film, TV, internet etc.

The novel seems rather fallow these days. A Dickens or Dostoevsky could certainly write on the Net and flourish but it would be through insight, through inventive character sketches and columns rather than novels. Just a passing thought.

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I had knowledge at the center, a thirst for knowledge but I think now, rather than a center of culture, knowledge is a structure inside the head of a person without which his or her head will implode from all the information streaming from outside of it. Knowledge is a ballast against what is outside of it; in that sense it is real.

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The poet sees mythology laying on top of the surface since machines initiate the mythologizing process and dive deep into the consciousness of the people. The two major machines-creating modern-myth are the nuclear device and the space vehicle. A big thing happened when we penetrated space. Space became its own reality at that moment. It became tactile; it became a form that took the mind with it. Up to that point space was a virginous abstraction we projected hopes into. COasis The mind then connected to the odd idea that maybe life existed beyond the Earth; that life was proliferating throughout the immense universe and we weren't equipped yet to find out.

On the other side was the destructive fury of nuclear weapons and their god-like ability to reduce everything down into dust and ash, yet, initiated by human action. This introduced another ancient

myth; that is, all life disappearing in great cycles of destruction and rebirth. So, if things got out of hand here and we just did ourselves in, life would pause for a million years, a mere blink of an eye, and then start up again.

A myth but a pleasing one from time to time.

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I don't think the "materialistic" society is a terrible thing. A city with riches in it is usually a good and interesting place. And so the people who create the materialism are no doubt good servants of the social creed.

I have no problem as long as I am not disturbed in my pursuits.

I do think there is way too much emphasis on it and it corrupts the young very early on who then have to find the right balance. I've never pit the writing life against the materialistic life. However, COasis the materialistic life, like family, is a density the writing life must move through. In that sense a lot of ragged bits of flesh and bone are hanging on the adventure. So, the writer develops stratagems to get through and do the deed. If "materialism" is an eternal Now and a function of the human animal, which basically it is, so be it.

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To sacrifice for the future is extremely dangerous to do in a materialistic culture.

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Money was a bug-a-boo. On the one hand I ascribed most bad things to money. But, more importantly, I experienced the world as a speeding, out of control freight train headed for its own doom. That did not encourage my talents. Therefore I had to block out the driving engine to the mad dash to doom; money. From little coins to vast accounts with a multiplier being the thirst human beings have for money, all driving to the apocalypse. To a young heart it sometimes appears to be the case. The older heart laughs but not too much.

But for a young heart to passively insert itself in that sort of machinery was not going to be tolerable. "Aren't I a free guy too?" Therefore, I followed my path as best as I could and denied money the claims it had made in the world. It's a test of sorts.

And as Kafka put it, "if you're in a race with the world, bet on the world." COasis

I wanted to be a writer, not a consumer.

For me a book was a treasure and a good word or bit of wisdom an object of great value. That may have spilled over into places it shouldn't have gone. I know that people wanted to correct that attitude in myself. I held on as best I could.

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It's very difficult to be a writer in America. There really is no economic incentive. I think one of two things happens. Either a person finds they have writing talent and it's exciting to exercise that talent and then finds the necessity to write; or, a person finds some necessity and then develops a writing talent to fulfill that necessity. It's not enough simply to have talent; you must find the necessity. That converts the writer from a lonely creature to a social one. Where else would the necessity be but something not working in the world around you? Where else it would be but wounds within the self that others can chase away through money or material goods? So, the problem of writing starts there and it puts the writer at odds with others who have different incentives, more mainstream, natural incentives. And the writer is tested, tested, tested. Up and down, every which way there is a mighty test for the writer in this world. And you either find ways to meet this test or give up or disintegrate by degrees. You meet the test through some common American verities: deferral of gratification, humor at one's bad lot in life, spiritual devotion, continually plunging down into the values you have chosen, satire, criticism, etc etc. There are all kinds of ways to keep the ugly ghosts from invading too deeply or sharply.

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I trust the spirit, the created object, the beauty in nature much more than the vanity of human beings and all the clever ways it is disguised, whether in criticism or politics.

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How the writer is to make his living is an old question. I don't like the idea that writers are beggars or homeless heroes wandering the mean streets of the worst cities in the world. No. I don't like the idea of the writer as a scrounge rat living among rats in little apartments ducking in and out of gunshots.

Writing taught me patience and how to climb up and out of terrible states of mind. I knew I was capable of making a living but I did not want to sacrifice whatever talents I had. To me that was a distinctive negative; whereas sacrificing the good in life for those few things I believed in meant a great deal more to me.

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When young the thing to fight is hate. Hatred is a virus that is easy to catch. Check hatred in oneself and you will know the secret of how to avoid the pernicious disease when its blown your way. Respect all human beings you have contact with unless they prove they aren't worthy of it. That is one of the simple secrets of life.

Fear is a ghastly distortion, smoothed over time by thoughtfulness.

Let the impression of society pass through, study it, make some conclusion about it, and then focus exclusively on your own efforts.

The romanticism of youth becomes a sentimental dumbness as you get older. Get hard and firm and look at reality as it is.

Take all the generous resource you learn in youth and make it your own, keep lapping it into the current project.

I find myself, now, in a much more resolving sort of mood. The fight consumes everything until we realize it is only the struggle of the individual to reach some kind of fulfillment in this life even if he prepares for the next one. Both the solar power and Sunoasis.com were faces to the real world, faces to the established arena where poetry, philosophy, and beauty, and truth have hardly a chance of surviving. That was a compromise that I worked hard to achieve because I didn't want one to devour the other to be frank about it. And it's still rather tenuous.

The problem in my case was that I always choose the writing life over the material life. Only in the last five years or so has that changed a bit. I worked much harder at sunoasis.com than I did on my writings during that time.

It was difficult not to pick a career path with normal channels and then shoot through it. That was not my fate to do. Nonetheless, it's not an either/or situation. Are we not free to choose?

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A formula: Escape the vanity of the time and all its trappings; yet, return to the present fully human, fully prepared.

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It's important to distinguish between the "power" of the world outside the writer and the world as the writer conceives it on paper or screen. The power of the world is fairly well known, is rationalized as benefiting the greater good. Law is a great power, politics, economics, the "sovereignty of nations." The Earth itself is a vast power and connects us with the greater power of the universe. We believe the universe is connected and that the unknowable God is that power. Whether it is or not we do know the universe as a physical fact and explore it as a fact. And in doing so we know, now, that it is immensity plus. And since we know that and since we've trundled a bit in its emptiness we feel rather captured down here on Earth; we feel as though there is not enough space for us.

This is a dilemma for our time.

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The writer's consciousness is concerned with the macro and the micro; the individual standing on the surface and the vastness above him. What is in between is certainly interesting and is that great world outside the writer whose powers are vast and way beyond the writer or any particular person or institution for that matter. He studies this. He acts in it occasionally. He has experience of it, good, bad, and ugly. It forces things from him that he doesn't want. He is pleased with some of it.

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Those who struggle for power between the individual and universe usually try to destroy or, at least, dismiss the two.

The vast majority of people are only concerned with the enacting of self-interest through career, through relationships, through ideas, through the institutions and so forth. Drama is created out of it certainly. Disillusionment is certainly wrought out of it.

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Knowledge is important to all of this but knowledge is endless and captured by specialists and plugged back into the institutions to help them function. Why should it be any other way? Knowledge for the writer is equilibrium and he turns his knowledge into a kind of playful discourse on things.

Experience is also important but limiting. When young we seek experience to change the ruts we fall into. We test ourselves. We want to know. Experience is part of the color of life and color of language.

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Democracy has its charms no doubt. It has its ludicrous aspects and often asserts itself as the living end of all things. In practice and theory democracy is only a becoming, always evolving, always transforming and never satisfied with the status quo.

So it's no wonder why one's work, one's precious writing, should not suffer the same sort of fate. And all things will reverse and topple into the grand sea of time. Good. Democracy is good. It permits light and says "go to the highest level and always push the envelope and always transform what is solid."

Yes.

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My youth appears to me as a curious mistake or, at least, a series of stupidities. I was studious sometimes. I was thinking and making up stories no question. I had ambitions without a doubt.

The Berkeley years were far more intense and productive than it first appears. I was reading, writing, and thinking. And between those activities lived in a series of wombs; neighborhoods, jobs, friends and people I associated with and so on.

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And there was constant attention on the "world situation"; the post-Vietnam, post-Watergate era. That's when I picked up on the computer revolution, the possibility of digitizing texts, wireless and all of that stuff that convinces even the skeptical writer that we live in a magical poofland.

I just consumed it all as an imagination will and read a little bit about it. I also got interested in solar power and the question of resources; how they are transformed, the nature of scarcity, political issues surrounding them etc.

"He read a great deal, as though he knew the light was being put out." It was the post-60's in Berkeley and it wasn't pretty.

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The Internet put me back into society, sometimes in very painful ways. It brought a lot of stress and disruption to my bucolic life. The last three or four years have been the most difficult because I had to do things for very little money and so became that archetypal American: the very frustrated dude.

The Net introduced me to a few dark pains and a few hits of adrenaline. It introduced me to business and many people I would never have had any relation with; as I said it put me back into the society in a big way. It wasn't without its pains and costs. Nope. Could not escape that.

What it did more than anything was re-initiate myself into thinking about the future, my own and generally as a member of the human race.

And it proved to me that a person can do much but can't do it all. That a person is so remarkable when given the freedom to be so. But he isn't an island. He isn't all of himself, total and complete.

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Like many I started out a utopian---youth believes all is possible and if life were simply rational all would be well. I tapped into the generous vein of utopian thinking that came from both the religious and political side. Looking back I can see it is a good but doomed vein; and you have to go into the next stage which is a confrontation with the real complexity in things. In the end is either understanding and knowledge or nuttiness of a sort.

The utopian view is sustainable only by students and wealthy half-crazed aristocrats who don't want to get their shoes sullied by the working stiffs, the "wage slaves," as they aptly put it at times. The utopians suffer great inflations and hyperbole and the good in them moves on, leaving the crumbs and trails of cults that litter the landscape.

