

J's EVOLUTION

--Religion as Novel:
The Novel as Religion--

The penultimate Word on
Law and Order

A Mirror Image of
Mirrored Reality...
Scene
Through A
Looking Glass

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To J

without whom this novel
would not have been possible

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Now, concerning the coming of our Lord
Jesus Christ...that day will not come
unless the rebellion comes first, and
the man of lawlessness is revealed, the
son of perdition, who opposes and exalts
himself against every so-called god or
object of worship...

Second Letter to the Thessalonians 2:1-4

Beth... Bethel...

S H I T

Jackass. It's been so long since you've written that you don't even know how to spell anymore. BethLEhem. Today I went to Beth-lehem. Date: March 9, 1970. Time: 8 p.m. I'm sitting in a little cafe on David Street in the old section of Jerusalem. Mortar shells are exploding. Inter arma leges silent. I'm drinking tea and lemon.

There, that's done. Now, I am situated in the world. I exist in time and space.

I'm jabbering now. I don't really know what to write. My hand is trembling as I write these words. Words, I'm afraid of you. I've tried to face this battle without your being my crutch. I don't want to hide behind you as I used to. So, I've avoided the confrontation. I've tried to avoid it by playing with you, by making a crossword puzzle, a game with words. But I can't make the words fit together. The puzzle doesn't help me hide.

I feel myself hanging precariously over the abyss. I don't want to fall, but something is preventing me from leaping. I must retreat: I just turned the crossword puzzle over, and am once again beginning to write. One thin sheet of paper between me and the abyss.

Except for three poems, I haven't written during these past six months. One can't describe a religious quest, can't write about the ineffable. Words are totally inadequate.

But now I must try to find the words.

Words, I'm not exactly sure what I expect from you. To seek the Word via words. Yet, more. Although I realize I'm taking a step back from the abyss, I am hoping that you can give me a base in my search. A base into existence from which I can relate to the absolute.

I thought the kibbutz would provide that base. Kibbutz Ha'on. The Sea of Galilee. Snow-capped Mt. Hermon in the distance. All material needs provided: food, clothing, shelter.

But I felt trapped.

Everything was patterned. You wake up and work eight hours a day and then you sleep and then eat and then swim and then sleep and then work.

This generation worked the fields by the Sea of Galilee, so that the next generation could work the fields by the Sea of Galilee, so that the next generation could work...

Where does it end. Where does it lead. I need more than physical necessities. Constantly I was chided: you're off in the clouds. What's your problem?

The Infinite

the wind blows outside;
the trees are swaying in disorder
and there is a whistling sound,
accompanied in contrapuntal theme by a roar,
like the ocean surf
The Infinite is at work again.

A simple poem. No symbols. The only symbol is the absence of

symbols. At least I've made some progress from the complex, sopho-
moric intellectualism of Johannes.

Yet, the people on the kibbutz didn't understand this poem.
They couldn't understand my quest. Why do you keep re-reading the
Bible, especially the New Testament. Aren't you Jewish. Why don't you
pollinate the date trees faster, sift more bananas.

Sift more bananas: tearing little pieces of brown leaves from
the tips. Thousands and thousands a day. Pollinate the date trees:
walk through the date trees with my knife, tearing open the female
organs which are enclosed in a brown piece of bark. Ripping into it
with my knife, finding the white buds, and sticking cotton into them
White cotton filled with male pollination.

Tree after tree. Step, climb the ladder, take out the knife
and cut open the bark; expose more female buds. Stuff cotton into
them.

Damn me. Why couldn't I stick to that. I fertilize the dates,
but don't have the patience to watch my creation grow. Why isn't that
enough meaning: socialistic life, sharing, working with man and nature.

I'm just like the saw that I used to prune the date trees. It's
totally ineffective at first, as it seeks a base with which to cut the
limbs. Hacking in different directions, tearing at the limb, making
only superficial marks.

But once it finds that base, it can make long, smooth strokes
towards the center. Why can't I make the date trees my base. Why
can't I make people my base, be satisfied with universal concerns.
Why, God damn it, why isn't that enough.

The Window

a date tree limb;
sky;
insects crawling
Infinity through a small pane;
but I must continue...
seeking for something more

Often I think of Elizabeth while I'm here. We were wrestling from different sides. She from the side of infinity trying to grasp the finite. I, clinging to her womb, fearing to slip into infinity. Now I am where she was, but I must not let myself become trapped by the finite.

Yesterday, the day after Purim, I left the kibbutz. Purim night I went to a costume party; white sheet around my shoulders, two crossed sticks in my hand, and my feet and ankles dampened in the Sea, the result of a slight loss of faith.

The Dance

sweat streaming off smiling faces;
she, dark hair, swinging over brown eyes,
coyishly returning to greet
I, boyishly laughing, throwing my arms
high
spinning faster.
I, dashing out, skipping, casting
daring glances back at
she, following, smiling, panting,
and once more,
We

Sometimes the whole kibbutz would join arms, dancing, laughing, singing together. Arm in arm, accordions and drums playing louder and louder. The accordion player said, "I am no longer playing with my hands, but with my soul."

All caught up in the dance. Song. Food: falafel, shashlik cooked on the grill. Wine, bread.

Someone shouts, "Hurrah for Esther!"

The Book of Esther.

I grab the microphone from the accordion player.

"Stop this dancing, this drinking."

Do you realize what you're celebrating? Are you dancing because of Ahasuerus' edict which allowed the Jews to smite the enemy with the sword, slaughtering them and destroying them? Are you singing for Esther who asked that the Jews in Susa be allowed to commit more killings the following day?

Do you still want to dance?

Oh, they saved the booty, you say. Yes, "they laid no hands on the money." Kill man, but don't touch the booty. Man's life isn't so important. The Jews killed the people and you're celebrating by dancing. Purim, a day of feasting and gladness. You murdered, and now you're joyously singing.

How can you rejoice over killing? Get away from me, I'm not finished talking yet. Look at the war now. You never question the killing. Can't you see that you've got to harden yourselves when you kill others, and that makes you kill part of your own insides, part of your aliveness?

Look how you teach your children war games, praising them when they fight, and hit, and shoot each other. Look what you're doing to your children; look what you're doing to yourselves.

Damnit, how can you dance?

I sit here in the cafe. Mortar shells are still exploding in the distance.

In the entire story of Purim, God wasn't mentioned once.

If only people would seek Him. And yet, even as I write that, I'm admitting my own inability to stand on this dizzying precipice trying to face God. Why can't I just accept Him, why must I retreat from Him?

And by writing right now, I'm retreating. I need the words to help me. But I'm not going to hide behind them. This is only temporary. I need time to regroup myself. To find out what my "self" is.

But where do I begin? Where does one begin to look for a sense of himself? At twenty-five, how do I look back and find a thread?

I have some papers with me; parts of a diary I kept before I decided to stop writing. Disordered, crumpled, torn pieces of paper. I feel like York, after Richard left for Ireland: "If I know how or which way to order these affairs/ Thus thrust disorderly into my hands/ Never believe me... everything is at six and seven."

Start there. Re-read the diary; transcribe it; edit it. And be honest. Don't try to temper it; don't try to modulate it...

Yes, I must be honest. This paper is my last hope, it is my life. No games. No tricks. I'm not going to pretend that I'm editing someone else's papers that Tyche cast into my hands by fortuitously leaving open an unlocked drawer. These are my words. I wrote them. Yet now, as I hold them in my hands, it seems so futile to try to pull out my past as if it were still alive; to edit my past, in order to cast light on these papers, to somehow form a shadowgraph from them.

Damn it, stop thinking. Don't ask if it will do any good. Just do it, John.

John. I wonder why people in Israel have been calling me John. My name is Johannes Maya Eddy. But somehow I've become John, the

servant of Johannes. Yet my name seems so unimportant, so trivial compared to the task ahead of me: pouring through pages and pages of my own writing...

Writing. It seems to me that that is what I have always done. After I graduated from law school, there was no question about what I would do. I rented a flat in San Francisco and joined a law firm. During my first month there, the firm was commissioned by the Vico Foundation to write a field report on the inner city of San Francisco, concentrating mainly on the old age/ wine problem along Sixth Street. The book was meant not only to study the problem, but to bring it before the public. Because of my ability to write, the assignment was given to me. Within a year, the novel had reached the best-seller list. The family was so proud of me. What a success, what a career. The lawyer as novelist. How interesting. The legal novel. Such an interesting dialectic.

I decided to quit the law firm and devote full time to writing. I plunged into my second novel. Work was coming fine...

Journal of mine, jubilate judiciously. Tonight, March 11, 1969, I had an interesting experience which is potential material for my novel. Let me tell you of it. I entered my delightful deli, David's, and sat down. I'd written hard all day and was exhausted. Yet there is a certain relief that goes with exhausting myself, with pushing myself to the limit. As I sat at the table, my mind kept going over the thoughts of today's writing. I couldn't turn myself off, but kept scrawling notes and ideas on scraps of paper. I didn't look up as the waitress took my order, but kept writing. The

rain was coming down slowly, and its sound reminded me of the andante
overture to my opera. Ah, I hear it now. Two thunder claps as the
orchestra opens in D minor. Clarinets, flutes, with soft violin
accompaniment. Then the brass enriches the tone. D minor modulates to
A. And then, ahh, then the first violin begins to play deep ominous
notes, reinforced by soft rumbling thunder of the viola and cello.
Rapid key shifts occurring. D minor/ A/ D minor/ A. Shifting, ominous,
building. CRASH ba da dum; Crash ba da dum. D major.

I couldn't see the rain because there were too many lights on in
the restaurant and the window acted like a mirror. I saw the reflection
of the waitress returning with my food and I turned to be served. I
didn't recognize her, so knew that she must be new. She was very
nervous, and I told her to stay calm. Just as I was saying this, she
spilled some water on me. I told her not to worry about the water,
that it wasn't a clear and present danger, but she continued to look
like a little child that has been caught in the cookie jar, knows it's
caught, and is frantically searching its mind for some words. She
couldn't find any, and stood there blushing because of her substantive
evil. I laughed and turned back to my notes; but the ludicrousness
of the situation had made me lose my train of thought. I told her I
was still thirsty and asked if I couldn't please have another glass of
water. She made a mistake and brought me milk instead.

What a strange girl. She fascinates me. I spent the rest of
the night in the deli, watching her, and drinking hot tea. I think
it is her face that fascinates me. I can't quite describe it. Her
features are easy enough: red hair, freckles, brown eyes. But there

is something unusual about it. I'm not exactly sure what. Maybe it's because her face seems ageless. But there was more that intrigued me as I studied it tonight. It looked calm, peaceful, but she was so nervous, and blushed repeatedly during the night. She looked serene, yet intense. Her face kept changing between the one and the other, like the ocean's waves. I've never met a face like that before, a face I couldn't describe, put down on paper.

Johannes, let's make a challenge of it. I shall make her one of the characters in my novel. What a splendid idea; to see how well I can get her down on paper. I'll drink to that. Beer, I'll drink well to that. Falstaff, ye man of noble character, will you drink a Falstaff with me. Ah, John, 'tis indeed good to have one such as thee as drinking companion. Well, I'll drink beer to that. Falstaff could drink a well of beer, or I am a Jew else, an Ebrew Jew.

Drink, O fellow boarder of Eastcheap. Be intemperate. Who cares if we break out in carbuncles. Fear not, for I have a purple amethyst stone which, according to Greek legend, will remedy drunkenness. Drink as I sing to thee of the challenge: "Non sperar, se non m'uccidi, ch'io ti lasai fuggir mai..."

Oh, immortal, heavenly sin:
the damsel hast not a chance against my pen
especially when
it is harmonized with my os rotundum

Right, Horace?

March 12. Today I decided not to write, but to wait until I had a chance to study her better. So, I went to Golden Gate, to relax and lie in the sun. I sat down in my little corner of the Shakespeare Gardens, and leaned my head against the stone wall. Above my head

was lettered: "What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet." I have often wished that the four years I spent studying Latin for pre-law training could have instead been spent delving deeper into Shakespeare's mind. Oh well, it shows scholarly acumen to throw bits of Latin wit into my writings; makes the reader think that there is an erudite author.

In the garden there were several small children, all of pre-school age. I had brought my recorder along, and began to play an Israeli dance tune. Some of the children took the straws out of their milk containers and danced around me, laughing and singing and a thunderclap interrupts the wail of an Arab woman's song. I wonder where her song comes from... playing their straws like recorders. The leaves were just beginning to bud, and some of the flowers in the garden were blooming. I remember thinking to myself as I lay in the sun with those children around me, what an idyllic setting it was. Here is life's meaning. I ask for no other.

March 13. By not writing yesterday I stored up extra energy, so I ran the half mile to the deli. As I was walking in, the girl was walking out. Her face was to the ground. I wasn't sure if she didn't want to see me, or just didn't see me. So of course I stopped her. She was crying. I asked if she'd like to get some coffee. We walked down towards Union Square and into a small coffee house that I frequent.

She ordered tea and lemon. I ordered tea. Then she began a lengthy explanation about why she was crying; the manager criticised her; everything she did was wrong; and the more he watched her, the more nervous she became. She was sobbing intermittently.

This is rather boring to relate. I've got an idea, though.
Since I didn't write yesterday, I'll write this entry as if it's a
chapter in my second novel.

Okay, let's dramatically cast the reader into the situation.
The reader - me. Where was I? Ah yes, I was bored listening to her
talk about the manager. A bit of dramatic action, some dialogue:

"His face became fierce and he began yelling at me. I thought he
was going to strike me." Da dum. Suspense.

Now, we switch to the other character: me, of course. First, let's
see what's in my head. I'm thinking: she sure is dull to listen to, but
it's amazing how her facial expressions flow into each other.

A juke box began playing. We sat listening to a song by the Doors:
"I Looked at You."

She is an art student at S.F. art school, and is now on spring
break. Before deciding to go to art school, she worked in a home for
retarded children. She told me that as a child she wrote the J of her
last name as if it were f.

"Hello, I Love You, Won't You Tell Me Your Name."

Elizabeth Mery Jaellois. There is something funny about her
middle name: it is pronounced like Mary, only spelled with an E.

I felt, as I was watching her, that I was beginning to understand
her. Soon, I'll be able to take her character, and, after mixing it with
fiction, produce its essence. For that is the secret of my art: to take
people, events, life, mix them with fiction, and produce their essence.
My motto is fictio cedit veritati.

She continued talking about her childhood: six sisters, German mother,

father a minister. Quite a flock. Then she said something about how people are too often caught up in their own perspective. That no one ever made the attempt to understand how she was seeing J. So, she made it one of her goals to try to see things from other people's perspective.

"That's a good point, Elizabeth. In fact, one of the fundamental principles of the British Constitution is just that: audi alteram partem. But I think that your conversation is irrelevant and immaterial to the subject of retarded children. How does your seeing J like f have anything to do with retarded children?"

She became upset when I said this, and I thought she was going to cry again. It's hard for me to write down her conversation. Partly because I didn't listen to it too carefully, and partly because it's so boring that I'm not sure I can sufficiently alter it to make it a readable entry. But, let's try.

"I think they are relevant. Because people didn't try to understand me, I decided I'd work with retarded children in order to get into their world, and to see things as they did, rather than making them and their views conform to my world."

There, that's not bad, considering the material with which I am working. You'd probably be proud of the way I let you say that, Elizabeth.

"For two years, I tried with every ounce of my strength to communicate with them, but after two years, there were some that I hadn't even begun to know."

Her face showed a weary resignation. Poor suffering girl. Good, Johannes, you've done quite a fine job of portraying her, and the pathos

of her situation.

"Don't be upset. I'm sure you must have helped a few."

That's it, make yourself compassionate towards her.

"But that's not the point. Even if it were just one. Just one child. Yet, there were many that I couldn't touch. It was like a wall. I don't understand. How can children be born that way. I won't allow myself to believe they were born like that. I can't. It must have been their parents or the environment. But I could do nothing, absolutely nothing."

I sat looking at her, not knowing exactly what to say.

"I imagine that that was a frustrating experience."

Wait, read that last line again: I imagine that that was a frustrating experience. God, what insight you had, what warmth and compassion. You were a shell. She was doing as well to talk to you as to those children. How deaf, how completely deaf you were. Damn, I've had enough for tonight. I'm going to bed. Frustrating. God o' mighty. Frustrating. All right, that's what this task I'm doing right now is: just frustrating. Grinding through these small details, looking for some trace of myself. And afraid to look too far ahead. Wanting to live in the past, to find the answer in the past. And I don't even allow myself to think beyond the two of us sitting and talking. I'm safe there. As long as I keep myself in the past, I'm safe and I exist. I live in the past; and for now, my only future lies in trying to understand my past.

I awoke this morning. Good line. What a sound introduction into a day. I awoke. What caused me to awake. Why didn't I just

continue to sleep into infinity. I wonder if there are certain cells in the brain that make a signal to the rest of the body to awaken. I wonder what kind of signal they make. I wonder how long I can keep writing about how I awoke this morning and thereby continue to avoid my task. It's so hard to leap right back into the past, to try to re-live it, to make its memories come alive again; yet I must, for I exist only in the past. The irony. I live only in the past, yet the impossibility of totally thrusting myself back into it.

I left myself in the cafe on March 12, but I was reading what I had written on March 13. Where am I exactly? Am I on the night of March 12 or am I on the morning of March 13 looking back at March 12? Is the only past I see now the past that is filtered through the eyes of the past? Into which day am I casting myself? On March 13, when I write about March 12, am I again living March 12, or is that day lost to me just because the date is March 13? And as I re-read this on March 10, am I cast into the original event, or am I casting myself back into the day on which I wrote about the original event; or, am I suspended somewhere else, not in the present moment, but not fully in the past; somewhere outside them both, trying to cast myself from one to the other, but not really being involved in either of them?

Enough. Start reading your diary. But even as I say that, I'm afraid to go too fast, for what if my task fails. I'm safe in the past, but once I finish re-reading and editing... No, don't think of that. Just keep going. Transcribe and edit.

As we walked home last night, I began telling jokes. I enjoyed watching the way she laughed; her gleaming brown eyes; and the smile on her freckled face reminded me of the children that were dancing around

me in the park yesterday. There is one other thing I want to write down. It's probably just a trivial incident, but I want to get it on paper anyway. Twice, while we were walking home, Elizabeth's eyes became glazed, as if she had drifted into a dream-like trance. When this happened, her face appeared to be veiled and lacked all expression. I started to ask her if she would lift the veil, but I was afraid to. I can't exactly explain why I was afraid, or why it upset me. Oh well, as my poet friend said in Ars Amandi: Nox et hiems longaeque viae, saevique dolores/ molibus his castris. et labor omnis inest.

Enough writing for this morning. Right now I am going to pick up Elizabeth and we're going to breakfast.

p.m. When I picked her up this morning, the sun was shining off her hair, making it look golden. She was dressed in a light-green, checkered shirt with a green dress and a gold belt around her waist. She had a bright topaz ring on her finger. It reminded me of Mom's carbuncle stone that's been in my family for generations.

We talked a long time about art. She told me she began to draw in the evenings, when she returned from working with the retarded children.

"When I'd leave them at night, I wouldn't know what to do with myself. I began to paint. I'd draw until I felt completely drained. Then I'd sit down and cry. But it was the painting that emptied me enough so that I could begin to cry."

"I too draw just a bit. But I took it up so that I could see things more clearly. Often I find that when I am writing, or trying to

make a picture with words, I leave out too much. I took up drawing to try to be able to better reproduce what I saw: what a room was like, or what a person's face looked like. You see, Elizabeth, one of my goals is to be able to see and describe everything, and to describe it as accurately as I can."

"We do draw for different reasons. I see too much. Drawing keeps me open so I don't close up to life. Don't you find that same sort of release in your writing?"

See too much? Release? What kind of nonsense is this girl talking: "No, I don't find that release. And I don't understand what the hell you are talking about."

"Like the children. I found it so hard to be with them and to keep myself open. Their pain was too much for me to bear. I have to let off energy. Sometimes I play the piano, sometimes I run..."

Heh, heh. "Okay, later on today we'll go running in the park. But now, how about horse-back-riding along the beach. Today's Thursday, and every Thursday I take my horse for a ride. Would you care to join me. Come on, what's wrong... why the sullen face. Let's go ride."

We spent the day riding through the trails and hills above Skyline and along the ocean. At first, I tried to teach Elizabeth how to ride a horse, but she was scared so I let her get on the back of mine, told her to hang on tightly, and off we went. I had this strange feeling of egstasy within me. A feeling of being one with the horse. I pulled the reins, he reacted. I kicked him with my heels and pinched my knees into his belly, and he'd canter and gallop for me. Faster and faster the horse seemed to be flying over the land, his legs blurring into the ground, the trees and hills alongside us merging into each other. It

seemed as if we were no longer riding through them, but were being immersed in them, had become part of them. The wind in my face and the girl's arms around me. Trees, dirt, hills, girl.

The ocean. Riding along the sand. Roar of the ocean surf as the sun splashed on it. The waves pounding the beach. Suddenly, I felt I was no longer riding the horse; I was no longer being hugged by the girl. I felt myself leave my body, and rise into the air, onto a nearby hill. There I sat and looked down towards the beach. There were two people riding a horse on the sand. The sun was beginning to set. The girl's hair was alternately golden, then dark. The ocean was turning a purplish hue as the sun turned red, bright red. The surf pounded onto the shore and the ocean lay before me: stretching as far as my vision would allow it.

The person on the hill looked down on all this. He saw these two people who were merging with the ocean and the sky. They were part of the picture. They were the picture. The self watching these two people knew that they were happy; and, after watching them awhile longer, he floated back down the hill and back into me to join us for the rest of the journey.

I was happy.

I left off writing last night. I again suspended myself somewhere in the past, in a state of happiness. I want to leave myself there. I don't want to continue delving through my past. Where does it lead? Will this task culminate in me, locked in a room in Jerusalem, living in spiritual galuth.

Is there a base arising?

Do I really want to find a base, or is this writing just a means to hide in the past? Is my brief retreat into the past going to be a permanent exile?

Here I sit...
legs crossed yoga-style on the hard
dirt ground.
The ground, once wet, now molding
two tire-tracks forever in itself: until
the rains come again.
The root of some
limb cut off at earth.
Only its uppermost part,
right at the surface, lies
exposed.
It is this part that is groping
for the sunlight.
The rest of the limb is
below the ground,
in darkness.
The top, which pushed through
the sod, was broken
while making an
effort to reach light.
The branch under the ground doesn't even
know there is sunlight above.
And unknowing, is content.

I'm sitting in Independence Park now. But I feel I've nothing to celebrate. No independence. For now, I must again lock myself in my room, once more become a slave to my past.

March 21. These last few days are a blur in my mind. I'm amazed at myself. Haven't written in the diary for over a week and a half. Although in the past, I've gone days, even weeks, without working on the novel, I have absolutely never skipped one day of writing in my diary. I've always tried to write down an event after it happened, so as to reproduce it as accurately as possible. I can't imagine not writing for a week and a half. No wonder I start off this entry: "These last few days are a blur..." I spent them all with Elizabeth. The girl

seems more and more of a contradiction to me. Even after a week and a half, I still can't understand her.

Two conversations which occurred this week stand out in my mind.

The first took place while we were sitting on the grass at the Shakespeare Garden. I asked her if she were going to get her job back as a waitress.

"No, I'm afraid it's too hard for me."

"What, too hard? It's just a routine: same thing day after day.

The only thing that might be too hard is that it would be too easy. I'd get bored with the monotony."

"It's not at all the same. Every person is different. I'm afraid each time I go to a new table. How will I serve the people, what will they order; and even while they are ordering, I often can't concentrate on what they're saying but begin wondering who they are, what they are doing in the restaurant. It's hard to keep my mind on their orders."

"Can't you get some sort of pattern into the job. A system. You know, the salads are here, the meats there, the condiments over there. Everything should be planned beforehand. And then you shouldn't pay too much attention to the people. They should fit into your system. All you have to do is learn the routine, then go through it. Like in my writing. I write so much each day. Just do it, almost without thinking. The system makes everything much easier."

"That was one of the reasons I took the job, so that I'd have to work myself into a routine. I tried to pretend that the customers weren't really people so that I could accept their criticism without taking it so seriously. But I can't get into that sort of system. I can't just shrug their remarks off. It's agonizing each time I have to

face new people."

"No, I can't understand that. It's always easy to meet new people. If you do it enough, it can become a simple routine. I don't even have to think about it any more."

I do not mean to make a negation,
By hereby ending the first conversation,
But I now begin with much elation,
The remarks of our second conversation,

We were watching a man and wife who had come into the cafe with their two kids. The entire table was in an uproar. Kids screaming at each other; parents yelling at the kids; and the parents speaking bitterly to one another.

"Why, Johannes? They must have loved each other at one time. Why the bitterness?"

"They are lacking a framework for their love. If only they had one, they would be able to avoid bitterness and hatred. Or at least they'd be able to work out their problems and differences within the framework of that love."

She didn't say anything, but continued to look around the cafe. It was nearly empty. She said to me, "I wonder where all the people go when it is raining;" and then, almost an afterthought: "I wonder if they are happy."

I sometimes think this girl intentionally tries to be ambiguous. Ambiguitas verborum contra stipulatorem est. For her to make a comment like that, right after I finished explaining something else to her. That annoys the hell out of me.

Saturday evening. Today Elizabeth and I had one of our bitterest discussions. Actually, it became too heated to be called a discussion.

At least I became too heated; and it's unlike me to become upset over
trivia. De minimis lex non curat. We went swimming today in the YMCA
pool. I am going to try to reproduce the scene as objectively as I can,
to see exactly what happened. But damn, it's hard to be objective. She
really annoyed me.

We walked into the swimming area. She was wearing an old-
fashioned two-piece suit. I asked her why she wore that outmoded style.
She said she was embarrassed to expose too much of herself; and that
her body was not for the public.

"Good grief, Elizabeth, it's not obscene. According to recent
Supreme Court rulings, for something to be obscene it must be 'utterly
without redeeming social value.' Look at your breasts. Their social
value is enormous."

A lane opened up and I jumped in. I began swimming hard. The
water felt good and I decided to set a fast pace for the six hundred
yards. As I went to make a flip turn, I saw someone jump in over me.
I became incensed. I had waited for the lane to open. Who in hell was
he to intrude in my area. I turned quickly and began to stroke as hard
as I could. I kept my eyes focused on the black line which divided the
lanes. I had been swimming over that line from the start. I put down
my head and kept swimming over it. I hope the fucking bastard hits me.
I'll prosecute him, take actiones legis. I saw him approach, and began
pulling and kicking even harder. He moved at the last second. I was
sorry. I would liked to have smashed into him. Encroaching on my lane.
The hell with him,

I wondered where Elizabeth was, but didn't want to stop to check
until I finished my laps. My arms began to tire, but I had my goal and

I wasn't going to stop until I reached it; it's as if there is an
unwritten law that commands me to swim so much each day.

When I finished my laps, I bobbed a few times to regain my
breath, then looked to see if I could find Elizabeth. She was standing
on the side, so I hopped out and went over to her. She looked like she
was ready to cry.

"What's wrong?"

"Nothing."

"Did you swim?"

"I got in and began to swim, but then some other people jumped in
and it became too crowded, so I got out."

She burst into tears. I felt anger burst in me.

"Who are they, which ones?" I demanded.

"No, Johannes, it's not anyone's fault. No one is wrong. I don't
have any right to a lane any more than they do. I just decided to let
them swim."

"But you were there first, the lane was yours."

"How can you say 'mine'? What right do I have to that lane?"

She began crying again. "What right do I have to anything? Here I am;
someone put me here. I don't know what I'm supposed to be doing; and I
don't feel like I have a right to anything. Who gives that right?"

"What the hell are you talking about? You waited in line. Then
it's your turn. Once you start swimming, it is your lane." I felt my
anger being directed towards her. I was almost shouting. "What are you
going to do, just let people step over you. You have every right to that
lane. You waited for it, it's yours."

"But that piece of property... a lane... I can't think. What about the people..."

"Oh shut up. You're talking nonsense now. What the hell are we arguing about anyway — a stupid swimming lane. This is absurd. Go get dressed."

Early Sunday morning, March 23, before leaving for church (ugh). Well, last night, while we were sitting in my room drinking wine, Elizabeth told me how much she liked my print of Starry Night. I've never thought too much about it. A friend gave it to me: someday I'll read up on it. It does have pretty colors though: yellows, blues. Red-headed Elizabeth then made the half-assed suggestion that we go to church this morning. I will now try to duplicate verbatim the Ecstatic Lecture I delivered. It is entitled "The Pebble and the Puddle." In giving this lecture, I pulled my favorite novelist's trick with her: to make use of ambiguities so that the reader understands one thing in the reading, and then, suddenly notices that the words could also be interpreted otherwise. I would certainly hate for that artistic secret to reach publici juris. Just think of the advantage it would give those plebeians.

The Pebble and the Puddle

"Once, many seconds ago, there was a pebble. It was a very happy little pebble who lived a very happy little life. A life without strife. This pebble could, at will, fall into a nearby puddle, causing ripples throughout the puddle. One Sunday a strong eastern wind arose and said to the pebble:

'Why don't you jump on my back, and I will whisk you off to my church. Today's sermon is on "Ethics and Morality."'

"But the pebble was smart. He knew the difficulties of climbing on the wind's back. He also knew that the church of the wind would be the source from which the wind came, and he had no desire to visit a mouth of hot air.

"It must be a Communist Plot, the pebble decided, because the wind was his hated enemy. For when the pebble catapulted himself into the puddle, the waters cascaded and swirled several inches skyward and the puddle reverberated with a resounding tremor. But, on the outskirts, his ripples were squashed by the dreaded wind. Therefore, he didn't want to get involved with the wind any more than he had to.

'O Eastern Wind, I am not of the proper essence to hear that sermon. Let me suggest that you invite the philosophically and theologically-minded clouds.'

" And, dearest Elizabeth, if you would only look into my puddle, I am certain you would see yourself... how beautiful it is."

"Let me add a personal note, and say that there is one religion I almost took up. It's an ancient religion practiced by a people called the Canaanites, a tribe which dwelt among the Hebrews during the time of Joshua and the Judges. Their goddess was called Asheroth; and they worshipped her by having sexual intercourse with the temple priestess. Maybe that is why the all-powerful Jehovah warned the Hebrews: 'Thou shalt not whore after strange gods.' After all, He is a jealousy God. And I know that one of His laws is that those with crushed testicles or whose male member is cut off shall not enter the assembly of the Lord. Do you think the Lord had something going?

"What Biblical exegesis. Or is that hermeneutics?"

"I can feel the ripples beginning to die out. I, a large pebble, a stone, hereby conclude my Ecstatic Lecture." As I said this I took a gulp of wine.

I looked over at Elizabeth, expecting to find her in a state of orgiastic excitement after my poetical lecture, my dance with words. She wasn't. Oh, the irony of it all. I asked her what was wrong: didn't she find the lecture a true mīmēsis, a realistic mirroring of nature by employing the elements of nature itself.

"Was I too wordy, prolix, verbose, redundant, and long-winded? Were my tautological circumlocutions too periphrastic?"

She didn't laugh, but said that she couldn't make fun of religion, that to her it wasn't a joke. "I need to have faith in something more than the world we live in."

"Do you believe in life after death?"

"Yes, I do, and I believe in it not for the sake of the future after I die, but for the present so that I can continue to live." She probably didn't say the above quite as cleverly as I am letting her say it now.

"I can understand your need to believe that, but faith, religion are irrelevant to me."

"Then how do you keep going? What do you use as your base? Where do you begin?"

"What an absurd question. My base is the law, and my writing."

"No, I mean something more, something beyond the law, beyond words. What is the base in you that allows you to write?"

"Have some more wine. I write because I write and have always written. You want another base. Listen carefully and I'll tell you:

Semanteme. My order and meaning: Morpheme. Now, my head is beginning to get dizzy from the wine; and I know a sure cure for that - let's go to the coffee house, buy some wine, and I'll let wine cure the dizziness caused by wine. Just show me the way to the next whisky bar... oh, don't ask why."

We walk into the coffee house in which we spent our first evening together. It is good to see faces I know and to be in surroundings that are familiar. Tonight, instead of a juke box, they have a rock band. I order some wine, and we start to dance.

But something strange happened last night as we were dancing. I had trouble feeling the music. Normally I can let myself go and lose myself in the dance. Sweaty and hot; faster; gyrating body, without form, without direction, enclosed by the beat of the music pounding off the walls.

Something was different last night, though. As soon as I felt I was caught up by the music, I'd look up at Elizabeth, see her dancing, and something would strike me - a confusion I can't at all explain; but for the moment, it was as if the music had stopped, the beat ended, and I was supposed to keep dancing...

We left and began walking back towards her house. I was afraid to drop her off and walk back alone to my apartment. I stood at her doorstep talking nonsense to her, caressing her, doing anything I could to keep from leaving.

She said to me she was tired and that I should go. Her words pained me. I asked her if I couldn't stay a little longer. She said no, we had to get up early for... Egad, I forgot all about the church

service. 9:45. I still have an hour. 9:15. I am going to stop in a half hour to get some dinner. I've been editing all day without even stopping for a meal.

I felt she was pushing me away from her at the very time that I wanted to hold her. I've never before felt such fear. The road seemed ominous, even though I'd taken it many times in the last couple of weeks. I turned and began to walk slowly away. After a half-block, however, I had a sudden urge for a donut. I rushed back and rang her doorbell. She opened the door and didn't say anything.

I said, with a low bow, "Ma'am, if you won't let me sleep all night in your soul kitchen, then I'd be much obliged if you'd find it in your heart to accompany this hungry gent for an old-fashioned, glazed donut." Her face lit up, and she offered her hand to be kissed, saying:

"Why, I'd be right honored, kind sir."

We enter the donut shop and sit down at a table near the window. I look at Elizabeth, take her hand, and give it a squeeze. She is watching two people sitting in the corner. I follow her eyes. In this corner is a man with his grandchild. There are many lines in the man's face. He has a rugged, hard look, as if he had spent much of his life on the sea. The child is tiny, not more than three or four years old. He has short-cropped red hair, just a bit lighter than Elizabeth's. He too has smiling brown eyes.

His head doesn't quite reach over the table, so he has crossed his boots under his seat so that he can see his grandad. The two sit wordlessly, staring around the room and out the window. The child squeezes his lips and draws a lemon-colored drink into his mouth. I am amazed

that someone so small knows how to suck liquid through a straw; like a tiny baby at his mother's nipple; the instinctive desire for the warmth and comfort of a female breast.

The old man is eating his donut, and has gotten down to the part in which only the thick jelly center is left. That point in donut eating when all the gooey red jelly is just urging you to take a bit. Instead, he offers it to his grandson.

"Not Isaac, not Jesus, but that, Elizabeth, is the supreme sacrifice," I laugh. The child takes a bite, and smiles at his grandad, showing red-jellied teeth. A switch is thrown, and the old man's face is set aglow. The wrinkles disappear. The tired face has a youthful luster. Still no words have been said.

The power of a donut.

If I don't stop this diary now, I'll be late for church.

This has been a rough day for me. I awoke this morning in a state of suspended animation. I feel drained now, as if I have lived through many months in the few hours I've been writing. I need to take up a hobby, something to pass the time when I'm not writing. I don't want to think unless I am encased in the past, and am at this typewriter working. I am going to go out, buy a knife and see if I can find some hard wood. I'll whittle a chess set in order to keep myself from whittling away. Oh, the whit of it all.

No, John, that doesn't ring funny. Not very funny at all. Don't try to hide the fact you're retreating further and further behind the finite. Puns won't conceal what you're doing.

I have no desire to go to the church service this morning. As

I remember, it wasn't that enjoyable the first time; and why should I redo to something that I've already been to, by going back to and redoing what's already been done. Enough. The morning's philosophical exercises are over. We are going to church. Then, John, after you have finished that, I'll let you begin work on your chess set. Since the wood I found last night is a somber reddish hue, I think I'll carve the darker figures first, starting with the pawn. But, for now, the church. Let the historical drama unfold. Scene: Johannes has looked at his watch and is frantically hurrying out of his room to Elizabeth's house. He is out of breath when he arrives. He knocks, waiting with breathless anticipation. She opens the door and...

She was dressed in a bright, yellow-flowered dress, and was wearing a smile to match. I gave her a rose I'd plucked on the way over, and we left for the service. While walking to church, I told her about my fear of leaving her Saturday night.

"I wonder why that was?" I asked.

"Maybe you were afraid to go home because you were afraid to face yourself." Still that smile. Mind searching for a response:

"No, that couldn't be right. It's that you, after only the two weeks we've spent together, have become part of me. So, by leaving you, I was leaving a part of me behind." She smiled but said nothing. I was beginning to hate that smile.

We walked in silence for awhile. Then Elizabeth began telling me about her family's religious beliefs. They seemed trite and cliched to me, almost like a soap-opera. But she felt they were important, so I'll devote two small paragraphs to them.

She told me that she had a terrific fear instilled in her from birth. Her father didn't confine his preaching to Sunday, but each day made her keenly aware of the torments of hell. The burning flames were a reality; and each action might cast her into fire and brimstone: a dress that was too short; letting a fellow get too near her; any impropriety was certain to hurl her into Gehenna.

"Finally, the torment became too much. I felt myself on the verge of insanity and I left home. I decided I couldn't accept what Father said. God couldn't have meant for us to live each day of our lives in agonizing fear. I decided to choose my own path. I wasn't going to be guided by the words of my parents or the words of my religion, but by what I felt was the essence of goodness within me. I try so hard to hear that still small voice, telling me the way to act."

"That's interesting. My family was just the opposite. Religion was almost totally irrelevant. We were even more reform than reform Jews. I went to Sunday school to learn about Judaism. I learned some prayers, studied the holidays, and that was it. It was something to be done on Sunday. I also remember that afterwards we'd have a big Sunday brunch: chicken livers, eggs, lox, bagels, and cream cheese. I guess if there is a lesson, it is that one has to suffer through Sunday school to gain the reward of Sunday breakfast."

I laughed and pulled her after me. The sun silkily shimmered, richly reflecting tarnished trolley-tracks. Birds belted boisterously. I felt whole all through me. If only we were going to the beach; anywhere else but to church.

As we walked in, I remember asking her what denomination it was.

"I don't know. I like the minister and the choir, and I've never

thought to ask what denomination."

We were given a program and ushered to a seat. The program was four pages long, and I wasn't sure I was going to last. The first page had a picture of a totem pole with outstretched wings. Under it was a little child mimicking the totem pole by stretching out his arms. If he were thirty feet higher, made of wood and painted, the child would have been an exact mirror image. Behind the child was a man; the child couldn't see him; but the man was imitating the boy by extending his arms. A parable for our times. First, what if the boy could really see the father, but could only see him reflected in the totem pole. Perhaps the totem pole is only a mirror, which takes its shape by reflecting the father. Then, the son would only exist as a mirror image of the father.

But, if the child, as imagined earlier, were in fact the mirror, and was mirroring the totem pole, which in turn was also a mirror, then the father would see himself inversely in the totem pole, and he would see the inverse reflection of his inverse reflection in the son. Thereby, he would see himself in the son, for the mirror image of a mirror image is itself.

Likewise, if...

Elizabeth asked me what time it was. 11:10. Why hadn't the service started? I looked at the clock on the wall: 10:55. Mine must be fast. Then all the rush over here was for nothing.

To the left were high, vaulted windows. Multicolored. I noticed in particular a deep blue. The sun was shining through the windows, and gave this color the appearance of a rich velvet texture. The windows

ended and gave rise to a series of high-vaulted, arching domes in Gothic style.

Straight ahead of me was the figure of Jesus. He was hanging from a long, narrow cross, which accentuated the leanness of his body. The taut ripples of the stomach, the long wiry arms. I didn't particularly like those arms. They were outstretched in an embracing manner, as if he were trying to enfold the entire congregation. Yet, his head was bent and he was looking downward. In this last gesture of embrace he met his death.

I looked over at Elizabeth and saw that she was watching an old lady seated in front of her. Her eyes seemed glued to the lady's yellow hat. My eyes watched her watch the lady, and I began to wonder what was going through her mind.

The organ music began with some ringing chords. The music seemed to startle Elizabeth for I saw her jump. I turned and asked her where her mind had been, but she said, "Shh, after the service. Listen to the music."

A half minute later the choir entered in an orderly procession. Each one opening his mouth wide and singing. Soon their ranks split, half went to the left, half to the right. The people joined in. There were about 150 people there. Most of them old, over fifty. I admired the fact that they would get up and spend a Sunday morning in church.

Elizabeth seemed totally immersed in the song. That annoyed me because I felt like an outsider who was twice removed: it was a Christian song; and I seldom would sing, even at Synagogue. I began to feel that her enjoyment of the singing, the smile on her face were intended to make me feel more awkward.

The song finally ended, and everybody sat down. Then, some man stood up and began to talk about breaking down barriers between people and the risk of total freedom and meeting people without walls. I felt myself in the midst of a unique historical event. Surely his sermon, by virtue of its rhetoric, oratorical skill, and clarity, deserved the title of "The Most Unecstatic Lecture." To have to listen to him must have made me the unhappiest man alive. I passed the time by looking at the dark blue color on the window, and at my watch. Sometimes I'd look at Elizabeth, but not often, for I'd become angry each time I did. I felt she was growing apart from me and ignoring me to listen to this man;

"Jesus came to be the servant of mankind. By being humble, He became exalted. God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong."

So Jesus was the humble, weak servant who, because of His humility and weakness, was exalted to master. The strong are humble and weak in comparison to His exalted strength due to His humble weakness. We are servants of the servant who came to serve us, and because He came to serve us, exalted Himself. But it is through weakness that His strength is shown; and through serving, His mastery. If we are His servants, He becomes strong and exalted and therefore becomes weak and humble. But it is this very weakness and humility which --

Thank God he finally sat down. Then the choir stood up. Then they sat down, and he stood up. Musical chairs for adults.

It was announced that those who wanted could now take communion. Splendid! Audience participation time. Everyone walked up to the podium and ate soggy bread and drank wine that tasted like grape-juice. I looked into my wine and saw the reflection of Jesus hanging from the

long, narrow cross. Impanation: what symbolism. Or maybe I actually WAS drinking Jesus' blood. A delightful bouquet, fragrant aroma. I wondered what vintage. I felt like laughing, shouting; not from joy, but because everyone else looked so serious. When I drink wine with friends, we all get drunk and dance and sing. But during this thing, everyone was solemn. What a celebration of life.

The audience returned to their seats, the choir sang, then exited. The ministers came down from their podium. My God, they descended to the level of the people. They told everyone to embrace his neighbor. I hugged an old man on my left that I hadn't noticed during the service, then turned and gave Elizabeth a big kiss. Ah, that's my religion - the flesh.

The postlude began. I heard the final dominant, tonic, dominant, tonic, dominant. I said a quick prayer of thanksgiving and we left.

I asked Elizabeth what she had been thinking while watching the lady in the yellow hat.

"Oh, I don't remember; nothing particular, I'm sure." Her peaceful, smiling face was pushing me further and further from her. I wanted to lash out. She was smiling and trying to appear calm in order to annoy me even more. Acta exteriora indicant interiora secreta.

We walked several minutes in silence. I started to turn and walk away. Yet I didn't want to do that. I didn't want to leave her, but neither did I want to be with her.

I had to understand that smile. More than understand it, to remove it from her. She had no right to feel happy without me; to feel peaceful in order to anger me. My head began to spin, as it did

Saturday night when I tried to walk back to my apartment.

She interrupted my thoughts by asking me, "Wasn't that service fantastic, Johannes?"

"Fantastic? No, it did absolutely nothing for me. His sermon left me unmoved."

Her face showed utter disbelief. "When he stood up there and said that there were times when he felt that he'd really failed, and then someone put a hand on his shoulder and said, 'Don't let it get you down, you've done all you could.' That was beautiful to me. It's like failure isn't important as long as someone is there; as long as you know that someone else cares; that hand makes all the difference. Oh, I can't explain it, but I felt his words strike something inside me."

"I told you, it meant nothing to me: 'that hand makes all the difference.' You're not making any sense. I'm looking forward to a meal now." Yet, as I said this, I felt a hardness and anger within me. I had no desire to eat. I had no desire to be with her. I hated her for the beauty she saw in the sermon. It was as if she were saying to me: "I'm beautiful because I can see beauty;" and then the next sentence, which she left unsaid, was, "You aren't beautiful, you're ugly if you can't see it."

I wanted to hurt this girl; or to hold her, to squeeze her so tightly that I'd draw the beauty from her and put it in me.

"I'm looking forward to the meal, too."

"What, you mean that you don't feel totally satisfied. Wasn't religious food and holy prayer enough?" Can't you eat his sermon, you bitch.

"The church doesn't satisfy me. It makes me hungry. I see what there can be: man singing, dancing, the joy in the organ notes; and then I see what there is: all the ugliness in the world. The church isn't a womb for me, it's a base. When I leave the church, I feel satisfied within myself, but that's not enough. I want everyone to feel as good as I do, to be able to sing, to celebrate life, and the sheer joy of existence." Still smiling.

Is she deaf, or did she just ignore the intent of my remark. Hunger to help others. What bullshit. Hunger for myself. I want lox and bagels, God damn her.

We started to enter David's, but she said she'd rather not, for she would be embarrassed when some of her friends recognized her. We walked down the street to Solomon's.

I ordered for both of us: lox and cream cheese, bagels, grape jam; tea for me; tea and lemon for Elizabeth; and three, three-minute soft-boiled eggs.

"You see, when soft-boiled eggs are cooked three minutes, the yoke isn't squiggly squishy squirmy, but bursting with bountiful bliss in bubbly bites."

I was beginning to feel better and once again in control. I told her about my family's Sunday morning brunches and how important a factor food was in maintaining my family's cohesiveness. The Jewish family sharing a common meal. The Christian girl and the Jewish fellow going to a Christian service and a Jewish deli. The ecumenicalism of it all.

I asked Elizabeth if she was aware that this particular deli had been immortalized in verse over two thousand years ago. "The Song of Solomon!"

I held her tightly while we waited for the bus to take us to the park. I've never had feelings this deep and this strong for anyone. The first love. She lives on Love Street. I have a complete and total love for her. The hatred and anger of this morning are gone, a dream never to return.

As we walked through Golden Gate, we stopped to listen to the band playing their Sunday afternoon concert. We ate some almond macaroons, then lay down on the grass and fell asleep. I woke up a half hour ago and am writing this as she sleeps. Smiling, her face looks beautiful, peaceful. Never again will there be those vitiated feelings of frustration and anger that inexplicably popped up last night and this morning. Now, everything is beautiful, a fairy story...

A fairy story; yes, of course. I guess it must be tea-time at the March Hare's place: time to suspend time. Probably because the Queen of Hearts realized that Johannes was murdering time by singing this morning in church. Tea hour would be a delightful resp... in which to work on my chess set. I think I'll carve the queen.

But what if my red queen, like Alice's, turns into a bespectacled sheep with knitting needles. I'd hate to be in that sheep's shop. Poor Alice, as soon as she looked on one shelf, the shelf became empty and all the other shelves became full. Poor Alice, crying in despair, "Things flow about so here." Oh well, after all it's only a fairy story.

March 13. This morning I am lying in bed letting the thoughts of last night drift through me:

A light rain is falling as I leave my room. I stop for awhile by Herod's tomb. His tomb frightens me. I see death in it. The idea of

history; countless deaths. Human life is so insignificant.

Leave the tomb and walk into the Old City through Jaffa Gate. Stop at an open market on David Street and buy some pregort and fifty agora worth of cheese. I'm certainly eating a lot of milk products -- I wonder if that's symbolic of a return to the womb.

Walk back David Street toward Jaffa Gate, looking for a place to sit down. Turn left down Armenian Street with the intention of going to the Jewish quarter. After a few hundred yards, I see a ledge on my right which overlooks the street. I climb the stairs to the ledge and realize that it was once the beginning of a drawbridge of an ancient castle. I take out my knife and begin to carve the queen, stopping occasionally for cheese and pregort.

A small girl, about five, with dark-black, waist-length pony-tail sits down next to me. Her eyes seem to be asking something. Almost pleading.

I offer her some cheese, but she refuses, moving further away.

She calls to her friends who are running by on the street below. Two little girls scramble up the stairs, but before they reach the ledge, they see another group of children playing and rush back down.

The girl is still alone.

I want to pull her to me and hold her. To stroke her hair and protect her.

She climbs down to the street. She looks so small amidst the people. She wanders about, inspecting posts, looking back at me.

Why this fascination with her? I wonder if by worrying about her smallness, I forget my own.

Many couples are walking below. They have an aura of those newly acquainted with the mysteries of love. As they stroll arm in arm, laughing and looking into the shop windows, they feel there is absolutely nothing that can come between them. The world's problems, metaphysical questions of what are we doing here, where are we headed, don't exist. They are for each other. Their love can conquer every hurdle.

It was just that love I wanted. I thought that love could vault me over the hurdles. It did for awhile, with Elizabeth. The barriers didn't exist; or if they did, I didn't see them. Love kept me from facing the nothingness.

Even when I'd begun to experience the agony of indifference, I still hoped that love could help me. The play I wrote in San Francisco, my introspective, inward spiraling play: all I wanted was someone to share the waiting, the endlessly recurring pain. "No," I shouted, "I won't be another Sisyphus. You can't imagine him happy, Camus, because alone we can't be happy."

But as I turned from girl to girl, and finally back to Elizabeth, I realized that it can't be done with another. I remember the song that was on her tape recorder the last time I saw her:

Jesus walked that lonesome valley,
He had to walk it by Himself.
For nobody else could walk it for Him,
He had to walk it by Himself.

You have to walk that lonesome valley,
You have to walk it by yourself,
for nobody else can walk it for you,
you have to walk it by yourself.

You, John, are going to have to face this by yourself. Only when you break through to the other side of despair can you be with another.

But will it ever end?

These people strolling arm in arm; they hide each other from the nothingness. If they would once see it, their bubble would burst. As soon as the nothingness is seen, visions of romantic love vanish. I'll never again be able to fall into someone's arms. Nothingness precludes love.

Yet, as I see the little girl returning to the ledge, I want to take her in my arms and hide her. I don't want her to have to feel any pain. And by protecting her, I'd be protecting myself. My role: her benefactor. I, her salvation.

And maybe she'd love me. There would be no walls. Isn't the way to God through the Reginas?

But what a leap of faith is necessary to fall into the arms of that innocent Israeli child. Over mountainous rocks and infinite abysses. How easily love makes that leap; almost as if there were no leap necessary. Why is it I have to see the barriers so clearly?

But damnit, I don't want to fall into anyone's arms. No longer will a woman's body protect me. I've left Elizabeth's womb forever. I am going to face this alone, no matter where it may lead me. No more wombs. I won't let myself hide behind love's illusions.

Enough of carving this queen. I feel like chopping her head off.

I walk down the stairs and onto the street. Across the street is the Church of Christ.

I look in, but all is quiet.

March 24. This morning I'm lying in bed, reviewing the events of last night. After leaving the park, we came back to my place. We again had wine - twice on Sunday. Jesus would have been pleased. I lit my

two large, blue candles, and put The Doors second album on the record-
player. We smoked awhile, and gradually the music began to enfold the
two of us. Come on baby light my fire. Ooh ah. The one of us. We fell
asleep embracing, like Rodin's hand of God. I bet Aristophanes would
be happy to know that man and woman are no longer split, but have once
again reached a complete physical unity.

Elizabeth slipped out sometime during the night. This morning I
found these words written on a piece of yellow stationery: "Ich liebe
dich. Last night was the perfect ending to yesterday. I felt so very
close to you. But please don't come by today. I have many little
things to do. M.E."

What an interesting way to sign her name. Twist Elizabeth Mery
into Mery Elizabeth. M.E. Ah, such good memories of last night. Well
Johannes, you rascal you, Adam knew Eve, and if you don't know the girl
by now, you never will. That poor chapter has been waiting two weeks,
and it's beginning to scream from under-nourishment. Come on, let's
stop writing in this diary and get to work.

The wee hours. Today was interrupted by a knock at the door.

I got up, opened the door, and: "Why, if it isn't Miriam Jachobed,
my favorite landlady." I was feeling good, the church service was
behind me, the night with Elizabeth was with me, and mirable dictu
here was my landlady with a heaping plate of strawberry shortcake piled
with mounds of whipped cream. "The Lord be praised. Salvation is at
hand."

"Oh, you youngsters, you don't have any respect for the Good Lord
anymore."

"Good Lord, the good Lord be praised. For heaven's sake, how could I make such a mistake. We know the Lord is good, don't we?"

Her face suddenly became livid. "Yes, we know the Lord is good,"

I didn't understand the tone of her voice and I noticed "a dangerous tendency" in her words. Gitlow v. New York. Her face interested me so I apologized to her. It's an interesting thing about landlords. You know so little about them, only superficial things. I know that she lives a comfortable life because she is always smiling. She has bright blue eyes, and she walks around the apartment complex in a red apron. Her daughter comes to visit her at least once a week; and with my rent money coupled with that of the other tenants, I knew that she had enough money for food, clothing, and the rest of life's essentials. Until this morning, that's all I knew about her. It was a lucky break she became upset. Otherwise, I probably never would have had any more than a superficial acquaintance with her.

I made some coffee and we began talking. First thing I found out was that she wasn't American, but was born in Palestine, in some god-forsaken town east of the Jordan River, about ten miles from Mts. Pisgah and Nebo. She told me that she had come to the States in 1949.

"Why did you decide to leave?"

She looked at me awhile, then her eyes closed tightly. "My husband and both my sons were killed during the Israeli war of liberation. Only my daughter and I escaped. We lost everything, and decided it was best to try to start over in America." It seemed to me that she started to cry. I was surprised to hear that she was from Palestine, for I pictured people from the Middle East as much darker, not

with blue eyes. Odd.

When she stopped crying, I asked her how she kept going during the tragedy.

"This life is awful. Each day is pain, and brings renewed hurt. But I endure, knowing that this is the way the good Lord meant for it to be. I know that when I die, the Lord will bless me in paradise. There must be a paradise, for nothing can be as awful as this dearth.

"The Lord knows that I've suffered much in this life; I've borne it patiently, for I know that this is His will. He wants to make me a strong person. This pain is a test to see if I can keep my faith in Him. He is preparing me for the day when He will put on His Breastplate of Judgment with its twelve stones, each stone representing one of the tribes of Israel; and then, either Urim or Thummin will light up, determining my guilt or innocence. It's right in the Bible, young man. Each night, before I go to bed, I read my Bible. Ten chapters a night. This is the twenty-fifth time I've read it -- as many times as you are old. Sometimes I have to stop in the middle of a passage. I can't go on. Every word in that Bible is the truth. Every word is from God.

"Let me tell you a story. Once, about five years ago, I was asked to give a speech to a convention of men in charge of Boeing and Lockheed Aircraft. The topic was Theology and the Airplane." I remember standing before them." Here she stood up and faced me, as if I were the audience that she was addressing. Her head was lifted high, her back arched proudly. I wanted to pull out my recorder and give a flourish. "As I neared the end of my speech, I said to them: 'Gentlemen, you see, therefore, that there is nothing so new or unusual about the airplane. Three thousand years ago, right in the Bible, there was

a miracle which, by comparison, makes the airplane seem a child's toy.
All you have to do is open your Bibles to Second Kings, chapter 2, verse
11, and it says the following: (I have memorized it from going over this
passage so often) "And it came to pass that behold there appeared a
chariot of fire and horses of fire; and Elija went up by a whirlwind
into heaven." Before Elija died, the Lord lifted him right off the
ground and into heaven. And He, the King of Kings, didn't even need
engines."

As she said these words, her eyes lit up and her hand reached
towards the ceiling. Her gaze stopped there for a minute. She must
have imagined that she was riding the whirlwind of Elija. I wonder
whether the whirlwind was an eddy. She turned from the ceiling, looked
down at me and continued:

"When I finished, they just sat there, spellbound, their mouths
agape, not knowing what to say." I too was spellbound, not knowing
what to say. I wanted to laugh. This poor old lady. Yes, I can
understand why the Lord must be good. For if He weren't, I don't think
you would still be here to bring me strawberry shortcake.

We talked awhile longer, then she left. I decided not to write
today, but to go to the park and play my recorder. On the way over, I
re-examined her conversation. So, this is what God is good for: for
those who are too old to live in this world, for those who have felt
such intolerable pain that there is nothing left, nothing but the fervent
hope of something better. In her mind this hope has become a reality.
Each bit of suffering has brought her closer to God. Each pain has
only made her cling more tightly to the "good Lord,"

I can understand her need for Him, how she would have to have something like a god to believe in. I regretted that she had been reduced to this blind hope. God was a crutch to her. I wonder what would happen if that crutch were taken away. But that's an irrelevant question. No one will ever be able to take it away. True knight of faith. Everything is now endurable. She is both Job and Lazarus. She doesn't understand, but either she will get her double rewards now, her children will be returned; or she will be reborn into paradise. The world's pains will soon pass for her; for now, she must be patient, endure... wait.

Be patient, endure... wait. How many times have I said those words to myself since then. Why is it that you only understand something after it has happened to you. Words are so empty as long as the experience doesn't directly touch you. Be patient, endure... wait.

I walked over to the park and sat down in my corner. I didn't enjoy watching the kids today because my mind was on other things. No, not other things; on one other thing -- Elizabeth. I wanted to rush over and see her, even though she had asked me to stay away. Or maybe it was because she had asked me to stay away.

I thought back to our first night in the cafe. She would have to return to school in early April. Two more weeks. The idea bothered me she would be going back, leaving me.

I looked down and saw some ants crawling along. To occupy my mind, I played with them, putting stones, twigs, leaves in their path. Then I became bored with them, and started to crush them with my hand. I thought of Elizabeth. This would probably upset her. Time for

another ecstatic lecture. Subject : Entropy.

"You see, Elizabeth, entropy is the ultimate state reached in the degradation of matter in the universe. It is the absence of form, hierarchy, or differentiation. I'm helping the ants and the earth become undifferentiated faster, removing the hierarchy between animate and inanimate. As the scientific mathematician, J.R. Newman, said and I quote: 'Entropy is the general trend of the universe toward death and disorder.' Therefore, I am helping the ants on their way. Ergo, á la Cassius, my syllogism is complete." My hand falls.

Leaving me in two weeks. What the hell. I can just pack up and follow. That's one of the advantages of being a writer: flexibility. It doesn't make that much difference where I write.

A revelation: why not spend these last couple of weeks in Carmel. We could swim, lie in the sun, read...

Great idea. I jumped up and rushed over to her place.

She came to the door. Suddenly, I felt awkward. I couldn't find the words. She seemed puzzled to see me, yet almost indifferent.

"Why did you come by?"

I couldn't speak. Finally, I stammered, "N-now that's not a v-very cordial greeting."

"But I asked you not to come by today."

"I know, but I had the idea that since you aren't working now I thought that perhaps we could take the next couple of weeks off and go to Carmel and lie in the sun and enjoy ourselves so that you would feel completely rested when you go back to school and maybe even find time to do a little drawing down there." Gaspd for air. Had said all

that in one breath. Wasn't even sure she had heard or understood.
What's wrong, os rotundum?

"Fine, I'd love to. When do we leave?"

Good Lord, it's 3 a.m. We leave in six hours. Note: don't forget
to bring record player and The Doors' albums.

8:45 a.m. Last night I couldn't sleep. I felt like a little
kid on Christmas Eve: knowing that if I could only go to sleep, the
morning would come and I would find all the presents under the tree.
But until I go to sleep, Santa won't come. So, the kid tosses and turns
and twists. I remember so clearly those unbearably long Christmas Eve
nights -- last night was just like that. Santa Claus Jaellois!

So, on the morning of March 25, Johannes sets out. The night
before was like Christmas Eve. Now, it is morning for him. Now, it is
evening for me. I wonder if that time difference can be reconciled by
the different time zones. If that were true, then the only difference
between light and dark would be where you are in the world. Except, if
I were to fly back to San Francisco, it would be dark by the time I
arrived.

The sun rises, the sun sets. Vanitas, Vanitatum, Vanitas. Je
m'ouvrais a la tendre indifference du monde. I think Camus and Kohelet
would have been soul brothers.

I've had enough writing for today. Here I sit, wanting to be like
the pawn I'm carving: always going forward, unable to go backward. And
yet, all I'm doing is going backward, deeper and deeper into the past.
I feel the way a pawn must when the opponent says of it: that piece
cannot be moved; all forward progress is stopped. Tonight I will start

on a third piece: the rook. I wish I had a piece of onyx with which to carve him.

Why the rook? I start the rook tonight because the rook, which can only go parallel to the sides of the board, parallels my life. I feel like I'm rooked. I am trying to go through my past like a pawn, always going forward, so that I can catch up to my present. Yet, I just reread the entries' first sentence on March 13, 1970 and March 24, 1969: "This morning I am lying in bed..." Exactly parallel sentence structure, exactly the same words, not different in kind, not different in degree; different only in time. Therefore, they are parallel. My pawn's forward movement has been stopped and all I can do is parallel my past. No progress is being made, nothing but the present paralleling the past. How will they ever meet? Parallel lines don't intersect; they can't. Unless maybe you're a mathematician somewhere out in infinity. But what about the man who is part of the parallel line and is pointing the way towards infinity? What about him?

And you still ask, Why the rook? Look around this room. Look at this fortress, this castle in which I have enclosed myself. I have enclosed myself physically in this room, and mentally in the past. And how am I different from Johannes who is so enclosed that he doesn't even know he is enclosed? Maybe that's the difference. *Non decipitur qui scit se decipi*. I am a castle and know it. He doesn't even know it. The edification implied in that thought. Ultimatum: Tonight I'm going to buy some wine and get drunk. Have a Merry Christmas vacation, Johannes.

I woke up this morning and looked at my watch. 2:15. I looked at the calendar on the watch: 15. I looked at my notes, and the last entry

I wrote was March 13. I don't understand. I re-read March 13th's notes in which Johannes is ready for his vacation. But I don't know what happened to yesterday. I can remember absolutely nothing about it. Yesterday is lost forever. It doesn't exist.

Don't think too much about it. Must be considerate of our good friend Johannes. After all, he's ready to embark on his Christmas Vacation and I don't want to make him wait another day.

March 25, Tuesday night. Ah, what a day today was. We left early this morning and decided there was no need to rush to Carmel, so we left the highway at Monterey and took the seventeen mile drive. We stopped on the beach near Point Lobos. Sitting and watching the currents clash together, the white foam of the ocean pounding against the rocks. The august ocean. A paradise -- like the Garden of Eden. We lay back in the sun. Elizabeth unpacked the picnic lunch; a bacchian feast of wine, chicken, apple pie. I felt like Odysseus, the conquering hero who, having finally returned home you haven't returned home because you haven't ever left it banished the suitors, grabbed Penelope, and said:

"Hey, woman, let's go to Point Lobos for a dionysian good time."

I lifted the wine flask high, tilted it, and the liquid shot straight into my mouth. A little higher, and the stream of wine hit the corner of my eye, trickled down my nose and, with the proper tilting of my head, gently flowed into my mouth. The more that flowed into the mouth of the delta, the braver the hero became. Soon, the wine was pouring forth in torrents upon my head, cascading over my eyes, and only with the greatest ingenuity could I twist myself in such a manner to catch at least part of the raging wine. The rest continued its plunge, rushed down over

my ribs, reddened my stomach, and splattered over my swimsuit.

I lay my head back on Elizabeth's lap and looked up at the sunlight as she tore off pieces of chicken and fed them too me. Then she offered me some of her fresh, homemade apple pie. How could I resist.

The effects of the wine and water lulled me to sleep.

When I awoke, the sun was beginning to set. We gathered the supplies and continued the journey to our royal palace. The road rose higher, offering a beautiful view of Monterey Bay. I stopped the car and climbed out.

We looked down on the ocean surf breaking on the beach, watched the sun redden in the distance as it went behind the clouds. I felt that I was a god: in command not only of myself but, from this elevated position on the mountain, of all the land I could see.

"Elizabeth, do you know why the sun is setting now? Because I just now told Hespera to announce the sun's safe arrival on the western shores of the ocean. You see, I order the gods and they obey my every whim, providing us with delightful evening's entertainment." Elizabeth began laughing. We were both feeling the effects of the wine. I gave my Tarzan call over the cliff right before the fall. Then we climbed back into the car and headed to Carmel.

That church in San Francisco may be Elizabeth's religion, but this is mine: a red-headed girl under my arm, wine, and lots of good food.

"Do you know, Elizabeth, that even Paul agrees with my religious viewpoint? Didn't he say that food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food? And the body is meant for the Lord and the Lord for the body. And, I ask you, isn't the stomach part of the body? Since the

body is made for the Lord, I eat, ergo I am religious."

Tonight we arrived in Carmel, the vineyard of God. Kerem-El. The wine is going to flow freely. It was dark outside, but we had no trouble finding a place to stay. I like the cottage we have. It is tucked in the woods, yet near enough to the beach so that, as I write this, I can hear the ocean. There is a small fire-place and Elizabeth is making a fire now.

April 3, 4 p.m. The sun is scouring me. I am writing this lying on the beach. I haven't written since we've been here, and now I want to catch up on the last few days and nights. The days are a blur in my mind. We spend them lying on the beach. Often we lie for hours, looking up: right above us is a stage on which a white drama unfolds -- the clouds, blown by the wind, continually changing shapes. The curtain goes up and the one-act play begins. The first character is clothed in a mass of white. It is a pole or tree trunk. Asheroth, no doubt. The pole thickens and becomes a pillar of cloud.

The pillar slowly becomes thicker and divides at the top into elongated fragments. A wrist forms from which five fingers emerge: a hand. Che gelo e questo mai. At that altitude, it certainly can't be too warm. This hand changes, the wrist enlarges, the fingers grow thicker, and lo: a crown. Prince Hal, it is only befitting that Falstaff present thee with this trophy.

An entire show, for those who open their eyes.

We also spend much time in the ocean, lying on a small, inflatable, boat-like inner-tube I brought along. We recline in the boat, our bodies dandled by the gentle rocking motion of the waves. Often we

fall asleep to the rhythmic cradle song made by the wind-blown water
softly lapping against the sides of the craft.

Rock-a-by Johannes on the tube's top
While the waves roll, the cradle will rock
When the feast's over, you'll go to the sea
Good-bye, Johannes, I'm glad you're not me

One day, while we were in the inner-tube, I began telling Eliza-
beth of the canoeing trips I had taken in Minnesota and Canada.

The upper and lower Basswoods; clear lake; my tent, my food, my
paddle. No people. Paddling through nature by day. An occasional deer
darting along the bank. Nature flowing past me; the canoe merging with
the water as I into the surroundings. I became that peaceful setting.
I became nature. I was part of the water's blueness, the trees' green-
ness. At night I curled up into the earth, often not using a tent. The
dirt was my pillow. The nights were briskly cold and I'd huddle near the
land for warmth. I'd awaken smiling, the sun and fresh air blowing over
me. No watch. Time didn't exist; timeless moments that I wanted to last
for my lifetime.

There were many portages between lakes. I'd put my packs on my
back and swing the fiberglass canoe over my shoulder. A pioneer charting
new horizons, wandering in awestruck beauty, trying to caress the clouds.
No sounds except the rustling of twigs under my feet. Crackling noises,
each step bringing forth a rich flourish of twigs... And then, the nights,
when I'd stop, having paddled hard all day. I'd undress and lower my-
self into the water. It was always cold, and my skin would tighten. I
would let go, and begin drifting with the current. No tension, floating
with the water. Lying on my back so I could watch the sunset and the
lands as they glided by me.

During these last few days, I told Elizabeth many things about my past, almost as if I were compelled to show her the beautiful things I have seen and done. I wonder if it isn't the countryside here which evokes these memories.

I told her about sailing the fjords in Norway, around Aandelsnes and Trondheim; skiing in Lake Tahoe; hiking in the Catskills; deep-sea diving in Acapulco. Someday I should write a book about these events. Or maybe a short story. I could write it in the same form as Bwana Harry did. Except, I wouldn't situate myself on Kilimanjaro, but in a warmer climate, so that the sun would be shining when I...

At night, we return to our cottage, build a fire and eat dinner. After dinner, we put on The Doors' albums and get into bed. Certainly the English would have called our cottage a Tabernacle. "When the music's over," we listen to the sound of the ocean's waves breaking upon the sand. My head snuggled between her breasts. I've never seen a girl with such white breasts. In the beginning was the breast. And the breast was with woman and the breast was woman. And her nipples: pink, like a little child's. I want to spend the rest of my life lying in bed with her, running my hands through her hair, listening to her softly panting, her heart's steady beat, the pounding surf below, the crackling of the fire. I feel so secure and sheltered, so warm and comfortable. I want to lay with her forever. I feel a complete peace in my bones. Beware of false prophets who cry peace, peace when there is no peace. I can't wait for tonight.

That's what you think, Johannes. I am going to make you wait for tonight. I am going to suspend you on the beach, in the midst of your

diary. How does that feel, ol' buddy? See, you really can wait. Don't we have a good relationship, though. I suspend myself back there with you, but I can suspend you whenever I want. You poor pawn. Your forward movement is also stopped. Johannes, although I don't like to admit it to myself, sometimes I hate your guts; you and your trite intellectualisms. I get a sadistic pleasure in doing anything I can to hurt you. Like right now. I suspend you, making you wait for the torture that's going to follow. I look forward to the agony you're going to be suffering. I revel in your pain. You are my insignificant little plaything, and I can do with you as I will. Tough luck, buddy of mine. Maybe I'll see you tomorrow, if you're lucky. But just think how fortunate you are. Norfolk was banished for life, and Bolingbroke for six years. You, only for a night.

Now, this night with deepest hast and burning desire,
Like spindly flames bursting from a churchly spire,
I, one who is adrift and cast inro mire
Will let Richard II set me afire.

Damn you, Johannes. I'd like to banish you forever. But I can't seem to. Maybe I hate you because I see you're so much a part of me. I still produce trite, meaningless poems. I wonder if that part of me called Johannes will ever die, will ever be totally banished from my insides. But enough of you. I am going to continue reading Richard II and to begin carving the Red Knight. It's not worth it to spend too much time dwelling on you, Johannes.

March 17. The night passed. The day begins. I look at my watch: it's nine o'clock. I look at Johannes' diary: it's...

5:15. Just called my family to tell them where I am, and what a great time I'm having. They asked me if I was going to have a Seder

dinner. I completely forgot. Tonight at sundown is the first day of
Passover. Right now, I'm off the Ocean Avenue to pick up some supplies.
What a meal this is going to be...

11:58. "What aileth thee, o thou sea, that thou fleest."

That's enough for the Hallel. I don't like Psalm 114 that much anyway.

L'SHONOH HAB'OH BEERUSHOLOYEEM. NEXT YEAR IN JERUSALEM.

Phew, just made it. What a meal that was. Elizabeth went down to the
beach. She seems upset. I'll go talk to her in a moment, but first. I
did such a superlative job of conducting the Seder that I want to go
over it in detail. The scene is the banquet room of the Symposium.
Prepare yourself, dear diary, for a discourse on physical love -- a
discourse accompanied by the appropriate actions.

After I came back with the supplies, I told Elizabeth to set the
"table of showbreads" with a white cloth and to let me fix dinner. I
put three pieces of matzah on each side of the table, covered them with
a white napkin, and put a plate on them. The table looked elegant --
like an altar.

I finished preparing the meal, hid ten pieces of leavened bread,
and called Elizabeth: la mensae preparata.