A confrontation with complexity requires an enormous amount of knowledge, structure, and discipline. We finally weed out what we can't handle and focus on the next development which is careerism in a specialty of one sort or another where energy is released and driven down one narrow channel. At the end of this process is a person, a citizen, someone who, hopefully, is productive and resourceful.

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The writer passes through an odd moment of total disgust and disbelief at the world. In my case I had no confidence in the dominant institutions; that is, science, technology, capital, and bureaucracy. Each was fully built and roaring by the time I gained consciousness. There was nothing innovative about them; they appeared like conquering armies of an imperial power that will subdue the people and make them submit to whole new rules and rituals. Science created an age of reduction, completely antithetical to the literary imagination. Technology was a taunting of the spirit, often; capital favored the very worst in human nature and marginalized the very best and bureaucracy was this oppressive, corrupt weight that crushed out aspiration. This was the feeling when I was a younger man. It's a dangerous moment and I countered it with as much optimism as I could muster. I countered it by spiritual discipline, knowledge, thinking through, abandoning the irrational, and trying to understand that which dominated. .

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I still view it a very dangerous proposition for free people to glide or bump and grind their way through life without understanding that which surrounds them.

The most pernicious was the reductionism since it enflamed every hatred and gave it a gleeful weapon.

Certainly these activities were connected to human activities and to human beings some of whom I actually knew. That makes a difference. And knowledge makes a huge difference. But, even an educated person needs to study a great deal more than simple college courses and apply concentrated effort to bring these behemoth powers down into a sphere of understanding. Absent of that effort is alienation and a fruitless search for equilibrium.

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It is the type of loneliness sailors experienced in their sea voyages, seeing and feeling things with the depth of the element they found themselves in. There! Devils climb the deck and through the rigging. "And de sun be some spirit blazing into the open, withering heart."

The smell of death must have been in their nostrils. Too, the longing for old friendships, old loves to take away the stink of the daily mirage.

And what does the "new land" promise but it is new and belief makes it so. Call it San Salvador if you wish. Name it India. It is where life will be lived for the next epoch as we watch the old life crawl from the ship and disappear into the grey rolling sea. Old failing wills and demoralization get filled by the crustacean and nautilus.

A joy is felt that nature has recognized the emptiness and the spirit is on the path of testing itself once again, freed for a moment from the pall of old habits.

Health! Simple recognitions!

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"We left them because nightmare had become fact."

"The old, you see, just increased the tensions built into the damn world." .

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In the new land old hatreds are sublimated into beauty. A more profound exchange of love and understanding takes place. New pride rises up from new consciousness.

The Fewer Impressions The Better:

A mass culture destroys everything but its own obsessions. How to reach those who are filled with obsessions not their own?

No one lives it for us. We can commiserate.

The people are shockingly manipulative, suspicious, and ignorant, without an ounce of understanding and yet want to be pampered at every step along the way.

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No shame in the chastened and humbled body.

It's a battle between fascination with what is going on in the world and fascination for what is going on in front of the screen or a piece of paper. The world wins out yet the mind prevails.

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Things slow to the speed of turmoil as human culture feeds on what has been thrown in front of it.

Full of irony, I tried to find the source of my own productivity and emphasize that.

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It feels right to imagine our phases of development as expansive discs flying through the mind to push back inhuman pressures.

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People project all the time, thinking they are ridding themselves of something bad. The bad simply waits for them down the road swinging down from a tree to smack them on the ass.

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You can only absorb the world if you have already committed yourself to "remaking" the world through your stories and language.

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There is a dog in every man wanting to chase down a cat and make it a victim.

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America was the center, I knew that. Where was one to go? And nowhere one goes allows the self to escape its problems.

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One problem that carried me off into some twilight adventure was the "end of literature as a mode of entertainment." And in came problematical literature based more on philosophy or scholarship than entertaining fellows with tales of their own kind and others. In one way I was prepared for that, in other ways I certainly was not. Art, after all, begins in play. And I think of the entertainments my brothers and cousins devised for the parents of the town I lived in. And I think of the endless parade of entertainments that trooped through the brain whether it was TV, movies, music, magazines, books and so on.

A vast leaping and jiving thing.

Literature needs to be conveyed pleasantly and entertainment values are intrinsic to it but the story, now, can be macro and grand in ways it couldn't when the novel, for instance, was the central piece of entertainment.

And so response.

I can't do anything about the systems in place. I respond as best I can. I can't do anything about the nature of the universe but I respond. I can't do anything about death or sex. I respond.

Life is a great breathing-in to the point of sharp pain, then paralysis that such a world runs amok in one, and then breathing-out into the world that has shaped him.

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It's not so important to be right or wrong or know everything. It's important to know what you are doing and why.

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Life is not something I would want to repeat.

I will empty myself of what I have and fly onward to some mysterious tundra.

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When the first rains come I write and, later, think about language. It's a ritual from way back when I would sit on a chair on a porch with a canopy and watch the new rain move in from the Bay. "Yes it comes again to clean the tar of things and thoughts from the surface of the city."

Language forms from a writers' struggle with "his moment." My moment, in the 70's, was a total crack in the Great Egg of reality. The world was divided between joy and doubt. Young people who don't yet have a language of their own had the joy, the rest of the people had the doubt. Naked perceptions down-dogged the language to an amazing extent.

Dreams intruded into reality and started staking their claims for the future.

The world was an unprecedented bitch of a thing. Everything with authority was doing the absolutely wrong things. "Here, here my good man, come into our wonderful room of death and sacrifice yourself!"

I started exploring many traditions, many ways and many places. It cost me a novel writing career perhaps, but then, in an unprecedented world who can write novels? They are impossible to write without the credibility of knowing the world you are in.

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I listened intently to people when I was a young guy; alternating between the meaning of the person speaking and to the sound of the word itself without, necessarily, reference to meaning. I saw language as a painter sees color; it is in nature, it is in the world as a utility. He experiences both along with the tradition of color in painting and out of it tries to come up with something that has never existed before.

Language is seeded in nature, animal-speech, birds, the "speech of machines," conversations, speeches, journalism, sales letters, songs among other things. What combinations create the spirited spaces of literary writing?

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Hawthorne I learned from. Whitman. I think Mark Twain was very important because he combined sublime wisdom with the common language; the language of ethnic groups, tradesmen, the frontier, slaves and so forth.

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The language I inherited went through a meat-grinder of credibility from the elite to the street. At the end of the process were a set of assumptions people took into the future, nearly out of exhaustion.

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Experience taught me that language should clarify the chief responsibility in a democracy which is to prove that freedom works. It works because the person gets better, wider, deeper, more inclusive, more willing to help, happily engaged in his or her contradictions because they have faith that freedom is both grace and courage.

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I started with a series of abysms in my mid-20's. For one thing I felt the novel, as a panoramic expression of the society, was impossible. The novel had been successfully squeezed out of the popular culture where the money was and fit tighter into an academic/intellectual bandwidth that was cut-off from the vitality of the culture it so hated and criticized.

I felt to write novels a writer had to use large quantities of experience and knowledge, cultivate the mess, overcome all points of alienation, connect with or, at least, make contact with as many distinct points of the culture as possible and move through its major categories of activity including science, technology, capital, and bureaucracy; both experience and knowledge would be brought to bear on the circles of social reality, family, classes, distinctive communities, city/suburb, rural, etc etc.

That was my subjective prescription to write novels of any substance. Anything less was going to produce the ideological novel or one that was too dependent on the institution that gave it support. Therefore, the novel could say nothing to contemporary people or to the future.

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I wrote everything but novels. Some of the writing reflected the process of knowing or experiencing things; some of it was pure emotion, some of it was genuine insight.

The basic mode was simple: long cycle of knowing and experiencing the society/region; short cycles of creating or writing in the various forms that existed through '95.

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Once I left my hallucinatory youth I got concerned about the shift in values from what it had been to what it was becoming. I'm thinking primarily about "sacrifice" and "deferral of gratification" versus "instant gratification." The advent of the consumerist culture made buying and its mania central to the life and survival of the society. And buying excluded much more than included.

To me it was not a matter of pitting one against the other. It was a matter of choosing which values would allow for the building of projects, a writing life and other improbable meanings.

So, I went with sacrifice and deferral of gratification and built as best as I could; sometimes in very adverse circumstances, relatively speaking.

I was tested at every step. The goal was to have a lot of writing under my belt by the time the Net came along. I had read about it in college and during the 70's and felt confident that it was going to happen.

Why not?

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Hopefully one learns with sad laughter that there are more interesting things than pure idealism.

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I believe now that things are better than they seem in the mind.

The mind can be a tricky old devil!

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Write as though you are a benevolent king and feel responsible for everything going on in your domain.

"Mommy, that man is strutting down the street with no clothes on!"

And as they chop away at the good king-writer he learns some valuable lessons. And stories emerge, along with a few themes. His eyes remain fixed with a startled gaze.

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To a young guy of sentience society appears to be a collection of white, pillared, even grey buildings set in various cities. In Washington D.C. they are architecturally classic and austere filled from youth with the aura of myth and power. Then there are the financial pyramids and ziggurats of Manhattan, filled with the machinations of criminals and those who like criminals or those frozen in fear of the criminals.

And all the games, music, TV, newspapers, magazines, houses, communications technology, roads, and ships make an impression depending on the state of being of the observer and experiencer of these things.

Every impression carries its secret signals, overt and covert messages, its histories, and documents to the eyes of a single, solitary heart and mind.

A man has a sadly beautiful love for what is familiar to him.

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Youth wrangles in itself over whether the society exists for the individual or does the individual exist for the society? It's never answered in the classroom; only where the living and dead commingle, always cajoling one to come over to the other side. Rare is the young person who doesn't believe that the individual has to become large, bountiful, thoughtful, experienced, at ease in the life he's been issued into rather than manipulated, debased, thwarted and made self-conscious so all his great imagination, desire, and even will becomes passive and supine to some form of authority.

So the youth asks, "Can this society inspire the best efforts of the men and women in it?"

Youth carries around a happy intuition: Freedom is more than what is demonstrated as proof around us! Sometimes the body is satisfied with its freedom of movement but the spirit is not satisfied and other times, the spirit is satisfied with its infinite worlds but the body is restless for motion or action of some kind. When I fly over the land and it blurs beneath me does it make me freer than those who moved drip by drip through its arid desert? And whose hardships are hardly measurable in our own time? Of course I who am flying must land and face hundreds of contingencies the old pioneer didn't have to face. So perhaps that blur of land is filled with laughing and happy ghosts.