"Elizabeth, this entire service, the Seder, is very ordered and
ritualized. Seder itself, in Hebrew, means order. The entire evening is
a ritualized performance which follows a script, called the Haggadah,
Hebrew for tale or narration. So tonight, we are actors, following a
formal narrative."

I turned off the lights and lit the incense holder near the
cabinet. It was dark except for the light of the moon which came through
the window and fell upon the top of the cabinet. Lux aeternum. I lit

the seven candles of the Menorah I'd bought today. We began the search for the Chametz.

"This search is to get rid of all the leavened bread in the house. It is supposed to be collected and burnt the next day before noon. Actually, we should have done this last night, and we're now caught in an insoluble dilemma: any bread which is leavened is forbidden in the house beginning sundown on the first night of Pesach. But, according to the Haggadah, it is necessary that the ceremony of Bedikat Chametz, the search for the Chametz, be done as part of the pre-Seder preparation. Therefore, not to do it, is to break the ritual, and to do it, to try to keep the order of the Haggadah, is to sin against the ritual."

Bolingbroke would empathize.

We gathered the ten pieces and I stuck them in my pocket, making a mental note to get rid of them in the morning.

"Now, Elizabeth, the next scene takes place at the table. Notice the quantities of food, the abundance of wine. Truly this is what Macbeth meant when he said, 'The table's full.' There are seven bowls that I've filled with different foods. Normally they go on the plate, but I decided to depart from the script; it makes life more interesting.

"The first bowl is filled with salt water. On the side of this bowl are some olives. It's supposed to be onions or parsley, but I thought olives would taste better. In the second bowl is the Z'roa, the shankbone. It is a symbol of the roasted Paschal lamb that Jewish farmers would travel to the Holy City to eat. Yecch. Smell this shankbone. The grocer must have kept it next to the fish.

"In this bowl, the third, I put the Haroseth, which is a paste of

apples, nuts, and wine. This mixture is supposed to resemble the clay mixture which the Jews used in order to make the bricks for Ramses' monuments.

"Here, in the center, is the largest bowl, containing the wine. Four glasses each. Kerem-El! Vineyard of God.

"Bowl number five contains a baked egg. The sixth bowl is the Moror, consisting of both horse-radish and lettuce. Moror means bitter, and is symbolic of the bitterness of the life of the Jews in Egypt. That was, of course, before the appearance of, tut tut tut tut ta tum: Moses the hero, liberator of the Jews.

"I left the seventh bowl empty. I put it on the table so that there would be a symmetrical pattern around the fourth bowl. There is no reason for it, except that without it the table would have been unsymmetrical. It provides the order, three bowls on each side of the wine.

"On this side of the wine bowl is the plate of fruits: grapes, lemon, dates, bananas. Notice the yellow mustard-seed surrounding the plate. I put it there especially for you. I put the fruit plate there especially for me. One day I'd like to work in the fields and grow these fruits.

"On the other side of the wine bowl is the silver chalice which is filled with wine for Elija. Elija, the harbinger of redemption, the patron of the poor, the down-trodden, the persecuted. Oh, Elija, such a man art thou that thou deserveth a cup of wine from each of the tables of the Jews across the nation, across the world. I knowest, O great Elija, why thou dost not return, for if thou didst, thou wouldst become

too inebriated with good sack, like my noble acquaintance Falstaff at the Boor's Head Tavern, so that thou wouldst lose thy capacity to save the poor, for thou wouldst find thy good self in a state of intoxication causing interminable incapacitation. Yes Elija, Johannes the wise knows why thou dost not return."

After finishing these brilliant explanations, I said to Elizabeth, "Fair woman, 'you know your own degree,' therefore sit down next to mine own good self. And, damsel, let's be careful to keep this banquet ordered and ritualized. We certainly wouldn't want it to end with one of us saying, 'Stand not upon the order of your going, but go at once.' Let us orderly proceed. The first thing we do is say the blessing over wine."

While Elizabeth was pouring the wine, I, like all worthy actors, began to improvise: "Give me some wine, fill full. I drink to the general joy of the whole table. And to our dear friends Banquo and Elija, whom we miss. Would they were here..."

We drank the first glass of wine. I added a toast: "Vivan le femmine, viva il buon vino."

We washed our hands for the second time in a laver of bronze, then took some of the olives and dipped them in the salt water. "This is done to remind Jews that the ancient royal feasts began with a salad course, and that the Seder should thus begin; for, on this evening of Passover, every Israelite, being free, is a king.

"King Johannes throweth his warder down, and proclaimeth the above as veritable reality. This salt-watered olive salutes the salt-watered ocean."

I wanted more wine, but first came the breaking of the matzah.
Keep things ordered now, King J. We took the three matzah from under our
plates.

"O Queen Elizabeth, let me asketh thee if this repast doth compare
to the one we had last Sunday morn after church, O behold, you are
beautiful, my love. I do not want you to answer. Your eyes are doves
behind your veil, your lips like a scarlet thread. Do not open them.
Just allow me to continue to explicate these matters of matzah to you.
There are three matzah and they represent the three divisions of the
Jewish people: Kohen, Levi, Yisrael. And, o my beloved, you have ravished
my heart with a glance of your eyes; please turn aside so I may find the
strength to continue. Note, o dearest, the thinness of the matzah, our
unleavened bread, the bread of affliction. It's thinness shows the
thin times of the people of Israel. That they were thin and bones.

"Let me elucidate additional things to you concerning barley. Why
barley, you ask? Ah, I shall inform you of the mysteries of my mind, how
it works. Do you not know that the next forty-nine days after Passover
are called Days of Omer -- Days of Anxiety? Some say because these are
the days before the holiday Shabuot when Moses received the law on Mt.
Sinai. Some say because of the anxiety over whether the barley crop
would prosper. But it is not for us to decide why. Nevertheless, from
the above it can clearly be seen that barley and Passover and omer are
all connected. Hurrah for barley.

"I want some more wine. No, King J. This is your conscience
speaking. First we must take the middle matzah, break it, and put the
smaller half back in the middle. Then, we must take the other half

and hide it, in this way saving it for the Aphikomen, the dessert. Now, finally, we can fill the wine glasses again; it is the time to ask the four questions.

"Why is this night different from all other nights? Because it is the Red Knight. Don't remember the answer. In fact, I don't remember any more of the questions. Cheers, wine glass number two. Now, we are to wash our hands again. For God's sake, this is the third time to-night. Out damn spot. Heh heh. A little water clears us of this deed. Does it work, Lady M? Or how about you, friend Pontius? Heh heh burp."

We picked up the matzah, dropped the bottom one on the plate, and ate the top one and middle one-half. Then we laboriously sat up.

I said to Elizabeth, "A riddle now. What's red, but when a horse is put before it, turns white? Give up?" When she didn't answer, I picked up some horse-radish and said, "O Elizabeth, I compare you, my love, to a mare of Pharaoh's chariot."

We dipped the horse-radish into the horoseth. The horoseth was shaken off and we ate the Moror. The bitterness of it all. I needed some wine to wash it down. The hell with the order.

"I toast to you, slaves of old, and to the bitterness of your life in slavery." There, that ought to pacify the gods; and, falling back into a reclining position, I dipped some more herbs into the horoseth, put them between pieces of the bottom matzah, and ate.

We decided to skip the main meal and went directly to the Aphikomen. Afterwards, I poured Elizabeth her third glass of wine, while finishing up my third. I opened the door and read a short prayer from the Haggadah. The wine finally hit me...

I grabbed at Elizabeth, feverishly kissing her. I stuck my hand down her dress.

"O my beloved, where is the bag of myrrh that lies between your breasts. Dearest, aren't you going to compare me to a cluster of henna blossoms in the vineyards of Engedi... Is it henna that you use to give your hair that coloring, o beloved? O, fairest of the fair, how much better is your love than wine." I poured my fourth glass of wine, drank some, then kissed her breasts. "I drink my wine with my milk. O maiden, I asked you for water, you gave me milk."

I began to run my hand up her legs. "O queenly maiden, how graceful are your feet in sandals; and your rounded thighs are like jewels, the work of a master hand." I took my master hand and tried to drink more wine, but spilled a bit on her stomach. "Your navel is a rounded bowl that never lacks mixed wine. Elizabeth, my love." I stared deep into her veiled, dove-like eyes. "Your head crowns you like Carmel. Mt. Carmel, isn't that where our man Elija slew the prophets of Baal. Oh, excuse me, beautiful maiden, my mind wandered, but only for an instant. In another moment, I would have been held captive by your purple flowing tresses. O fair damsel, you are as stately as a palm tree, and with my palms I climb the palm tree and lay hold of its branches. Oh, may your breasts be like ripe juicy grapes on the clusters of the vine, and the scent of your breast like the apple pie you baked me last week."

The wind coming through the door was cold, so I pulled the woolen blanket off the bed and put it over us. "Ah, dearest one, the roof of your mouth is like the best wine that goes down smoothly. O Jael, oh, Jael... lois. What a gorgeous name. French-sounding. Blessed above

women shall you be. You are a garden fountain, a well of living water, flowing streams from Lebanon."

I looked at my watch. "Maiden of mine, excuseth me, but it nearest the hour of 11:30, and for Heaven's sake, we have to have all this finished by 12:00. It is commanded. Thus, let us arise, and continue with the event." I poured the rest of the wine from the large bowl into her glass. Her fourth cup. "That's the last of the wine, except for Elija's silver chalice."

I began to look around for a Bible in order to read the Hallel, the Psalms of Praise. I opened the desk drawer, but there was none. Then I opened the door of the cabinet, and there it lay in all its splendor. Ah, the Torah encased in a magnificent mahogeny ark. Bezalel would be jealous.

"Here, my garden fountain, my well of living water, let me read this to you."

"Johannes, how could you jump up like that? Why is it so important to finish reading this before 12:00?"

"Dearest Beloved, it's written in the Jewish law. How would it look if a lawyer didn't even follow the laws of his religion?"

"Why must you analyze everything? Can't you feel? There must be something more important than your laws."

"Analyze everything? What do you mean by that? Should I analyze what you mean? Heh."

She walked out of the house. I opened the Bible to the Hallel. I happened to turn to Psalm 114:

I stuck paper and pencil into my pocket, picked up the Menorah, and

walked outside to find Elizabeth. The night was windy, so I went back
into the room and pulled the woolen blanket around me, took a drink of
wine: viva il buon vino, and went off in search of my garden fountain,
Oh, the passionate love beating within my heart. Analyze everything?
Hmm, is it passionate love beating there or just blood?

Where, o where does one begin to look for living water? O my flow-
ing stream, set me as a seal upon your arm; for love is strong as death,
jealousy as cruel as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, a
most vehement flame. I wish I could find a fire, it's windy tonight.
I pull the blanket tighter around me.

The woods open onto the beach. A campfire. Walk over to it. Music
being played on drums. Black hands flashing on congo. Fire plays with
his hands' shadow. Black shadow on white drumskin. Chicano playing
Indian drum, tamboura. Black man eating a watermelon. Genet would be
proud. Not afraid to play an image. Voice reciting poetry:

Then I had religion. Then I had a vision
I could not turn from their revel in derision.

Interesting scene for novel. I take out pad and begin to make
notes. Writer comes down to beach to look for girlfriend. Interracial
campfire. Race, a good theme these days. Pander to the public with it.
White liberals enjoy lashing themselves. Wonder if Supreme Court will
pass reverse Shelley v. Kraemer. Blacks no longer allowed to have
restrictive covenants barring whites.

Finds his girlfriend at campfire. They walk along beach. Elizabeth
cuts her foot. Begins bleeding. He finds a bandaid, tries to heal her.
The night gets colder. He wraps the blanket tighter around him. The
same blanket on which they had earlier made love. He tries to protect

the girl. The sand. He watches speckles sparkle. Girl bumps into him,
edging him closer to water. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can
floods crown it. I take a step. He takes a step. The man in my novel
takes a step. Let me describe him: he is a writer. Who writes his
novels by describing his own actions. This man takes a step, but as he
takes a step, he is saying, "the man in my novel takes a step." So, he
takes a step, and the man in his novel takes a step. He writes about
the man in his novel, who is he. Thus, this man lives in his novel, not
the novel in him. He is his novel, and each step he takes adds more
words to the novel. Therefore, he is a word. The more steps he takes,
the more words he writes. When he thinks, the man in the novel thinks.
Still more words, thoughts thinking, words faster, writing: thinking of
man in novel thinking of man in novel. Words blurring. Who's thinking.
Who's thinking, "Who's thinking." I write words about man who writes
words about himself under the guise of writing about another person.
But I'm the other person about whom he's writing. Words flowing faster.
Stop. Write. Write about him. Him who writes about him. I'm him, all
hims. Slow, easy. Words not in same place. Shifting too rapidly.
Heraclitan flux. Ocean roars louder. I -- no, he: man in novel. He
writes about a man who pulls girl closer to him. Fear of the ocean.
Man in his novel doesn't want to look at it. Blanket tighter. Tries to
protect girl. Or is it that he tries to be protected. Twice-removed.
Watch him watch him. Can't see him clearly enough yet. Scene isn't
far enough along in his mind. Surf pounding on the ocean. For love is
strong as death. Quit pushing me towards the ocean.

The ocean. Man in his scene remarks to the girl: first time I've
ever seen the ocean at night. Holds her tighter, clinging to her as they

get closer to the water. Walking along water's edge. Turmoil begins within man in writer's novel. Confusion over sight of ocean. Waves mounting, crashing on beach. Ominous greeting. Spindly fingers, slimy tentacles encircling feet. Water is sucked back. Soon followed by another wave, another invitation. Awesomely menacing invitation as waters again gently encircle my, damnit, not mine, the author's feet. The man, Don't forget the man. Talk about him. He lets go of the girl's arm and walks into the water.

Throw in some Greek mythology. The sirens lure him. Irony. Sirens from Greek word seirazein, meaning to dry up. These sirens dry him up by luring him into the water. Good, laugh, that's better. Sweet singing sirens. Promised Odysseus foreknowledge of all future happenings. Death angels chanting dirges to lyre music, calling him to their sepulchre island. Man in my novel being lured, especially by Molpe and Thelxepeia. Music and soothing words. Poor fellow. Water luring him closer. Sirens calling him to their island. White foam reflecting moon's reflected light. Aphrodite arising from foam's chaos. Naked; dancing on sea to Molpe. Smiling waves. Waves have faces; disappearing faces; incessantly disappearing and reappearing; each face the same, each face different. All merging. Merging into one finger, and the finger more tightly entwining around my -- his leg. His mind flowing into dizzy; losing control; new feelings -- never before lost control. Seeking solid. Fear swelling. Nakedness. Heart flooding; pumping nauseous pain through my being.

Keep thinking, Johannes. Don't stop. Talk about him. What is this ocean? Make him ask that question. Analyze the fear. Awareness.

Watch his actions. Don't pull back. Keep control. But why the fear?
Damnit, I don't know why. I don't have an answer. Nausea. Define it.
Ponta rhea: everything flows. We derive diarrHEA from this. Such use
of classical language. That's it. Try to laugh. Can't. There's
nothing. Flowing flux. Where to direct it. No reason. Nothing,
nothingness...

Help me. Where are you? Her face. That face again. It's solid,
it holds peace. Soft hair, tranquil. Hold me, Elizabeth, hold me
tightly. Her face smiling. I'm safe in her arms. Reassuring smile,
She begins to sing me a song. Her hands softly caressing me:

"A song my mother used to sing me when I was young. Thelka's song:

"Der Eichwald brauset, die Wolken ziehn
Das Mägdlein wandelt an Ufers Grun;
Es bricht sich dis Welle mit Macht, mit Macht
Und sie singt hinaus in die finstre Nacht...
Das Auge von Weinen getrübet;
Das Herz is gestorben, die Welt ist leer,
Und weiter giebt sie dem Wunsche nichts mehr
Du Heilige, rufe dein Kind zurück
Ich habe genossen das irdische Glück
Ich habe gelebt und geliebet."

"No, God, no. Don't sing me something in a language I can't
understand. Something familiar. Sing me something in English." Now,
a year later, I know enough German to translate the song. Unbridled
progress.

The cloud doth gather/ the greenwood roar,
The damsel paces along the shore,
The bellows they tumble with might, with might;
And she flings out her voice to the darksome night;
Her bosom is swelling with sorrow;
The world it is empty, the heart will die
There's nothing to wish for beneath the sky.
Thou holy one, call thy child away
I've lived and loved and that was today;
Make ready my grave clothes tomorrow.

"This takes place two scenes later. I forget the first lines.
I shouldn't though, for Mutter read us this play many times as children;

"This is not theater where hope abides;
The dull thick noise of war alone stirs here;
And love himself, as he were armed in steel,
Steps forth and girds him for the strife of death."

The music grows louder from the campfire. Congos pounding.

Voices chanting.

Then I heard the boom of the bloodlust song
Beware, beware, walk with care.

Elizabeth's voice again:

"There's a dark spirit walking in our house,
And swiftly with the destiny close on us.
It drove me hither from my calm asylum,
It mocks my soul with charming witchery,
It lures me forward in a seraph's shape,
I see it near, I see it nearer floating.
It draws, it pulls me with a god-like power...
And lo! the abyss -- and thither I am moving --
I have no power within me not to move."

The campfire: boomlay boomlay, boomlay, boom,

"Stop, Elizabeth. No more. I don't want to hear any more. Hold
me tightly. More, that's not enough. Don't let go." I pull her to me
as hard as I can. Can't feel her. Pull her closer. Try to crush her.
Nothing. Ixion. A cloud. Jovial trick, Zeus? Not funny.

"You're going back. I know you are. Friday. You can't. That's
tomorrow. No, God, you can't go." Face won't stay still. The smile.
Red hair. Live devil passing through flames of hell. Peaceful smile.
Agonizing hair, scourching her. "Take one shape. Can't you just be one
thing. Be either one or the other. Stop it, face. Quit shifting.
Something be stable. Face, quit changing."

She is the devil. She led me to the ocean. Leaving me, deserting

me. She cast me here. Why, her why's led me to the sea. Mery. The
y. The y was only to disguise it. You can't go. Dizzy crescendoing
louder. Deserting me. Boomlay boomlay, boomlay, boom.

Hell with her. "Go, get away from me." I don't need her. She
takes away my freedom, ties me down. "Get away, leave. Stop asking me
what's wrong. Nothing. Can't you tell. Just nothing. Let's go,
we're leaving right now."

"Okay, if you like."

If I like. Yes, I like, you bitch. Is that all I am, a super-
fluous thing. Take it or leave it, all the same to you.

"It's okay with you if we leave right now?" Damn her, playing an
angel, acting as if there is nothing evil in her; an innocent lamb without
blemish. "Take the bus. I'm staying. Scram." Bitch. If I can't be
important to her because she loves me, because she wants to be with me,
fine. I don't give a shit. "You bitch, do you hear, I don't give a shit."
The hell with you, devil. So, I'm superfluous. I'll show her how super-
fluous I am. Lunge for her. Shake her. Her little cry of what's wrong.
Fuck her.

"I'll do whatever you want. Please leave me alone."

Anger surging faster. Boomlay boomlay boomlay. "Think you're
beautiful, don't you." Her neck. Superfluous am I; a nothing. I'll show
you how nothing I am. "I hate you -- I hate you -- I hate you. I'm going to
tear you apart, each limb of your body. You're going to feel ugly,
girl." Slapping her harder now, throwing her on the ground. She bleeds.
Good; spit on her.

"Get back to the cabin." Now I'm not nothing. "A nothing doesn't

make you bleed, does it? The bitch. I turn to the ocean. Oh God,
repent you bloody bastard; pentiti cangia vita; pentiti scellerato.
Boomlay boom. Congos stop.

No, God, I can't face that ocean.

The sand feels cold against my face, Crying for the first time in
my life. Tears come harder. No, Johannes, you couldn't have done this.
Damnit, no. Must tell her, must see her. Run back to cabin. She can
protect me from ocean. I love her. Mistake. Don't understand. But
now -- a goal.

Hear music. Doors' album "I can't see your face in my mind."

Next to last song. Side two. Not her fault. I had no right. My sick-
ness; the nothing. Don't know what caused it. Run faster, grasp air.
It wasn't me. An animal, something must have gotten into me. Ira furor
brevis est. New York Supreme Court ruling. Acted without reason,
without thinking. Must accept me back, must help me. What if she
doesn't? Ocean begins rumbling louder. No, don't think that. Keep
control. That's it, order yourself. Easy, you can handle this. Think
of her face. The smile. Yes, the smile will hide the ocean.

The cabin. Door's closed. No answer. Can she hear me? Imag-
ining a wraith haunting the place. Thunders of heaven reverberating.
Trees violently bent by wind. When the bough breaks. I hear her knocking
on the other side of the door. The latch. Yes, open the latch. Do you
hear me. No answer. Apri. Knock knock knock. Knocking at the South
Gate. Apri dico. Let me enter. The door opens. House is dark. I
light the candelabrum. For a second, I forget everything; I have no plans,
no calculations, reason is thrown overboard. Grasping for procedure,

method. Must speak clearly, logically. Explain: the ocean, the
nothingness, losing myself. Answer. Do you understand? Glazed eyes.
Veiled. Does she hear? Is she really there? She goes to the open Bible,
turns pages, and begins reading:

"They are cruel and have no mercy; the sound of them is like the
roaring of the sea... when the King of Babylon heard the report of them,
his hands fell helpless; anguish seized him/ pain, as of a woman in
travail..."

I jump up and hold her close to me. "Yes, the sea. You understand."
I hold her tighter. Limp, glassy-eyed. I hear that ominous violin again.
Take her hand. Not death itself were colder. "Don't you hear my words?
Why don't you talk? Please, I'm helpless, I need you." Caressing her
gently to make her look at me; softly petting her breasts. Still a
veiled stare. No speculation in those eyes. "Talk to me, damnit, talk."
Shaking her. Her hair like gusts of flame. Don d'escono quei vortici,
"Why are you trapping me like this, not talking to me?" Shouting. Tears
blinding my eyes. Nothing, still no sound. Limp, lifeless. Grab her
breasts, squeeze them tightly, to make her cry in pain. No response.
"You're mocking me." Throw her on the ground, her head hits against the
table. Begins to bleed. Laver and silver chalice overturn. Water and
wine flowing off table onto red hair. "So, the church service was beauti-
ful. Well, God damn it, here's your communion." Need bread still. In
pocket. Grab part. Grind it into her hair. Reddens.

Then a calm. You trapped me, o damsel. You had me in your
control, in slavery to you, but I freed myself. I broke the yoke you
had on me. Strike her for third time. You unspeaking ass. Balaam curse
you. Spit again. Thy bones are marrowless. Thy blood is cold. Quit

my sight. Let the earth hide thee.

Sun rising as I walk outside. Music coming from...? Memnon's
statue. "When the music's over..." Side two, last song. Song of Songs.
Numbness creeping through me. Looking ahead. Surging waters before me.
Bank of Nile. Trees, sand, stones. All become mass of frothing,
faceless water. Encircled, no place to turn. An opening. A Sea of
Death opening before me. Only path to take. Look's safe. Head spinning
faster; dry land; stumble forward. Elizabeth's bloody face. Walking
drunkenly. Bleeding... The smile. Dizzycrescendoing water's roaring.
Faintness; staggering, can't walk. Falling. Cradle will fall; pain in
my hand. The sand. Bread in pocket. Bury it in sand. Eastern wind
rising. Carrying me to Fleet. Che inferno. Love is strong as death.
Che terror. Music of Doors fading. Can't grasp the words; her face;
bloody; waters rushing back. Don't let dancer speak epilogue; rushing
back; ahhh; rushing b...

M

orpheus's amorphous faces. Seeking to contact

the familiar. Searching. Faces leer; words uttered:

"Lord be praised, he's awakening."

My little girl, where did my little girl go...

"Dr., what's he talking about little children for. Do
you know the passage from the New Testament about the little
children; whoever causes one of these little ones

I know there was a little girl here. Dreaming. My little
girl. She was bad. No, naughty to do that; now you

"to stumble

shouldn't do that. Nice words. Little girl, wearing pretty
yellow dress, please listen to dada

"it would be better for him

listen, listEN, LISTEN will you. Words. She can't

"if a great millstone were hung around his neck

understand them. Throw her hard. She's calling me: dadadadada-
dahhhhhhh

"and he were thrown into the sea"

Faces coming closer. Shapeless faces. Formless mouths
eyes bulging forward to pierce me. My little girl...fading into
dream. Buried in sand. Blue eyes pushing her away from me...

Miriam's face smiling at me. Form returns. Physical out-
lines. Strange man,

"Lie back, relax. You've been unconscious since this man's
wife found you lying on the beach nine days ago. His wife said you
were lying soaking wet, and surrounded, almost as if in a cradle,
by your papers.

"She bent over to draw you out of the water and
To draw out. Hebrew word: Mashah.

"your eyes were wet. The Dr.'s wife said she couldn't tell
if it was from crying or from the ocean. And behold, a boy that
wept.

"Since you've been lying on this bed, you keep mumbling
something about a red little girl. Here, let me introduce you
to this nice Doctor who brought you here:

"Johannes Maya Eddy, meet the Doctor, Dr. Rhamzees Jr.

"Dr., this young man is a tenant I've had for almost three
years. A writer, and quite a good one. He's had a best
Writer, writing words. So long since I've been with words.
Where have they gone? Must find them. Contact law firm.

"seller for almost two years. What's the name of it...oh,
gracious Lord, there go his eyes again. Glazing over. He seems
drifting off."

They say words. I hear them. Smile. Let them know you are.
Big toothy fleshy lips parting. Ah, smile returned. They think I'm
here. Did I smile? I, who? No, wasn't me smiling. Just external
machine me. Smile fleshy lips again. Look, they respond. Machine

motions. Twenty-five years of life inertia keeping me going. Smile, eternal smile, eternal repetitions of the past giving me momentum.

"Look at the dear, lying there smiling."

"Miriam, I'm going to go now. He's pulling out of it fine, but you'd better watch him closely the next couple days, to make sure. I'll check back later.

"Also, he sprained that hand of his badly. Make sure he soaks it in a solution of water and salt, as hot as he can stand it."

Words bouncing off me. Everything the exterior. Dream-like trance. Sometimes, suddenly, awareness. Too hard. Luxuriously slip back, sitting and staring. Helpless...

"Wake up, young man. Yesterday was Sunday, the day of rest. Wake up now. You've slept almost twenty hours. Come on, the sun's shining. Pull the curtain and you'll see it. The Lord rested on only the seventh day. Today's Monday. It's time for you to

I wonder what the Lord did on the eighth day...

arise and face this beautiful world our Lord created.

"Here's a big breakfast. All your favorite foods: lox, eggs, bagels. Come on now, let's get up and eat."

Open your eyes. Must get up. Afraid. Afraid to open them. Don't want to see anything. Sun too bright. Sleep. Keep them shut, veiled. Breakfast looks terrible. Something's changed about the food.

"When I get back, I want all that eaten. You need to regain your strength. Then, we'll go for a walk. Come on, now, eat everything."

Look towards window.

The curtains drawn shut;
early morning light casts tree limb
shadows.
A hummingbird.
Wings buzzing.
The light hurls its image onto the
curtain.
It pauses, mingling with branches,
Pull back the curtains.
It's gone.
Close the curtain.
Shadows return.

"Aren't the trees beautiful. Just beginning to bud. April
flowers. It's good for you to get out into the open air. You look
so sickly. Come on, awaken, and enjoy God's greatest gift: your life.
It's sometimes hard, but we suffering servants must stick together.

"I've got to get you going again, young man. No more of this
drifting away into the clouds. You walk around like a man in love.
Are you listening to me? You don't even seem to hear."

Won't she shut up. I don't want to think. I don't want to
talk. I don't want to do anything. Why won't she leave me alone, go
say some prayers, and read her Bible. I don't want her to take care
of me. Now, she's yelling. Isn't that stupid? Trying to anger me, I
guess, or to get some reaction from me. I have none, Jacobed. No
emotions, no reactions. No love, fear, hate. No life. And that's
what I want. I don't want to awaken.

"Johannes, here it is Tuesday evening. I've taken three days
off my work, but now I have to get back to it. I think you are well
enough to take care of yourself, if only you'd come out of hiding and
let the Lord help you.

"Why don't you get yourself busy again, and do some more writing.

Surround yourself with those brown sheets of papyrus, and get to work."

Closes the door. Waters again beginning to swirl. Memnon's statue, Banks of the Nile. Drifting...

Wednesday. Yesterday Miriam left to do her work. Must take control of myself. Go for a walk.

Golden Gate Park. Wandering aimlessly. Everything's new, changed. Don't know where to go. Mechanically pulled to Shakespeare Garden. Why do I always come to this place? An entire park, and I never go anywhere but here. And then to this corner. Right under the cornerstones: Roses and names.

I don't like the roses. I hate red. Want a different colored flower. Blue. Just because it's different.

I hate this park. It's new, strange. I can feel a difference about it, but I can't figure out exactly what.

Some violets. Not blue enough. Still tempered by red. Red everywhere.

Kids playing tag. Join them. Chase, run, laughter. I'm just ready to tag him. He falls. Head hits against tree. Mother runs over to him. Crying.

Tears, salty tears. Flooding pain. Elizabeth. Irrational animal kid crying. Mother holding him. Just left her. It wasn't me. Quit looking at me, Mother. I didn't push him. Her. I did. Was it I? I, me, who I? No, couldn't have been me. There is no I, no me. I didn't.

Ground closer. Stomach buried in grass. Child's tears crescendoing in my head. Blood: hers, his, mine. I couldn't have done this.

His tears: pain through my body. Ground pains my head. Salty tears. His/mine in my mouth. Oceans waves. Blue ocean. Tears, ocean, both pounding into me.

Pain.

I feel a slight pain in my right hand. I wonder how I hurt it. Dr. said I fell. Don't remember where. It looks swollen. I can't even bend it backward. I'd better go back to my room to soak it.

Stretch out left hand upon the grass. Grass is green, from fresh rains, then sunlight. Wonder if grass was once blue. But yellow sunlight turned it green. I wish the yellow hadn't interacted with it, so it could have remained blue.

Roll over on left side. Keep right hand in air so as not to injure it. Bend legs up near stomach. This is an interesting position, like an embryo lying in the grass.

Now, keep left arm straight, and push left hand against grass, bringing it nearer body. Good, now my stomach is off the ground. Put right leg near left knee, and make sure right knee is parallel with chin. Pivot on right foot and left hand and spin a half turn, like a top.

There, you're standing. Now, direct your steps towards the room, and soak your hand in the salt water.

Salty tears.

The child. I wonder if the child is all right. Maybe I should turn back and see if...

Mother's glare. No, I don't even want to turn around, to turn back. Not Lot's wife. Forward, towards home.

The room. Domus sua cuique est tutissimum refugium.

Empty.

Turn on hot water; put salt in basin; soak hand. Turn cold water off. Want to scorch myself. Want physical pain. Let pain kill pain.

The walls.

Bare.

Stare at four green walls.

Ugly silence staring coldly back.

One picture. Starry Night. Lifeless, faded colors.

Hour later. Time to stop soaking hand.

Now what to do...

Now what...

Now...

No.

God damn it, no.

Here I sit in my room. Holding an agate paperweight. Agate of different colors, stripes, clouds. Complete confusion. There is nothing, absolutely nothing I have to do. No place to go, no one to see. I am alone. I am. I

a.m. April 4th 3:45. Can't be 3:45. The sun is shining.

My watch has stopped. Calendar trapped between two days. I'm hanging suspended between days. Must somehow break out.

But how, damnit, how. I can't seem to grasp the day, to climb into it. There's no rung on which to place my feet. Can't find a base. I'm hanging between days; they're slipping past. Must try to get up. Must do something to fight this...this...

Up, and do your morning exercises. Push-ups. First set: 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10. Next set: 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10. Third set: 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10.

If only I could get out of bed. I counted those so well.

But why get out? There is absolutely no reason to leave this bed. Here I lie. No one knows what is happening to me. I could die, and no one would know. To what person would my death make a difference?

Alone. I've never been alone before. Never.

Or maybe I've always been alone, and never would let myself face it. Always trying to hide from that fact. Never would become involved enough to break the womb, and cast myself out alone. Hide in the wombs to keep myself from facing myself.

Within a system. College, law school. Always direction within that system, never stopping to question it. And succeeding, succeeding on the systems standards.

Must straighten this room. "Endless duration makes good no better, nor white any whiter." Room is so barren. Must order it. Bookshelf. Top shelf, middle. French nineteenth century writers: Stendhal, Balzac, Flaubert. Systematically chronologically ordered. Stifling; too ordered. Barrenness and sterility from cleanliness.

Balzac's Pere Goriot. Madame Vaquery's boarding house. She was the boarding house. The boarding house was her.

I am this room's emptiness.

Air in here is choking me. Suffocating. I can't stand this room. Damn it, it's like a mirror reflecting back on me my own emptiness. I've got to get out of here.

Air is oppressive outside. It's as if someone put a grey lens
in front of my eyes. Clouds, trees, grass. All shade greyer.

Begin to walk. Shadows are darkening now. I see a man lying on
the sidewalk. He is black shadows...on white pavement.

The man looks towards the sky.
He squeezes his hand out towards the
nothingness...
and grasps it.
As he holds it tightly, it starts to squirm.

A bird flies through the murky clouds of fog-covered sky.

...like the lucky worm who just ended his
nothingness.
The bird squeezes the worm tightly to keep it
from moving.
The skies' clouds begin to descend and cast
silvery shadows over the evening's
steely stillness.
The hollowness echoes to a crescendo, as the
nothingness
slowly
sinks
through the pores of the man's palm, and enters
his bloodstream.

He feels it stream through his veins and rush
into his heart.
There it lodges.

He fights desperately against it; his fists
clutched in rebellion; his shouts
tearing the night air.
All through the night he writhes in the grass,
pouring out his tears.

If only the nothing could leave through
the eyes
the mouth

If only he could give it form, could
see it
grasp it
feel it.

What is this it, this damn, indefinable
IT.

The next morning he opens his eyes.
He no longer feels like crying.
He no longer feels like fighting against the
nothingness.

He no longer cares.

I am the shadow of the man.

The man is the shadow of you.

You are my shadow.

I am your shadow.

People look at me and think me real, but they are only looking at your shadow, the shadow of an artificial object being carried across a roadway in front of a fire. Damn it, when will we both be able to come out of the darkness of the cave.

I left the cell-like confines of my room last week, and went to Eilat. After reading about Johannes, I felt drained, and needed a respite after nine days of solitude.

I planned to spend two weeks in Eilat, but I had to cut it short. As painful as it is living alone in the solitude of this room, with only my past for company, it is even more painful if I'm not.

The present is too much for me. There is no base, nothing solid on which to grasp. I left yesterday, after only nine days. I was desperate to get back to my writing.

I realized in Eilat that I can neither live nor die till I finish the writing. It is as if I've made the conscious decision not to decide. This novel is my attempt to gain enough momentum to leap the abyss, or, failing that, to plunge into it. As long as I'm writing about life, I'm hiding from it. I remain suspended. After finishing the writing, I'll decide either/or.

Re-reading Johannes's journal drained me. As much as I dislike him, we're too close. I can't just shut him out. I felt part of me die as I went through the last pages of his diary. In Eilat, I felt compelled to return to Jerusalem to continue the diary.

This morning, when I arrived, I plunged back into it. I didn't even take time to review the diary I kept in Eilat. I stashed that diary into the rest of the papers. Now, I must continue with Johannes again, continue with my past.

It seems wrong, though, to call him, or even me, Johannes. It's like we're all the same, but each of us is different. Johannes is left behind. I am what is ahead. What comes next is the middle section. I feel that I must label everything.

Everything is labels, names. Shemot.

Middle section. Middle name. Maya.

I know you by name, Johannes, but you have not found favor in my sight. Maybe you, Maya, will do better.

No more delays. I plunge myself back into my shadow: my mirrored image who is mirroring reality for me.