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MONEY

The money system, something the writer did not create, is another one of these infinite conflicts the writer experiences. In my case it has not been pretty.

Reading Thoreau last night I realize how much influence Henry David had on me, how I perceived him as a beautiful soul; intelligent, independent, truthful, creative; the perfect model for a free liberal, democratic writer and how, nearly, unattainable it is under the present set-up.

Perhaps not.

"Oh writer, rebel in the mind rather than the street as they take you to a place you don't want to be, away from the center of your own gravity."

Thoreau was one of my first models, definitely. Dostoevsky was another. These occurred in college. Dostoevsky merged literary art and meaning and had a great influence on the way I viewed reality, at least into my mid-20's. But Dostoevsky was a fundamentalist rather than a liberal democrat. Walt Whitman was another model for a while. Rimbaud and Baudelaire for a moment. Henry Miller. James Joyce. D.H. Lawrence. Thomas Hardy. Eventually Rilke, Yeats and a few others. Nietzsche to some

extent. In my 20's I was influenced by who I read. And I read a great deal, way into my 30's. I must have read as much as a decent professor.

I read to shake the demoralization of pure ass dread.

Dread as only one with enormous talent and no money can experience in a world like this. Terrible, bone chilling dread.

And I often put the books to battle with this dread, if not the world itself. That began to change in my mid-30's.

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One word of wisdom was worth a million dollars in the bank, as far as I was concerned.

The pressure was immense at the time and the ways and means of fighting it told me a good deal.

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Once in a great while, in a superb moment of clarity, I would experience a rare freedom. The moment was powerful enough to convince me that freedom was a reality, if not reality itself and to be treated with respect. And that freedom's great enemy is mass thought, mass activity, mass demoralization, mass depression, mass weirdness. And so much of modern media had tried to reduce everything into a slag heap of massiness.

Nothing can emerge out of massiness but dangerous leaders.

Whereas a free people will produce wise leaders.

One tendency in the mass was to hypnotize themselves in the belief that money had permitted them to transcend history. Facts justified the feeling they were on the other side of history and everything they did was producing a new history.

But one fact does loom up and over this period of time: Unconscious of the past and we simply are the playthings of old ghosts. Full understanding of the past and we are free in ways that are full-bodied and allow us to live as free, liberal democratic citizens.

We are unique only for the opportunity to be unique; it is not ipso facto the case.

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The feet fit the land. On one side of this land the sun rises, in the middle the sun replenishes acres of grain, in the west the sun sets. On all coasts rolls a mighty ocean. On all borders exists another nation. The land is rich in material and natural beauty; lakes, rivers, mountains, plains, deserts, forests, varieties of plant-life and birds all with their degree of sizes, shapes, sounds, tastes, and textures. Mists, fogs, snow, rain- tempests of nature; earthquakes, volcanoes, tornadoes, hurricanes. The simple inventory doesn't do justice to the individuation of each phenomena and the way each weighs in the self that experiences them. If I have no relation to the facts of my community then I have no relation to it at all.

With the facts comes history that moves in and out , as much a part of it as the mountains or streams and this history stretches back to certain expressions my kind begins to evidence. The curt eye. The tongue on the edge of the wings of the lips. As much as the trees and mountains I must have a relation to this community or else risk no relation to it all. In fact, my relation to it will tell a great deal about myself.

The history is a struggle between what they want and what any other par of my community is willing to give up. It's a struggle and tells me a great deal about the parts of my community and my relation to this struggle tells a great deal about both parts of my community and my relation to this struggle tells a great deal about myself.

Ah, they struggle against themselves! And I must have a relation to that and most importantly to the modern vanity that sucks up whatever ideals and value my community used to have.

The first intimations of my community are rather misty and mythological. Great nourishment can come by the first intimation. The later intimations are documented fairly well so I can begin the supreme effort of making judgments about how one part of my community has dealt with the other.

Has it set traps along the way? Perhaps in the whole of the community we see the trap. Perhaps not.

Has it started to fan out, adventure into the dark interior where reliance is no longer on the tarnished ideals of an old land but the instinct of something ancient, always new?

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After ten long years on the internet I find it to be a problematical beast. I don't regret it.

The internet is resource certainly but it is also everything you wanted to avoid. Everything. And the crowds destroy Everything eventually. So, it is more like a crowded bar a bad friend has taken you than a new land.

The hardest thing is to rope the internet to your best interest. That can only be done by rigorous editing which, not a coincidence, was the original intention of Sunoasis.com

"Liberate the finest energies and avoid useless, out-moded conflicts." That was the initial mighty voice of the Net.

Filled with toxicity the Net can squeeze the heartiest brain into the neurosis of conflict-not-wanted or engaged in unilaterally because a person or group are flailing away powerless wondering why the world doesn't recognize their truth. Stay clear. Laugh.

Make sure the space you make for your own efforts is a productive and constructive one.

What one learns:

Some good knowledge to have or at least be cognizant of:

Modern cosmology

Any study on the impact of communications on the human being.

Experience the cities fully by living poorly in them. Ride the busses. Walk the streets. Read leisurely in the parks. Talk to people.

Drive and fly.

Understand the difference between information, knowledge, and wisdom

Come to some conclusion or understanding of why democracy is so necessary, why it is good, and why it needs to develop more and some directions it can develop towards.

One must let go of as much jealousy and hatred as possible and let things be as they are. Be happy for the success of other people.

Be happy that people are in a great culture manifesting as they are. Be as free of resentment as you can. Be light. Work hard. But be light.

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For one thing you need to comprehend your "own time." For me that stretches back to the 50's--the first event I was aware of was Sputnik in 1957. From that time you cull out the main things. Here's a list:

space adventure

cold war

communications revolution

popular movements

a) civil rights

b) women's rights

c) environmental

d) anti-government/anti-tax

change of economy from scarcity to surplus

Obviously, many changes take place in styles and music and so on. It's also necessary to study the systems that flow through everything, including the individual person. Transportation, energy, communication, economic, political, education and so on. It's necessary to have some grasp of the administrations Eisenhower, JFK, LBJ, Nixon, Ford, Carter, Reagan, Bush 1, Clinton, Bush2, Obama. And the congresses through there, the legislation, the decisions by the Supreme Court.

Then you want to look back further into the history that preceded you. WWII, Depression, Roaring 20's, Wilson years, TR years, settling of the West, Railroad, Civil War and Reconstruction, migration West, first quarter of new government, Constitution, Revolution, Colonization, Slavery, European powers meeting

native peoples (Cortez, Pizzaro), Sea-Crossings, pre-Columbian peoples in South and North America, migration from Asia, flora, fauna, and landscape changes through time.

Then you need a solid knowledge of global history. Know the personalities, the deeds, the good, bad, and ugly about it. The past is a lesson, just as the framers knew. A good, healthy even innocent mind will find all the places, persons, objects what he or she needs to given a bit of passion and sacrifice and work ethic.

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Politics is the stink of liars and mad dogs on their way to the control of money and weapons.

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Discreteness and wholeness; A battle engaged for the conjunction of these qualities. A wonderful set of objects is created for the writer to muse on! In this culture the discrete and linear dominate; the wholeness is a creative function. They need each other. I think you need enormous experience with both modes without getting confounded by everything that passes through as you experience these modes. Perhaps the threshold point that divides one from the other occurs when we are filled with disgust for the nonsense that is carried by one form or the other.

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What gives us meaning and/or pleasure but the sense of knowing both discreteness and wholeness instantaneously too bring them so close together that they look at each other in the eye and do not blink until the other one smiles. We hope it is a smile at any rate.

We admit that the great struggle is for coherence. That we admit we move along a series of spots and then there is great influence exerted on us at every moment. It's as though we are Buddha at the moment just preceding his great illumination and all the demons and seductresses are rushing at him to knock him off track. They do not succeed because Buddha knows what he is about and, obviously, if they had won we would never heard or known the name or the system attached to Buddha.

So we are on the west side of things rooted as we are on the east side of things. And rivers roar and carry our common heart to the ocean. And we imagine the tracks left by those who want to dance for us; who throw their head back in a seductive pose, who smile knowingly at us from a distance. And then we are one city among thousands of lit cities, feeding on the dead. And no one has told us, yet, the proper way to read the papers or to digest the gorgeous image when the camera is pointed just right. There are no royal courts or passing crowds that circulate through us; only empty space occupied by those who struggle for singularity. And when they give birth their brains fill with the responsibility of the age until the burden is too great and, collapsing by the riverside, they breathe the sun and want, no more, the encounters. So, an endless series of books is read and yet nothing moves. So, the impression of a past and buried century comes to us effortlessly and we sink down in our ignorance. And then the great plane flies onward with all the passengers yelling for us to get out of bed. Ah yes, at first, the division between the man and the woman. Are they roped yet to their specific contingency? We like the way a good woman laughs~

It's been a series of transits in vehicle I neither built nor owned. It's been a series of people who know me less than I know them. It's been a series of desperation all having to do with money and the lack of it. It's been a series of misunderstanding between people who exert a deadly will. It's been a series of fits and starts not in the direction of choice but, contradicting the prime choice.

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Tasks have replaced motive. The day, week, month and years of tasks with, thankfully, time for reading, re-writing, thinking, conversation, travel, breathing in the ocean air, contemplating beautiful women who I have known or who has passed by me, a deep connection with what I find indispensable to live; to, in fact, be an American at this stage of the game.

There is an integrity to American life that one must know deeper than anything; if they do not know this integrity they will grasp the empty sound of their own will to power.

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A certain time rushes over us; through us is a more appropriate term. Then we are given a moment to reflect on it and we see it was all nothing but vanity piled on vanity. The marketplace must be fed. The political animal must be fed. When the time turns obliquely this way it is fed a particular way and when it turns that way, it is fed differently. What is damaged is, always, the capacity to dream and create.

Ah, we will not see the haunting that will move, ghost-like, through the puerile institutions. We would stand away on the horizon of one of the lesser moons and dangle our feet in the abyss; sad for the life that passes us by. Perhaps the life is obsessed with the promise that it will escape what it already is deeply implicated in. We have no loyalty to those who would burn us while we sleep.

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A certain fallowness strikes me from time to time. It's the unbridgeable boredom that puts one in the lonely, stark and fierce forest, separated from the mundane run of things by a raging river. And it's not as if I have never been in the forest before. And it makes me forget the joy and pleasure of the crowded cities. It turns my attention to a map where I must suck up all the bits of information lodged in an innocuous map. It convinces me that the world has fooled itself into believing that it is a performance but with the price for recognition that is too great. Therefore, we are silent and look away when the beautiful creature approaches wondering where we have been.

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The brutal extraction of some penalty simply because the fool wanted to know and to welcome the real and modern world into him.

Constant motion is the secret of life.

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So we finally get to know our world; the world we belong to because our will demands it. The world of mute symbols. The world of the free radical. The world where the spirit is free to launch itself from any tower. The world that absorbs the great characters haunted in the daylight avenues when there is nothing better to do. Scenes in the world permits us to enter many other worlds and partake of its richness to, at least, avoid its darkness.

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I would like to think that I see the same moon and sun as Homer did. I would like to think that the ocean touches all things.

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America throws many generalities at a writer-- it throws huge questions, huge perceptions at the unwitting. Perhaps that is why we are attracted to the Russian writers at any early age. The Russian and the Roman are the ones a writer needs to know considering everything. Yet, isn't it a good and wonderful practice to break down the general to the specific? The individuality in things! That is a worthwhile goal to pursue. America as a world power and society as the collective effect of persons not myself or my family. Little battles fought in different regions make up the generalizations.

I always feel the need to try to determine my relation to these things. I would rather define myself in relation to what I directly experience, what I can see with my own eyes. I don't think any single person can claim America as his own but, certainly, a single person can experience through himself what America means to him.

America destroys yesterday, dreams today, and begins again tomorrow.

Many generations wait yet to spring alive in America.

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The happiest moment occurs when the frame is grasped and we see, in the middle, a potential dance.

What does it want from us? How can we introduce it to the others?

We will not crash into the others but let them be; they drift away on the plane of hollow sound. Many times the heart is torn into pieces. Many times, we disguise a certain self-slaughter. We lay in the field of collected thought and stare up at the refulgent moon. Don't we yet believe that we must stand and pierce the roar that is around us?

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Forms beyond forms. The belief in such a thing initiates a creative spell; it takes up a good deal in its wake. If we see a form stretched out across the universe, we have one of several choices. We can either leap on top of it and push outward or we can push it down to the earth and strangle those we don't like. Many forms present the choice between power and compassion.

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I'm afraid we've entered interesting times again. Three things stand out. One is the internet and no one knows the implications of the beast. It could be one of these slow turning, half-burning epochal changes that the living are ignorant of. The second is terrorism; frightening because of the equation: mass weapons, dangerous weapons meet people who have nothing to lose. And the third element is China.

The mind, marvelous and secret, finds the way to deal with it all. Between ignorant simplicity and the grinding down by complexity exists a happy medium. All one can do is say, "these things shaped me, they helped produce an identity for better or for worse. They weren't the only things but they played a role without question. They gave me a sense of orientation as far as history and where we might be."

Of course, there is always life running below the crazy world. The life of people, of family, friends, of work, of play. Of gambols and competitions, entertainments and tragedies.

Our life is destructive of the past; people inherit that belief, it is as common as salt and yet they hardly know where it comes from.

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My region offers a rich variety of life and I am fortunate to have tasted a good deal of it. I felt conflict but rarely shame. Some conflict I had contempt for, other conflict stayed with me for a long time. I loved the art of building things. That is the only tribe I truly trust and have loyalty with.

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The fatal disease of any individual or group, political or otherwise, is to live in the past. Know the past as well as your own hand. Know it in all its diversity and complexity. Know it. But live fully in the present

and expect the present to move into the future better than you found it. Find the patch of green that permits this.

There are crooks in every profession, including the intellectual and literary one, who are going to try to limit you rather than open windows and doors into splendid places.

The writing life is filled with moral lessons. When I reflect on my youth I see that I didn't appreciate how good, bad, and ugly human nature could be. And that throughout the writing life I tried to emphasize the good, acknowledge the bad and transform the ugly. I tried to. I failed on more than one occasion. The bad gets under the radar and self-assessment is always needed. Faith is needed. And when the writer understands how frail, how weak he can be; how foolish he can be, in reflection, then he forgives others and tries to emphasize the good. And the good is there without question. This is a question between the writer and his sense of the living universe. It is not something between the writer and his family or cohorts or anything of that nature. So, in that sense God is real.

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I knew from the beginning that the key to the times was whether democracy had any morale left to it, without which it will wither and die. The key belonged to the individual who had to awake to a democracy wholly absorbed by the alluring attractions of the myth of money. "Ah, his money proves he is fit to be a self-ruling citizen and he will make as many as he can in his image."

It's evident from time to time that we are not ruled by self-ruling citizens but by huge collective entities who the citizen either has loyalty to or is passive to. And what morale do powerful self-interests have except to convince themselves that they represent, after all, the furthest development of a democracy.

So politically that was my main interest because if a writer has no interest in this question then he has given up, given in and is part of the larger deflation that signals the end of democracy, not its flourishing.

That was my thinking as a young guy.

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It doesn't do freedom any good to become more a consumer than a producer; doesn't matter if that consuming is dishes or fine literature. A free man shouldn't consume what he can't produce or understand the processes that gives rise to the product.

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There are freedoms that are unconditioned. These exist in the hope, imagination and aspiration of men and women. Freedoms that hopefully are revealed through the contemplation of truth. Such unconditional freedoms do exist; whether they can be sustained over a period of time is another question.

The only justification at developing some incisive, critical thought is to burn the fat around some seed of freedom until it is revealed; ready to be nourished in the intelligence of the human heart.

And yet, paradoxically, when that single, hypothetical entity who is carrying that unconditioned freedom is in relation with another, with an object, with a thought, immediately that freedom begins to become conditioned. It goes through a thousand and one temptations. It is thwarted, it is twisted by ambition.

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One problem exists in the way every instant of time is organized. Not a moment is "lost" to thinking, speculating, dreaming unless it is highly organized and directed toward some end which conditions the thinking, speculating, dreaming. And the "end" as far as one can see is further organization without any real thought to the end of that organization.

It exists, ipso facto, it must continue, must progress, must enlarge itself.

And yet, "morale" implies that new dreams can come into being, not on behalf of huge organizations but on behalf of the spirit of human freedom.

The types of irrationality rampant in America today can destroy freedom without a doubt. The sky is not falling so they are tolerated. The craziness is a mass exorcism of self-hatred, hatred of society, hatred of civilization, hatred of everything that "denies my irrationality." And it is tolerated mainly because there is little that can be done about it. It becomes the shadow of freedom in which even evil can dress itself

up in the truth and get an audience. And, if successful, eventually erodes the actual value and strength of political and social freedom.

Freedom is the ability to transcend the very things in which these extremists and demagogues embody so, in an ironic sense, they become a measurement of the values and strengths of the freedom project.

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A key to freedom: that the individual has all the resources at his or her disposal, uses them, even the technical nature of the world the same way it uses nature; ie. as raw material.

It requires at least one thing and that is the ability to distinguish and differentiate the various aspects in the self and learn how to harmonize them.

A WRITER'S USEFUL FORM:

(1)The ego humbled rather than subdued. Humbled by the recognition that whatever acts, gestures, tricks it conjures has been done a thousand times over. Approached right and that recognition should inspire the ego to be delighted; to be full and abundant rather than subdued and scheming as it often times does.

(2) The ego humbled. The 'unconscious' energy released. Those energies transformed into productive areas; into problem-solving, into creative work and so on. Any break along this line, any break and everything goes to wrack and ruin. If the ego is not humbled and the 'unconscious' energy is released and transformed into destructive areas there is little but catastrophe. If the ego is humbled but the "unconscious" energy stopped up, frustrated by the weight of the ego and the desire to transform into productive areas still intact- catastrophe.

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I will suffer for my limitations. I will suffer for the mistakes I have made, I will suffer for many reasons, but I will not, I refuse to, torture myself.

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I describe my living space as a line that goes from the Oregon/California border, down the Pacific Ocean, through the SF Bay Area, to Big Sur, a line crossing the valley and tucked in underneath Yosemite, followed by a line up the Sierra Nevada's and then a sharp diagonal that cuts through the Sacramento Valley, meeting up with the Oregon/California border. And staying, relatively, in this one space does have an effect. The impression of individuals is deeper. The coinage of other personalities jingles about one's brain a bit more often. What I'm glad didn't happen was that the spite picked up out of the many exchanges didn't have any lasting power.

After all, how can one learn about the society but through others? It's one of the free privileges of drawing a breath in a free society.

A writer simply has to reconcile him or herself to various facts; you'll never get the satisfaction.

Perhaps the writer in a democracy is called on to chronicle this: A man begins in hope but his imagination and his "self" is turned to "oneness" what is common to all and both the intellect and imagination serve to validate that, celebrate it and so on. It's really a tremendous feeling that can see the whole operating out of the single source; a large, bountiful source that no single man or thought can penetrate. Then experience comes along. Distinctions are made. A writer rises to his own nature. He has to do this regardless of others. There has to be some measure in himself that allows him to rise and grow the way it was intended rather than the dictates of his vain ego. Which, in the end, is not his own anyway.

GRAVITY HAS LESSONS

Listening to an astronaut speak, in the lightness of a day with a white moon showing, he describes standing there, on the moon. and looking to the blue pearl in the distance; what it's like when your perception is in this one airless place no one has ever gone before and looking up to see where you are from, where everything lies familiar, where the green clouds themselves are like memories, the place you will return to.

My dad was a pilot and used to take my brothers and I flying. Out in the open blue he would say, "now I'm going to show you boys something", and he would put the plane in a steep dive so we couldn't keep our hands from floating above our laps and as he pulled up and out of the dive our little hands would smash down to our laps and however hard we tried we couldn't get them up. They were stuck fast. He was always proud of the teaching moment. "Gravity boys."

Only rarely have men and women glimpsed this liberation from gravity. Gravity is a force to overcome!
So says the happy boy who believes all is possible.