Tuesday, May 6. Dusk now, eighteen days since my last entry.

Today is the eighteenth day of Iyer. Lag B'Omer. Thirty-third day, in the midst of the Days of Anxiety. Walking past a church.

Religion.

Bullshit. But what the hell? What difference does it make?

Dante, hell isn't your seven circles of symbolically contrived monsters. The people caught in your circles yell and scream. But they aren't really in hell.

There is a lower rung, the eighth rung: in that rung there are
no cries of anguish, no painful wails. In that rung there is silence.
For that rung is made of those who don't give a damn,

And the indifferent don't yell.

Turn to walk into the church. It's becoming darker outside.
Feel my senses returning. Wonder if there has been a wind all afternoon,
and I've been too numbed to feel it,

The numbness leaves, flows away, but in its wake is the pain,
Is this pain a step above or below the numbness. Does pain bring me closer
to the sunlight?

Lights are dim in church. Too dim for casting shadows.

Look at stained glass windows on the left. Deep dark blue
catches my eye. It seems to engulf all the other colors. I stare and
stare. It seems so beautiful, so velvety.

As I walk up to the window, its color changes to a greenish-blue
as the yellow street lamps come on. Damn that yellow. I touch the glass.

It is cold and hard, like a piece of beryl.

At the front of the church, near the pulpit, a woman, or maybe
a young girl, is praying. Church is empty, otherwise.

I wonder if God is lonely, too.

This pain, god damn it. Becoming unbearable.

Jesus.

Face bent forward, looking downward. Mouth tightly clenched, teeth
biting his tongue till it bleeds. Trying to stop himself from screaming
out in pain. Deserted. Left to die on the cross, Lama sabachthani.
Cast adrift, dying. His pointless existence culminating in the futility
of his death.

Yet, I wonder if death isn't a blessing. At least it would end this pain.

Pain.

It's not physical. That I can manage because I can understand it. But this constant agony. It's beyond the physical; I can't define it. I can't even begin to understand it.

This God damn pain. What did we do, what did Jesus do? God, damn You. Do You hate Your creation? Jesus dies, and people say, "Ah, He's revealed Himself." Do You reveal Yourself through death? Is that Your way of showing Your power? Do You try to test us to see how much we can take before we break?

Well, damn You, I'm not going to break. I'll fight You to the end. How can You do this to me? Do You delight in my suffering? Is this how we are meant to spend our lives: emptying our insides: writing, vomiting, bleeding, crying?

Do You delight in this, Lord?

Here, then rejoice in my tears. Here they are. See them. Smile. Here's my blood Lord, and my tears, and my guts.

Yea, my guts. I can't keep them down. I'm crying them out.

God help me, god help me, somebody help...

The hand on my back frightens me. Want to turn and slash out. I'm naked. Why are you touching me? Turn to shout "get away from me."

It's the young girl. Try to smile though the tears. Can't; another burst my insides rushing out again defenseless nothing restraining me

Still soft pressure of her hand on my shoulder. That hand makes all the difference. Want to reach up and hold her.

Pull myself away. Too scared. Too open. No one can see me now.
Bury my face in my hands; my insides are standing before her. I don't
want her to see them. If she does, she'll turn in horror.

Hear her leaving. Afraid to be left alone. Start to jump
up and stop her. No, I wouldn't have anything to say to her. How could
I have begun to talk to her when there is nothing in me, nothing there
to relate.

Impossible for me to be near people. Must get away. Exile my-
self from them. Self-exile. Physical galuth. Must make a choice where
to flee.

Writing. I am going to start writing again.

Damn that Doctor. If only he'd cured my hand faster. It still
won't bend backwards. Too painful. I must keep soaking it in the salt
water solution. But I hate being ordered by him, like a slave. He
probably doesn't even know what the hell he's talking about.

Soon, I'll be able to get back to work, to put this legal mind back
in its groove. I'll stop writing the second novel, and try to write a
follow-up on the men on Sixth Street.

What an absurd undertaking I had planned for the second novel.
A philosophical view of life. To give life experience within the confines
of one novel. How utterly incapable I am. What pretension. I who hadn't
even been born, who had lived so tightly within a system, to try to
describe life. That novel I now put aside. I'm certainly incapable of
writing it. Go back to the first novel about the men on Sixth Street.

There's the promised land, the answer to the pain. Tomorrow I
go to the law library to see if any relevant cases have been cited which
would affect my first book. Law, you'll bring me out of this wilderness.

I feel like celebrating. Day of celebration amidst the Days of Anxiety. Poor ancient Jews, going through their Days of Anxiety, afraid that the harvest might be pillaged by invading enemies, or destroyed by the ravages of nature. Suffering, exiled Jews, allowing themselves only one day, Lag B'Omer, to celebrate. Day number thirty-three. Suffering though the rest of the days to Shabbat.

But not this wandering, exiled Jew. As of today, I come out of the wilderness. No more Days of Anxiety for me. I've glimpsed the promised land.

I should go out and eat a hard boiled egg. The good Jew, following his customs: eating hard boiled eggs on Lag B'Omer. For some reason I feel I'll find a hard boiled egg if I look in the fifth bowl. But that's assinine. There aren't any bowls in this church. Except to collect money.

Enough thinking. Tomorrow, to the promised land of law. Law library, here I come...

Enough of this God damn God.

What can I say? Here I see myself, or part of myself, on paper. And I know I am being deceived. Maya won't come out of the wilderness. I, John, haven't yet come out of the wilderness. Yet, I am helpless to do anything to help him, just as he is helpless to help me.

He, on Wednesday May 7, 1969, goes to the law library. I, on Saturday, March 28, 1970, am now going to Sanhedrin Park, to see the tombs of the Judges. He, a Judge Williams, is trying to find life in his ethical choice, the law. I, his religious counterpart, am going to see the burial place of the Judges of Israel's first supreme court.

The sun has risen. I've been writing all night. A new day has arrived, although it doesn't seem new. Merely an extension of an old day. I don't want to sleep. After a break to the tombs, back to writing.

I just returned from my break to the tombs. But it seems funny to write that line write under a line I wrote two hours ago. How does one signal the passage of time? To an objective reader it would appear that no time has passed.

Or the time I went to Eilat. The first part of the Maya section was written nine days after I wrote the last part of the Johannes section. Yet, those two sections are juxtaposed as if they were written one right after the other, without letting the reader know that nine days had actually passed.

Words, do you see how limited you are? Your inability to express time accurately. I wonder if a possible technic would be to insert three hours worth of blank white pages which the reader would have to turn, so that he would realize that the writer was absent during a certain interval.

So, I curse the words for being ineffective, and yet, here I sit, still hiding behind them. Each word I write is like a thorn. A dagger sticking into me. I see myself retreating farther and farther behind words. Objective pieces of meaningless black and white drawings. And even while I'm cursing myself, I'm cursing myself with words. Because I am too scared to do anything else.

Now, I must begin to write about my trip to the Sanhedrin Park. Perhaps, after I finish writing about it, I should count the words and figure proportionately how much time each word represents by dividing it into two hours. Thereby working out a time factor per word for the Sanhedrin Park experience.

That's an excellent display of your uniqueness, John. A marvelous example of the culminating achievement which you will pass onto following generations and infuse into the life blood of western culture. But, figure that up later. For now, speak of the excursion.

On my way to the Park, I decided to detour through the Mea Shearim. I'd heard that this was the most devout Jewish community in Israel, and I was hoping these people would have some insight to offer me about my religious quest.

Walking down small, ghetto like alleys. Feel myself in Eastern Europe. Houses decaying. Men wearing long black frock coats, and big fur hats, like Russian cassock hats. The small alleys seem forboding, as if there is an implicit no trespassing sign.

I begin to walk down them anyway. I can't tell if I do this because I don't give a damn what happens to my life, or because I value it so highly that I want to live it as fully as possible.

I walk into a synagogue. The people are daviting and reading from Shemot, the Exodus. One man, with prayer shawl wrapped around him, is daviting himself into a state of ecstasy. Moaning, crying out, like a person reaching a climax.

I leave the synagogue, walk outside, and into the next building, a Yeshiva, where I see a young man pouring over Cabbalic scriptures. I speak to him in Hebrew:

"Ani rotzeh lerot..."

He jumps up from his reading:

"Never speak in Hebrew about everyday things, American. Speak English. Hebrew is reserved for the Divine. It is the tongue of God. Do not degrade it by using it to speak about the everyday."

I want to ask him if one couldn't speak Hebrew about everything, thereby hallowing the everyday, and seeing divinity in finitude. Consubstantiation. But I decide not to pursue it further.

He is about my age, but we look completely different. His face is extremely pale, and he has the side curls, pious, on an otherwise shaved head.

"Could you please explain to me about the daviting I saw in synagogue."

"What, you don't davit?"

"No, you see in Kansas City where I..."

"You must davit. If you want to understand the law and receive God's inspiration, you must davit three time a day: forty-five minutes in the morning, fifteen in the afternoon, and ten before bed. If you are to be Jewish, you must do this, and you must say the eighteen prayers, shmonah esreh."

"Is that all you do in order to understand God's law?"

"That's all you must do. My task is much more difficult. That's why I'm studying the Cabbalic literature."

"Why are you?"

"Because that's the right thing to do. We Hassids must lower down the Cabbalic literature. It is too complex for most men, so we make it understandable to all. So that all men can become acquainted with the divine words.

"We must know the divine words perfectly so we can do exactly according to God's laws. God makes it harder for the Jews because we are His chosen people. That's why we have to follow and obey all of God's six hundred and thirteen commandments. It was these commandments that He

had Moses write in the Torah. The righteous Jew lives by these words of law; for he 'who despises the word of the law and has broken His commandments, that person shall be utterly cut off, his iniquity shall be upon him.'

"Wouldn't it be harder," I asked, "if there were no laws, and God made each of us choose for ourselves?"

"No, that would never work. Enough, I must continue my work."

ObeY, study, follow the commandments and you're saved. A pawn of the law, no matter which, God's or man's.

God must allow us more freedom of choice. These people aren't living. They don't choose, they don't struggle, they obey. I can't imagine that God wants us to live like slaves.

And what these people do to their children; it's criminal. The children aren't allowed to think. Everything is laid out for them and decided according to the words of the Torah.

I can't allow myself to believe that the fault is with God's law. It must be with these people's interpretation of the law. I must believe that.

I start to walk out of the section, but decide to take one last look in a synagogue. I feel a sickness within me. I think I have purposely avoided the Mea Shearim for fear that it might not be what I wanted. I knew about their orthodox beliefs, and that they, too, were searching for God. But I was afraid to see them, afraid that I wouldn't be able to accept their answers.

Nausea, dizziness within me. Something I wanted to be true, failed. Something I hoped would help me find a direction towards God, failed.

The synagogue I'm in now looks the same as the other one I was in earlier. Every other building is a synagogue, and each of them look the same; the altar, table of showbreads, eternal light, Torah encased in an ornately carved ark. Same monotonous symbols. At least the tabernacle Elizabeth and I stayed in at Carmel was more ingeniously furnished.

There were two things which struck me in this synagogue, and, at another time, I would have found humorous. Two little boys were hitting each other in the back row of the synagogue, and giggling. It seemed like a sign of life, amidst the sterility of the worship service.

The other thing was an old man, with a deep dark beard, long pious, flowing robes and prayer shawls covering him, a large beaver hat on his head. Very darkly complected.

He was picking his nose.

I left the Mea Shearim and walked over to the Park. It was completely deserted, and there was nothing very interesting to see. The tombs of the Judges had been excavated, and were empty. I had to piss, so I went to the john in one of them. I imagine my pissing on their tombs won't drastically alter the superiorly concocted jurisprudential system of our esteemed planet.

What a maze of jurisprudential garbage has been passed in the last couple years. I've gotten out of touch with the law. I know almost nothing about social security legislation that has been passed since 1967, when the trial period ended for the 1962 amendments.

There's so damn much I have to wade through: USCA, section 42, Public Health and Welfare. Must re-check the current laws and legislation in U.S. Code, Congressional and Administrative News.

How could I have spent three years studying here. Three years,
sometimes spending entire nights, endless hours pouring over cases.
How could I have ever enjoyed that. It's so lonely in here. Each
person buried within a law book, submerged within their casework.

I can't stand this loneliness. I need to call someone, to be
with someone.

Where's my little blue book? I'll call Sandy. I haven't
seen her in a long time, and it would be good to be with her again.

Let's see: Zip Oops, my fly is open. Zip

Zipper

Zipper

Zipporah

Wait, what am I doing. It begins with W:

Werth

Werther

Ah, here it is:

Wether, Sandy....1220 E. Midian Way....JETHRO 7-1260

Ringin. Silence.

Ringin.

"Hello, S-s-sandy. This is...

"That's right, Johannes." I'm not Johannes. I'm nameless. How
can you label a nameless person.

"Fine, and you?" Fine, what can I say to her. I'm nameless,
I don't exist. Nothingness doesn't feel.

"Sure, when? Forty minutes? Fine. Are many coming?"

"All right.

"I'm looking forward to seeing you, too." She's looking forward
to seeing me, Does she know what ME is. How can she say "me." She's
talking to an image of me that she saw six months ago. How does she
know that I'm the same. Without contact with me, that image remains
constant. How can she say she is looking forward to seeing me. She doesn't

know me. Talking to a stranger. Gershom. Stranger in a strange land.
No one knows me. I know no one. I'm no one.

It must have been the telephone. Yes, that's it. It's so hard
to communicate over the telephone. Too impersonal, dehumanizing. Wires,
lines, and you can't touch the other person. Just a voice, formless. No
way to touch.

That must be the reason we didn't communicate very well. That,
plus I am not eloquent over the phone. I am slow of speech and of tongue.
It will be ok when I can see her in person. Forty minutes. Where to go; don't
want to go back to my room.

Begin walking in circles. What difference does it make? Walk and
walk, no particular direction, no particular goal, but at least I'm walk-
ing.

I decide to go eat.

The thought of food sickens me. Stomach tightens. But I must eat
in order to regain my strength.

Walk into Davids, and sit down.

I realize that I haven't eaten all day. Feel hungry, but don't
want to eat because I know the food will make me sicker. I'm sure I'll
vomit it.

Also, I have to be careful what I eat. I've developed a severe case
of constipation. The Dr. recommended that I take a special medicine. He
told me it is a sweetish exudate of European flowery ash. He called it
Fraxius Ormus. I quailed the first time I took it. It tastes awful.

Man and woman are seated at the booth next to me. They're
laughing and talking. The man is fat. His chin is so flabby that it only
appears when he throws his head back in one of his laughing fits. Then,

an indistinct chin appears.

They're playing cards. Cribbage.

The man deals the hand. He stares at it, intensely contemplating the cards, then he throws two into the crib.

Both begin calling numbers, and playing their cards:

Three

Thirteen

Fifteen for two

Twenty-five

Go

The old man begins to count up the points in his hand: fifteen two, fifteen four, and a pair for six. He puts his peg six spaces forward, and now he is three spaces ahead of the lady. He finds this terrifically funny. He's so pleased that he's moved his peg ahead of hers, and is that much closer to winning.

He celebrates by displaying his indistinct chin.

Great, old man. Great. Into the lead. You're closer to finishing the circle. Then you can start another game, and go around the circle again...and again.

Until your wary fingers can barely lift the coffee cup, till the lines in your face cause your eyes to squint shut, till your neck becomes so stiff you can't tilt it back to laugh.

Then, old man, what good does your going around in circles do.

One must imagine him happy. Bullshit.

Dinner comes. Fish. I can't eat. Play with it, push it aside. Makes me nauseous. Take a drink of water. Bitter, like at Marah. No tree to sweeten it.

Leave, and again begin walking in circles. Apart, cast off from everyone, everything. Will I ever find a meaning sufficient for me.

Still walking in circles. Walking over this sidewalk. Cracked, torn sidewalk. Watch feet talking steps. Keep walking in circles, as much reason to do that, as not.

Sandy's party.

Running. Good feeling. Running because I have a goal, a place to go. It will be fun, to see old friends, talk to people, get stoned, Midian Way. Where are some addresses? 1260. Right side of the road, then.

Here we go, 1220. I'm excited, this will be good.

Knock,Knock,Knock. No answer.

Knock,Knock,Knock. Apri, Apri Dico.

Something's wrong. Ocean beginning to roar, trees swaying. Knocking at Hell's gate. Ocean roaring louder.

Sandy.

"Hihowareyou. Gladtoseeyou." Throwing her arms around me. "You're looking well." Ocean roaring louder. "How are you." Stop roaring ocean. Go away. Should soak my hand. Boughs breaking. Dizzy spinning sickness. Words catching in my throat. Can't explain...

"Fine."

"Good, come on in. Where have you been hiding? Here, I have some friends I'd like you to meet. Have a beer."

"Well..."

"Cheers!"

Friends inside talking and laughing. Chattering. Faces look ugly

when you're alone. Drinking. Some smoking. How can I talk to them?

What do I have to say?

"Excuse me, I have to go to the john."

Wait a minute, you're going to the wrong person for help.

Watch Sandy walk into a small group and begin talking. How did she do that? So smoothly, flowing between people. What can they talk about?

If only I could say something: the weather, politics, anything. If only I had some place to stand, some base from which to talk.

Look at their smiling faces. Why are you smiling? What are you talking about, people? Tell me, someone tell me what is funny. Someone talk to me. Let me talk. I've got to talk.

Try to walk into the living room, but my feet won't move. I stand motionless. Some force is holding me back. I can't make myself move.

But I don't want them to see me standing here. I must hide. I can't face them.

Wait, what am I worried about. They can't see me. I'm invisible. I don't have to hide. I'm nothing. No insides. An empty vacuum. They are probably looking right through me.

The cheshire cat, without even a smile; Ellison, you think you have problems: here's a blood brother, without blood. Heh, that's it, laugh, joke about it.

I can't laugh. I can't talk. I can't move. I want to talk and something stops me and I want to move and something stops me and I want to be near people and...

Turn, run through the door. Cold outside. Gnawing through my bones. Running faster. Pumping legs harder, must try to get rid of this gnawing pain, this tenseness in my stomach. Writhe and beat the air with my fists.

pounding into nothingness. I scream out, crying into the night.

But no one hears. Absolutely no one.

Stop running. Begin walking. Eyes blankly ahead. Step, step, step.

No longer a wind. Don't feel cold. Again, like the man in the shadows:

I no longer care.

The street sign says 8th and Market. Might be interesting to see the men about whom I wrote my book. I imagine they are still there; maybe different men, but they will all look the same.

No, I have no real desire to see them. They were good, they helped me publish my book. I helped them in my small way. Can't feel guilty if they're still suffering.

I think I'll go to the law library and do some more research. Then, after I have finished my research, I'll come take a look at them. See if I can make some more character sketches, add some vividness to my research.

Enough of this loafing around. That's my decision. Tomorrow I go to the library and begin studying. Feel better now that I have a plan. I only wish this hand would heal, so that I could write. This stupid hand makes so much difference. Tonight I will relax, and soak it in hot water, but tomorrow, Thursday, I begin work.

Today is Thursday. I've spent these last two weeks in the library. Today, my hand is well. I can start writing again. I, too, feel well. I am sitting in the law library writing this. For the first time in forty days, I can say "I" I exist. I see the promised land before me. My hand is well enough to write. I can again cast myself into the diary.

I've been writing this diary as if there were no narrator, casting

me, the reader, into the middle of the scene. The narrator disappeared because I felt that I had disappeared, that I didn't exist. But I think I'm ok now. Whatever caused those feelings are passed. I can finally remove myself far enough from an event so that I can be objective about it. Right now I want to look back on these last couple weeks, and to catch up in my diary. It's so good to not be confined to pecking on the typewriter with my left hand.

These past two weeks haven't been particularly easy, but with the help of the law work, I think I've made it. The law provides order.

The last entry I made in the diary was Wednesday, May 8. Since then I have spent much time reviewing Shakespeare's Henry IV and V. I was hoping that Falstaff would give me the lift he normally does.

But I found that I no longer admired Falstaff. His aesthetic, dionysian life no longer appealed to me. I think he must have been an unhappy man.

Instead, it was Prince Hal that I felt drawn to. Although, as the play opened, he, too, was living amidst the drinking and carousing at the Boor's Head Tavern, he went beyond that. He was more of a person than Falstaff, because he was conscious of himself drinking and playing the games of these people. In his soliloquy in the First Act, he pointed out the pitfalls of the aesthetic life, the life-for-the-moment.

There is much I want to say about Hal, but I'll save it till later, for now I want to tell about my trip to the zoo. I don't remember which day it was that I went, but it was sometime within the last two weeks. I'm finding that dates are less and less relevant.

I walked to the zoo with my head held high, my back arched, as if I had a sense of direction. One must be a landsurveyor--to convince not

only the castle and the villagers, but himself as well.

I hadn't been to the zoo since I was twelve, and I was amazed at the different animals. The elephant, for example. Why his trunk?

Or the giraffe's neck?

Wondering through the zoo. Up ahead are the camels and horses.

I walk towards the horses first. The sign says:

PRESWALSKIS

The only wild horse left in the world. All others are now tamed, or have once been tamed by man.

My horse back riding. I haven't done that for weeks. Last time I did that was...I don't even remember. Funny. It took place...

Interesting thing about these Preswalskis. The only wild horse left. Yet, where is it found, but caged in a zoo. The rest of the horses, which were once free and unrestrained, man has already bridled, put a bit into their mouths, and made them slaves.

The horse no longer has its freedom, but must conform to man's order. I've never thought of that before. Yet, isn't that exactly what I'd do when I would go horseback riding: try to control the horse, to order him around.

Walk over to the camels. There is an old man feeding peanuts to them. He is fat, and is wearing a faded brown sport coat. Although the sport coat is torn and patched, and he hasn't shaven for a few days, he is smiling a toothless grin. Mirroring the camel's toothless reply.

He turns and sees me. The grin disappears. He walks away.

I kick a small stone at my feet. It lands in some water.

The Pebble and the Puddle.

The puddle was calm. He could see his reflection in it. His only

reality was the camel and the peanut. I cast a stone into his image, sending shattering waves, engulfing his image, drowning his illusion.

I feel like I'm beginning to be a plague. My life is filled with darkness, and it seems I must cast that darkness onto others around me. Damn it, leave other's reality alone. Keep your stone-infested body out of their illusions.

Leave the zoo and walk outside. Stand on the corner. I feel that people passing by in cars are staring at me. Why is he just standing there?

I want to yell at them: "I'm a landsurveyor. Just ask the castle."

As the next car comes, I make a feint to cross the street, then stop and step back on the sidewalk. Each car that comes, I make the same motion. Eternal repetitions: step into the street, back onto the curb.

Now each car thinks I have a goal. They think that I want to get to the other side of the street. They are satisfied and I am justified. My existence is established because they believe it is.

That's enough about the past. Now, I want to write a few words about the law. It was difficult at first to start pouring through the case books. I've never before realized how clinically they are written. Of course, I understand the necessity of precision in law, but these notes seemed a bit cold. Soon, however, the words began to flow. Probably they melted from the attention of my gaze meticulously scrutinizing them with heated intensity. I became completely engrossed in the texts. Two weeks solidly pouring over them. It was good to get back into something, and especially something this solid.

I think I'll perform a beneficial function for those men on Sixth Street. After all, they helped me in my book. I'll take my vast store of knowledge down to them, and try to elucidate certain finer points of law.

Dear Men: Please put your bottles away for a few minutes and I will tell you some very important things. Let me say, all you men should be thankful that you live in the golden state of California. The Federal government and most other states call its aid to old people Old Age Assistance; but California calls it Old Age Security.

Now, doesn't that make the day look brighter. I imagine it has an immense psychological affect on you. Just think, you aren't being assisted, but are being made more secure. Just look at these lovely, secure surroudnings.

And listen to this, under the 1956 amendment to the Social Security Act, each state was encouraged, and now I'm quoting "to furnish financial assistance, as far as practicible under such conditions, to help such indiviudals attain self-care." The two important words are individuals and self-care. You men must understand that you are individuals. Now, now, put the wine down. Naughty naughty. How can you ever attain self-care if you don't listen to me. You must listen, for I'm trying to help you. All you have to do is say "we will do and we will be obedient." Naaseh V'nishmo. If you say that, then you will have made great strides towards the attainment of your individuality.

Even our esteemed President wants you to stand up for yourselves and to assert your rights. He has set aside this month, May, 1969, as Senior Citizen's Month. And, in the immortal words of our lawyer-President: "I especially invite the older citizens of this nation to use this month as a time for re-examinig the social role which they are playing and the conditions under which they live."

Don't those words speak clearly to you. Just look around at the beautiful, garbage-filled, cemented street on which you live. Re-examine

it, for the President wants you to share your conclusions and recommendations with your countrymen. Please tell me, how do you find the cement, the glass you sometimes sit on. I'm sure the country would love to know. But hurry, your month ends in nine days.

Of course, you can always wait till 1971.

Why 1971?

Don't you remember, President Johnson on September 28, 1968, signed a joint congressional resolution for a White House conference on aging for 1971. Not long men, just two years. Sit tight, and if you aren't yet dead, they will discuss your conditions more closely.

Wait, sit up, you aren't even concentrating. How can I help you if you don't listen? Put the bottles down now. I've already told you that you can't drink and listen at the same time.

Leave the law library and get on the bus.

Here I am trying to help you, and you aren't listening. I even will sacrifice a bit of blood from my right calf for you. Here, I throw this blood, and ink from my pen upon you people. I'm doing so much for you men. What a sacrifice. Hallowed by my name.

The least you can do is give me a swig of the wine, in return for your soon to come land of vache et halav, milk and honey.

Ahhh, good stuff. Red mountain. Now, listen to this next gem: Section 2005 of the Welfare and Institution Code says that...

Shhh, quiet. You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take away from it. You mustn't question the law.

...no aged person is to be disqualified by a refusal to seek or accept employment. See, you don't even have to try to work. Just drink and lie in the streets and enjoy life. Thy kingdom come. Lazy lives

lounging luxuriously in the street, drinking dewy drops of wine. O' lucky men. I wish I had a honey cake with biblical inscript on it. That would be a fitting gift this fine Shabuot, to show you that the law is sweet as honey. It is no trifle to you, but these laws, they are your life. Give us this day.

Give me the wine. Remember, the American Public Welfare Conference in Chicago said that one of the functions of old people is "carrying on traditions, transmitting stability, cultural community, and a smoother transition between generations." Pass that wine again. Let's keep the transition smooth. Also, let's do our share for cultural community. How much was this? Seventy-nine cents, eh.

Probably been butying this stuff since January, 1968. At least those of you over seventy-two. Yes, sure was nice of them government folks to pass a law amending the old welfare laws. Earnings were increased, for those who had little or no past earnings under social security, from thirty-five to forty dollars, a month.

Why, with that money, you can afford to buy fifty gallons of wine a month, especially with rent so little. You men are rich. Of course, you can't afford to buy shelter, clothing, food. But, if you didn't buy wine, then you would have a dollar thirty a day for food, clothing, shelter. Can't complain now, can you?

Here, have some more wine. Don't worry about getting drunk. We can drink all we want, for I have a blue stone in my pocket, amethyst, which, according to Greek legend, is supposed to be a remedy for drunkenness.

Sure would be nice if we had some bread to go with the wine. Our daily bread. Don't you have any? No. Well, that's ok, I figured you might not, and so I brought two loaves of wheat bread. My thanksgiving

offering to you. I brought it to your shrine, this beautiful Sixth Street tabernacle. My way of saying thanks for the help you have given me in writing my book.

12th and Market. Not yet there.

This is going to be so helpful to them. I'll tell them about the new psychological approach that's being used to understand them. How it is found that old people displace the problem, because they can see no fitting solution to the problem in sight.

7th and Market. Jump off here.

If only they'll listen to me, and be careful to do the commandments and statutes that I command them this day. You're going to be saved, men. Here comes the harbinger of the redemption. He's returned to save the lives of the poor, the downtrodden, and the weary. Have a glass of wine ready for him. Hang on, right around the corner...

He comes.

Law books, pencil and paper in hand. Right hand is completely healed. Coming to the promised land.

Wind picking up. Going to do research, to find life for the novel. Study some faces. I hear the clanging of the drill as workmen tear into Market Street. BART. The great construction feat. Ripping up streets to replace them.

Clanging pounds into me as I walk along an area sectioned off for pedestrians. Buildings tower along both sides. Their tops bending towards each other, cut the sky off from my vision. They look ready to fall, if only someone would give them the signal. The smoke and smog mix in my nostrils and eyes. My feet step in dirt and mud along the path, covering occasional bits of broken glass, discarded cans. Buildings seem to lean

closer to each other. The clouds hang low, and the clanging continues incessantly.

Taking steps faster. Each person on street seems to be glaring into my insides. Try to twist my body, to walk faster, turn, dodge. But I'm exposed at every angle.

I see an old man, bent, with a derby hat covering sweat-soaked streaks of grey, clothes dishelved. Face is pale; Mahlon and Chilion, sickly and wasting away. He's coming towards me. I want to hide my face, to take off my shoes and run away.

Ragged blue ends of jacket, torn shreds, forming tassles, extend towards me;

"Some money, please." Garbled, foam-caked words.

No, damnit no. Get away from me. I know you not old man. Become a statistic, words in a book. Too real. Sweaty hair, spitting saliva from livid mouth. Can't stand his begging.

What's he want, a handout. Here you are, poor old fool. You're lost, here's a dime for your trouble of living. Go get stoned, and don't bother me anymore.

Heading back towards Market. Raining, thunder and lightning. People can't see me anymore. They see through me. Nothing, just a mind that whirls around; dizzy, nauseating whirling. A mind which, doesn't, can't do anything.

The clanging getting louder and fiercer. Trumpet like, pounding my ears. Harder, stronger, racing through my blood. Have to get it out of my skin, get rid of this feeling. Don't call me Naomi, call me Mara.

Running. Faster. Sickly whirling in head. Running to nowhere, but fast as I can. Tearing through the streets, bumping into people, dodging them, but not worried, not caring. Panting faster. They can't see me.

Running down hill. Look at my legs. They no longer seem fas-
tened to me. Interesting. Watch one moving up, bend at the knee, and
then stretch forth to touch the ground. Next leg rises. There they are,
churning like the wheels of a railroad train.

Careful legs. Streets are uneven when you're down. There's a curb
ahead. Listen to me or you'll...

Tripping, falling into building. Law books and writing thrown to
ground.

Blood on my coat, left side. I've fallen on a piece of glass.
I pick up the glass and examine it. Interesting thing: glass that one
looks through, which is used to shield one from those on the other side,
has just cut me. I'm glad. I like the sight of blood. It makes me proud;
I, too, have suffered. Now you can't ask me for money because I look like
you.

Somewhere I belong. I suffer and therefore I exist. My scar.

Walk back down the hill, past the church, to Eddy Street. Then
turn and walk back to my room, to look at my scar, my justification for
existence.

Wash it off.

I feel like there is a blinding light coming from my face. Irony:
a blinding light to focus more clearly on my nothingness, to reveal my
emptiness. Must veil my face, and, from now on, face people with a veil.

Tonight, while walking back home, I saw a black man leaning against
a street light. He blended into the darkening twilight. He, too, looks
invisible. But he's not.

His role is defined. Everyone knows a black man. People hate him,
they fear him, or they tolerate him. But at least they react. He's black, and
he exists.

I don't exist. I'm a man in a plague of darkness. No one can see me. Me,
the man who walks the streets without a role, without a goal. I wanted
to throw my arms around the man with the derby hat, and say, please don't
think ill of me.

I'm begging, too.

I'm begging for existence, and I don't know where to look.

I've looked in me, so deep inside me that I've hit the other
side, I've ripped through my body, clawing and tearing at every piece of
flesh, every bit of my insides trying to find me, some center, some
base from which to start. And it's hollow. There are no insides.

I walk the streets, knowing people must be looking through my
overcoat and seeing that there is nothing inside. From every angle
they can see it. I have no place to hide.

Put the copper kettle on my stove. Shivering in sickly silence
of my room. This god damn room. Walls are tilted inward. Chair seems
ready to fall over. Yellow bedspread. Typewriter, which hasn't been
used for the novel in months, sits on the table. Stacks of paper
lying next to the table, some white, some with words on them. The
great philosophical novel, half completed.

But maybe there is still a chance. If I worked hard on it, and
changed certain passages; maybe, with a lot of work I...

Shrill whistle of tea kettle.

Spit on the paper.

Pour boiling water into a little tea pot; put some Mandarin tea
into the silver container. Put the container into the tea pot, and wait
for it to steep. Every motion slow, deliberate. Toast to myself this fine
Shabuot. Watch my hand slowly raise itself. I am divorced from it and it

is divorced from the rest of my body. How ironic because I'm nothing, and there is no body from which to be divorced; and yet, it is I who am aware of all this. Nothingness having awareness of itself.

Glance down at my manuscripts. Felt that what I had to say was so important. Those thoughts were crucial to the future of the world. There they lie, the chair tilted against them, wet saliva streaking the ink.

And just now I was going to take notes on the men on Sixth Street. How could I have even thought of writing about them. Hiding in my womb: writing, law. Keep things an arms distance away. Watching people, seeing how they will fit into my next novel.

Description. Everything is an experience to describe. Words were my money. Mammonism. And the words kept the experiences a sheet of paper away from me. And that sheet of paper was as opaque, as concealing as thick stone tablets.

The men along Sixth Street, their poverty, their pain, were for me to write about, for someone else to worry about. My job was only to get them on paper, black and white. Good, well-executed. Don't let it get too close to you, don't let it burn you. Words are cold. The typewriter a machine made of iron.

Put these men down on paper, and let them die for you as they come alive in the novel. Each time I wrote about them I killed them, killed them with words.

People were so impressed: how accurately he writes, how vivid, how moving. What a creative effort. Nisus formativus.

Bullshit.

I hadn't created anything; I had taken these men's guts, and

I put them on paper. I took their burning fires, the undying flames from their souls, and put it into words. I'd transferred their lives, their actions, into words.

They weren't people, they were characters. Characters to fill research data, to supplement USCA, section 42, to bring to life the legislative and congressional pronouncements.

Once they were on paper, I'd become immune to them. After each page, a bit more of me would die. So, off for a new experience, new feelings. I'd experience it, and then onto paper. Living my life by describing others.

And by killing my insides.

Perseus slayed Medusa by looking at her in a mirror. To look at her directly would have turned him to stone. I, by trying to mirror those men, turned my own insides to stone.

But did I really kill my own insides. Were there any there to kill? Or was it just the reflection of the men that I killed?

Me, a mirror. Taking an imprint, photographing, enlarging, then describing what has been photographed.

Without insides of my own, living on the insides of someone else. A mirror has no essence. It is what it sees. Am I no more than that? Is there nothing more in me? Anyone can describe. How can that be a criteria for the great legal novel?

The legal novel. Based on objective law. The law, my savoir. Strings of polysyllabic phonetically ponderous words, combining systematically to form precise, ordered phrases. Lex tutissima cassis sub clypeo legis nemo decipitur. The law is the safest helmet; under the shield of the law no one is deceived. Legal latin proverbs. Full of SHIT

I know now why I was attracted to Prince Hal; for what happened to him, once he was crowned Henry V, is exactly what's happened to me: we've both become pawns of the law. Hal has his crown, the symbol of law, "the polished perturbation which doth sit like a rich armor worn in the heat of day, that scalds with safety." I have my law, my crowning achievement, my armor to protect me. Burns while it protects; eats out your insides but insides are never noticed because they are protected and hid by a thickly encrusted coat of stone, the law.

When he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law...and he shall read it all the days of his life that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, by keeping all the words of this law, and these statutes, and doing them.

The words of the law.

How could I have ever believed that the law would give me a base, Illusory law. ,Maya. God damned illusions. Instead of being able to use the law, I became trapped within it. Me, hiding behind the laws, sub clypeo legis. Just like Henry. Henry no longer acts. His office acts for him. When he sees Falstaff at the end of the play, he says: "I know thee not, old man. Fall to thy prayers. Presume not that I am the thing that I was."