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I don't assume that the limits of human nature are played out in the political, economic, or social worlds. Certainly there are patterns of behavior. There are innumerable lessons. There is a kind of hypnotism of will. There are examples of human nature. But, to assume that the full capacity of human nature is being played out to its full in the world at large is consigning a nightmare to the future.

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Perhaps our dreams are primarily about the future even if centered in a familiar city.

The dreamer becomes friends with an alien. "He" is a tall 'robot-type' of person. The dreamer has strong feelings for this particular being. They have all kinds of adventures in the city. And the city has not changed; it's as boisterous and confusing as ever. They get on busses. They try to pick up women. Eventually the alien wants to return to his own planet. He has come here in order to help the dreamer with something, a problem perhaps so small the dreamer has forgotten it. When they reach the alien planet on a ship the alien reveals his true form; his body is the same but his head changes. It's more a triangular shape that suddenly produces an impossible gulf between them. The alien introduces him to his wife. The dreamer is sad about leaving him. They communicate even though they have physically separated. On waking the dreamer thinks about how the origins of peoples became sanctified in the stories that were made about them.

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Reality appears a fire sometimes. One is walking. There are many distractions along the walk but invariably the attention is brought back to the fire raging where once water reigned.

Most perception seems like the broken line through the roots emanating out of a seed. There are ambiguous feelings; tones, messages of various sorts within any particular strand. Most perception is moving continually through and circling back through the particular so that it gives the illusion that physical reality is ever changing and yet ever returning to some still point.

In a scientific society this is an arbitrary act of power since isolation and imagination can give the appearance of truth and, in fact, is made 'truth' by the act itself. This is what commentators have called the breaking off point between our world and the old world; our wisdom and old wisdom; science and religion.

WE DON'T SQUANDER TIME WE GROW AND DEVELOP IT

There is a kind of ecstatic moment when one realizes that development is a reality rather than a plaything. It doesn't matter what the development is of; could be a self or a piece of writing or a career for that matter.

A good deal of development has to do with synchronizing the energies that, at some point, are a mélange of conflict.

A good deal of it has to do with bringing into the center knowledge and understanding of the ways of the people.

A good deal of it has to do with finding the keys to your own productivity.

A good deal of it has to do with finding those relations that are supreme and securing them in the passage of every day.

A good deal of it has to do with finding the bountiful sources of optimism to drive out the natural pessimisms that are seeded at the core of any stupidity.

A good deal of it has to do with tracing out the deepest implication of the self and culture.

A good deal of it has to do with finding a monstrous heart on the mountaintop.

A good deal of it has to do with linking in great chains with the development of many generations.

A good deal of it has to do with driving out every instance of coercion that demoralizes and mystifies the self.

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The writer writes for those who breathe and live at the same time as himself. And looking back we see an immense struggle between Tradition and the Market and, hopefully, they both won something and allowed the writer to be better than he would have been had that struggle not taken place.

There is no writing without intelligence and what used to be called, wit. The world and all its constituent elements conspire to create an impression and we follow it through our own spirit until, finally, it spills out and we rub it furiously to whatever space nature has allowed us.

The writer then asks, "ah, but the mode; what is the mode for all this worldliness?" The technology that lives with us leave a few clues. For one thing the camera records perception that, otherwise, we would have had to fight to gain. Yet, the humans have language. They have words, they have relations. And haven't others gone before us? Haven't they demonstrated courage that, at times, we lack?

We live in the present but, then, what do we really write about? What is it that bothers us the most? And certainly life is more than a series of irritations since we exist in relation to a cosmos that contains not simply our life but our death as well.

We celebrate the delicate acts of forgetfulness that opens world to us vanity and other obstacles would shield from us. World density and word density are very similar. Ah, we live in a region! Men and women pass through us whether we concur with them or not. They are not objects but, rather, memories and insights, we are tempted to say windows, into whatever world they may inhabit. We exalt in a world that contains many memories.

We are at the supreme and fleeing moment when life is new and open and all we have passed through is nothing.

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The writing life was full of lapses and stupidities that call for the beneficent laughter from the grace of God.

When I think about the informing years I think about some of these things: Young people who face nuclear annihilation have troubles adapting to the world as it is. Young people who see men walking on the moon with the shimmering Earth in a pocket of the universe all around it have troubles accepting the common assumptions of the time. Young people who are exposed to the manic impressions from a new medium like TV are shaped differently than other generations, for good and bad. All of these things and more did one thing. It drove me into knowledge and wisdom. Knowledge is a power that pushes back pressures of that sort. Magic won't do it. I did not have the irrational hatred that a lot of my comrades had in that generation. In fact, I was quite alarmed by a lot I saw and heard and read.

Fortunately the personal computer was being built at that time and, behind it, was the internet. I had a blind sort of faith that the internet would come in, be a rather subversive force and it gave me confidence to ignore the marketplace and academia for a while. I felt that the artistic form should come out of necessity and the individual artist struggling with his or her battle with the world. It should not be formed by the pressure of the marketplace or reputation building and destroyed by academia. I still feel that but am less put out about it. Let's just say I've moved on.

I look at the writing life, the essays, the political notes, autobiographical sketches, short stories, poetry, lamentations, parables, night thoughts, literary notes, history notes, nuclear notes, wisdom notes and other miscellaneous efforts to be "good," to be "sincere" and not a waste of time. I got quite concerned about the nature of the liberal democracy. I got quite concerned about the future of writing and literature. I got quite concerned about the future period. With a loss in the belief in progress comes Hell. And yet that same road to Hell can be paved with wonderful intentions with the future in mind. So, wisdom is required to negotiate the past, present, and future. That played a large role in that period of time.

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The internet came along and changed many things. For one thing it initiated a new set of goals. It lessened pressure on the relations I had at that time. I felt renewed energy and adrenaline. I felt that the future would be reached. These emerged in the next few years.

The internet was like the world that I had missed and came at me like a wailing banshee.

It was not the nice, settled niche with book readers and writers although it had that. It was crummy people, good people, bottom-feeders engaged in activities I had no interest in or had run into in my offline life. It was a vast city then. A new city of the mind. Quite extraordinary and one of these days I'll write about it. But, it was a technology after all. And it presented so many options it got confusing, even a bit scary.

Beauty is what is left when everything else has been bought off.

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I watched the Kennedy inaugural yesterday. Doesn't this mean the past is always present with us? That which we have lived through at any rate: the beginning of the 60's and quite a ride through the 70's. The "culture" has gotten cruder and more vulgar and passes quickly in and out of us like bad gas. Work still gets done. The children are raised. A probe landed on one of the moons of Saturn the other day. That was implicated from the beginning of the Kennedy years. He never survives. The protests grow. Nixon sweats through Watergate. Armstrong says the same words over and over while on the surface of the moon. If we wish it never goes away but there are times when we want it to vanish. It's one more of our precarious options in this day and age. Writing becomes something other than recording of events. The event is part of a vast cache basin in the imagination from which the new can emerge, without once trying to interpret the event.

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The struggle is joined at the confluence of judgment and spirit.

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Even though I have been critical of the society that's not my true intention. Criticism is necessary to differentiate the self from what is all around it. Criticism has the obligation to put forward a positive, constructive form of itself as well as "refuse," when the loathed object or authority says jump. Writing, ultimately, is a kind of celebration either of total optimism or total pessimism; one or the other.

"Where is the enrichment, even enchantment? "

"Don't write about ends, ends, and more endings but beginnings, beginnings, and more beginnings."

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There is a wonderful resentment that only writers know. In his deepest heart he realizes that at one time all was poetry. It was not simply nature that spoke in magnificent signs but the gestures, speech, and acts of human beings. So when a writer looks up and sees a world botched; speech botched up, imagination mangled he begins to resent the carriers of these things. It's a hopeless kind of resentment. Then he begins to name his projections and spins them all together in his brain, along with assorted stuff from reality until he is filled with a secret excitement that precedes the feeling that no one will ever know; it will not do anything for anyone and yet he says to himself, "if they only knew."

That is the attempt to make an ally out of an enemy that writer was unprepared for.

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OK, we have assumed the gruesome task of taking on the nature of things and after a few spells of madness can still know our own name. Good. Some test has been passed.

"Localize the problem and then dance merrily around it."

One reason it takes so long: The ludicrous threshold met as the mind attempts to come to terms with problems of ungodly complexity. Yet the writing life demands that the mind confront the nature of things as though they matter. From a technical point of view we can say with a shrug, "well, its both fully developed and raw material for some new horizon up ahead."

And we emerge with this fact: For every problem there is happy material with a vast history. The material struggles to the present where it is sometimes ruthlessly used until it is emptied of its history and meaning. A line is drawn on top of which the activity of a specific universe taps for its resource. The mind struggles to capture the dense material and the line on which it is temporarily resting. Consciousness then looks forward and seeks out the future and desires its flourishing.

"A set of propositions for every session of thinking."

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The future has suprised me enough times to make me believe in it.

When I am most arrogant the center is lost. I am tossed out into the periphery, a rogue elephant feeding on the few kernels of seed. It's at those times I consult the classics and epics of the imaginative spirit.

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The first obstacle to knowing America is paranoia inspired by the size, power, freedom, variety of it by a mind that naturally wants to control everything.

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I identify myself as one who lives on the west coast of things. America is, to me, a constitution, a series of curious events, a precious few books, a window in all directions including backward and forward, the history of my family (all branches), the beauty and ugliness of success and progress, a nature that continually informs and humbles the ego, resourcefulness to the end of time, space, the spires of cities, the wonderful ability to contradict everything that denies my aspirations. It is many things that can not be defined at this moment and so is a kind of new empire in the sunlit worlds.

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The writer grasps, quickly, the nature and instruments of the time and is made bold by them. What is there to fear if we are able to construct ourselves, let ourselves die, remake ourself, die again to the point where we are delivered of the mortal coil? We fear that we will be captured in a transition period and suffer the agonies of some mid-world.

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Generalities are for politicians who want power.

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Everything individualized to the project!

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The cultural way taught me this: Begin in an unbounded space, a desire, and then find your limitation through experience. Find it until it hurts (and it will). Learn the boundaries through personal experience and then apply that to your work.