But at least he has enough sense of self to know that he's changed; "presume not that I am the thing that I was."

I am that I am. Ehyeh-asher-ehyeh.

I can say neither. For I do not know either who I am, or who I was.

Right now I want to take this sheet of paper out of the typewriter and begin writing again; not the second novel, not about the men on Sixth Street. But to write about how a person with no insides lived. Then, maybe

one day someone will come along and read the papers, and say: "See, this is how an invisible man lived."

Pick up my recorder and try to play a few notes. The notes sound mournful, and provide a strange sort of comfort. Like part of the pain is being spent through the instrument. I play some more notes, but the dizziness begins to come back. I feel like a top, and someone keeps plunging down the handle, up and down, up and down, winding it tighter so that it can spin forever.

But a spring is busted, and I can't spin; so I just get tighter and more wound up; and, although my body stays flat and motionless, my insides scream and holler, looking for somewhere to turn, some goal to seek.

Like Samson's goal. Eyes gorged out. Hair partially grown back. Pushing against the temple walls. Two pillars are to fall. Head throbbing, loins pounding, blood surging into his temple. Here is his life. Ridiculed, mocked. Revenge; two pillars. Push, strength goal kill them hate harder arms can't go on mocked. Keep pushing, your whole being, reach your limit. Go beyond, beyond the pain. There's a reason.

A reason.

If only there were a reason, that goal. To give my life for something, to have some pillars to push against.

But I push against emptiness.

Why do I keep forcing myself to justify myself: to myself. I am like a writer who not only can't reach the castle, but can convince neither the villagers...nor himself.

Pick up a copy of the Bible. Dark green, jasper colored; a present Miriam gave me this morning to celebrate the ending of the Days of Anxiety. I could have sworn that when she gave it to me this morning it was a bluish-

green color, like biblical sapphire. Must be that the light has changed.

Damn yellow light making it green.

Bible is unused, unopened. I open it. Genesis. Book of
Creation. First word, Bereshit. In the beginning. First letter, Beth.

Beth.

E

liza. Beth. Elizabeth.

I hear your voice, your still small voice, but I can't see your face in my mind. Where is my diary? You're lost little girl. Ahh, here you are Elizabeth. Fifty days ago today since I last saw you. Pentecost, a festival day. It's so good to be near you again. Do not ask me to leave you or to return from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and... and...y-your God my God.

I've been to church, Elizabeth. The same church you introduced me to. I'm becoming so religious. Today I even decided to re-read the Bible.

Come here, eat some bread and dip your morsel in the wine. Join me as I read about you:

J

ovial journal of mine, jubilate judiciously. Today,

March 30, 1970, I interrupt this rereading of a reread journal. I've been transcribing these notes since I returned from the Sanhedrin Park two days ago. There is something that is driving me onward. I am afraid to let up the pace, no matter how painful it becomes. I am not going to stop writing, but I need a change of material. I'm going

to switch from Eddy's reflections about Elizabeth, and to reread my reflections on Eilat.

But I'm not sure where I put the notes...here. Mixed in with the rest of the papers. I guess that's where they belong: to the past. The time in Eilat seems as distant to me as the events of a year ago. It seems like once an event is absorbed into your system, the time element disappears, and that which is a week ago, is just as distant as that which occurred a year ago.

I'm not even certain that what I just wrote above is entirely true. The past isn't always an equal distance away. For, if I'm thinking about an event now, in the present, then that event in fact exists in the present. At least for me it exists. When it actually occurred becomes irrelevant, for it would be present, and it would be equally present, no matter how far past it was.

Enough idleness. Quit your God damn theoretical speculations and make a decision. Either underline the notes from Eilat and make them part of the past; or don't underline the notes because they are too near the present and must be distinguished from that which occurred...

There you go again, jackass. Great philosophical imponderables. Don't underline Eilat. Don't do it just because it takes too long. That's the decision. Shut up and write.

March 18. Hot dry desert. Nomadic wilderness. Monotonous repetition, although there is something starkly elegant about the primitiveness of the land south of Beersheba.

March 19. I'm in love with this place. It's so good to have gotten away from writing, to have left everything behind in Jerusalem.

I brought Richard II down with me, and last night I finally finished it. It's ironic that I've never read that play before, since I've read the tragedies that follow: Henry IV and V. It's as if I've read the future before I've read the past.

I feel somewhat like Shakespeare must have felt when he was writing these historical plays. Trying to order history, the past, to give it meaning. I am trying to order my past to find some meaning in it.

But not in Eilat. Here, I'm through with reading. I've finished reading Richard II; and, for the time being, I'm finished with Johannes. Enough of the past.

Last night, I built a depression in the sand to shelter me from the wind. I'm living on Choral Beach, next to the waters of the Red Sea. Today I went skin diving. Multi-colored fish, majestic coral. Like taking a trip to another world--right beneath the sea. It felt elegant immersing myself in the waters of the Red Sea.

This evening I am going to work some more on my chess set.

March 22. I finally met someone I could talk to. First human contact in over two weeks. It was so good to be able to put aside my chess pieces, and to talk to someone.

He is the man who rents out the skin diving equipment; and tonight, we made matzoh ball soup, and had some bread and wine. He asked me if I wouldn't honor him by drinking out of his silver chalice. The wine flowed freely, as if we were in a vineyard of God, Kerem-el.

Although we began talking in Hebrew, we found we were much more fluent in French. He's from Morocco, and immigrated to Israel about fifteen years ago. The past fifteen years he's lived in the same hut,

a self-made structure which sticks out over the Sea. It's foundation consists of four poles stuck into the ground. Impervious to the elements... he claims.

He rents out skin diving gear during the day, and makes about fifteen lira, three dollars a day. And that gives him enough money to buy provisions on a day by day basis.

That's the way he's lived for fifteen years, and that's the way he plans to spend the rest of his life.

Seul?
Oui, je suis seul, mais il n'y a
aucune difference entre moi et
les autres
Tout le monde nait seul, meurt seul.
Mais il y a des amis, comme toi.
Tu viens et nous partageons
le pain et le vin
Puis, bien que nous soyions seuls, nous ne
sommes pas
solitaires.

La renommée, le bien, tout ne vaut rien.
Tout n'est rien; sauf, mon ami,
les amis, le vin, et le pain.
Ca, c'est tout.

We've spent the last three nights talking until early morning. Sitting in his little hut, drinking wine, eating soup and bread, and listening to the waters of the Sea below.

He told me that once he was in love. A Scandanavian school teacher came to Eilat, and he lived with her. She finally left, saying that she had to get back to her teaching. She was an art teacher.

He was numb after she left. There was a lapse of several weeks when he didn't say anything. He told me that he had even built a rocket ship to the moon out of woods and stones. Sat for hours looking at the moon, saying nothing, seeing no one, talking to no one. He himself

didn't even know why:

Je ne comprends rien...cetter vie.
En effet, il n'y a aucune chose
que je comprends.
Rien.
C'est seulement...rien.

Finally, he realized his despair was caused by the teacher. He wrote her several times to come back. Vayikra, and he called. But there was no answer. He asked me to read a poem he wrote, but never sent:

J'ai peur...de vivre
sans comprendre.
De vivre sans amour
De mourir sans amour.
D'amour.

I'm looking forward to spending many evenings with him, for I find we have much in common. I'd like to tell him how Johannes, after a two month lapse, again tried to be with Elizabeth.

tonight, March 11, 1969, I entered my delightful deli, Davids. Do you remember our first meeting, Elizabeth? My first glance of you: your reflection in the mirror. Right now, instead of spilling water on me, we should be eating a big Shabuot snack of kreplach and cheese blintzes.

No, Elizabeth, kreplach doesn't go on top of the blintzes. It goes in soup. Note carefully its shape: three cornered. Do you know what that symbolizes? The trinity! For God's sake girl, I'm Jewish.

Let me tell you the meaning behind kreplach. You see, today is

Shabuot; and on that day, when the Torah was given on Sinai, everything was of a triplicate nature. There are three parts of the Bible: the Torah, the Prophets, and the Holy Writings. It was given to Israel, which was comprised of Priests, Levites, and Israelites; through Moses, the third child of Amram; after three days of preparation; in the third month, Sivan.

I'd swear for weeks under oath that the above is true.

Elizabeth, you aren't laughing. Didn't you get my pun? Weeks, oath. Ah yes, that's right. You don't know Hebrew. Shabuot means both weeks and oath.

Damnit, something's wrong. I can't seem to play with the words. I feel compelled to explain everything, to justify the use of each word. I can't seem to make them flow together like I used to.

Look how well I described the Overture to Don Giovanni. I made the words flow together like music: D minor/A / D minor/A .Crash ba da dum. D major. Now the words don't flow. They seem cubersome and awkward.

Or my conversation with Falstaff; the Hebrew word beer means well. Look how well the words flowed; as if Horace, Don Giovanni, and Shakespeare were meant to be in one paragraph. But no longer do I have the os rotundum.

And it's your fault, damn you,. I was fine before I met you. There was no confusion, no d i s order in my life until "I Looked at You." A song by the Doors.

You were the wedge that opened the door. The first thing I couldn't describe, couldn't order. It was you, you bitch, that wedged open the door that led me to the ocean. The ocean was the door swung wide open. I hate you for what you did to me.

Wait. Stop this Eddy. Look what you're doing; blaming everything on her. What did she do? She made you see yourself, made you tear down

the illusory, finite wall you'd built. The wall of words, of the law.
It wasn't until you walked through the door that you realized there is
no room. There are no walls. The ocean, disorder, is all around.

And you blame her. She who is so much more sensitive than you
can ever hope to be. Look at the conversation you had with her about
the retarded children. The children caused her pain. She had to draw,
to run, to cry, to get the pain out of her system. But what about
you? Did the men on Sixth Street ever bother you?

No, damnit, I never had to run or cry. I was too hidden.

Patron of the poor, the down trodden. Shit on me. I did nothing
for them. I hate me. I hate me and my coldness, Hardguts. Tightened
insides. How can I claim to be Jewish, descended from Obed, serving?
No, not in that tradition. I serve no one. All the time, the hours
I spent each day studying those men; the most I gave them was a dime, one
hard cold thin piece of change.

I feel so ugly. A plague. If I reach my hand into my shirt, it
would come out leprous. Me, the fifth plague: sores and boils. Out-
side all fine and healthy looking, but inside so damn ugly. How could
Elizabeth ever have come near me? I can't allow myself to see her. All
I could do is hurt her, too. Infest her with the plague that
pollutes me. I exist and I hate myself. A festering sore. Are you
sure, Eddy, that it isn't because you hate yourself that you exist?

gnawing hurt as stomach
descends and dark depths
inside twist and
churn and are ugly and black.

Eliza, I want you near me so badly. I'm alone and need someone to
help me endure this solitude. I call you. The phone rings. I shout
your name: Eliza, Eliza, Eliza. But there is no answer.

I must write to try to get rid of this pain. But in a new form, I must find a new way to use the words.

A play. I've never before written one. My first involvement with the illusory world of the theatre.

Stage setting: no room to walk between four bare walls. Two windows, curtains holding out the light. Papers, pillows, a sheet, clothes, books pajamas, litter the floor. The carpet is barely visible. In the corner, a young man is sitting at a typewriter. He is typing slowly, often pausing. His face is pale and drawn. His shirt is off, his pant buckel loosened.

The keys clang, and the sound is harsh and cruel. Each letter is made with great effort; each word is part of his insides being spent. He is sitting alone at the typewriter. No one around him. He stops to look at his stomach. The taut hard stomach of two years ago. He sucks in his breath, and there is a reminiscence of what once was. He silently resolves to get himself back into shape.

He glances around the room. There are some pictures of nudes on the wall above his head. He is a sometimes artist. Over the typewriter are some pictures of his college days: the political science corner; his receiving a Phi Beta Kappa Key.

He took up drawing so that he could see more clearly. His goal was to see more clearly than any man before him; others didn't see, not because it wasn't there, but because they were afraid to see.

He began to draw, and to picture the infinite variations of the finite. He became fascinated with Van Gogh, and especially the picture Starry Night. The picture about which Van Gogh said: "There is another world, a world accessible only to certain men."

He wanted to perceive that world, to portray it. To draw it in his writing as Van Gogh painted it. But he began to see too clearly. And the more he saw, the greater was his ability to see. And to hear: to hear deep inside people, beyond their words.

And the more he saw, the more he wrote. Until one day he quit. The pain became too much for him, the sight was too agonizing. He was tired of pouring forth his insides so that others could comment upon them. He hated having people peer at his writing as if it were a side show to be examined. It wasn't a side show. It was his guts, his tears, his pain.

The fellow begins laughing. A person who wears glasses, yet sees too much. Who is deaf in one ear, yet hears too much. A person cursed with being too human. The irony.

He returns to his typing. There is an intense look upon his face. He has no choice about writing. He must write, in order to get rid of all the unhappiness, the pain, the aloneness within him.

As we approach inside his mind, he is thinking: the motorcycle trip back home, the wind blowing in my face, trees passing by in a blur, colors merging into a grey whirl. Numbed. I can feel nothing.

All his thoughts are turned inward, upon himself. He gets up from the typewriter and stands before a picture. It is of a young girl, dressed in a yellow dress. The face of the girl shows an outer tranquility, but he is staring through the picture, into her insides. Tears come to his eyes. He sees a terrific beauty in this picture; a picture of someone who is looking deep into themselves.

All day he has been inside himself. His face is contorted and his heart is filled with a crying rage. A rage of helplessness. He can't break out of himself; and he knows that if he can't do that, he will never

again be able to love, to relate to another.

But the only type of person he wants to relate to is someone else who has seen their own insides, who has experienced the hell/nothingness.

As he stands before the picture of the girl, he knows that she knows. He wonders if he will ever again find someone else who has gone so deeply into themselves. Not many people are that introspective. Or maybe there are many, and he just hasn't found them. Or maybe he doesn't let them into him. Or maybe he's typing this paper as a means of objectifying his problem so that he won't have to go any deeper into himself, so that he won't have to keep clawing and tearing through himself. Or maybe...

But let the poor writer in this play worry about these questions. Let him worry about his aloneness, or whether he can love or be loved, or whether there will ever be someone with whom he can share himself.

He takes his head and puts it in his hands, bending forward and resting on the typewriter. He begins crying.

I am going to leave him sitting there and go outside, and buy some wine. After all, he's only a fictional character. Johannes, your motto, fictio credit veritati, has just been found invalid.

I feel an onus lifted from me. Look at my watch. Well past midnight. Walk outside, and the night air feels fresh. For the first time in months, my senses are alive. The wind is cutting at my face; I smell freshly cut grass. I am alive. Living.

Dying. Though today there was no way to avoid dying. Picked up by an Israeli driver while I was hitch-hiking along Choral Beach. He told me he would give me a lift to Israel's only fjord.

Reckless driver. Tearing along old dirt road carved into the wilderness. Thought death was imminent. The road was just built, sloppily

constructed. Jeep nearly overturning. "Rega, rega echad." But he couldn't hear me. Driving faster and farther into the wilderness. Road ends. Continue driving. Exploring the new.

Feeling more alive as I approach death.

Desert sands colorful. No longer starkness of the Negev.

Finally he stopped the car. There was a huge grin on his dust-covered face. We'd just driven over the road that he built. The road is his creation, and he drove fast because he knew the road like the palm of his hand. He'd labored with it, suffered with it, and watched it grow. It is his; and its meaning is sufficient to him. His base into existence.

As I got back into the car, I was hoping that he would drive back just as fast. Even though I was afraid, I liked being frightened. I wanted him to drive faster and faster to see how much I could take. I think there is a masochistic streak in me, which makes me seek punishment. I need something that's causing me pain, something to fight against.

If I'm comfortable too long, I feel something is wrong. Perhaps that was the reason I kept going back to see Elizabeth. It was as if I was seeking punishment, hoping that she would continue to show me how blind and callous I was, and thereby make me push beyond myself. I don't know why I want to keep pushing, but I know that I don't want to be bound by anything. I want to push through all barriers, to push myself as hard as I can, in spite of the pain. Or maybe it is because of the pain.

Maybe I enjoy this suffering, this loneliness, because it keeps pushing me onwards, keeps me from stagnating into a machine, captured within the law, like Johannes. In omni re nascitur res quae ipsam rem exterminat.

I fear becoming too complacent, like the bee who drowns in his own honey. If I'm going to drown, I want it to be from falling into the sea, after the wax has melted my wings.

March 24. Night. A group of kids at the beach got together, and we sang songs in different languages. Very few people here are Israelis, most of them have gathered in Eilat because of the weather, the free rent, the hashish, and the Red Sea. Tonight we sat around a campfire singing:

The music plays and the faces flash and shine with me.
People smile and are one with each other, all joined
by the song.

Song ends.

The silence
the aloneness
the distnaces
are again between us.
The momentary oneness is broken
and each finds
himself

alone.

Alone, and knowing that is the way
it will always be,
except for the moments of
Song.

I want to burst into song. It's been so long since I've felt the freshness of the wind on my face, the coolness of the night air. This time of night is definitely made for a donut. Remember, Elizabeth, the time we saw the old man and his grandchild at the donut place. Time for us to make a repeat performance.

As I walk in, the smells of donutness surround me. Ah, good Jewish nose, infallibly working again. Nice to have you on my team again. Sign posted on the wall: Encounter group: Saturday, May 23, 8 p.m. Unitarian Church. 33rd and Eddy Street. All welcome.

So, in nineteen hours, people will be encountering each other. Good for them. I have more important things to do: like ordering two old fashioned

glazed donuts and a glass of milk.

Three men are sitting in a booth in front of me.. I sit and watch them. They seem to be unaware of each other. All three are looking into their coffee cups.

One speaks: low guttural sounds. His words merge, almost inaudible. Neither of the other two look up.

They all begin humming. Occasionally one of them speaks.

No response. Still staring into cups of coffee.

I feel I'm watching an Ionesco or Beckett. Their conversation reads like the theatre of the absurd. None of them can get out of themselves to either listen to or hear what the other is saying.

Damn it, old men. Look at each other. Look up, talk.

I wonder if they realize the barriers between them.

I even wonder if they are all really sitting at the table. Where are their minds: in an excursion into their past, their youth; in an unfulfilled dream of the future?

Do you live on your past and future, old men?

Why do you live?

Is this worth it? Is that cup of coffee so good? Is the warmth of your conversation enough? You sit and eat stale donuts. And the faster you eat them, the faster you expose the nothingness that lies at their center. Heideggerian donut: outer field with nothing on the inside.

Why do you sit there, old men? Why do you sit and die, while living?

Isn't the slow pain of death unbearable?

Discuss the weather, or politics, or something. You must have something to talk about.

Or is that too much? Is it too hard to speak, to make that effort at

communication.?

I can't sit here any longer.

Walk outside. I'm not going to let this loneliness descend upon me again. No, damnit. Start walking towards the Tenderloin.

This morning I awoke with the girl I picked up at the Tenderloin last night. We just made love. Then, after the highest expression of physical and mental love, I went to read the newspaper, and she took a shower. She came back from the shower, and I told her that her nose was peeling. We discussed nothingness. I asked her why she didn't ask me to take a shower with her. She looked at me and said she figured I'd come in if I wanted to. I pinched her nose and she made noises like a pig: oink oink. I laughed, but not really a laugh. She asked me what was wrong. I said nothing. I meant just that: nothing. That nothing which is the first sign of the absurdity...

She said she didn't understand what I was talking about.

I read her a poem I wrote while she was in the shower:

hissighing softly silhouette's shadow
sensuously seeks star's steely stillness
trying to tighten taut tenseness tearing
through the thick thighs
higher heaving headaching heart,
he hurls hollow hiss

She smiled, and said it sounded nice, but that she didn't understand it. I started to explain it to her, but decided it wasn't worth the trouble. She finally left. I blew her a kiss. But she didn't see it for she was already out the door. I imagine the kiss missed her and rammed into the door, which was being shut on me.

Last night was hellish. After I picked her up, we drove to the beach. I needed to talk to someone. But I don't think she heard one word that I

said, because she never stopped smiling.

Floating, dizzily floating
no earth, no ground
the car speeds along the narrow
road which must be followed;
trees close in on both sides

tires screech around windy bends;
music over the radio: "You're Lost Little Girl."
No, it's I'm lost little girl.

Stop...
Can't I stop this car.
What is it that makes me drive along this road?
Where am I?
Where is the road going as I
go faster and faster and stop,
slow down, you have a life time to
get there.

But the dizziness and the road won't
stay still, keeps turning and my head
spinning and the car wheels screech and
can't anything be steady.

Can't I slow down, why damn it, why
won't you slow down, car.
Stop spinning, head.

And the girl next to me. Smiling.
God, can't you see what's happening to me?
How can you smile.
Don't you, can't you see the
Nothing.
Can't you feel the dizzy?

Listen to the dizzy. It crescendoes.
Louder and louder and shriller and the
road turning and the wheels shrieking...

and you smile.

How could she sit there and smile. She must have felt this hell/nothing-
ness. This emptiness of the body. I hate her smile. All it did was
reinforce my own aloneness and separation from others. Her smile was
the barrier she put up to keep me from her. An empty smile behind which
she hid.

Eddy, you are trapped in that damn either-or way of thinking again;

a smile has only one meaning. It can't mean two things to you at the same time. It has to be either one thing or the other. But why does her smile have to have only one essence, one meaning? Maybe her smile wasn't to put up barriers; maybe, although she couldn't intellectually understand what was wrong with you, she wanted to smile to let you know that she was with you, that she cared. Or perhaps she was feeling awkward because you pushed her into an embarrassing situation which she didn't know how to handle.

Could it have been that although you thought she was treating you like an object, that in fact that was the way you were treating her? Maybe it was your callousness, your being trapped in yourself which didn't let you get out of your own perspective to see what her smile meant. I smile, yet I see the nothingness. A smile doesn't have to hide nothingness.

Damnit. Look what I've just done: exactly what I accused you of doing, Eddy. The either-or. I've just sat here and lectured to you that you were all wrong, that you were mistaken about her smile because you were too trapped within your own perspective. But have I done any better? I reject your perspective, and become trapped outside it. The girl is right. You are wrong. Either/or. Clear cut. Why can't it be both? Maybe her smile meant all those things, and meant them all at the same time.

That's probably the hardest concept for me to grasp. I want everything to be ordered and defined, to be reduced to one essence; and if there is anything which I can't reduce to one essence: Elizabeth's face, the ocean, God, I must pursue it until I do. I am trapped until I do, just like you, Eddy, are trapped by that smile.

I am trapped inside me. And she stares with a cunning know all smile and says, 'Now you are caught. You are trapped and can't get out.' Haughtily sitting back and watching me squirm and fight to break loose. And smiling again. That smile which makes me entrapped tighter in the web. Smiles like Elizabeth. Damn you, too, Elizabeth. Right here in my journal, after the church service, you did the same thing to me. Your damn smile. You saw that I was trapped; you knew that I was angry, and were glad. And you saw that I began to hate you. And you were thinking, look, Johannes, and just think how hateful you are towards me. Ugly. You're ugly. Evidence itself. See the hate in you, see the ugliness." I hate that smile, and god damn it, hating that smile makes me hate myself more, which traps me even tighter.

I feel twisted around in knots, clawing through myself again.

Eddy, I hate to interrupt your comments on Johannes's journal, but I must comment. I feel like a perpetual commentator, and one who is twice removed from the event. Johannes is the writer, watching, always describing. But the writer watching is now being watched by Eddy, who is, in turn, being watched by me.

Eddy, I wish you were here to reread your poem, for I think you would see things from a different perspective.

Isn't the smile just something on which you can focus, something on which you can direct the nothingness? You blame the law, your writing, Elizabeth's smile. Aren't they all excuses to avoid facing what's behind them?

Look at the poem again. You are trapped. Not by the smile, but by the car. You want desperately to be the driver of the car, not to be driven by it. But there is no way for you to gain control of the car. The car

drives you.

I wish you were here for another reason, Eddy; for there are two things which I would like to ask you about. Even though I'm leary of any kind of symbols, I found two in your poem that seem relevant to me. I'd like to talk to you about them.

But maybe it is irrelevant whether or not you consciously intended them to be symbolic, as long as I find them so. Isn't the road symbolic of life, and the car the life force which carries you forward? Maybe that's oversimplifying, but take a look at the poem again.

Can't you see that you are trapped on the road, and that you have no control of the car? The most you can do is give yourself the illusion that you are driving it.

That is all I, too can do: try to give myself the illusion that I am driving life, that I am in control of the situation. You, Eddy, are my illusion.

But I hate knowing that I'm living behind an illusion. I, me, you: Johannes Maya Eddy, are a man that wants to live without any illusions; you want to face the chaos, which means facing the fact that you have no control. But I am not sure one can face that, without finding that death is the inevitable answer.

I'm sorry for that interruption, Eddy. You're too important to my life for me to neglect you for the sake of my philosophical speculations. I'm truly sorry.

God, look what I've done. I've done it again. Those damn emotions.
Angry, hating, bitter.

Where do they come from? What causes them within me?

THE ATTACK

THE ATTACKER

I hear people trying to assert themselves by destroying others; trying to fill their own insides by the guts of another--as they tear and rip at the other's mind and body, hurling criticisms of daggers clothed behind benign looking smiles.

THE ATTACKED

I see people walking, casting furtive glances, watching, staring, in order to keep others at a distance. They so fear that someone might trespass upon the thinly cloaked shell of protection that hides their empty insides.

I am the attacker, the attacked, and the battleground.

If only I could feel that my insides weren't so ugly, that they didn't need to be protected by a shell. Is there really an attack, or do I myself attack in order to provide justification for keeping the wall up?

And why this bitterness within me? Look at the swimming scene: I was ready to kill the man that took over my lane. Yet Elizabeth voluntarily gave up her lane to someone else. Why couldn't I have done that? Instead I hide behind my law: de minimis lex non curat. Little things, like people. Why can't I be more like her? Her kindness, her sensitiveness to other people.

Dear Elizabeth,

I address a letter to you. You who represent a dimension that I hope will one day be part of me. You have something, something indefinable, which I want. Call it the world of the spirit, kindness, sensitivity. I feel that I can only add this dimension to me through you. It's like you are a contrepuntal theme to me; I, who am analytical and rational, and so often bitter and hating.

I wish I could address this letter "Dear Johannes," but I'm afraid our names aren't interchangeable, even though I'd like them to be.

I just reread the section about when we went swimming. You are the opposite of me: so much kinder and more feeling. After the church service, my bitterness and hatred at you. And just because you were feeling the service, the man's words. I am like an emotionless, uncaring monster.

Two nights ago, I saw a movie. It was tragic. The movie ended and I sat there. Johannes said: "Eddy, we can get up now, the movie is over, life must be lived. I've got a date with a pretty girl and I don't want to lose the spell. I want to have fun tonight."

But Eddy answered: "I can't move. I want to curl up and cry. I hurt so badly I don't want to keep going." And I sat.

But I knew that at any time I could get up and smile. And I knew I could talk if I really made the effort. I could have pushed the tragedy away, and smiled. But I can't go on forever hiding behind my damn smile. The movie hurt.

Yet, all the time it hurt, I knew I was thinking about the hurt. I was analyzing why and how I was feeling, and was looking around the theatre, wondering: "what must others be thinking about me," and then saying "I shouldn't be thinking about what others are thinking about me."

The night of Passover when you said to me, "why are you so analytical": what can I answer? Here I sit, cursing myself for being analytical; and yet, at the same time, trying to analyze why I am analytical. I'm still trying to analyze what you meant by that statement. Did you mean I don't feel enough; I don't love; I don't have spirit? Does it mean I'm driven, tense, can't laugh, always forging ahead for a goal?

I live in the world of my rational mind.

You live in a world I want so badly, a world of the spirit, of sensitivity, of warmth. I live in my seasonless world of hard keys and cold black and white letters, a world of the law.

I stopped writing when I met you. And I have decided not to continue. For I realized that all I had done was go from the womb of college to the womb of law school, to the womb of my writing. And I didn't even realize my writing was a womb until I stopped writing.

But now, because of you, I've broken free from the womb of my writing and of the law. The words no longer hide.

I'm open now, and I'm striving to be like you, to have your sensitivity to people. But I wonder if I ever will, if I'll ever be able to meet people as they are, without the walls, without a veil; for I cannot stop transcending myself, and watching me meet them. I can't live my life, for what I do, I must watch me do.

Let me interrupt this letter in the middle. I'm glad you didn't send it, for it shows a lot about me that I didn't realize. Change comes so gradually, that without some point from which to measure, one often doesn't realize that change has occurred. But now, I look back at this letter, and so much seems different between the way Eddy and I look at things. One thing imparticular is the swimming scene.

We agree, Eddy, that in this scene, Johannes is a cruel bastard. Law, his great driving force, has made him callous to the human element; the law, which is to serve man, is being served by man. Johannes is trapped within the confines of the law.

But look at Elizabeth. She would rather give up her place swimming than upset anybody. To her, the people are more important than

the lane. But she does this "noble" deed, it seems to me, because of a fear of non-self.

I agree that Johannes should be condemned for his callousness, but you are making Elizabeth into an exemplar, a Christ figure who sacrificed herself on the altar of humanity, who literally waited upon others.

You will try to imitate her, to be a servant of mankind, and to achieve the goodness which her act represents. The question, though, the either-or which must be answered is this: ~~can one~~ do this act and still retain a sense of self. Where is the balance between giving oneself to others, waiting upon them; and, at the same time, maintaining and doing this from a sense of self? In this scene, Elizabeth is too afraid of her own non worth; and therefore she is afraid to stand up for herself. She is afraid that there is no self for which to stand up.

Although Johannes's hardness is not the answer, I'm not sure Elizabeth's lack of self is either.

Enough transcendent speculation. Let me rejoin you, Eddy; please continue with your letter. I'm sorry for the interruption.

Even when I write, I am involved in a constant transcending of myself. Look at the technic I used when I wrote about you, Elizabeth.

As soon as I became too involved in anything, I'd write it in the past tense. But if, as was usually the case, I was outside the event, I would write about it dramatically. The donut scene, for example. I was feeling good; I was a spectator; so I could cast myself into the event, and write it present tense dramatically; for, although I wrote it dramtically, nevertheless I was writing it. And the words removed me one step from the event.

However, as soon as I found myself directly in an event, without a framework or a rational base, I'd shift to the past tense so that I could maintain on objective detachment. I would become the omniscient narrator, and watch the event. For example, when we left my room to go dancing. Suddenly, I shifted tenses, in order to remove myself from the scene. Then, after I had watched the event, had drawn limits around it by words, then and only then, did I go back into the event, and proceed with the story. One way or another there had to be a system in which I was enclosed; and there had to be a method by which I could remain objectively detached from the event.

Often my writing about the event was more exciting than what had actually occurred. I wonder if there existed any reality other than the reality I produced while writing about the events. Did events exist in themselves, or only after I'd written about them were they given existence?

Never would I let myself become too close to anything, too involved in anything--until you, Elizabeth. You broke the walls down, the walls of words, of law, and I was left sticking out into existence; naked, defenseless.

But I must stay like this. In spite of the pain, I must stay open to every encounter.

It's 7 o'clock. The encounter group meets in one hour.

I must try to face them. Mustn't let myself become like those old men in the donut shop, I can't allow myself to slip back into the indifference, the non-caring. If I give in to that, I'll become like those men, dying while alive. I won't accept that stagnation. I must keep going until I'm too tired to risk meeting other people, too

weary to make that venture for conversation.

But sometimes the pain becomes unbearable.

Like right now.

Walk into the church. People sitting on the floor, shoes off.

"Come in, take off your shoes. Be at home."

Fear overcomes desire. Start to turn and leave. Can't face them. Someone enters behind me. I feel trapped in the room, forced to stay.

People smiling, nervously laughing,
trying desperatley to hide
the uneasiness.

Identify yourself:
Can't.

Greet each other. Nonverbally.
Smiles, feigned affection.
Tightness, nerves flexed

FEAR...of others; of being;
laughter, tears;
tears I can see hear touch
Momentary bond.

FEAR...touching, holding hands;
want to run out, to write about it;
to type the people

completely naked existence too painful;
too much to bear; naked people frighten me;

total honesty on first encounter: false.
need time, easy, see the person slowly.

Love is not first meeting. People can't
be this open. Need barriers; need to be
standing somewhere; a base. Can't talk
stripped of everything

Hurling bits of my life at them; trying
to show them/me what I am
Don't come near me. Can't stay this
open. Don't touch me

Numbness returning.

Try to fight it off.

But numbness feels good. Makes it easier to face these people. I don't really care about them. I sit down, anesthetized.

I'm so far from you people that you can't touch me, you can't hurt me. I'm alone and I don't give a damn: not about being alone or being near you or what you say. Nothing.

10:45. I've been talking to a lady about fifty, a social worker. She wears her hair long. Grey. Doesn't seem to be ashamed of getting old. Pride in her carriage: like I've endured this world for fifty years, and I'm damn proud of it.

The leader tells us to get together with another couple, and for each person to describe an experience. The lady begins talking, and as she begins,

takes hold of my hand. Startles me. Numbness flees. I want to pull my hand back. Don't want to be touched.

But why? I just turn off. Cold, no voice to form words; no desire to be spoken to; to be held; to be touched.

Degutted of humanness; a machine; an inanimate object that touches, holds, feels... without caring.

She's open; she cares, and you're afraid of letting her too near you. I let her hand stay, and listen to her story. Her hand begins to feel good.

Hand is jerked away to help her tell story. I want it back; I watch it as it becomes the sky, vast expanse of sky; then clouds within that sky; then the ocean beneath.

The waves break, and it lands back on her knee. I want to grasp the ocean's water, but fear reaching across the infinite barriers between us. The gap seems abyssmal.

Numbness returning. My hand clenched in tight fist.
Pain unbearable. Must fight it. Unravel fingers.
Don't want to move. Slowly move agonized, rheumatic-
pained-hand.
Drawing closer. Terror, physically
sick.

Stop. The distances are too great between you and others. Give into the
numbness. It's easier that way.

You'll never make it One last effort.
Take hold of her hand.
That hand makes all the difference.

Session ends. Leave the church.
See lady outside, but have nothing to
say to her. The closed circle of the
group is no longer. The momentary
bond is broken.

Stomach begins to spin. Illusory contact.
Here I am alone, walking no where, and
going without the hand.

If I could have just held onto that hand a
little longer.
If I could just have something to hold onto...

Sunday morning. Sunlight is beginning to appear. Somehow I
negotiated the steps back to my room last night. I want to go to church
this morning, but I'm not even sure why. Maybe it's the still small voice
of Elizabeth telling me to go.

Dear Elizabeth,

I write to you because I know you'll understand what
I'm saying. I know that you, too, have gone through this
nothingness. I'm hoping that one day we can help each other

face this lostness together. Gogo and Didi did, waiting,
but loving and caring for one another while they waited.

I sit in my room, trying so desperatly to calm
myself. To gain a bit of peace. I wonder if it's
possible to ever attain that elusive bastard. If
it is, I'll strive to gain it. Strive to quit striving.

I sit...
like a top wound up but
unable to spin

I lie down...
my insides screaming
in agony

I stand...
and try to run, to
dash out of my body

My insides are turning and
twisting,
screaming for freedom.

A tearing gnawing, burning tenseness,
little bodies hurtling against my guts.

God, why can't I lie down and sleep?
Why can't I say goodnight and turn the
light out?
Why do I have to get up and type this,
to go outside and run till I can't
lift my legs anymore, and then to fall,
panting, exhausted...

...and yet still to feel it, to feel
my insides throbbing.

Peace. Inside and out. Is there
any way to get peace? Yes, "get"
obtain, strive after. Where are
you, Monster. Hidden god

Do you ever come out from hiding?
Are you real?

It's been so long since I've felt
anything near peace. Just these tearing
insides; this gnawing torment.

I can't stand it. Will you go away god
damn it.

I wrote this poem last night, Elizabeth, I'm not exactly sure why I'm including it in this letter. Perhaps because when I write to you I get tongue tied, and sound so serious and analytical. I'm confused right now as I write this. I want you to see that there's more to me than this; that I am capable of feelings.

I am searching for new forms in which to write, for somehow I can express my emotions with words, but have the words be more than just black and white drawings.

But this letter is defeating my purpose. It is so very serious, I feel each word must be perfect, and I'm spending so long considering each word, that any potential emotion is killed by logical analysis of it.

Why do I feel so boxed in while writing you? I feel I have to convince you that I have changed, and to justify myself to you. I strive to have a foothold with you, but you keep dodging. Why, that night at the beach, did you forsake me? Why wouldn't you talk to me, answer me?

You were my last grip on life. I could get mad at you, shout and say that it was you that angered me and were holding me down, trapping me. But when I hated you, there was something there, something to fight against.

Now there is nothing.

Sometimes, while walking, I feel the tears. And I'm thankful, for the tears bring relief.

I've thought many times of coming to visit you, to let you hold me like you did in Carmel. Carmel, where I learned that I was falsely worshipping the gods of Baal. I want you to hold me again and tell me that together we can do it, together we can love, in spite of the nothingness.

No, it needn't be you I spend a life with; but it must be someone who is as sensitive and caring as you; who has loved as deeply and cried as hard; and who can accept me and my love with all the problems and insecurities. Someone who can share this serious analysis which seems so formal and which is written during a time of so much pain and hurt.

After Carmel, I've been trying to find a base in me, some universal concern. No longer do I want the moment to moment life that I lived when I was with you before. My life then was like music: as soon as it is heard, it vanishes. There was nothing to me, no essence. Only a note which disappears the instant it is heard.

I've tried to find my ethical base in the law, my writing. But I realized that they weren't the answer. I turn to you, or someone like you. Something lasting, permanent.

I've been looking at diamond rings; the thought of marriage even enters my...

For God's sake, Eddy, I'm about to explode. Your letter is driving me insane. You're too serious. Can't you laugh? It's too bad you aren't here with me to see how I would write the letter. Just

in case some part of you is still here with me, note how I would write the letter:

Start it out with a song by the Doors: "mine eyes have seen thee," and I was awe struck by the beauty and charm of your manner, by the ease and grace of your walk. I was immediately captured and enraptured, enhanced and entranced by the ravishing dashing beauty of your inner and outer bearing.

Or, perhaps that doesn't clearly enough show the agony of what you're going through. Why not do it obliquely, and add some humor to your life? You're like a dull lifeless clod going through existential agony. Here's an idea that the master seducer himself would be proud of:

Dear Elizabeth:

I hope you will not be affronted by this edifying discourse, but I feel that, in keeping with my point of view as an author, I have a duty to warn one so fair as thou art.

Along the stages of my life's way, I have discerned that there is a young man with evil intentions uponest thou. This cursed seducer will employ very careful and well concealed tactics with respect to thy character and thy passions.

I feel it is my duty to protect thee, Either because of the purity of heart, Or because of thy works of love. I do this, even if it means remaining in the wings, unforseen and unsuspected by this vile seducer.

I have heard of his tricks and devices. Be not deceived, o red-headed beauty. This fellow will approach thee and tell thee that all has changed; that he is indeed a new person, with a new, more ethical outlook on life. O dreadful lies, conceptually conceived in philosophical fragments.

Further, he will tell you that he has gone through great misery and suffering without you, that he has spent many long hours bemoaning the aloneness and nothingness of the world since you have forsaken him. He will tell thee that his pain is a sickness unto death when there is no death.

Do not be deceived by such rhetoric as the above. Do not give into his talk about suffering and tears. Know that it is all a plot to win thine own fair hand. Therefore, damsel, remain in fear and trembling.

I have seen it meet to inform you of this, because I want thy fair-skinned maidenhood to not be sullied by one so cruel and harsh, so callous and so wicked that he would intend to gain thy good grace and loving warmth by means so seductive.

Take heed, madame.

I am thy faithful servant who, for the present, must remain anonymous.

Now, mournful, morbid, Eddy, let's reread the splendid example of passionate prose presented in epistulary form, and shout shibboleths of shalom and...

...Shit. God damn you John. Look what you've done. Punning, playing with words. Who does that letter sound like?

Johannes. Yes, you've done it again. Reverted back to Johannes; playing with the words, hiding behind them. Why does your gut reaction to Eddy's sorrow have to be Johannes's humor?

I fear Eddy's mournfulness, but I fear even more returning to the shallowness of Johannes. But why do I feel I ~~must~~ make a choice between one and the other? Why this either-or, why not a synthesis of their natures?

God, John, you just did it again. What do you mean a synthesis of their natures? Are you looking at each of them as if they have only one essence? Johannes is shallow, Eddy is mournful. Damn you. I've never met anyone more trapped in one way of thinking. I'm not sure it's ever going to be possible for you to break out of it.

Now, quit thinking about yourself, and return to Eddy.

Enough of this writing. I am going to go to church: the Unitarian church where they had the encounter group last night. Maybe I'll see some of the people who were at the encounter group.

Walk outside. Sun is shining.

Walk into the church, out of the sunlight.

This church is different from the one Elizabeth took me to. It's much less structured; the walls aren't nearly as ornate, and there aren't any stained glass windows.

There isn't even a figure of Jesus. Elizabeth. I wish Elizabeth were her to share the service with me.

A jazz combo is playing. I've never cared too much for jazz. Too disordered. And this combo's music reflects well the unstructured building.

A man gets up from the pews and begins to talk. He says he's not talking to us, but rapping with us. He talks about Jesus. "Jesus never split the scene. We are all Jesus like. We all have that potential for faith, the faith of just one tiny grain of mustard seed."

I want to stand up and shout, "No, not me, man. I split the scene." Why don't I stand up and yell. What difference would it make to him, to me, to anyone?

I remain seated.

No, man rapping at me, I split the scene. I left the people on

Sixth Street, left them cold. I returned from the cold to drink the fifth cup of wine, but there the resemblance ends. Patron of the poor. Shit on me. I took my rotten filthy body and walked away from them. My polluted, plague infested insides. No, Mr. Preacher, I've never done anything for anybody.

Elizabeth should be here. She would know what he means. She does for others; and she has faith. Faith like a field of yellow mustard seeds.

The man starts reading from the Bible: Jeremiah. "Did not your father eat and drink and do justice and righteousness. Then it was well with him. He judged the

But why isn't it well with me? Why do I have to feel such agonizing pain that I sometimes feel like

"cause of the poor and needy. Is this not to know Me? But you have eyes and heart only for your dishonest gain. You said I will not listen. This has been your way from

Quit looking at me preacher man. He's staring at me. I know he is. I want to hide from his

"your youth that you have not obeyed My voice.

I have obeyed. The law. I obeyed the law, never questioned it, I

"You shall be ashamed and confounded by all your wickedness."

My deafness, blindness. Trapped in man's law; man's law made me oblivious to man. Heedless of God's laws. God's laws are "for poor and needy." That's why the pain. Lostness. Haven't listened to God's words of law.

Flute player begins. Her notes try to wedge between the boils in my leprous body. I close my eyes. And pray.

No more self-centeredness. I am through making my own self-hatred the only thing with which I fill my empty insides. I am going to do something about the men on Sixth Street; to get out of my self long enough to try to help mankind.

The notes of the flute player seem pure, almost as if they're cleansing me. The whole group stands up and begins singing and clapping. I, too, stand. As straight and tall as I can. I'm no longer ashamed to be seen. I feel elevated, taller than anyone in the congregation; I want to sing and dance forever. If only Elizabeth were here to enjoy it with me. I've finally made a decision that she would approve of. Now I'm becoming more like her, more sensitive to people.

I want to go see her. To tell her my new decision; to help mankind. There is order within the chaos. I have a new base.

The service ends, and I walk outside.

Marching down 59th street on a Sunday afternoon. Feeling groovy. Elizabeth, here I come. We can go drink tea, and I'll even put some pretty yellow colored lemon in it. It's been so long since I've seen her, so long since I've been happy like I was with her. Her red-headed freckled smiling brown eyed face.

We could be so good together. My wild love, you're the sun. You live on love street. The river knows that if you don't come back, I'll have to drown myself in mystic heated wine. Love me two times girl, one for tomorrow and one just for today.

Ah, there's her house. The one with the bright yellow chrysanthemums in front. Cryseos. Golden, And I, chrysostomos, approach the yellow flowered door. Right behind this door, there is an Elizabeth, wearing her topaz ring.

Knock, Knock, Knock.

Johannes, It's so good to see you. I've been thinking about you and really missed you. Oh, I'm so glad you've come back.

Knock knock knock.

She'll probably be a bit confused when she sees me, but if she says that, I'll be satisfied. Her vocabulary isn't that large.

Knock knock. Knock and it will be opened to you. Wonder if she's home. I hear music playing. Sounds like the tape her sister made:

Jesus walked that lonesome valley

She must be getting ready to see me. Oh, hurry. He's downstairs waiting. Fix my hair. Put on my topaz ring he likes so much. Can't wait to see him. He's so tall, so hand---

"Yes?"

He had to walk it by himself.

"Elizabeth,

"Yes?"

"Elizabeth, I went to church this morning. There was a flute player. I wanted to sing with you. I'm not going to split the scene. May I come..."

"No, there isn't time. I've got to go to the library and begin studying

For nobody else could walk it for him

for my art finals."

"But, Elizabeth, I haven't seen you in almost two months. Why are you dodging? I've got to talk to you. Things have changed. So much has happened to me."

"Please go. I don't want to talk. Have you forgiven yourself so quickly for what you did to me? Leaving me bleeding in a strange cabin. You sinned against me, Johannes, deeply sinned."

"But I've called to explain, and you never answer. You don't under

"Please. I've decided. I don't want to talk."

You have to walk that lonesome valley

"But you must, you must listen!"

"No, Johannes. I'm afraid of you. Afraid to show any emotions
around you. We're too different. All we could do is hurt each other."

You have to walk it by yourself.

"Don't shut the door. Knock knock. Apri, apri dico. What do you
mean too different. Open. Please open."

For nobody else can walk it for you,
You have to walk it by yourself.

Can't let myself get angry. Don't shout at her. But god I hate
her. She keeps dodging. Each time I've called, or now, when I come
to see her, she avoids me. It's like she intentionally drags me
to the edge of nothingness, and pushes me in.

She led me to the ocean. I thought she was protecting me, sheltering
me in her breasts, but maybe it was just the opposite. Rodin's Hand
of God: two people struggling. The red-headed devil feeding me milk
and then bashing my head in.

Why won't she open the door? Let me out. This damn gnawing dizzy
pain again.

Eddy, you hate her without cause. If she had not come and spoken
to you, you would not have sin; but now you have no excuse for your sin.
Now you have seen; and hate her...without cause. Hate her because she
unblinded you--to you.

Look what you just now tried to do with her. First, as Johannes,
you tried to make her a character in your novel, to order her as you would
a fictitious person. But she's real, alive, and can't be ordered. And

just now you tried to order her, by imagining the scene even before it happened. You even planned what she was supposed to say to you. You try to have your imagination become reality, and then you hate her if she doesn't conform to that reality. And what you do is impose an order on her, harness her, like Johannes harnessed his horse.

But she is a person, not a character in your book, or a scene in your mind. She really isn't the ogre your paranoid subconscious makes her out to be; nor is she the monster that is trying to confuse you. But, she wants, no more than you want, complete slavery to order. And if she becomes your order, around which you live your life, then you are her slave, and she becomes a slave to your need for her.

It's too bad you aren't here with me; for you're too close to the scene to actually see what is happening. Sometimes this causes you to unjustly berate yourself. For example, you curse yourself for not understanding what she meant by art, saying how blind, how closed you were. But Elizabeth is only expressing one view of art and its relation to action: the cathartic nature of art; to rid oneself of one's insides that one can continue to live. Johannes was expressing the other side: of using art as a vehicle for more understanding, for greater openness. His view isn't necessarily more callous just because it is different from hers.

Although you yourself said that Elizabeth and you are contrapuntal themes, I'm not sure you fully understood the implications of that. In the art dialogue, for example, can't you see that Johannes, who is trying to mirror reality, is also a mirror image of Elizabeth. He is within the system, and hasn't yet broken out; she is without the system, trying to get back in.

Elizabeth is in a state of disorder and confusion. She is too open

to every event, and needs to take one step back. She is too involved, and needs objective detachment. Johannes, on the other hand, needs to get closer to the event. He is too detached and buried within his ordered system.

His order is attracted to her disorder; her disorder, to his order.

Can you see what you're doing, Eddy? You are trying to regain the illusory order you had as Johannes, before you met her; and you're trying to do that by stopping, turning around, and plowing back through her disorder.

Note the scene in the Shakespeare garden when you were playing with the ants. The first signs of disorder were upon you, and you were still unaware. Your journal says that you didn't like the park this time, and that your thoughts kept returning to Elizabeth. Even in your ordered, familiar park, you were focusing on Elizabeth, disorder. You tried to conceal this by ordering the ants. But you killed them. You killed that which was providing your order.

And the irony is that your attempt to regain order, to regain the broken ritual, is the very thing which causes your disorder. To attempt to hide from disorder in Elizabeth's womb, is actually an attempt to hide from disorder in the midst of disorder.

Oh, that's wonderful, John. How neat, how concise. Everything is reduced to a neat conceptual, ordered scheme. You've defined everything in terms of an absolute. Elizabeth represents disorder. How very efficient. Damn you, can't you learn?

Look at Johannes; he was confused about her face: was it passive, calm; or intense, upset. He had to define it; everything must have an essence. He had to write about it until he could see which set of charac-

teristics was accurate. Maya must find his answer. He decides it is writing, the law. But then he decides that writing hides, and that he had been shielded in the womb of law and words. Therefore, they are bad. He rejects them. No duality. Just concrete answers.

Now, Eddy with Elizabeth. She is all good, the Christ-like figure sacrificing herself for humanity. Her essence is good.

But when he goes to see her, she rejects him. He hates her. But, does Eddy hate the absolute good?

No, for she is the devil that led him to the ocean. Therefore, she's bad. She can't be both. Our minds, Johannes, Maya, and Eddy, are too similar. Wanting everything to fit into a nice, ordered scheme. Everything to have an essence which is definable in terms of one absolute.

But look at Elizabeth. What is she? Is she a Christ-like figure suffering for humanity; is she someone who has the answer to your search in the wilderness; is she herself the answer?

How can she be defined in terms of one absolute? She is both a womb to you, and a wedge opening the door of disorder. That same door that Raskolnikov forgot to close when he killed the pawnbroker; the door of irrationality, beyond reason.

Finally, you Maya, and you, Eddy, could no longer live like Johannes. You both had to face that open door, and walk through it. Eddy, you hoped that you could turn around and walk back out the door. You hoped that Elizabeth would be the door which would lead you back into order.

"Don't shut the door on me.

"Please don't leave me here. Let me out. I've changed. Won't you listen?"

No answer. Only an ugly dark green door staring back.

Begin walking. Wind picking up. Nausea returning. Wind swirling
around me. Faster and faster. Turning, being pulled by it. Whirlwind
spinning me. Against the current. Reeling. Elizabeth. O, Eliza

M

ind whirling. Dizziness still surrounding me. Caught up
in whirlwind taking me to heaven, into blue skies. Green grass of earth
receding into distance. Clouds obstructing the people; wisps of clouds;
alto stratus, thirty thousand feet.

Leaving everything I own behind, searching beyond the physical.
Leaving my city. Forgetmenot, San Francisco.

My life receding into the distance.

Thirty five thousand feet.

I'm glad I didn't shout at Elizabeth this time. But she seemed
so different. She wasn't at all like I remembered her from the diary.
I can't exactly explain the difference, but she seemed more...more human
than I expected. I wonder how much our relationship these last two
months was poetic drama: an illusion which gives the appearance of
reality. How much was I projecting my feelings of love and my desire to
be loved; and how much did she come to symbolize love in the ideal?

Flying over Grand Canyon now. The earth below. Wish I were an
astronaut; to see the earth from a perspective of two hundred and forty
thousand miles; to see there is a unity of us all; that we are all
ants living on the same globe. Have we not all one father? Has not one

God created us? If only people would realize that we are drifting on
a tiny ball into an infinite void, perhaps they would understand
their common bond of humanity. Perhaps then, all mankind would be
able to share bread and wine.

Today is June 2. After I left Elizabeth nine days ago, I buried
myself in the law library during the days. At night I studied the
Torah. I hoped that I would be able to find ways to help the men on
Sixth Street. This morning, I went back to see them. Even though
I knew it would be painful, I felt compelled.

Somewhere amidst these papers, I wrote about them. But I
didn't write about them in prose, like I did in the first novel.

The street is loud, clanging.
Shoes pound it.
People harden themselves as they
pass stiff, swollen carcasses;
bodies warm with blood and
flesh,
but dying on pavement's coldness.

They die and beg; begging with
crying insides,
Tears so deep they no longer
hear them.

Insides screaming with aloneness,
flesh dying. Loneliness runs through
their bodies with the wine,
deadening the pain, pretending
it doesn't exist.

Yes, it's lonely.
Yes, it's cold and hard.
But cry,
Cry and you're living.
Drink and you're dying...
closing yourself and dying in the
midst of your life.

He asked me for money and I cried. I want so much to show them
their beauty. To tell them not to give up, to quit begging. I want them

to believe an ugly world doesn't mean ugly people. Each person has a beauty within them if only they'd let themselves. If only I could find that beauty in me, I could begin to show others their beauty. I feel as ugly as they must; but I can't allow myself to give up. As long as I am alive, I must keep open.

I'm just about to close myself to everybody. Tomorrow, no later, I must leave Eilat. I have to get back to my writing in Jerusalem.

I've waited until today to make general observations about the people I've met down here. There is a strong feeling of comradeship. Anyone you meet, after knowing them only a few moments, invites you into their tent for a pipe. There is something gemütlich about passing the pipe: not only the effect of the smoking, but the ritual and comradeship of sharing that goes along with it.

But hashish isn't the only thing that is shared: bread, wine, anything that someone has, all share it. The acquisitiveness of American society is absent.

I find my views on mankind beginning to change. When I left the Kibbutz, I was convinced that there were no redeeming factors in man. The beautiful natural setting of the Kibbutz seemed ugly when I found that the Sea of Galilee was filled with excretion. The people seemed callous, in fact, so callous that they could dance on Purim.

But I think now that the people on the kibbutz were too closed to see beyond their material cares. I believe that these people in Eilat can see beyond. No matter where they are from: Australia, Norway, France, Denmark, Germany, Italy, there are common beliefs that we share. It seems that no matter where or how a person is brought up, there is an

essence in him. An essence irrespective of culture, parents, environment. Each person has the same concerns about mankind as I do. All of us believe in the sanctity of human life; and that, once someone decides that a life is expendable, either on the radical right or ~~the~~ radical left, then no human life any longer has value.

That belief is the one thing to which I am still clinging. As soon as I feel I can judge another human being's life is not worth living, and can make that decision for him by killing him, then I no longer have life. Then everything is permitted, and the last thread tying me to existence is cut.

But the people down here agree with me. I feel a fantastic sense of hope. Hope that perhaps there could one day be a unification of man. Not a merging, but a converging man. One who is willing to tolerate that which he can't or doesn't understand; one who works, in his own way, for the good of all. Each one striving, separately, towards an omega point.

I want to believe that the people on the kibbutz haven't opened themselves enough; and that the reason they haven't reached their essence is because they have put up too many barriers. Essentially they are good, but first they must get through the barriers they've erected. Barriers which close them to their fellow man; which allow them to dance on a holiday which celebrates Jews killing Persians; which allow them to teach their children war games and to praise them for fighting.

If they could get through to that essence, they would see that to kill someone else is to kill part of themselves, to lose part of their aliveness. Perhaps, for their generation, there is no alternative.

But they pass these views onto their children, and their children's children. Views which say that killing is a necessity. And each succeeding generation hardens its insides, and becomes more blinded to the non-violent option.

It is good to see people down here who believe as I do. People who are groping for answers, but groping in an open way, non-violently committed to helping man. I wish I could stay here longer, but tomorrow, I must head back towards Jericho, the River Jordan, and then back to Jerusalem.

And after I see my family, I am going to go back to San Francisco and do something about the men on Sixth Street. Maybe I'll begin writing. I'll become a messenger to the people, an angel of God who tries to show the people God's law.

But I won't return to what I was a month ago. I hate looking back at myself. It's too painful being constantly reminded how blind I was, how closed to mankind. My speech to the men on Sixth Street; telling them not to worry about drinking because I had an amethyst stone in my pocket. Damn it, I was as hard as stone, as cold and unfeeling as that blue "beryl-like" piece of stained glass in church. When I return this time, I'll be writing from a different perspective: not from man's law, but from the law of God, the statutes and ordinances which the Lord commanded Moses at Sinai.

Biblical Hebrews set aside part of their field for the poor and the stranger. The Harvest Story in the Book of Ruth. People sharing God's laws. Leviticus. But not in our society where everybody is too damn worried about himself. The neighbor is the one against whom you compete, not someone with whom you share. Damn acquisitive society, pro-

erty is the highest value. But like the swimming scene, who in
the world gives anyone the right to own property? Why does some
person have the right to keep others off? No Trespassing, Bullshit,
Who gives them that right?

Certainly not God's law.

When I went to Sixth Street to explain man's laws, I was making
fun of the situation. But the parody was not meant to mock the laws,
for I still envisioned the law as my promised land; and I saw myself
as the self-appointed savoir of the men there.

But the absurdity of the law is exposed in trying to administer it,
Perhaps my ironic parody was the first sign that man's law was
invalid as a base; and that I was once again suspended between Enten--Eller;
the dash--of the ironic man,

As I write this, I'm pointing the way to the one who, by means
of God's law, will return to help the poor, downtrodden, and weak, Forgetmenot,
men on Sixth Street. It's not yet necessary to put flowers on my grave,
for I will return.

"Fasten Seat Belts." Wonder what's happening. Still an hour out
of Kansas City. Must be rough weather ahead. Plane's shaking. Hard
to write now. Lights went out. Scribbling in darkness. Black outside.
Plane losing altitude, crashing...

No, couldn't be. Vertigo. Everything's fine I'm sure. Faith: pilot's
in control. People around me seem calm. I'm not alone, bond between us.
But where's the captain why doesn't he say something?

Plane rolling from side to side losing more altitude I know we're
crashing where's the pilot what do you write when you're dying why is every-
one so calm looking straight ahead and we're dying "talk to me people we're

crashing" they're sitting "are you going to die like sheep being led to the slaughter can't you see we're crashing headlong into a void..."

Pilot comes on: "Minor disturbance. Everything now fine. We're flying over Boulder Springs, Colorado, the Air Force Academy."

Faith in man?

One week in Kansas City. Yesterday morning the entire clan gathered for a Sunday Brunch. I worked all morning preparing a feast of lox, bagels chicken livers, cream cheese, wine, and hard-boiled eggs. The eggs were certainly better than those in the fifth bowl on Passover. I also squeezed one hundred oranges. I wanted this meal to be perfect.

The clan gathered and we sat down to a common meal. For the first time in my family, a prayer was read. I read part of Psalm 133: "Behold, How good and how pleasant it is/ For brothers to dwell together in unity.../it is like the dew of Hermon which falls on the Mountains of Zion."

"Do you remember the brunches we used to have when I was going to Sunday School."

There is laughter, talk of how fast I've grown.

"But why did I go to school on Sunday. Isn't Saturday the Sabbath?"

"You see grandson," Grandpa M. talking, "we are reform Jews. In fact," chuckling to himself, "we here in Kansas City are so reform that we are even more reformed than the reform Jews. Why do you think we celebrate Christmas?"

Some more laughter.

"As long as we're talking about holidays, do you remember when I called you from Carmel last Passover? Let me thank you, Gramps, for giving me

those few facts over the phone. But why did you never teach me anything about the holidays? Why didn't we ever have a Seder?

"We did, son. Don't you remember the time your mother prepared that delicious Seder dinner. You remember, the one in which she made a mistake and ordered a ham bone instead of a lamb bone?"

More laughter.

"No, I don't remember. But I'm being serious. Let's stop laughing just for a moment. This is important to me."

"You're Jewish, but there is no reason to display that fact."

Grandfather E.

"But what am I displaying. What is this 'Jewishness'?"

"It's not that important, son." Dad.

"Exactly what you've made me believe: that it's irrelevant. But I want to know. What the hell does it mean when I say I'm Jewish?"

"Quiet now. You're raising your voice. Let's have a nice family brunch. I don't want to upset my parents or your father's parents."

Mom, wearing her carbuncle ring.

"I'm calm. But I want to understand. Don't any of you know?"

Grandma M: "This is sure good orange juice. Did you freshly squeeze it?"

Try to smile: "Yes, Grandma, just because I know how much you like it."

"Do you remember the girl I wrote you about: Elizabeth? We often talked about religion. I once told her that I believed religion to be irrelevant. But she showed me differently. I don't believe it anymore."

I'm smiling on the exterior now. Trying to appear calm.

"Do you just accept your Jewishness because your parents said you

were Jewish, and because their parents told them? What does it mean?
I can't believe that something this central to my nature is irrelevant."

"Here's what Jewishness is:" Grandpa M, "these livers and eggs.
They sure are good."

Uneasy laughter.

"How's your novel coming?" Grandpa E.

"I stopped writing it."

"Why, what's wrong? You're first one sold so well? Money doesn't
last forever. You can't rest on your laurels, the government doesn't
rest on their taxes. \$mile."

"Your hair is getting pretty long. Are you trying to become one
of those hippies?" Dad,

"It's not good for your face." Mom. "You are beginning to get those
ugly red marks, like carbuncles, on your forehead."

"Especially after we spent all that money to have a dermatologist
clean those ugly things up." Grandpa E.

Lull.

"This is fine, fine orange juice. Sure is good to have it today."

Grandma M.

Dad's mother. Blue-eyed grandma. Sitting in corner, not saying
anything, just observing.

Grandparents leave. Mom, Dad, and I left alone.

"Why did you two decide to live in Kansas City?"

"It's a good place to be, son. Business is fine. We're established.
have a good name. There's no reason to move. Why do you ask?"

"I'm not sure. But something is wrong. Maybe it's the anti-
establishment hippy part of me coming out. You know my image: long hair.

Soon I'll be wearing beads, bell bottoms, and attacking you and your establishment."

"Well, your hair is pretty long. Your dad ought to take you to get a haircut."

"For God's sake, I'm 25. You still seem to talk to the image you had of me when I was in High School. Things change. At least I do."

"Maybe that's what bothers me. Nothing has changed in Kansas City. It's all the same."

It's all the same. Two weeks. Walking down to the Plaza today. All the houses are the same: not in design, not in structure, but the same affluence. Neat, manicured lawns. Like our house. Wealthy southern plantation style. Big pillars in front, shrubbery all around. Crystal gas lights on front door. Roses immaculately trimmed along the upstairs balcony. Everything so neat and clean---and sterile.

I am beginning to hate it here. The atmosphere is oppressive. Not the weather, although the weather reflects the muggy, lethargic mood of the town.

There is something stultifying about the life. People here a reflection of my family: cast into the womb of middle class suburbia. And that womb is tightly nestled in the womb of Kansas City, the center of the United States. Sheltered from all problems, domestic and foreign.

Nothing seems to touch the people. They are removed from everything. Everything, except the bridge games on Tuesday and Friday, the golf game on Sunday. That is Mom's world. Dad's world is his business. Those are the shells they've put around them, and nothing is allowed to interfere with or break those shells.

At the plaza, I enter a deli called Bemidbar. A child, sitting on the floor, begins to cry.

The mother's eyes reveal, for an infinitely long second, an expression of hollow fear.

As she engages in her task, the fear passes. She hurriedly bends over to find out what is wrong. She gives him a bottle, checks his diapers, tries to stick a rattle into his hand.

Still he cries.

There must be a reason. Again checks his diapers. Her face turning red, sweat on her forehead, hair falls into her face. For an instant, Kansas City neatness overthrown.

Begins to scold the child. "Quit crying. Come on, one year old and crying like a baby. Stop that." Embarrassment becoming anger.

Child continues to cry.

Both parents now frantically searching for a reason. "He's tired, he's hungry, his diapers are wet."

He spits out the food. The diapers aren't wet. And while being caressed, he continues to cry.

Perplexed. We've taken care of his wants. "I don't understand, maybe he's sick and we should take him to the Doctor."

Yes, maybe he's sick, o parents. But maybe he's seeing. Seeing what you're afraid to see.

Looking out at the world with his churning mind. Everything is new. He doesn't understand. Newness is confusing. Can't express thoughts in words. He feels them.

He cries...

And his parents offer him a rattle.

Maybe you too, Parents, would be crying if you could hear what he is feeling; hear behind the tears, directly into his thoughts.

Has this child's message been lost to the world? Has the newness with which he approaches everything given way to a rotting of the minds? Have things become so routine, so patterned that people not only don't hear the thoughts behind the child's sobs, but no longer can?

How are we any different than that child? Even with all our wisdom and knowledge, how have we progressed beyond the child's tears? Is this world, our lives, the galaxies, inspite of all the facts and information, really any more understandable?

Why are you embarrassed, mother? Is it only because of the other people watching? Or is it because of that infinitely long second when you actually heard what he was saying.

With a feverish panic, you must quiet him. His tears raise a great uncertainty within you. You can't allow that. He must be crying for a reason you can help him with: food, milk, love. But, for that one second, you realized your helplessness.

The people watching. Some smile. That all wise smile that objectifies the situation: mother-child, as old as man. We understand and we smile. People, as long as you can smile at him crying, you'll never hear him. The smile blocks your ears. He's crying: not a child crying, but a human. Don't smile, try to hear.

Others watching, glaring. Clerk trying to add up the bill. You, o clerk, can't hear the child because of your fingers on the cash register. You're too worried trying to see how much money you are going to make.

Those outside. They pass the shop. They hear the child, but in their

wordly wisdom, they say: "ah, a child is crying. Children cry."

Oh, people, won't you stop? Won't you open your ears to hear what the child is saying? Can't you...

Three weeks. Almost thrown into jail this week. Too bad my family is well respected. Immediately the court judges, since they were friends, let me off. Family paid the fine. Nothing was mentioned in the newspapers.

I'm sitting in the kitchen writing this, on a chair beneath the broom closet. It's miraculous that my family still feeds me after what I did. In fact, they haven't once mentioned anything to me about the incident. I still feel lost, wondering in the wilderness. But at least now I feel I'm approaching the existntial mountain from the other direction; no longer am I trapped within man's law.

This week I attempted to free others that I felt were trapped.

There is an exclusive jewelry shop on the Plaza. All the rich society matrons spend their idol hours browsing through the shop, talking about how lovely this sapphire necklace is; wouldn't that diamond pendant look elegant around my neck; can't you just imagine this emerald vase over my fireplace, or is the vase jasper, my dear.

Names flash through my mind as I walk into the jewelry store: sardius, jacinth, varrigated agates. Damn these stones, all of them. Look at these people, worshipping false idols, false prophets of Bfal. Golden calves. Deceiving yourselves. All of you here, you're hiding, hiding behind your affluence. Stop worshipping these calves. You're blinded by the unseeing stones.

Must show them their mistake. I must destroy the stones, for their sake. To unblind them to what could be: God's Vineyard, Kerem-El.

Running through the store, pushing over the stones, overturning the tables of the money changers, throwing gold, diamonds, and other hard rocks through the windows. Vanity. All of you, forsaking the Lord to worship Ba'al. I, even I only, am left a prophet of the Lord. Stop hiding behind your affluence. There's more to life than these stones.

Fourth Week. Dad has been away on business most of the time I've been here, and we haven't had much time to talk. Yesterday I asked him about his Real Estate Business; where and who gave him the right to sell land; why money was so important to him; why did he spend so much time away from the family. I read him the passages in Leviticus on sharing, the peah, the corner of the field.

He smiled and said that my hair was definitely getting to long.

Then he picked up the Wall Street Journal and started to walk away.

"God damn it, Dad, you didn't listen to a word I said."

Turns and smiles.

"Are you afraid to listen? Afraid that if you actually hear what I'm saying it will challenge your most cherished beliefs?"

"When you're my age, then ask me those questions again. Youthful, impatient idealistic youth."

Where does rational dialogue begin?

Mom presents a different problem. But I can't communicate with her, either. The womb from which I came. Since, when I was younger, Dad was away on business so much, Mom felt that she had to become the

authroity figure. The role has taken her over completely. Tonight,
at dinner, she was constantly criticisng my manners, my dress, my con-
versation.

She caught herself, and stopped.

But we both realized that there was nothing else we had in common.
We were strangers. She was her role, and the role no longer applied.
There was no common ground on which we could talk to each other.
How can we love each other when there is no basis for communication,
nothing but silence?

The roles are over. They are shed like a snake's skin, and the
emptiness of the relationship has been seen.

And it's not that we don't see the emptiness; its' not that we
don't want to fill it; it's that we can't. Tonight mom kissed me, and
it was a kiss of such despair; as if she were saying, "Here I am, I
want to touch you, but I know and you know that I can't."

Why damnit, why am I drawing so far away from everything, even
my family, to which I was once closest.

I won't allow this to happen. I must break through the walls.

Fifth week. I asked Mom out for this Friday night. Friday,
I break through, no matter how. I want man to relate to man. I want
people to become closer; and I find myself drifting farther and farther
away from my own family. This is becoming unbearable.

July 12. Sunday, Tish b'Ab. I'm flying again. Dizzily whirling
upwards. How lonely sits the city. Never to return to the womb of my
family. Pain in forehead. My temples crashing inward. Feel in ruins,
expelled. What good are these lamentations, what good are the tears? Here

I go again, pouring out the story. Each word I write, pulling out a piece of my insides and putting it on paper. Here, words, tell the story.

Friday night, sitting in the living room before going to dinner with Mom. (That's it, calm down, write slowly)

I was thinking about writing again. (Good, wipe your eyes) Wondering if there was any way I could use my first novel and turn it into a socially useful tool; if there were any way the words might have some effect on someone.

Mom walked in. We started talking. At first, general. She asked me why I looked so glum. Told her I was upset. The ugliness of the world: dying, suffering, and here I sit in the luxury of this room.

And there sits Mom, her bridge games during the week, golf on weekends. "How do you find that enough? Bridge and golf. Look how empty. You aren't helping anyone either"

Her face hardens, a wall thrown up. "Mom, I'm not trying to attack you." The attack. Why did I ask her: did I want an answer, or did I want her to feel the same frustration and helplessness I do. Do I want her to see the same ugliness in her that I see in me? Probing deeper and deeper. "Don't you feel concerned?" hiding behind benign looking smiles, casting daggers. Keeping my voice soft. Attacker. "How can you worry about whether you shoot an 87 on the golf course, when people are dying?"

"I'm not trying to attack you, I'm just trying to make you more aware.

Her words becoming biting: "But what are you doing. You who sit there so self-righteously? Why don't you do something, instead of wallowing in your own self pity? Why don't you begin writing again?"

"I'll tell you why. Has my writing, in the two years that it's been

on the best seller list, made on person on Sixth Street suffer less?

Who was I writing for? What purpose in this writing: to describe

for other people what they themselves can't see, or don't want to see;

to display these men's insides so I can make money: to live on their deaths?

"Why should I go go back and knock myself out so that other people
can read it and say 'How morbid, how ugly. Do people really live like that?'
No, damn it, no more. I won't put down their insides, their pain as a
side show so that people can let their liberal consciences feel
a twang of remorse. I don't want to be the sponsor of a side show.
God damn it, all those pompous people peering from their self-righteous
positions. Get your damn eyes away from the cage. It isn't a show,
It's life."