A SHORT HISTORY OF A WRITER'S EMOTIONS

Emotions appear and disappear as, too, signs of disaster appear and vanish creating in the mind its peculiar sensations.

Youth was in love. Youth felt days of love for others, for nature, for possibility, for the future.

Youth is a fool that can't hide its love away.

Emotion meets the growling world that operates on a principle of self-interest.

Emotion evolves from its simple relations to its complex relations at a cost to its own delight.

Emotion, for one year, in grinding servitude to the problems of others to undercut the voracious appetite for abstraction.

The fortitude in front of talking stones of ignorance.

Emotions through the circle of objects that move and stay still under a power not one's own.

Emotions through the complexities of family to emerge fully human on the other side.

Emotions experience the misery of the poor and the delights of leisure.

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Pain and suffering over and over again, ceaseless pain and suffering. Ah, but joy and happiness in very close proximity!

Emotions of the father worried that the future of his children will not be satisfactory. Worries that they will run into the worst of situations and not the best of situations.

Emotions that the parents are aging and vulnerable.

Emotions that support or destroy our perception of things.

Emotions running deep to the foundations of what one is part of.

Emotions that leap out to the fleeing carnival of personalities and events.

Emotions that rise up to contradict the manipulation of emotions.

Emotions at the edge of space.

Emotions that link eternity and death.

Emotions running deep down into the work that pleases us the most.

Emotions that rise up to meet chaos.

Emotions of shame when we feel we have let someone down.

Emotions of humiliation.

Emotions of hero worship and disillusionment.

Emotions that flow to expectations.

Emotions for the opposite sex.

Emotions of chaos that destroy energy.

Emotions when confronted with the choice not entered into.

Emotions of fear of loss.

Emotions that free us of the emotions of others.

Emotions that flow to the eternal meanings.

Emotions that flow to the space one has occupied.

Emotions of bitterness when one has rejected the necessity for the work one does.

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Magnificent structures can be seen through emotion. They widen to encourage what has been experienced.

For the man, emotion is liberated when the male spirit flows through the manifold of the active world.

Emotion when one perceives the irresponsibilities of power.

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It's true that the writer risks something if he escapes into the past. He may be driven there by a legitimate fear of modernity, fear of the useless but powerful crowd of effects that shames the dignity of the individual. But, better to leave the past alone rather than trivialize it, sentimentalize it or use it for an agenda the past would scratch its head about.

But know it.

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There is a single, terrible curse: May you be born when things are big and the spirit is small.

A seed opens as the lens of a camera and delivers fools from all the bad of the past.

Denizens of the city play this out constantly.

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Don't state your beliefs too quickly!

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Compressed into an instrument of desire so it is desire running wild so when you begin to flow it flies off into its own chaos that no one questions but cheers wildly on. It is the form of the world. `

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Meager, yet a few scratches. Yes, perhaps? Who then? Yes, meager beyond description as if he only did it when he had a good long piss and the good, long piss was not frequent. Meager for the things in the background that control the physical; bodies and smiles looking over what is incomprehensible. In no position to do otherwise, in no place but there, so sad yet there as all sadness is. Why not? Perhaps, perhaps it is there, how can we tell from such a wonderful place? They loop over, tie one on and move forward despite our common pleas.

"I've had fantasies of living in this very spot, writing this very thing many years ago. And now how confined it all seems! The time is a swift river going nowhere."

"Perhaps something was lost in all that confusion. Perhaps some great strength flows altogether away from my poor self and what I have been left with is the skeleton or dead skin. Perhaps, as well, that confusion has fallen away into an animation dancing merrily in front of me."

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"And what is significant about your precious words?"

"I suppose it is that they are the words of an honest, fallible human being. That they try to enter places that are rare."

"You set yourself up for pain."

"And when you lived away from it was it good? Did it satisfy?"

"No, it was only an ornery sort of anticipation, fast when I was young but slowed down over the years. I had a nature that did the least enjoyable thing with a kind of relish."

"You cared too much!"

"Guilty. But I'm not alone."

* * * * *

Silence that begins to speak.

The shadow-mouth that devours worlds.

How can any modern story not involve flying through space? Flying to escape the evils of Earth, flying into the happy unknown that one embraces. Flying without machines as fully liberated spirits.

And we remember the exceptional beauties of earth and life. Our true selves.

Would a man flying through space be obsessed about "what is wrong with space?"

DIALOG OF AN HONEST MOON

"I saw where the sinner and saint were made; the poet and killer, the damned and laughing angels in us all. And my intention was so simple! Expand the knowledge base and find an identity as a writer."

"We who have been removed to the future, salute the past and ask for our release. You are with us always in heart and mind."

"One of the real delights is to massage the pain of youth into a good tale or two."

* * * * *

He learned one lesson at least: Try to produce what you have admired and you come up with shadow. Produce what is revealed by the curious and educated heart and one has something.

In that sense he is a product of his time and stands opposed to his time. A time that resists itself!

Why would a writer want to reproduce what has already been done? He wouldn't as long as he returns to the element of playfulness and willing to leap into new space displaced by forms he can no longer control.

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There is spiritual wisdom in making things.

* * * * *

What is more important, the tale or the way it is told?

The tale is the light, the way it is told is the lamp.

There is nothing formal about the way it is told. It is told to be comprehensible. It is told to involve the mind and heart in a secret only the mind and heart can understand when they are ready for it.

* * * * *

The key for the writer is the same for any person: develop a narrative that is true, don't lie to yourself, understand the core of the narrative and protect it with everything you've got. When change is needed or something new enters, open the window and let it filter in so long as it doesn't destroy the core.

* * * * *

One cold spring night the spirits of writing told me these things:

Don't turn everything into argument.

Don't turn the words of your enemy into your future.

Don't be morbid.

The truth is always controversial.

Experience is a gross form

Respect and honor the integrity of every person but don't get buried in their complexity.

Kingdoms of glory are for the madmen and the saints. Know the difference.

Don't try to fastidiously read a time which can't be read. All you'll do is find discouragement and pale interpretation piled on pale interpretation.

Only the devil would have concocted such a thing as a writing life.

"They're too arrogant to submit to a wisdom of any kind but they're too provincial to make any improvements."

"Have the good fortune of engaging many occupations. Learn all about them. Always look to what problems the occupation gives to the individual and his own particular solution. Never take the masks seriously."

* * * * *

"Consciousness as an experiment," DH Lawrence said. Not an imitation but an experiment.

Consciousness is an experiment that at times gets clogged by a labyrinth of fears, doubts, trickery, vanities and the rest of the imposed fallout of a civilization that doesn't like itself very much. When consciousness feels itself pinned inward the only way to feel the center of itself is by embracing something blowing fresh over the horizon with promises to lift the weight of the labyrinth now constructed like air ducts with fine, needle-like fibers running in it, now constructed like a concrete bunker.

Eventually the creative nature is shoved in the back room somewhere. Over it comes the harness, the rattling chains and leather slapping moans of the saddle.

* * * * *

The struggle of consciousness is sometimes, merely, to connect with itself after long years of fragmentation. The computer model has it right but, of course, the model is based on something that is a constant source of meaning for each unique human being. The model is useful as a reminder.

There are definitive mysterious X points at which no fact can be attained. The poetic spirit goes there and fills them with eternity to prevent the facts from making life too predictable and easy.

In one moment we stand in the present and let the systems flow through us, our initiation into the living present, our world, our now. A world and a now that is useless without profound connection to histories and some belief that a future will arise from us, the NOW.

First the connection within the self, then, connection beyond the self.

Who is to know for sure? We make our pronouncements but what are they? We believe them because we have lived. We do not believe that life is bad or dull or null and void. The struggle is enactment.

* * * * *

Brief Notes While Driving the Haptic Freeways.

I drive, I see the mountain. What is the mountain? It is a shape, an aesthetic impression, a color. Yet, it is a memory as well since I have been on that mountain. I was on that mountain as a boy and I remember those warm and breezy days on the mountain. It is many memories. And it is a series of facts since we know, generally, how the mountain rose. We know, generally, the nature of the flora and fauna. We know the micro-world contained on the mountain. We know its geology. And it is inspiring since when I look at the mountain I ask myself, don't the moon and Mars have mountains? So perhaps there are mountains beyond imagination throughout the universe. Aren't we privileged in being able to see this?

* * * * *

So, the car drives past the mountain and all I can see are other automobiles. And like the mountain the cars have a shape, memory, knowledge and so forth. Not with the same degree of magnificence as the mountain but with useful information nonetheless. For instance, when I see a car whizzing past me I see history. I see a careless history. I see a history contained by its desires and punished every moment by

what it knows is its deprivation. I see the first protests by the romantic sensibility at the onset of industrialism. I see the wholesale attack on industrialism throughout the last century and a half. And I see my experience in relation to the machine world. I see the human being swallowed by the little penetration that has occurred in the infinitude of space. I see the absurdity of trying to protect my family and community against nuclear attack. I see the endless waste products from what is apparently, an easy and guiltless life. Yet, there is something stunning and real about it all and it will transmit into the future. Perhaps we will be seen as awkward and ignorant of powers we have no appreciation of. This passes through me as I drive past cars and they drive past me.

Aren't thoughts objects? Aren't the products of imagination objects? So, the mind must be alive and responsive and see all things possible to see.

Brief Notes While Reading Old Friends.

It seems like yesterday....the arc made its supple way from what to that, from zap to zup. We are here people despite your worst nightmares and doodling in the impossible. We are here, not fresh but made and rounded.

Money and love are hard tasks.

We didn't want to practice an ancient craft but simply save what was good in the crafts that have been practiced.

The subtle mountains that grow from the fertile plain.

The eternal-speak of those caught in time.

"Oh, they buried much and the digging cost us but we did it out of devotion."

And delivered into this wonderful nightmare. We know now how to protect what we value.

"He can hardly write fiction, he who lives a fiction."

* * * * *

At the edge of what he knows; poised at the edge of the unknowable.

Listening to the marvelous sounds of houses. Watching the glass baubles that line one windowsill to see the reflection of strangers filling the entrance to familiar rooms.

The fawning wife obeys the man who will leave her in several years prompting the change long needed in the wife.

The host of powerful cameras move through the crowded parkway to record sensate material captured and transformed in leisure.