What kind of world is this where two people, a Mother and son, can
sit in the living room, both of them feeling helpless to do anything
in the world, to effect any change, and each of them seeing their own laziness
and ineptness reflected in the other?

What kind of world is this in which I want to bring feelings of
love and brotherhood among mankind, in which I talk about tearing down
national boundaries, and yet all I do is destroy relationships within
my own family?

I complained because they were stereotyping me, but what was I doing
to them? Setting up Dad as the business man establishment; Mom as the
bridge playing housewife. Then letting them represent a society. All
images. Nothing real except my images of them. I'm still not relating
to people, but only to illusory figures. I complain about the social structure
of the society, but again it's me. Me about whom I should complain. It's
me who stereotypes, who refuses to see anything or anyone as it really is.

I can never go back there. I've left the womb of my family forever. I can't go back to San Francisco, either. Writing is too futile, I couldn't bear to see those men again. The novel could never help them. I must continue searching, wherever this nauseous whirling leads.

I understand your feelings about the futility of writing. Your desire to supplement your first novel is no more futile than this, my second attempt at writing. Here I sit, taking amorphous words, which are defined only by other words, and try to find some direction in them. There are only four entries left. I'm silently praying that by the time I catch up to the present, the words will have given me a base, and that, through the words, I will have reached the Word.

But this solitary task is no longer enough. I want the writing to be more than a diary; I want it to be a means by which I can communicate my quest to others. This writing is an attempt to share myself. I'm afraid, though. What if people criticize it; what if no one understands it, saying the form is too complex, the images sophomoric? What if they become confused by who is speaking, and can't distinguish between the present and the past? What if they are so mixed-up by the mechanics of the writing, that they fail to understand the essential nature of the quest? What if they don't take the time to understand it?

I'm too close to this writing. If I were criticized, the pain would be unendurable. I wonder if it's possible to have another base independent of this writing. If I were to stop right now, and tear up my past, could I still function? Even as I write this, I already know the answer. It is found in my past: the last day in Eilat. I hadn't written about my past, Johannes,

in nine days; I was functionless, a vegetable that couldn't make a decision on the most trivial question. My fate seemed to rest on the choice between orange and mocha pregort. The decision was too painful. I didn't eat.

I can't exist without this writing, my past. And I now realize that I can't exist without others recognition; yet, if they criticize my writing, their recognition may be the very thing which destroys the foundation I've tried to create.

August 12. One month in Israel. Thank God I finally left the States. I don't think I could have stayed there any longer, and remained sane. I felt cut off from everything; family, friends, myself.

But I am being reborn; a new country, new people, a new life. I feel like a blank slate; and I am going to take the responsibility to choose what imprints I make on that slate. No longer the confining direction of the family, man's law; no longer being told what I should do or how I should do it.

My cabin is one hundred yards from the Sea of Galilee, and from my window I can just discern it through the date fields.

I enjoy working on the Kibbutz. We awaken at 3:30 a.m. The stars are still out. It seems like they've been brought closer to earth, or that I've been elevated into the darkness of the starry night. Work lasts from 4 till 12:30, with an hour for breakfast. The afternoons are free because it is too hot to work.

There is something inexplicably exciting about working amidst nature. My senses are reawakening to the sounds of animal life, especially birds. The other day I played Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony on a portable record player the Kibbutz owns. I had difficulty telling which music was

from the record, and which from the surroundings. A living record.
Beethoven, the forerunner of the living theatre.

My duties are two-fold; I spend alternate days working in the
bananas and the date trees. I don't like the bananas, though, and am
trving to get switched to the vineyards.

While working in the fields, I don't have the feeling that I'm
working against anybody. My co-woker isn't my enemy against whom I'm
competing in order to get ahead. Instead, we are all in this together,
we are all working together for the common good of one another. Capitalistic
competition so common in the States is absent here.

The Kibbutz itself is socialistic. In return for eight hours of
work, all necessary goods and services are given: clothes, food, shelter,
and coupons for whatever you need to buy in the Kibbutz's store.

Everything is paid as long as you live here, and put in eight
hours work a day. Kibbutz Ha'on is filled with young, first generation
immigrants. The oldest member of the Kibbutz is thrity-five. Even now,
however, they are building a place for the older members to live, when
they can no longer work. The Kibbutz seems to be one large family, and
the old are cared for within the framework of that family. The old
aren't cast onto Sixth Street as discarded refuse.

Social Security legislation isn't necessary in order to care for the
old. The family life and closeness is law enough.

At 12:30, when the work ends, I have a feeling of accomplishment;
for I've taken care of my material needs. The morning provides the base
for whatever activities I undertake in the afternoon; the physical
provides for the spiritual. I've lifted the veil covering physical
reality. Now, I must lift the veil covering the spiritual...

September 12. Second month. I think the jubilation of my first entry was due to the change in scenes. The newness has now worn off. Things are hard with me; I'm not sure I'm going to make it, and I don't know what to do. Today is Rosh Hashannah, the start of a new year. The banana fields are beginning to grow. We've cleared the fields and the new trees are planted. Ninety-six thousand banana trees, a solid mass of yellow, and I hate it. Finally, last week, they switched me to the lemon trees. The smell of the trees was fragrant, but I told them that I still wanted to work in the vineyards. Yesterday I began working in the vineyards.

I'm also continuing my work in the date trees. They are beginning to bud. Objectively I can say they are beautiful; the red dates, contrasted with the deep blue of the Sea of Galilee in the background. But the beauty doesn't touch me. I'm so far from everything.

Today, I'd like to begin again. Rosh Hashannah, the day when the Lord sits upon his throne with the Book of Life and Nations spread before Him. In this book He inscribes the destiny of men and nations. Maybe one day I'll write a book inscribing my destiny, the destiny of a profoundly confused, unhappy man.

The shofar is blown, and there is a very solemn service. A Rabbi came to the Kibbutz in order to conduct the service. I ask him why the shofar. He is shocked; ignorant American Jew. "Rosh Hashannah is the anniversary of the creation of the world; at the time of the creation the sound of the shofar was heard, heralding the coming of physical order out of chaos."

Blow loudly o shofar.

"Furthermore, young man, God proclaimed the day of the blowing

of the shofar as a sign to every man and nation to bring his spirit out of chaos, and to rededicate himself to an ethical and moral life. God, in his infinite mercy, gives each of us nine days to repent. On Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, He seals our destinies."

Nine days. I wonder if that's symbolic of life in the womb; nine days for me to be reborn, to cast off my sins. Today is the first of those days; the start of a new year. Even a new name; the people on the Kibbutz have been calling me John.

"In olden times, young man, the Jewish people would take two goats. One they sent to the Lord by sacrificing it in holiness; the other they sent out into the wilderness, and the sins of Israel were symbolically placed on that goat. Their fate was determined by lot on Yom Kippur."

But I am going to choose--choose the wilderness; to take my sins, put them upon me, and go into the wilderness. Maybe one day I'll be able to reemerge, and be changed. The sins will have vanished; I will have died, and my sins passed on. A new John will be born, purified and rebaptized.

I would even like to give myself as the sacrificial lamb, if only that would help this world. I would say to God, "Blot me, I pray thee, out of Thy Book." If only that would make this world a better place, if only my sacrifice would mean something, I would willingly do it.

"On Yom Kippur, the people of the Kibbutz will walk to the Sea, take off their clothes, and shake them into the water. I imagine you don't know why, do you?"

"In the Book of Michai, God says he will cast our sins into the depths of the sea. The ceremony is called Tashlik, to cast away."

That gesture seems ironic to me: for it was out of the depths of the ocean that my sins began, or I at least first became aware of them. Now I must cast them back; I must get rid of all the ugliness within me, in order to attain the law of God's word: Love your neighbor as yourself. First, I must love myself. And I don't

I hate myself for my sins, and I don't know what causes them. Why Macbeth, Lady Macbeth? Where does it come from; why the darkness the evilness within us? These sins which separate me from others.

Everyone of these plagues will be worked out of me. Even if it becomes a Sisyphean task: each time one comes to the surface, I must plunge down and attack another. I have to do this, to free myself from myself; to conquer the sins which separate me from myself.

And which separated me from Elizabeth. She was right when she said I sinned. I hit her, spit on her "and some began to spit on Him and strike Him," she was so beautiful. I've never before hit anyone; I wanted to kill her, for I thought she was the person by whom I was enslaved. Now I know I was only enslaved by myself, and by the rationally ordered law of man, the words of the law.

Elizabeth, I will never sin against another as I did against you. If only I could crucify that ugly part of me so that I would no longer be enslaved to my sin.

I still maintain the principles I wrote about in Eilat: sanctity of human life, the need for a non-violent, rational approach to dealing with people; and therefore I can't condone Johannes' action. But I'm not sure he had any other alternative.

After his last supper with Jaellois, Johannes is feeling alone, cast adrift. At the same time he is feeling superfluous to her, he is

beginning to come to grips with the ocean, and his own finiteness in relation to it. He tries to understand what is happening and explain it to her; but she says nothing. He wants something concrete, but her reactions only reinforce his feelings of non-existence.

He must show himself that he exists. If she won't rationally talk to him, then he is left with no alternative except violence. By his violence, he exists.

But it is this very violence which causes him to close up, to lose part of his aliveness. He can't keep himself totally open to his deed, and therefore part of him dies.

Either he feels he doesn't exist, or, in his attempt to exist, he dies. For Johannes, existence is death.

October 12. Third entry. Third month. I just awoke from a dream. Three a.m. I go to work in an hour.

I feel suspended on a tightrope in my mind. Nine days ago, October 3, the third great Jewish pilgrimage holiday, Succoth, began. My life has been an inverse reflection of the historical significance of each of the other two pilgrimage holidays. On Passover, which commemorates the physical freedom of the Jews, I entered the world of physical chaos. On Shabuot, the Jews received the Ten Commandments; spiritual freedom for the Jews, spiritual chaos for me.

Now, Succoth. Nine days of rejoicing. The first day, the Kibbutz made a booth of olive branches, the sukkah; a frail, thin structure symbolizing peace, and faith in man; the opposite of a fortress or castle in which man hides from man.

There was a short service that day: "let thy son and thy daughter

and thy man servant and thy maid servant and the Levite and the stranger and the fatherless and the widow that are within thy gates, let them all rejoice together."

My dream, a unified world, and I'm a stranger to it. People celebrating faith in man, a prayer for peace, and I can't join; my sin separates me from them.

Some of the older members told stories passed down for generations; stories of the celebration that used to take place in the days of the temple in Jerusalem; singing, dancing, flaming torches, hymns of praise to God.

One old timer, Dov, told a story he repeated many times while he was in the concentration camp at Auschwitz. "In ancient Jerusalem, there were no wells; all water came from the cisterns. On Succoth, the people would take the water from the wells and pour it into the altar. They did this because of their complete trust in God. In their minds they were saying, 'God, even though there isn't yet rain, and our cisterns are practically empty, we won't fearfully hoard the water that is left, but as a symbol of our faith in thee, we pour it on the altar.'"

That's his story. Simple. Faith. Faith in God and in man.

I've left behind everything which could keep me from having faith in God, which could block me from Him. My great desire to build monumental works of literature. I was like Ramses 11, enslaved to myself. Of making books there is no end. But I led myself out from myself. I quit writing my novel of words. Words were my wealth. The more words, the more vanity. Ruin in a flood of words. Can't serve God and mammon. But now I've left all my possessions behind me, in San Francisco. No longer am I hiding behind the word of law. Now, I'm bare.

and am working on my sins, so I can one day face God. I'm desperately trying to follow the law of His word: to love thy neighbor as thyself,

But god damn it, why can't I change? Why the sins which separate me from God? I pray to the God I read about on Yom Kippur, the God Who is slow to anger, Who is forgiving and pities Nineveh. God Who cares for His creation; and Who suffers when they suffer. A Lord who punishes when it is necessary, as it is necessary for me, but Who feels pain when He has to make His own creation suffer. Pain as if over the loss of an only son.

God, it is You that I'm seeking. Put false ways from me. Teach me Your law so that I can strive to be divine, to emulate You. Help me, God, I need your help. I'm not sure I'm strong enough to do it alone. Help lead me back from my sinfulness. Hear my cry, please hear it. "For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at work with the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members."

Today is Simhat Torah. These past thrity days since Rosh Hashonnah I've worked so damn hard on myself, but nothing changes. I fight with all my strength to rid myself of the bitterness and hatred within me, but it's still there. Why can't I forgive me? I think back with hatred to Elizabeth. I hate her. I hate me for hating her. That god damn womb in which I tried to hide. I found more bitter than death the woman whose heart is snares, and nets, and whose hands are fetters. I hate her for leading me to the ocean, to this chaos. Instead of forgiving others, I hate them.

I have to leave for work in ten minutes, but first I want to tell the dream I had last night. In this dream, I'm on trial, sitting on the

witness stand. The bench is empty. There is no judge. The court-
room is dark.

At the far end, a door opens, and an indistinguishable form
begins to walk towards me. I watch the shadows cast on the floor as the
person walks nearer. The light source is from the door, and it is
impossible to see the face clearly.

He walks still closer, shadow preceding form.
He opens the gate which separates the spectators from the trial
proceedings. This person identifies himself as the cross examiner. He
silently reflects, then begins to probe and rip into me. He relentlessly
points out my sins, my crimes.

All night this continues. Dawn breaks, and the court begins to
fill with light.

I look up. There is no cross examiner. Only sunlight reflected
by a mirror.

When I awoke an hour ago, it was still dark outside. Now the sun
is beginning to rise. I'm my own hardest critic. In spite of the fifth
amendment, a witness against myself. My life seems like a recurring attempt
to justify my actions to myself; and to justify them against a standard
which I haven't established, and which doesn't exist. I am both a
Moses and also the Jews in the wilderness. I am the man justifying
myself to others, at the same time that I am the others who demand that
he justify himself.

I want so badly to believe that all I must do is follow the dictates
which the blue tassel on my sleeve represents; that if only I obey the
voice of the Lord, keep his commandments which are written in the books
of the law, I will become sinless.

p.m. Simhat Torah, the last day of the Succoth festival, ends at dusk tonite. The nine day festival will be over. Today, at noon, the last two chapters of Deuteronomy were read, and the first chapter of Genesis. The Torah never ends.

But today my writing does. I've been slowly cutting down the frequency and length of my entries in the diary. In Kansas City I wrote once a week. In Israel I've been writing once a month. But no longer will I fall back on words as a crutch. No more reflections. The word lives in living. One final entry.

In the date fields, trying to bear fruits that befit repentance. Pruning the date limbs so there is room for them to grow to their full size. Tree after tree. Walking, slowly, through the trees. Waiting. Moments seem endless. For half the day to end, eternity. To see eternity in an hour. But what if it is unbearable.

I feel my head plunged down and, like a battering ram, I attack life. I expect somehow to come out on the other side of the despair, to make a full revolution, to break through some barrier. Yet, eternities pass each day, and nothing happens. There's nothing new under the sun. I don't even know what is supposed to change.

Be patient, I say. Be patient, endure...wait.

Work ends, another day begins. More eternities to wait, patiently plodding through the fields. Waiting, with tears, gasping for breath, grasping for life.

"The East Wind, the wind of the Lord, shall come from the wilderness."

Striving after wind. I lower my head and continue to walk further into the wilderness: lost, languid, lamed.



Jericho: two kilometers
Jordan River: five kilometers. In ten minutes I'll

be swimming in the waters of the Jordan River, near the spot at which it flows into the Dead Sea.

I'm writing this on the bus. In my lap is an entry I made ten days ago as I was approaching the Jordan River from the south, through the Negev and the Jericho Wilderness. I'm going to meet my past. John is approaching from Eilat, I am approaching from Jerusalem. A reuniting with myself. My final entry from the past:

Today I leave Eilat. These past nine days have made me realize how important writing is to me. The self-imposed order hides the chaos; for writing gives the illusion of progress.

By writing, I create. I, the author of life, grant the characters life. They are in my control; I am their life, their god. I order their experiences, and by ordering them, I give them meaning. I create order and meaning for the characters, and they, in turn, create my order and meaning.

I am able to say that my writing is an illusion. I should be able to say that I could see it destroyed, my life's creation ruined, and shrug it off with "What the hell, let's start again, it was only an illusion."

I should, although I don't think I could. I need the illusion of permanence which writing gives; I need to feel I'm creating. There is nothing, and then the word.

Words which destroy me by hiding me from life are the very things which create me and give my life meaning.

Although it's only been nine days since I finished writing about Johannes, the first signs of the chaos are beginning to slip back through the factuous order of the writing. And the chaos becomes unbearably painful. This morning

I awoke and felt something in
my stomach.
It was lodged deep within,
like a piece of ooze that slowly
penetrates your whole being.
A pain that attacks the system
from within; a pain that can't
be located or defined; a pain
which squeezes your insides until
you're too weakened to cry out, too
tired to care.
So I lay on the sand feeling the
pain whirl through my insides; helpless
to do anything, but feel its agonizing
grip on me.

I'm lying on the bank of the Jordan River, dripping wet. The water is chilly and cold. The waters of the Dead Sea are so salty I couldn't sink. While floating, I looked around at the hills, the old Roman ruins, the pillar of salt that was Lot's wife, and I laughed.

First time I've laughed since I arrived in Jerusalem twenty-eight days ago. I feel like I've finally come out of the wilderness, entering the promised land at the at the Jordan River and the Dead Sea. I hope this isn't just a one day reprieve amidst my days of anxiety, like Lag B'Omer.

I felt that I was being baptized by the waters; and yet, at the same time, I transcended that, and was the one doing the baptizing.

A change has come over me. I am no longer my past, no longer John. We are two different people. The old me, John, tried to tie my sandals,

but couldn't. The past is unworthy and unable to interfere with my presence. John was the center stage. Before him was Johannes. I am the final stage, the extremes: J-----es, Jes.

The sun is scorching me. I can think of no better way to celebrate my new identity than by taking a nap in the sun.

Sun's sweltering heat...relaxing quiet beneath Roman ruins...luxuriously lounging by Jordan River...waters rushing b...beth Elizabeth...knocking on sleep's gate...Morpheus' amorphous faces...Jovial journal resting alongside river...Mind whirling...

Snow capped Mt. Hermon in the distance. Must leave the Kibbutz and one day climb it. Leaving the Kibbutz climbing higher whirling upward, through snow, nine-thousand foot summit.

A court room on top. I'm a judge. Four defendants. Can't see their faces in my mind. One gets up.

"Name?"

"Maya."

"Proceed."

"Here is my first exhibit. Bowl number one from the Seder dinner: salt water. Johannes built a ship to protect him from salt water. Sailing down Suez Canal from Mediterranean, artillery fire sank his ship. He was left floating around Pi-hahiroth.

"I am the transubstantiation of Johannes. Different in mind and body. After he plunged into the Red Sea, I emerged. I walked to Marah, eating horseradish and lettuce from the sixth bowl, searching for man's law. Life was too bitter. I built a papyrus raft and returned to the canal. I reinforced my raft with biblical papyrus, and the Bible's first letter, Beth; then..."

He sits. Another gets up:

"I must now speak."

"Name?"

"Eddy."

"Proceed."

"I sought Elizabeth on the next rung of the canal. I was trying to fill the emptiness of the seventh bowl. I wanted to be the patron of the poor, the downtrodden, and the weary.

"Elizabeth shut the door on me telling me I was in the Wilderness of Sin. The canal gates were closed, and I was too far through the existential mountain to return."

He sits, next stands.

"Name?"

"Maya "

"The same as the first witness?"

"No, on the other side of the mountain."

"Before you proceed, let me lift the veil covering your face.

Now, continue."

"I searched for God's law. My dream was a brotherhood of man; each man recognizing that we have only one Father; each man recognizing that we are all brothers. I pushed through the Wilderness of Sin trying to point the way to the return of the harbinger of the redemption, the patron of the poor."

He points to the fourth witness; then walks over to the first witness and merges with him. A brief confusion follows. Eddy disappears.

The fourth witness stands.

"Name?"

"John."

"Before you proceed, answer me: Where is the second witness, Eddy."

"Call me Eddy. It's all the same to me."

"Proceed with your story."

"The story is over, Judge."

"But what is the point. Who is on Trial?"

"You."

"Me?"

"Please do not try to speak like an innocent, unblemished lamb. It is you who are the host ~~that~~ is dreaming about us, and who brought us here. You are responsible for what you've done to your past. You have made each of us into a character. You are no different than Johannes--you fictionalize us in order to find an essence. Fictio cedit veritati. But we aren't characters, and we resent what you have done to us."

The first witness rises:

"You invited us to meet you here, and you have inhumanely treated us by reducing your past to fiction. I am not a character and I condemn you. You are guilty."

"I hold this mirror up to you, and by so doing I find you, the first witness, in contempt of court. Can you possibly believe that following your six hundred and thirteen laws makes you guiltless?"

"Do not answer. For I know that it doesn't. Where your law ends, faith begins. You know that the law cannot save you from sin; only through the Judge's grace can your sins be forgiven, only through faith are you justified. The law is necessary but not sufficient to..."

"But aren't you the second law who is now Judge of..."

"You are not listening to me. You are too wrapped up in the word

of the law and you are letting it hide you from the human element. Don't you realize that God is love and he who abides in love, abides in God, and God abides in him? You are like a stone, Maya, as callous and hard as the tablets upon which your laws are written."

"Judge, I beg to differ with the living stone. But I feel it necessary to hold this mirror up to you; for it is you who are too wrapped up in your religious quest, the law of the Word, You are totally ignoring man.

"You talk about the fulfillment of the Word being love of mankind; but is that only an abstract concept irrelevant to the actual situation?"

"Faith is the fulfillment of the law. Christ is the end of the law. Unless you can accept that, it will be impossible for me to continue this conversation, and I will have to adjourn court."

"You aren't listening to what I'm saying. For Christ's sake. You are like a machine reciting a catechism."

"Maya is right. You seem afraid to listen. You are too caught up in the Word to hear his words."

"What is happening in this courtroom? Clouds descending. I'm becoming confused."

"You know what is happening. We are your past, and you are the consubstantiation of both of us. You are Jes, but you are also Maya and me. Present is the past, the past is the presence.

"No longer can you believe you are only of one essence. You aren't either Jes or Maya or Eddy, you're all of us. Your essence is, in essence, contradictory.

"But why is it necessary for a dream to tell you that? The dream will end, and you will swallow us into..."

It's late Sunday night, but I finally made it back to my room. I fell asleep on the bus ride back to Jerusalem. After I got off the bus, I bought Schwerma, roasted lamb, put it in a pita, and began walking towards Mt. Zion.

There, I entered the Dormition Monastery. After reading some latin inscriptions under ornately crafted mosaics, I walked downstairs into the crypt where there was a replica of Mary lying in a pyre, the spot where she fell into eternal sleep. Room gave me an eerie feeling; dimly lit, dank atmosphere.

I entered a roped-off section to read some inscriptions above the altar.

"Leave. Enter you that holy place not," German Monk commanded.

I leave the Monastery, walk through Zion Gate into the Old City, and begin walking down Armenian Street. I'm glad I didn't get angry at him, but I'm not sure he was justified in yelling at me. Perhaps the place was holy, but he was investing the symbol with too much meaning. I trespassed upon a symbol. But, there is an infinite distance between finite symbols and that to which they point. He was hiding behind his symbols.

Eli did the same thing when the Philistines captured the Ark of God. He heard that his sons were killed, but he didn't react. When he heard the Ark of God was captured, however, he fell over backwards and broke his neck. The Ark was more important than his sons. He became more attached to the Ark than that to which it pointed.

No more symbols for me, no more hiding. It's time to again face the abyss. But I think I can make the leap this time, to become a knight of faith like Abraham.

I continued walking down Armenian Street, and saw the Christ Church ahead. Approaching it from a different direction this time. Although it was late at night, there were many lights on. I entered the gate, and a man accosted me in Arabic. I told him I didn't speak Arabic, but only little Hebrew. He spoke a little English, so we began talking.

He told me his name was Me~~ch~~zedek, and asked if I wanted some bread and wine. His way of showing friendship.

Even though I'd just eaten and wasn't hungry, I took them. My way of showing friendship.

"Why are the lights on so late tonight?"

"Today is Palm Sunday. Many people are praying. I am up because I am the night watchman for the church."

"You sleep during the day?"

"No, during the day I work at UNRWA, the United Nations Refugee and Work Agency for Palestinian refugees."

I told him that I would very much like to visit the agency; and this Wednesday, we have a date.

Monday. Received a letter from my family. My grandmother E. has cancer and is dying. I'm going to carve the red bishops today.

Today is Wednesday. I haven't written in two days, and I feel my base slipping away. I stared at the typewriter all day yesterday. One of my greatest fears is that my insides have been completely used up and no new thoughts, nothing creative will ever again come to me.

My greatest fear is that if I begin to write, I will again retreat

behind the words. As I said Sunday, "No more hiding behind symbols." No more letting others around me hide, either. The theatre, Teatron, a place of seeing. I am going to write a play in which I use words as a vehicle for life, for seeing. In principio erat verbum. The play will be called just that: Debarim. Since it was a man named Johannes who first hid behind words, I am going to make him the main character.

Debarim: The Last Scene

A play in three acts
An act in three plays

(The curtain is drawn. On the left side of the curtain is a Star of David, which has been sewn onto it. There is a table outside the curtain on which are placed two candles, bread, wine. Johannes is lighting the candles. After he lights them, he begins the blessing over wine, facing the Star of David:)

Johannes (reading from a book)

Boruch Atch Adonoy Elohaynoo melech hoolom, boray pree hagofen

(He takes a sip of wine; then turns around to pick up the bread in order to bless it. As he picks up the bread, however, he sees the audience. He mumbles the blessing inaudibly, then turns to the audience:)

Johannes

Dear Audience: I want you to know that I am here in the capacity of a prologue. It is my function to serve a useful purpose. I am to inform you of what is supposed to happen in tonight's play, so that you can interpret the action with more ease from your red-cushioned seats. There are few characters. The author was very nice to you. He saw fit to keep the number limited so there wouldn't be any confusion in your minds. Let's clap for the author. Come on, now, all join in. (Pauses here for the audience to clap. They will, for crowds are too timid not to follow direct orders.)

Thank you, dear audience. If you hadn't clapped, there would have been an uneasy pause. You see, it says right here in the script (holds up the book from which he read the prayer) "Pauses here for audience to clap. They will, for crowds are too timid not to follow direct orders." Wasn't that excellent psychological insight by the author?

Notice, too, that the author is combining an antiquated form--prologue--with a modern form--living theatre. You people are actually part of the play. You have your lines--clapping. Admirably done.

Now, for the characters. I am the author. (Hopefully more applause. If they do, he can say they've again kept thier part of the script; if they don't, he can saw how hurt he is that the audience isn't following

Johannes

their lines)

I am the author, plus I am the character Johannes in the play. There are four other important characters. There is my father, who is called brother by my aunt who is called daughter by my grandparents whom she and her brother my dad call dad and mom. The nurse and doctor are irrelevant.

As the play opens, I am sitting in a hospital room with my grandmother. She is dying of a malignant cancerous tumor.

(He begins to walk through the curtains, stops, faces the audience and says:)

Don't be upset, it's all a play, you know. I wish I could offer you some wine. (Picks the wine up off the table and takes a swig.) Ah, agapé love feast.

(The curtain rises. He remains standing at the table, but now he is in the middle of the hospital room. The room has two big windows. The stage scenery has been painted so that the windows appear to look out upon an idyllic pastoral garden below; a field in which there are nothing but trees under which little children run playing their recorders and over which are white clouds and blue sky.

The walls are painted with flowers. Johannes goes over to the wall and picks a rose to put on his table. The rose is real, although the audience shouldn't be able to tell which flowers are painted, and which are real.

The sun is beginning to rise. One can barely detect this from the light which comes through the one real window in the room. A nurse quietly walks in, carrying pictures of sunrise. She puts the sunrise into the two windows; bright orange-red ball begins to light up the greyness of night.

The nurse leaves. Grandmother begins to wake up, rubs her eyes, as if the early morning light is too bright. She reaches for a copy of the morning newspaper; then says:)

Grandmother

(Yawning, shielding her eyes). Johannes, please pull the curtains. The light is too bright.

(He mechanically goes over to the windows, and pulls the curtains)

Thank you, my man. And thank you for staying with me last night. It gets so lonely at night.

(Doctor enters)

Doctor

Well, how is my little girl this morning. Why, there's no sunlight in this room. (He goes over to the window, but pulls the wrong curtain, revealing smog-filled Kansas City sky. He awkwardly smiles, pulls the right curtain, revealing a beautiful summer day.)

Doctor

Ah, what a beautiful day. Sunlight pouring through the window. (He pulls a switch;) birds singing. Everything to please you.

Grandmother

Yes, it's nice to see the sun shining in, to hear the birds singing. (She begins to choke, cough, tears rise. But she regains composure, and smiles.) Makes me feel good to be alive.

Doctor

And that's the way we are going to keep you. Just lie back and smile. Take a deep breath. It's like you are in the midst of nature. (The painted flowers on the wall emanate a natural scent.)

Pretty soon, we are going to send your breakfast to you and oh, here's the rest of your family.

(The rest of the family enters. Her son is tall and slim. He wears a dark black gotee to hide a weak jawline. His hair is neatly cropped, and he is wearing a tightly fitting business suit. A newspaper which says Wall Street Journal is under his arm.

His sister is wearing a red bonnet, and her cheeks are thickly rouged. She is wearing a miniskirt, bobbi socks, and sadal shoes. She isn't married, and is about forty. It is obvious that she is trying to play a role; she herself is conscious of that. When she speaks, her voice is high and squeaky, like a child's. She carries a red book under her arm, through which she constantly thumbs.

Her father looks like her brother, only twenty-five years older. He has made his fortune, and is now relaxing in his old age. His laugh is more self-assured than the sons, but his jaw line is disappearing beneath a layer of fat. He, too, is carrying around a paper with Wall Street Journal written on it.

The Doctor leaves when the family arrives. The three new members hug the two that are already in the room. Hi, hello, it's good to see you how are you the sun is shining are all uttered, but it is unclear exactly who says what. The nurse wheels in the table over which Johannes blessed the bread and wine. The family breaks into a chorus: "Ah, food for a queen, who sits upon her royal throne." The bed is propped up, and the Grandmother is seen for the first time. Her face, pale, haggard. She is wearing a brightly colored nightgown which vividly contrasts with her sickly white face.)

Grandmother

Yes, food for a queen. The queen rises and looks down at her disciples. (Coughs)

Grandfather

Look at that meal. All specially prepared.

Grandmother

Where is the parsely, I want my parsely.

(All begin frantically searching for the parsely. Words are cast out from them.)

It must be here. The nurse couldn't have forgottn it. Nurse

Nurse (running in)

What's wrong?

Grandfather

There's no parsely. She has had parsely every single day three times a day. We are paying good money for this room and

Grandmother

I can't eat without parsely surrounding it. It looks so stark sitting there. I must have the parsely.

Daughter

(Consulting her red book) I'll make a note to get some parsely mommy dear. That's silly of her to forget it like that. I don't blame you for not eating.

Grandfather

And with these prices, too. They'd damn well better hurry up.

(Nurse rushes back in, and gives the parsely to the daughter.)

Daughter

There you go, Queenie, now you can eat. (She sprinkles parsely over the bread.)

Grandmother

(Looks at the parsely, smiles, then brushes it off the bread and begins to eat.) This is much better. All that pretty green around the food. Even if I don't eat it, I like to have it there. It makes everything taste so much better. Otherwise the bread looks too stark sitting there without any decoration.

Son

Well, we certainly are helping the parsely business. Look in your paper, Dad. Parsely Palates: $17\frac{1}{2}$, up a point. Weren't you telling me that once you could have bought in for 4? Would have quadrupled your money. (They both continue running their fingers down the page) The net capital over a six month period, assuming long term investment, tax loopholes, and anti-inflationary measures, would have been a pretty penny.

Did you know the government was thinking about changing capital investment to mean minimum stock holding of one year between sales? Damn government always trying to rob us.

Grandfather

You're right about that. Like they say, taxes and de...uh you can't make too much money these days. But it's good to see you're following after your old father. Those business administration classes are beginning to pay off. One day you are going to have to handle a lot of responsibility; for example, the monthly security investment, which (their conversation fades into the background, but they continue talking and discussing the stocks and various other articles in the paper.

Sister

Mom, you look so grand. (walks over to her and brushes her hair back) We will have to get you to the hair dresser soon, for we want you to look even prettier. (She rushes back to her red book which she momentarily set down)

Let me make a note of that: parsely, hairdresser. Oh, look at those nice roses. (Walks over and smells them.) Not quiet as nice as those chrysanthemums, though. I'd better make a note to send all the people that sent them thank you cards. (She continues to bustle around the room, straightening things up, ordering the room, and writing notes in her red book. Johannes has picked up the book from which he recited the prayers at the opening of the play, and is busily reading it. The Grandmother is reading the paper. The father and son are no longer talking, but each is reading his Wall Street Journal.)

Grandmother

What is most important to me is my family. Family togetherness. (All look up from their books and papers)

I remember walking down the street one day, and there were four people. All were laughing. I don't know their background or anything about them, but they were all laughing. Laughing from deep inside. Not many people laugh like that anymore.

Daughter

Don't you remember, mommy, when I used to sit at the table and giggle. Once I got started, you couldn't stop me.

Grandmother

That's not what I mean. That's giggling. I mean laughter.

Daughter

That reminds me (returning to her book) I must call the man to sweep my apartment tomorrow.

(Johannes, who has been quietly reading in the corner, suddenly becomes upset, and tears a page from his book:)

Johannes

Damn this script is confining. Where's the wastebasket?

Grandmother

Over here, behind the bed. I don't want anyone who is a guest to see it when they walk in the room, so I keep it hidden.

Daughter

It's a good thing you reminded me (consulting her book) It's time to empty the wastebaskets.

Son

Sister, why do you spend so much time reading that red book of yours. You're just like Mom used to be. Monday this, Tuesday that, everything is written down for you. Friday shopping, Saturday gardening. Everything is by the script.

Daughter

You're right. I could do nothing without this book. I'd be completely lost. In fact, one day I lost it. I literally had to stay in bed.

But look who is making the criticism. You're clutching pretty tightly to that newspaper. I don't think the stock market is going to crash if you throw it away, but you might.

You probably won't admit it to yourself, but you can't say anything without that paper to guide you.

Grandfather (looking over his paper)

Does anyone remember what pill I took this morning? I can't remember it for the life of me.

Grandmother

(Drops her newspaper, begins crying) I don't want to go. I'm sorry, I don't know why I'm crying. I've lived a full life...but I don't want to go to the other world. I feel so lonely. So lost

(All papers and books are dropped; each rushes to the bed, surrounding it, as if they're attempting to insulate her from the pain. Daughter begins making the bed. Son and father ask her if she wants more food, some orange juice.)

Daughter

Let me make your bed nice and tidy

Son

How about some orange juice?

Daughter

Put some perfume on. Smell how fragrant this is.

Son

I can get the juice for you right now.

Grandfather

With these prices, we can get you anything you want. I still can't remember the same of the pill I took this morning

(Johannes is conspicuous by his absence in the dialogue. He has not re-opened his book, but is sitting there watching the people.)

Son

(looks down at his paper, and begins reading, as if a speech) Don't be upset, Mom. There is an article right here in the paper that says how often society makes older people into stereotyped images; saying they are too old, past the age of fulfillment, are degenerating. But this conference held in Chicago by Public Welfare people says that those stereotypes aren't true. The conference said that what old people really need is a sense of mastery so that they feel they are still in control.

Now, pick up your paper and let's quit crying

Grandmother

(picking up the paper) Yes, that's better. (looking down at paper) Yes, I have a life ahead of me. I'm not worried. That crying, that wasn't kosher, was it?

(There is an uneasy laughter as the curtain falls, ending the first act.)

I decided to take an intermission, and am now on the bus to UNRWA. I forgot all about my appointment to see Melchizedek.