Here, This Is What I Am

So that's the deal for a while. A kind of helpless sap surrounded by powerful machines and organizations. It's not "oppressive" in the Mubarak sense. But in a liberal, democratic sense it is oppressive. Even the machines and organizations are in shadows. They may be "my" machines and organizations inasmuch as we are Americans but still.....

The small quadrant will get squeezed by greater visions until it poofs off like a punctured balloon. "Ah, in this space is all we know!" And yet we know we will be laughed at in the future for what we didn't know.

It is a dilemma what with all the barbs and fine steel wrappings around what we assumed was freedom.

* * * * *

Thinking about the act of writing is rarely as pleasurable as the act itself. Not to have written but to write and let it all hang out. "Here, this is what I am." A man needs a full lifetime of protection to get to that point.

* * * * *

Divergent roads, rather than being a threat, are a resource. Hail the divergent road as you pass!

The difficult art is learning the difference between resource and waste.

We are contemporaneous to all those who have inspired the very best in ourselves.

* * * * *

Whatever it is it embeds us, folds us in. All of nature is enfolded in its blazing cold. Whatever created it, created ourselves and our ability to try and understand it. Scientists have compiled a tremendous amount of facts about it. We know it by its chemistry and physics; by its motion and gravitational pull. If ourselves and nature is indicative it tries to reproduce itself wherever it can. It sticks to survive. We have landed on a few of the lights. It is an enormous puzzle that we will solve in due time because we will have to escape our planet one of these days. We have time. Drink wine and relax. Tell wonderful tales to pass the time. The Kings are being routed. Man emerges free and open and nearly infinite. God pulls us up and away.

If we weren't so much our own enemies we would be superb!

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Civilization allows us to be the best animal we can be. Culture builds out toward better men and women.

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There are few satisfactions looking into a bottomless pit.

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And so a turning is on us. When the wheel cracks open a bit it never closes until it is fully open and churning up both madness and enlightenment.

The swift memory of eternal sands we tried to sink our feet into. Tomorrow we will be burned again by the swift packets of all we have known.

We know, at the very least, the rotten smell of certain freeways.

Forgive us if we've seen the moon one too many times.

The Crowds of Life

Crowds have always fascinated me as a writer. When I drew on large pieces of paper in my young schooldays it was of vast battle scenes or nifty stadiums filled with round faces or the poor Titanic leaning at an oblique angle with anguished faces in yellow portholes. Stadiums filled with the scent of people, with their rough integrity and joy in freedom.

Freedom! It is everywhere. And the young smokers, drinking, dressed up for a ball along the long promenade in open cafes watching, laughing, sparkling, and daring. With the crowds clomping up the street, fat with anticipations, silly and judging all around them. Solid under the shadows of the square buildings and long, looping bridges. So much an invitation to make it what you want it to be; it is what you make it to be. Make it well with all this freedom. Make is solid with all this knowledge.

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The pink and the dark, the dark and the rich.

* * * * *

Crowds that will never know I had an existence, ah I know of your existence. Isn't that ironic?

How I rebelled against the crowds! How I hated them! How I competed against them without their knowledge, without their consent. But eventually it is merely the crowds walking up Market Street, staggered through the generations, playing differently with different toys, perishing into the silence, darting into a pleasure to stave the silence, onward, going, never giving up.

* * * * *

You pass an old man and know he is proud and not to get too close to him. Pride has a way of chasing away camaraderie. You are glad he isn't maimed, not like one of those old vets who scoots along on the board with wheels so determined you are frightened of your own lack of passion. We were made to suffer and pull ourselves up from suffering. The non-sufferers are pitched down to hell before they know it.

The yellow eyes speak to it. The yellow eyes have emerged from some Hell to come onto the surface and proclaim something that the young need to know.

* * * * *

Those things one figures counted, do count. It is one of the odd wonderments of having a life.

* * * * *

To be part of the crowds is to lose your fear of them. They are the eternal crowds and rarely change. They do not create or destroy anything. They crowd into a space well prepared for them and settle in and call it home, call it the place. There is, in the universe, no other place! They are only moved so much every generation. It never changes. It is a beautiful thing it never changes. When one finds the beauty in the unchanging they will have found a great deal!

* * * * *

Crowds will, at one point in life, paralyze the individual. At other points of life, liberate the individual.

Crowds are the sacrifices that never know. They are like an edict of nature.

Influences

I threw off my young influences to enter the great world. I was met with a tremendous array of influences from everyone and everywhere. It took me a while to start to differentiate between what helped and what did not help as far as the influences.

A society, and the world beyond that, contained many more than myself, many more points of view and backgrounds. Sometimes it was rather frightening, other times the greatest delight. What remains? At various waterholes in the self you ask that question. And then move on. The self takes on a natural course. It builds against chaos and the bad it perceives in life. And it must be productive, that was always the bottom-line and since the market couldn't tell me I had to gauge that productivity in terms of "good effort." How much good effort emerged and when did it emerge? And why did it dry up over here and gush over there? And these you test out in life, it can't be taught.

* * * * *

The first grasp is wide and large, heavy with things. Joy is felt that such fecundity is possible, that one is lifted so high, so far and wide. A world view begins to appear of the physical as well as the psychological and emotional. It will get battered. So much the better since that is a good test of a view. It toughens up

until you can actually move from its center because it will always be there to return to. And then the great differentiation takes place. The cuts are deep and continuous until you are ripened; that is, until you know what to do, how to do it, and what is meaningful. And then the execution. The execution. That is what we are doing now. The execution.

Past

The past fades. A new thing arises. I am a man of faith. I am a man of awareness. Perhaps even a man of talent. Strengths. Life is led best through strengths and not weaknesses.

The past is a description and traces of feeling. What was large barely registers.

Language is imbued with spiritual intelligence. We aim there at any rate.

We want to see things make their way. All this hard waiting is too much. Let us go now into the brightness of spring's arrow.

Much will fall by the wayside. Let it fall. If it was meant not to fall then it would be riding high up with us. Only that which is meaningful yet or helpful rides with us. All else falls into that delicious vat of memory.

Forgiveness, gratefulness, laughter, helpfulness

More discipline in reading, watching, eating, doing, and writing

Simplicity but with method and strategy.

* * * * *

The Useful Word

The useless word is made powerful only by the power crazed in the world. They take useless words and destroy men and women with aplomb. The writer is always in a dilemma.

Most everything else is prettied up nonsense meant to put the mind to sleep.

"I don't believe what they say."

"I don't believe the world order."

"I don't believe how they weigh what is important and what is not important."

The useful word is attached to good mind and good centers of self. It comes from the God within. That's the point of it. That is how things begin again.

In the beginning was the emergence of a man from the Earth with no protection against the sensations of nature. He was beautiful motion and blind until he stumbled on the killing. The killing was a source of fascinating pressure, a thing that is done because it is no other way, it is the way it is done.

From the town and city the faces come one by one, a blur of oneness through the inkling day, dry from some swoosh that passes through.

* * * * *

Origins of What?

It's difficult to conjure limitations, to say, "ah past this point I cannot go even as my head rams the wall with alacrity!"

Let's say one is interested in origins, a slithering word if ever there was one. Against this word the myth of mind veers out of solitude and makes itself a thousand and one meanings of hope.

Origins of what? The heart, the mind, the beasts, the men, the forms scottering down the dust of roads closed and open, sprouting and paved; an eye to the circulation through abodes with old weary voices, burning incense, materials woven on the walls of scent and sound?

Animals have collected here to drink while the dust rages. The origins of what? Yellow bowelled, hollow-eyed, thumbbent progenitors wildly inquisitive among the running streams? Here is the lava flow burning fires on the shore; of dances to the rounded skull of He who made us and She who sustainth and of They who buryeth under the stones of sad impunity.

But first...a man fell from the limb of a rotted tree and headed absurdly on one of his knees.....

* * * * *

TIME

Try as we may (and the attempts fall over youth from one end to the other) we cannot conquer time. We cannot overcome it and, soon, it has taken us up and away to places we feared. We look then at ourselves and at the work we have attempted and it is not enough. Time laughs it to pieces. Time shows us a fleeting vision of what other possibilities exist regardless of whether we are victims of them or not. In this way we attempt to forget it, to plunge ourselves into our most meaningful struggle and see where things come out the other end.

Perhaps one day we will see new content or, perhaps, walk away from every association from every object that touches our aspirations and marks the spot where we have been.

We are sincere about our efforts to cut away what is superfluous and get to the real thing. Time turns us grey but yet we see the dancer at the middle of our field of vision.

Will God permit us to see His glory once more?

Or do we suffer in our days surrounded by those who have reduced God to a mere word riding on the merely childhood dreams?

Doesn't God carry us back to our ignorance to see how privileged we are?

TALES

The tale of the earnest fool.

The tale of one bursting to learn his conditioning.

The tale of one who collapses on himself in the pursuit of truth.

The tale of one who has intimations of beauty.

The tale of one who explains things to nobody and experiences joy.

The tale of one who writes because he is a writer and not a corporate guy.

The tale of pleasure and the denial of pleasure.

MARTYRS and SCAPEGOATS

Oh mighty scapegoat, bring yourself in from the wolves.

Good laughter is sometimes better than fire to drive animals away from your lonely camp.

If anyone asks just say that you were very slow, a ponderous beast in the middle of stinging flies and wild panthers.

Somewhere between the End of the World and the Beginning of Life is a truth.

* * * * *

Every living being goes through a period of decrepit pessimism. Understanding it is evidence of character. Just don't make it into a mirror.

* * * * *

The true American, one of them at any rate, is that person who can experience the society fully, in all its dimensions and out of that experience create something new, profound, and enriched beyond anyone's imagination.

That doesn't mean any and all expressions. The test is whether it has fully embraced the complete society which includes religions, histories, ethnicities, regions, documents, examples of a variety of action and many other contradictions.

* * * * *

In the cycle, out of the cycle. Ho hum. We are here. And we know it runs long and deep without us. It is a privilege to know and we guard it as a valued piece of gold. In the cycle we think of narrative. Out of the cycle we think on different things, sometimes nothing itself. We zim and zoom among the jesting faces. There is a halt to speech. We are peeled open at the precise moment.

Songs without words.

"Oh, I read all them prefaces and such, all those clues to make it big, no question."

Watch out when the martyr laughs! Beware when the scapegoat gloats!

Oh bury it, bury it and bury it more.

"He studied the distillations and thought they were the reality so we had to knock 'em down a few notches and put him with the buggers who are the distillations of nothing."

"All the great ones taught distillations and scales."

"Were they happy?"

"They knew better than to hail the happy ones as their brothers."

"Unhappy and restless band of brothers!"

Old Writers Are Thought About and Celebrated:

Reputations in the present are relatively meaningless. Give me manna and enrichment that only comes when the mind is fired hot across the bow of the lazy spirit.

So there are great contributions to the word hoard. And imagination becomes dignified and individual and each word, like each man or woman, is significant.

Everything good encounters its own special hatred. It doesn't matter. It comes through.

The American writer wrestles with what hand it's been dealt. He watches the appalling and the gracious with the same eye. After all, the American writer doesn't want to record reality but create a new one or, at least, add to the one that is here with his own makings.

The American writer is not the holy man.

He tries to find the laws of consciousness.

He tries to install in his work complexity and enrichment.

He abandons all influence that threatens his integrity.

Literary Work/Thinking Work

I felt a lot of tension between this: the purely literary work and the so-called thinking work; the comments, the observations and so forth. One implies the other I suppose. The mind was shaped this way so why not record it; why not be conscious of what has shaped or influenced the spirit? But they call on different qualities. Literature does want to embody a sort of irrational meaning, much like the spiritual. It can't be contrived. The "thinking work" is there to try and keep above board, to try and find some sort of peaceful negotiation with the world as it is.

And thinking back to my youth I was anything but at peace with the world. So, a kind of obligation, then, without which what is there? We have obligations. We set ourselves for our own problems but there it is, trudge through we must. Story telling, when it is right or poetry when it is right can not be surpassed for satisfaction. But, there is a kind of satisfaction in resolving a huge dilemma, at least for oneself.

* * * * *

Thinking comes from reading books and getting jarred and ripped by reality. If you recover from it you can think a bit. Experience is necessary and so is that empathetic personality that can insinuate itself into many roles and activities that otherwise would be barred.

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Freedom and the nature of the mind, if you wish to call it that, has taught me that there must be stimulation, there must be active interplay with the world on many levels, not simply thoughts but then there must be contemplation, there must be resolution before one goes to the next step, whatever that step may be. In that youth came many problems streaming down into the core of the self. In that youth came many impressions and perceptions from every direction.

The internet is a kind of third way since it is primarily a communications medium and my industry group is communications. And there is much interplay on the beast since many people tromp through the screen here. And transactions do take place. And like reality it forces one to do things he'd rather not do.

REFLECTIONS

We reflect, it is a natural condition of the writer's mind. We reflect on the stages of development that are of interest only to ourselves. What are we going to say to others? What are we going to announce to the looming faces of those we hardly know?

We admit defeats along many fronts. The world wins and yet we flail away as the most unsuspecting, improbable idiot.

Our life and our being are lost through the structures we make. After is what we have no knowledge of.

* * * * *

The symbolic wishes we have had- all gone, all disintegrated and disintegrating by the hour.

I have done what I can do. I have wrung each drop out of the precious hoard. I have gathered up the significant squares of latitude through which we see the traffic and flame of the daily grind.

The writer eventually discovers that the world is greater than he, yet the writer must believe he can report on the world. Let us see the men and women who lived with us this day!

We hear and see the malevolent cries of madmen and eternal killers. We want the sky. We want the last planet formed by the old cosmos.

We want to see what the camera can't show us. We surrender to the soft complexes; old conflicts resolve and dance happily under the purest moon.

Pictures

As much variety as the coherent mind can produce.

The world- stunned by its own senescence- bows to the dreams of young men.

Anything produced for the mind is either nourishment or poison.

The taste of the woman's sweat less body in the afterglow of night.

The hum-drum world broken apart by the cries of pain and lovers afraid to reject the world.

The empty sky absorbs the fat cities and smoky road; brings the mind out to intimations of eternity.

Ghostly, elliptical pictures of speaking dead Presidents, laughing.

Home clustered and packed by receding fields, heavy with the brooding children.

A graceful bird carrying the story of youth on its mighty wings.

DEVOTION and ITS ENEMIES

A life devoted to invention, dedicated to the imagination, devoted to the wisdom of the intellect, dedicated to the burnishing of the language. What one doesn't prepare for is the drudgery involved. The unalterable boredom that creeps in from day to day. The mundane tasks that must get done before and if anything else is going to get done. The wrenching of having to admit oneself to the judgments of others. The voracious market that is waiting and waiting to gobble up all of your precious thought and stories.

The lines of the profession get very blurred. The writer rebels at everything, if not outwardly then inwardly where most things take place. One is thrown into worlds he is not prepared for or knowledgeable of. In some dim image that he carries of that general reference called reality he senses that such a world exists. And then, as suddenly, he is in the middle of this world, it surrounds him, it is judging him, it is taunting him at times. And then, he is out of it and in some other existence whose limits he barely discerns. And all the while this is occurring he is attempting to learn how to transfer his thoughts into words, into sentences, into more complex thoughts. And feelings as well as relations become more and more complex and his experience richer.

Devoted to musing on things; devoted to the confrontation with things.

* * * * *

RAW INSIGHT

Raw insight means little or nothing. Kept at the level of the raw insight and the mind grows around it like a fester. Ejaculate it out into the world without care or thought and it is laughed at or seized on by more clever and ruthless individuals for their own use. If the raw insight has immeasurable emotional weight then it is usually thrown against the vast complexity of the world where it becomes lost, devoured by the world, robbing the self of the pride of discovery.

What then is to be done about the raw insight? Always but always write them down. And then leave them, perhaps leave them for years.

ADVICE

When reading becomes senseless step back and look at the world of objects around you; the processes and technology flying around your poor head.

Don't fight superfluous fights.

Ask the question: What draws one away from the largest dreams?

* * * * *

People always try to shame the writer into action.

Sometimes a writer will see himself as a quiet man in a straw hut sitting under the sun and grabbing for various rays hitting around him. Or a scarecrow come alive but who yet doesn't know how to move out of the cornfield.

TABOO

When I was young I saw just about every taboo broken, every just proportion made grotesque, everything sacred debased, all value reduced to a kind of private joke Every taboo but one and that was the taboo of 'knowing yourself'. If a man, say, hypothetically was to quit everything to learn to "know himself" what tremendous guilt's and problems and anger come flooding from the liberated age!

The taboos, proportion, values were either honestly broken by the icon-breaking mind, usually under the impetus of the ego or they were foolishly turned into rationalization and masks which those in authority used to cover their own deeds, misdeeds for the most part.

Read he said, read much, read over and over again. Reading is good. People see it as an act of the past, along with hoop skirts, smelly trains, and segregated streets. But there is rarely anything better. If it is quaint then it only means the barbarians have won and so that is that. Why worry if the barbarians have won? They will destroy everything and out of the ash will come something else. We don't want that to happen so we urge people to read and read well.

In one era the barbarians burn the books, in the next they simply ignore them, in another the barbarians read but make sure no one else does.

STRUCTURE and DESIGN

Anything of worth desires its own structure and design. The universe itself offers the perfect structure. It offers up a creature designed to understand the complexity of that structure and to create its own structure and to create its own structure through a multiplicity of worlds. That creature meditates, it creates, it destroys, it builds up.

There is a structure of character as well as a structure of objects.

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What is evil but the denial of the possibility to structure the rapid chaos that overwhelms us from time to time? As evil denies us that possibility it offers its own poor substitutes. And if the world is so attuned to its own weakness at the time, the denial will become the structure and so deny the possibility that the positive of life will have its structure. That has its imprints on generations.

The world, then, goes to rack and ruin. Nature, Science, Political constitutions or Law, Art; these are some of the categories that offer positive structures to flourish. On the brink of the abyss we are saved by one of the categories from time to time.

Death, dissolution, and chaos are threatening to punish and destroy our illusions. And, in fact, a stage in life is spent in a struggle between burgeoning aspirations, dreams and the chaos and evil that would deny that anything is real but itself.

* * * * *

And, how often it is that the man or woman raised in the belief that no evil exists ends up a pawn of it and the man or woman who struggles against it from an early stage becomes a saint.

PATHWAYS

On this- an excitable day- a day when we weight things in the balance. A day that reveals where we have been and what we are to do. A day filled with the portentous laughter of poetry, a day filled with predictions.

On this day we observe the emptying and replenishing that has taken place over the years. It is always emptying and replenishing, order and chaos. In my 20's was certainly a replenishing, a filling up to an extent I hardly knew was possible.

Ah-all burning wires repeat the message!

Then came a gradual emptying through my 30's. Emptying is the most disappointing process.

We contemplate the moon.

We bring the cosmos down to our humbled shed where sounds and light play in the trees.

We think of the vast convulsions that could take us away in a flash.

We think of our pathways filled with old and ruined memories.

Pathway that leads though the solid rooms of youth.

Pathway that moves through the eerie city when the mist falls, the people fall, arms outstretched for that which never falls.

Pathway where we rest to celebrate the few items that has passed with us. Happy items that survives the emptying!

They spin in delight before the sun touches them!

Do we smell the rot of those who have not yet conquered themselves?

CAMERA

The Queen is a camera and she wears no pearls. Her omniscient eye rarely looks at herself but then, from the panopticon all her subjects are observed. There are crevices and alleys that even the gods can't get to. Her worries are a substantial upgrade from the old dad but still it is for her conscience primarily. "Death takes them so fast and early, what can I do about it?"

A long line of portraits cross her brain. She lets it flow. She was taught to let them flow through, every last one, then you will know; you will know from the flow a thing or two.

"And the shabbiness is something you can manipulate when the need comes."

The Inspection of Goods is complete when the stately horses cross the Bridge.

Growth is slow. Decades slide like chunks of ice from the glaciers. Captured in the ice are spots of human pride and amusement. "Ah, they are diverted for a precious moment before they slide into the Sea."

Everywhere she ushers in the Carnival of Silliness with arms and hands pointing straight up into the grey and poisonous day.