It's frightening the way in which propaganda fills one with paranoia. I am riding through what was once the Arab sector of Jerusalem. The streets are being ripped up, so that the Arab workers can improve them. My initial reaction to them is fear. That's a reaction which would highly please Israeli propagandists.

Along the road, there are remnants of walls which were used to divide Jerusalem. These walls separating Arabs and Israelis must be

torn down. The bus is passing St. Stephens Church; now it is passing St. Georges Cathedral; two places where people pray for peace.

But one does one do at three in the morning when he is being shelled? Often I'd awaken to mortar fire on the Kibbutz. Although I have done absolutely nothing to the Arabs, they don't even know me, yet they would take the only thing which is uniquely mine: my life.

Passing St John Hospital, St. Joseph Hospital; two places where people die for war.

I remember one day I was walking on the Golan Heights. I asked a member of the Kibbutz if the Heights weren't once mined.

"Yes, but not with people mines, only with tank mines. We don't have to worry because tank mines won't go off unless something much heavier than a person steps on them."

"But why would they plant tank mines?"

"Because people aren't that important."

The blue and white flag showing a United World is flying in the distance. As I get off the bus, I see Melchizedek waiting at the gate. He smiles, we embrace;

"What happened, Jes? You were going to be here this morning?"

"I'm sorry. I started writing, and lost all track of time."

"I'm afraid I won't be able to give you any more than a quick tour. We are opening a new school in Nablus, about ten kilometers north, and I must check on it.

"This center is the main agency in control of all Palestinian refugee camps along the Jordan west bank. No refugees live here, however. There is another agency which works on the east bank of the Jordan, but I'm afraid you can't cross the River because the Jordanian government won't honor your Israeli-stamped passport." He bought me some grape soda pop, saying he waits until after

work to drink wine. We continued to walk around the grounds, and he explained:

"Through international Red Cross supervision and the aid of the United Nations, we try to provide food and shelter for homeless Palestinians. I have someone I'd like you to meet. You two can talk while I check on the school at Nablis."

We enter a low-ceilinged building:

"Mr. Eddy, this is Mary M. She can probably tell you much more clearly what it is like to be a refugee. I'll see you both in about an hour."

"First, please call me Jes. Where do you come from?"

"I am a Palestinian, but am now forced to carry an Israeli identity card."

"Why do you call yourself a Palestinian?"

"In 1948, my family was driven from Jerusalem during the Israeli war of liberation. Twenty years later, another war. I was only two the first time. But the second time I was twenty-two. My family and I decided not to leave our home, for we lost everything during the first war. We went downstairs during this bombing. But we still lost everything; this time to scavengers."

She was laughing as she spoke.

"You either have to laugh or cry, don't you?" I felt sorry I said that, and tried to cover up by asking another question: "What do you think should be done about the Arab-Israeli conflict?"

"The main problem I see is the Palestinians. They are being totally neglected in any proposed peace settlement. They are homeless people, without roots, driven from their land in 1948 and again in 1967."

"Does that justify their killing. The El fatah, for example..."

"Wait, please. You don't understand at all. These people don't have homes, they're nomads. Do you want them to lie back and die? To be born rootless and buried rootless?"

"But how can they kill? Killing makes you objectify people, lose part of your aliveness; that means killing part of yourself."

"Look, Jes, they don't have any aliveness. They're dead people from the day they are born. Arabs don't want them and treat them like second class citizens. Israelis don't want them and treat them the same. They have no power. They're

nothing, but they are going to make themselves into something.

"The path for them is death. They kill, for they have nothing to lose. They don't have life. They kill, and by killing, they become people. Others have to stop and take notice. You can no longer pretend they don't exist. You can no longer keep silent about them."

I thought of the time with Mery at Carmel: "Yes, I do understand. Perhaps this will seem trite to you, but I, too am lost. Not physically, for I need nothing material. But spiritually lost. Nomadic."

She smiles,

Melchizedek walks in, good bys are said, and I leave.

I feel like I've touched two people. An Arab, a Palestinian, a Jew. We've communicated, without bombs, without mines. On a one to one basis.

But we aren't governments; and they are the ones who "in the name of the people," declare the wars. We aren't the society which sets up self-perpetuating racist institutions.

How is her problem and those of the Palestinians any different from the blacks in America? The blacks have nothing to lose. Their lives are nothing, and when they kill, riot, they become something. No longer can the liberal white man ignore them. No longer can society perpetuate racist institutions with impunity.

Kansas City society, hoarding its wealth, is totally oblivious to what is happening to these Palestinian refugees, living in tents, praying for welfare.

Like the men on Sixth Street. Living on welfare checks. Completely at the mercy of the damn bureaucratic legal structure. Fucking laws--do the laws feel, do they understand the pain of those men? Do people feel? Do the people in Kansas City so blithely tucked away in their affluent

shells feel what is happening? Kansas City, the heart of the United States. The life flowing blood center of the nation, a symbol of the warmth and humanitarian feelings of the United States of America. But Kansas City has no blood, no emotions in its heart.

Israel, eleven thousand miles away, and nothing is different. Same suffering people. Same callousness by the Israelis and Arabs towards the Palestinian people as the Americans towards the men on Sixth Street.

Will man learn? Meriam Jachobed, who was like a mother and sister to me, driven from her home in 1948. Mary M., driven from her home in 1948 and in 1967. In twenty years, history has made a revolution. Nothing has changed. Just different people consumed in power hungry land grabbing legal battles. No human element at all. What has man done to himself that he can become so callous to other men.

If I hadn't left the States, I would have been crushed by it. As long as I molded and fit into their society, all was fine. The lawyer who never questions the law, only accepts it. That's wonderful, makes the society function like a well-oiled machine. Perpetuates a nice status quo so that those who have established themselves are never touched; and so that the men on Sixth Street have a dollar thirty a day for food, clothing, shelter. Land of affluence.

They would have loved it if I had remained in my shell of the law. For as long as I was within it, I couldn't remove myself far enough from it to question it. Mery helped break me out of the shell enough so that I could in fact see I was in a shell of law. Woe to you, lawyers.

Kansas City wanted to keep me in that shell; it wanted to suck away my life and have me sacrifice myself for the status quo and the

perpetuation of their wealth and values.

I see how one could destroy. To destroy and tear down even if there is nothing with which to replace it. For what exists, kills; the society that exists sucks away the life blood of those in it, trying to mold them into itself. Never will I let myself become a Eugene Rastignac. Society will not crush me.

The shell has to be torn off the society so that it can see itself. I would destroy every bit of property in the land, every treasure, building, and shop if that would make people come out of hiding, and look at themselves. If only they would quit hiding behind their affluence, their shells, and face one another...as people.

Why do nations fight wars? For humans or for abstract ideologies? U.S. in Vietnam: "we had to destroy the village to save it." Song My: massacring women and children under the banner of making the world free for democracy.

What has happened to man? Doesn't he think any more? Have all love and feelings been drained from his life? Doesn't he realize what he is doing when he shoots another person, drops napalm on an innocent child?

I hear music. The Sanhedrin Park is ahead. The place where I pissed on the tombs of the judges. There seems to be a festival on the park grounds. I have to buy a ticket to enter. Park is different from deserted place of two weeks ago. Now, ground is littered with people.

Seventy year old lady with torn nose sitting on the ground, eating sunflower seeds. Laughing, showing toothless gums. Children dancing, singing. Lutes, drums, wailing voices. Amidst the confusion, some people are quietly sipping tea. A forty year old lady is lifting

her baby carriage over the fence to keep from paying the sixty-cent entrance fee. She is, in turn, pulled over by her husband. A policeman runs up. They laugh at him. Oink oink.

I pick up a recorder and begin playing the Israeli dance tune that I once played in Golden Gate Park. Some Israeli children begin to dance around me. Singing, laughter...I throw the recorder down.

People are dying. Men on Sixth Street are lying on hard cement. Palestinian refugees don't have enough food. How callous can I be? I'm laughing while others are dying.

Thursday afternoon. 12:30. Intermission is over, after twenty hours. Time, a man-made concept to objectify reality, to make life more livable by allowing there to be an appearance of order. But man rushes and hurries as if he didn't in fact make time. He acts as if time is an absolute to which he has to conform.

Quit hiding behind that illusory monster, Jes. Don't let it push you. It doesn't exist.

ACT 11.

Johannes

This is the second act. Note please that this is the second of three, I repeat three (holding up three fingers) acts. Peace (holding up two fingers in peace sign)

I'm sorry the intermission was so short, but we must abide by the rules of time. Please get back in your red plush chairs so we can continue. I know you must have important things to do when you return home.

It's an interesting thing about time. In the ten minutes that you had for intermission, the entire morning passed. It is now late in the afternoon. As the second act begins, my grandfather and his son my father are in the hall talking when (have curtain rise--players, looking awkward, rush onto stage. Everything is to appear dishelved and confused. Prop men still setting up the hallway scene)

Oh my God, what happened. Who raised that curtain? (Have him go back stage and check, then come out and say:)

Johannes

Don't worry, dear audience, everything is going according to script. I was just trying to fool you. After all, it's only a play. Right here in the script (holding up prayer book out of which he originally read blessing over wine) it says that I am to go back stage and check what is happening. I wanted to see if you were on your toes and were maintaining your objective distance from me and the other characters.

Did any of you become embarrassed because you thought we'd made a mistake? Let's have a show of hands; those that were upset. .

Good. Still keeping your distance. Those of you that raised your hands, be more careful. It's sometimes dangerous to become too involved in a play.

To continue, the family is now in the hall. Except for the Grandmother and her daughter who are still in the room. (Makes a motion as if letting the audience in on a secret;) actually they are offstage. Shhh.

Now, if the curtain could please continue to rise.

Son

We should have rehearsed that curtain scene more. I wasn't sure that my confused look was at all effective. After all, this has happened so often that it is pretty easy to take it in stride.

Grandfather

What I want to know is what was that damn pill they gave me this morning.

Son

Dad, would you quit worrying about that pill.

Grandfather

But I can't remember what it was. I wonder why it is so important to me.

Son

I'm sick of hearing about you and your pill. That's all you could talk about this morning.

Grandfather

Were you any better? Hiding behind your newspaper all morning, and incessantly talking about the stocks.

Son

(anger rising) So I was hiding, was I. Weren't you there reading it with me. Not only did you hide behind your blue pill, but behind the money. Everything is money with you, and I'm sick of it.

I led my life that way because that's the way you told me to: to make money. More and more money. But God damn it, I'm fed up with it.

(Takes the Wall Street Journal from under his arm and throws it down, tearing it too pieces; then grabs his father's newspaper and tears it up.)

That's what I think of the way I've lived my life, like a reflection of you.

Grandfather

(Eyes staring blankly ahead) What was that pill I took this morning. A blue pill

Son

Dad, forget the script. Don't you hear me? This is the first time I've ever spoken to you about what I feel. It's the first time I've felt I wasn't playing a role with you, and saying to you what I thought you wanted me to say. Please listen to my words.

Grandfather

(Looking confused. Directs his eyes towards Johannes.) Grandson, I'm forgetting my lines. (there is pain in his voice, as if he's trying to break out of his role, but realizes he is too tightly trapped to do so.)

Please give me another copy of the script. (Johannes hands him the book he has been reading. The grandfather begins to read, but very self-consciously.)

Grandson, I'm forgetting my lines. There is pain in his voice, as if he's trying to break out of his role, but realizes he is too tightly trapped to do so. Please give me another copy of the script. Johannes hands him....

Johannes

Come on, snap out of it. Just read your lines. You're reading the stage directions, too. Here (goes over and points to where the Grandfather should begin reading)

Grandfather

Maybe you're right, son. A lifetime lived for you. I wanted to protect you and make you comfortable from...Damn it, I hate the way I sound as I'm reading this. I mean it son. I love you. But it's damn hard for me. I've told you a million times: the depression, the poverty in which your mother and I lived. We wanted you to be safe from that.

But maybe you're right, and I only wanted me to be safe. Money isn't human. It has no emotions. It never cries out to you in pain. (he begins crying.)

Son

(Runs up to his father and hugs him) This is the first time I've seen you cry. It's the first time we've ever held each other; the first time you've ever shown me you.

I didn't think you could cry, that we could talk.

Grandfather

I've begged for the opportunity. Every night I've pleaded, but he (points to Johannes) wouldn't let me. He was too worried about how to stereotype me as a miser hiding behind my money to let me cry.

Johannes

Careful. You're treading on dangerous ground. Remember, you're just a creature of my imagination, and any time I want to, I can cut you out of the script. Now, play it like it's written in the script.

Son

But what Dad said was written in the script. You can't get angry at him for saying what you told him to.

Johannes

Let's be fair. After all, my response to him was also written in the script. As was your response to my response, and as is this response to your response to my...

(The daughter runs in, panting.)

Daughter

Mother's dying. She knows she's going to die, and has been putting on an act for us so that we wouldn't feel uneasy.

Grandfather.

What was that pill this morning? The blue one.

Son

Dad, quit hiding. All of us. We're hiding her death from her, and we're hiding it from ourselves. You dad, behind your pill. Sister behind her red book, Me behind the newspaper. And you, son, behind this script. We have been putting on a play for her, and she's been putting one on for us. No more illusions.

Daughter

(frantically) She's dying and you're philosophizing about what happened the first act and how we're all hiding behind illusions. How can you stand there and talk (screaming) She's dying. Do you hear me, she's dying.

(she turns and runs back, the others stand there)

Johannes

(to the audience) Don't become upset. Even though our illusions are breaking down, the play itself is still an illusion. So we are safe and she is safe and you are safe. There are three acts. There's still another one to go.

Let me explain to you a bit of my philosophy about this play. (as he begins to talk, the other two character lie down on the floor, alternately stretching and yawning)

I want to tell you that this book from which I originally read the blessing, is actually a script. So are the Wall Street Journals, my aunt's red book, and my grandmother's Kansas City Times. Perhaps that should have been told you earlier but, in the first act, I wanted you to be caught up in each individual player's illusion. In this act, however, I am telling you, because I don't want you to have any illusions about the players themselves. Now, I want you to be caught up in the illusion of the theatre itself, and to realize that the actors were only acting as if they were hiding behind illusions.

Johannes

Now, you people can take an intermission. Till the next act...(waves his hand at them)

Daughter (waiting until many of the people have gotten up for intermission.)

(running on stage)
She's dead. God damn it, you stand out here and talk, and she's dead. (Sobbing hysterically)

Johannes

Shh. Don't say that now. It's intermission time. Anyway, that line isn't in the script.

Daughter

Yes it is, right here.

Johannes

No, I don't see it anywhere.

Daughter

Right here, after you say, "I don't see it anywhere."

Johannes

I don't see it anywhere.

Daughter

Quit reading your lines, damnit, I'm serious. My mother died. God, you're cold.

Johannes

Ah, yes, I see your lines now. Now I say: "Yes, I understand. Let me hold you." (All this action is very rigid and formalized, according to the script.)

Don't cry, auntie. Especially not during the intermission. Look, it says right here, cry gently. (She continues to sob; father and son still lying on the floor, taking their intermission, alternately yawning)

Daughter

She really is dead. Go and look.

Johannes

No, not till the next scene will I go look

Daughter

But this is the last scene.

Johannes

(exasperated:) Auntie, that's the name of the play, The Last Scene, a play in three acts. This is only the second act.

(Aunt leaves, as well as the other two characters. Johannes comes forward; the curtain falls. Only the table with the candles, bread and wine, is visible. The curtain is divided into half. On one side is the star of David. On the other is a cross.

There are three bursts of tears, "oh no" from back stage, then all is silent.)

Johannes (walking towards table of wine, bread, candles:)

Introibo ab altere Dei. Ad Deum qui me affligit. (quietly, almost under his breath). This is the third act. But this time there are no illusions.

Let me read you a part that I cut out of the second act. (here, his father walks back on stage.) I didn't read it because I didn't want to upset people. I wanted to hide her death, even from myself. Lord, I wanted to hide behind my faith in you.

I know I've sinned. I know I can only be forgiven by your grace. So I had to believe in you. That's why I left this passage out. It didn't fit into the order. But now listen God.

Audience, you can go home now. I don't want any intermediaries. You didn't here me did you, audience, I said you could go home now.

What's wrong? Are you feeling alienated. Did you want something different? Something from which you could leave and not feel upset? Wouldn't you like to be able to discuss this right now, to talk about the dialogue, the acting? Anything to keep it from touching you.

I saw a ballet last night, dear audience. (sarcasm in his voice.) Swan Lake.

The people that were there last night were just like you. Clap clap clap. Beautiful they shouted. Beautiful.

I wanted to stand up and shout to the ballet dancers: "You're an illusion. Look how you've trapped these people. Things just don't end like that. Siegfried and Odette don't go sailing off into life ever after accompanied by Tchaikovsky's chords."

You'd like that to happen tonight, wouldn't you? You'd like the players to come back on stage and say, it's all ok, she's alive.

But she's dead. I'll never see her again. Why aren't you clapping audience?

Like I said, you can go. I don't need or want any intermediaries now. I'm through hiding. This concerns you, God, and you alone. You, the last thing in which I had faith. Deuteronomion, the second law. I was hiding behind the law of the word. But no more. Listen to the passage:

(His father, who has been standing on the side through this soliloquy, begins to talk:)

Father

There's nothing I can do. Can you understand that? I wake up in the morning and I know that my mother is dying. It eats my insides out to watch her sit and talk while I know that there is cancer eating her insides apart, tearing her to pieces.

And all I can do is sit and watch, helpless to do anything

Son (Johannes)

Now you know the way I feel every morning of my life. I wake up and I'm helpless. We're going to die; you, me, Grandma. And there's absolutely nothing we can do about it. Some Lord up there kills us all.

Father

Let's try to hide it from her, put on an act.

Son

Why? That's what we do all our lives. Hiding from death. You are going to die just as surely as she is. What are you hiding from her? She knows she's going to die. We all do. Yet none of us faces it. Life seems to be a struggle to find ways to hide our deaths from ourselves.

Father

If only it could have been a car, or a sniper. At least we would have understood why. Or if she had been unhappy with life, or had hurt someone and been a cruel woman.

But she never hurt anybody. A fat old lady that sat in her rocking chair with her few strands of grey hair and blue eyes that warmed you to your depths. (He begins crying. Johannes makes no motion towards him, and his sister comes on to lead him off stage.

Johannes.

I am not going to comfort him, Lord. I'm not going to do anything which would divert me from You. Just You and me, Lord. I want to know why a woman like that died.

Did You hear her say, "I don't want to go to the other world?" Did You see my grandfather crying or hear my father's heart being torn apart?

Are You an audience to his? Did you enjoy watching the play and seeing my grandmother's insides being ripped apart by cancer?

I bet You especially liked the first act: seeing people try to hide behind illusions. You like it when we bury ourselves in the sand and hide from death.

But the play is over, God. It's You and me. Why did she die?
Answer me.

You don't answer, do You God? Has no one ever yelled before? Has everyone either cried out the pain, or gone to the bereaved and said, "Oh, everything is for the best, don't worry."? It's like a big fucking joke and everyone is afraid to say anything for fear they might disturb the others sitting next to them.

Look at the audience (pointing) How quietly, how passively they sit.

But I shout at you Lord, killer, cosmic Hitler. You killed Uzzah. David said he was angry, but his anger turned to fear. I used to fear You, Lord. But my fear turns to anger.

(He turns and faces the cross on the curtain) *Dis misso non tuum peccatum, iniquitates tuas. You must ask me to forgive You. No longer do I need to strive to show faith in You. You must show me a reason for faith. Quia peccatavisti opere*

I've spent my life seeking You, looking for signs of Your Presence. I began searching in the Torah. Did I find You there Lord, You who said to Moses, "I will make My arrows drunk with blood and My sword shall devour flesh...from the long haired heads of the enemy."

Johannes

Then You have Moses tell the people of Israel: "If you will be careful to do all these commandments which I command you to do: loving the Lord your God, walking in His ways, and clinging to Him, then the Lord will drive out all these nations before you...no man shall be able to stand against you."

What kind of Lord are You? Don't YOU realize that all men are brothers? To try to convince man that we are all in this world together seems impossible. To try to convince God...

Do You enjoy seeing people suffer, Lord? The people in the Wilderness were starving. They cried out to You for meat, and You sent them quail. But, "before it was yet between their teeth," You smote them. You give them quail, lure them to eat, then kill them for lusting after quail. Who put the hunger in them?

Should they have said nothing, and passively died of hunger, shriveled up while saying the Lord is good? What about the six million Jews? Should they, too have just submitted, saying, I have faith in the Lord.

(Picks up the cup of wine)

Here is the cup of wine. Hic est calix meae sanguinis. Biblite ex eo, Domine.

(Picks up the bread, brushes off the parsley)

Hoc est enim corpus meum. Manducate ex hoc.

I dip the bread into the wine. Chametz. It's reddening. Bloody red.

God, damn You. I damn You. Why haven't You answered? I challenge You, o merciful God.

(turning to the star of David) Shema Israel Adonai Elohemu. Hear of the wonderous Lord, o Israel,

Where are You wonderous Lord. I've searched through the fire and the earthquake. I've searched through the wind. Where is the still small voice?

(sudden change in voice, to a pleading, tears:)

Please God, show me that voice. I'll forgive. I won't ask what brought the fire, earthquake and wind that preceded. Please let me hear it.

(Silence)(head buried in hands) Oremus (Kneeling before cross)

(More silence)(then, in bitter rage)(Jumping up)

Why am I praying? I want no solace or hope from You, Lord. What should I pray for: blind resignation? Should I have asked that my grandmother live another five years, another twenty-five?

Is that what you want us to pray for--a suspended

Johannes

sentence? Like Hezekiah. You gave him fifteen years. Then You killed him. Do we thank You for that?

Murderer, I challenge You. I won't sit still like those slaves (Pointing to audience) I won't bury my pain behind illusions, or relieve it by tears.

You're silent. Are You afraid? Afraid of anyone that challenges Your all powerful authority? Do You fear that someone might get too near and see You for what You are?

Why did You swallow Korah up? Korah, the existentialist Messiah, wanting to know why. If that is what it means to "despise the Lord," then I will never cease. Long live Korah! (lifting wine glass, in toast against Lord)

(Smashing wine glass on floor)

Lord, I hate You. I hate Your guts. (Falling to floor he shouts:) God, damn You.

(As he is shouting God, Damn you, curtain should be falling. There is to be no curtain call. If someone applauds, he is to shout at them: Shut up, damn you. Are you clapping for my guts?)

God, damn you. Those were my words, my curses. Now what do I say? Do I say the play is over so the playwright can go home? I can't leave Johannes lying there, for he said what I've felt but been afraid to say. I've been afraid to turn to God, and have done everything I could to avoid confronting Him.

But now, all illusions are stripped away. Now, God, there's no one left to confront but You.

Outside the air is damp. The sun has set and the sky is ominous ; right after dusk but before it has become dark. The shadows are longer and narrower, and blend into the darkness.

Stop at Herod's tomb. My shadow is cast onto the tomb. Thirty-three days ago John began writing here in Jerusalem, in a cafe on David Street. Fuit homo missus a Deo, cui nomen erat Joannes. But John is now

a shadow of my past. A shadow I leave behind lying at the foot of Herod's tomb.

Walk past a windmill and down through an Arab village. Woman singing. I wonder where her song comes from...

Climbing stairs now. Higher, ascending. Standing on Mt. Zion. Walk past the tomb of King David, upstairs into an old room with chippeed pillars. The Coenaculum, site of the last supper.

I want no supper. I drank from the same chalice and ate from the same bread as Johannes did. The words of the play were my supper. Et verbum caro factum est. I'm my supper. Living bread, the second bowl, Z'roa.

I feel like vomiting as I leave the Coenaculum, I enter into the Jewish quarter through Zion Gate, and stop on the Street of the Chain. To my left is Jaffa Gate, the cafe, David Street, all that is known.

Turn right. The Western Wall is ahead.

I talk to a Hassidic Rabbi. We talk about Martin Buber and Hassidism. I ask him if he knows what Buber said about Jesus, that Jesus is the man who faced God most directly...

"Don't you want some Teflin with which to say a prayer at the wall?"

"No, not now. No prayers."

I leave and walk through Mt. Moriah, thinking of Abraham's sacrifice. What kind of God is this Who requires such a sacrifice from man. It's as if God is sadistic and wants man to suffer. He must have known the terrible agony, the gnawing pain that Abraham felt on the third day of his walk up the Mount. Does God demand this pain to ensure belief? Why does He constantly test man? Doesn't HE have faith in man?

As I leave the Old City through Lion's Gate, a group of small Arab children rush up to me. One child, about five, is holding her baby brother in her arms. Her clothes are gypsie-like: long dress covering her ankles. Her hair's tied in a pony tail. Beautiful brown eyes. They could have been like Mery's, only there was no sparkle.

"Give me money."

An old man on Sixth Street. An Arab girl in Jerusalem. Starting her life out like they are ending theirs. At five, begging for existence.

I give her the few agora I have in my pocket, and watch her rush away. I head towards the Basilica of Agony and the Garden of Gethsemany. I don't fit in this world. I can't fit while people are living like that.

Ten more children run to me in the Garden. Look around at Olive trees, nice, neatly kept garden. Flowers. Physically beautiful. Children hugging me, pleading for their lives. Give me money, give me food so I can eat tonight.

I look at the Church of All Nations, standing on the grounds. A symbol of man's togetherness and brotherhood on earth.

I look at the olive tree in Gethsemany where Jesus taught his disciples.

Finally, I look up at the sky.

I know why I am wrestling with God.

Mortar fire awakens me. The ground is wet. A wind is coming up. More shells explode. Shells being shot at a monolithic enemy. The enemy doesn't have feelings, flesh, blood. Enemies don't sweat, or cry.

Euripides, the first man to cry out, to hear the woman's agonizing torment, the children screaming and crying out, to hear behind the heroic

exploits which Homer told.

And the prophets heard: Isaiah, Jeremiah. They, too shouted in protest. Martin Luther King heard. He had a dream. He was shot. What good is his dream? What good was your protest over 2000 years ago, Euripides, or Jeremiah. What answer do you have now? Answer me, dead people. Tell me about the virtues of pacifism, non violence. Did you hear about the riots one year after your death, King? Where are your words now? Why don't you answer? Any of you. Are the tears choking you? Is the futility crescendoing in your ears, deafening you to my plea?

But forget about the Church of All Nations, forget about finite man. Where are you, Adonai Elohemu, the Lord our God? Here is your City of Peace, but where is there a sign of peace? Even if man doesn't kill man, You kill him. Don't pass the cup from me, God. I don't want you to take it away, for I drink it to the dregs.

Leave Gethsemany, and begin walking back to my room. The sky is clear, a starry night. Enter the Old City through St. Stephens Gate. Walking straight ahead. Pass pools of Bethesda. I hear the shelling in the background. Station number one. I know what I must do.

I see the world dying. I must awaken them, I must be their servant and suffer for them. Their eyes are unseeing, their ears unhearing. But by my death, I can show them that they are killing themselves.

These words descend like the weight of a cross. My death, the total fulfillment of my love for what manking could be. My death, in order to save at least a remnant. Trip in darkness.

If only they heed me. World of flesh hiding behind
their man-made bricks. I must show them what is possible. Tell
them how I freed myself from each brick--material possessions, friends,
loved ones, family. I see my mother's image. The day I left Kansas
City. I freed myself from all wombs--law, family, Mery, nations.
And now I'm freeing myself from God. You, God, are the final brick
from which I must free myself.

No, no one can help me carry this cross. It's mine alone.
Fall again.

God, You're the last brick which must be removed before I can
be toally free; free of all illusions. First I had to cut through
the symbols around you, all rituals and ceremonies which prevent
people from facing you--like the monk at the Dormition monastery.

After thrity-three days of hiding behind words, I come forth
to face you. Fall third time. Clothes being tattered, stripped off me.

I'm on a pinnacle, God. I've gone through everything in an
attempt to fill the seventh bowl. I've openqd and gone through all
the doors. You're the last one. I've knocked long enough. Now
I open it and face You. I created a character, Johannes, and made
him wrestlé with You. But I'm not hiding behind him anymore.

The only control You have over me is my death.

And tonight, You don't have that control any longer. I must
have complete freedom, even if that means my death. I won't let you take
my life, Killer.

Sun is rising. I no longer care about the son.

I feel my hands have been tied, and I'm being pierced by nails.
I, catholic man, being pierced by some force. I, everyman, sacrificed

on an altar, nailed to a cross, and bleeding.

But I choose my death. I voluntarily take my life. What are You going to do, God? Now You're powerless. Before, You killed other people for cursing You. But not me, I beat You to it.. Sorry, Powerless One, but now You're reduced to nothing. Now, I'm God and I suck away your last bit of power by my death. From my pinnacle, I spit down on you...

En archē ēn ho logos. Friday the Word and words died. Midnight of Easter Sunday. Holy Sepulchre. Greek Orthodox Service. Pomp and ritualized ceremony. Deacons and Greek clergy march in, the Archbishop with his crown of jewels. Flame of the resurrected Christ being passed as each person lights their candles from it.

The Archbishop side steps an impression in the floor which marks the half way point between the site of the crucifixion and the site of the resurrection.

People start singing. A fat old lady takes her arms and puts them around me.

I fall asleep, dreaming:

climbing a ladder from Bethel. Ladder leads to an open door. Voices are singing. Holy holy holy is the Lord God almighty. Walk through the door. No faces. No bodies. Just amorphous words of song.

Flashes of lightning, peals of thunder. Music begins to modulate into an opera. Andante overture. Ominous violins. One large throne, empty.

A table of showbreads on which there are seven bowls. Three on each side of a large bowl placed in the center. The bowls on each end, numbers one and two, are filled with blood; blood that will once again be used to turn rivers red. The first plague.

The next bowl on each side is filled with darkness. Darkness that is used to cause anguish in man's soul; the ninth plague.

The two bowls next to the center, numbers five and six, are filled with foul sores, boils, leprosy; the fifth plague.

There is just one bowl left, the seventh. The one bowl that, until

today, I've always found empty. But I can see there is something in it. I start to look closer. A word booms out. I turn and see a man on the throne. He is reading from the Book of Life. The words begin to engulf me. I fight off their shapes and forms but they become larger and more intricate, entangling my arms, crushing me beneath their weight. Exhausted, I resign myself to their will.

The letters begin to pass me amongst them, faster and faster, like a flowing river. Words begin to glide by me in a blur. A vision forms from their midst. I see a field in which little children are dancing to recorder music. The ox is eating straw with the lion; man is living in brotherhood and peace with fellow man. The Holy City Jerusalem has come down from the skies, and no more will nation lift up sword against nation.

God's ways are finally made clear to me. The violence of the Old Testament, His cruelty, man's pain and suffering, were all part of His divine plan to bring about this idyllic community of love and understanding.

The word's suddenly end, and I am cast back into reality. I stand before the man reading from the Book. He closes the Book of Life, then walks over to the seven bowls and drinks them to the dregs. The wraths of God vanish forever.

He puts his hand on my shoulder to embrace me.

The hand is drawn away. The Greek lady smiles at me and says she must go now. Sunlight is filling the Holy Sepulchre. Most of the people have already left. I wish she had left her hand on my shoulder.

I feel sickly, although I'm not sure why. My dream showed me the God for whom I had been searching. There was meaning in the world. The

men on Sixth Street no longer felt the pain of existence. The Arab girl no longer had to beg. Here was the answer to the seventh bowl. Finally, after my frantic search for something to grasp onto, some absolutely good essence, I had found it.

I knew that ultimately everything I wanted would work out. I knew that God existed and existed exactly like I wanted Him to. He had assumed an inflexible form. My literary and religious quests had converged. The Word was no longer in flux.

And yet, knowing that, I find no solace or comfort. I look around me at the world, and feel a sickly numbness. If this world now is the price we have to pay for future harmony, I can't accept it. The knowledge of the kingdom to come does not decrease one bit the pain of that Arab child in the streets. It does not decrease one bit the pain and suffering around me and within me.

It leaves me standing here, still begging for something to hold onto. But finding nothing but a cold Eastern Wind, which is impossible to grasp.

Vendors are preparing their shops as I walk through the Christian sector to David Street. I stand outside a small cafe. Pastry smells. Narrow sidewalks. I walk in, buy some tea, and lean against the window, watching faces hurry by. Anxious glances at watches. Through the window I see a waitress carrying a tray of donuts. She enters the shop and sets the donuts on the counter.

Some of the footsteps halt, look in the window. Thick gooey donuts are bought, shoved into waiting mouths. Mechanically: hand, mouth, swallow; footsteps faster. Little ants, head lowered, food mouth swallow.

The watches. Hurrying faster. Why are you hurrying o man?
With your head down rushing forward to gain time. Time o man doesn't
exist. It's your invention, a monster wearing a mask; and behind the
mask is no face. The mask is your illusion to hide the face of nothingness.

It's another brick that you've added to your tomb. Stop and
think. Tear down some of the bricks. You've been so busy making
bricks from Haroseth that you've become buried in your own creation.
Learn to see again.

See the moon. Do you remember the question the astronaut
asked from the moon "I wonder if the world is inhabited?" From
the moon, o man, the boundaries of nations can't be seen. You kill
for boundaries, for territory. Look at the sky. Look at your nation.

Another brick must go. Now, you're hiding behind one less
illusion. *Judicium non debet esse illusorium.*

But what is left you ask. No time, no nation. Where are you
hurrying? Are you rushing to the Boor's Head Tavern to hide behind
your alcohol?

Home? *La mensae preparata.* Home to the womb of the family.

The largest brick save one. The family, huddled close for comfort.
You work for them, toil the fields for them, and they in turn toil the
fields for their sons. Vanity, daughters of Zelophad. Generation to
generation, each providing an inheritance for the next. Where is it going,
o man? Aren't you hiding behind your family?

You're beginning to shake. Why? Because another brick is torn
down? False illusions giving away. Now you're becoming free, unbridled,
like a Preswalski stallion. You're beginning to see, aren't you? No time,
no nation, no family. What is left?

God?

Yes, God. The last brick in the tomb that you've spent your life constructing. Let me read to you about God, o man. Turn to Isaiah. Not the suffering servant passages. Beyond that, to that last chapter. "Rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad for her...that you may suck and be satisfied with her consoling breasts...you shall be carried upon her hip and dandled upon her knees. As one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you. You shall be comforted in Jerusalem."

From your mother's womb to your wife's womb to the Lord's womb, suckling breasts. No more wombs, ol man. Not even the Lord. Beyond God lies the abyss.

I too cleared away all the bricks but the last. Then I had to clear away that part of my tomb to see what lay beyond the womb of the Lord. Thursday night a man named Jes wrote a play in which I was the main character. Jes wanted to lead forth mankind from their self-imposed tomb. He was willing to be a suffering servant and to die for man so that a remnant might be saved. He saw God clearly, ol man. Too clearly, without any illusions. Friday morning he died.

I alone am left to tell thee. I, the lawless one. Kai ho logos sarx egeneto.

Why are you hiding your face, old man? It's in vain, you can't escape. Non sperar, se non m'uccidi ch'io ti lasci fuggir mai.

You're crying old man. You don't like to hear these words, do you? You want Jesus to be resurrected today. Do you hear the mortar shells? Is that the resurrection?

Look around you, old man. Everywhere is death. People are killing

each other, for nations, for land, for pride. Show me a sign of the resurrection.

The trumpets, do you hear them? Do you see swords turning into plowshares, wolves and lambs dwelling together, calves and lions fattening together?

Shearjashub: a remnant will return. . . .

Do you think we are that remnant?

Are you still with me old man? Are you at the edge or did you again retreat behind one of your bricks? You're quitting, aren't you?

Isn't a forever endurable mechanical life better than unendurable screaming chaos?

I understand, o man, why you must. Why it is impossible for you to stand here with me. Here, at the edge. Behind me is family nation, God. Before me is the abyss.

