milk magazine

volume three

this issue:

Ron PADGETT
Linh DINH
Tom CLARK
Anselm BERRIGAN
J.J. BLICKSTEIN
Jane JORITZ-NAKAGAWA
Aaron BELZ
William ALLEGREZZA

New! A Day in the Life of Two Artists: The Art of Yvonne Jacquette and Rudy Burckhardt, By Vincent KATZ

Apoc-Collapse: PostFluxPost Booklets from Luc Fierens, reviewed by Tom HIBBARD

20 Questions with Bill BERKSON

translations of Attila JOZSEF by Gabor GYUKICS and Michael CASTRO

prose by Gerard MALANGA

interview with Allen Ginsberg on Harry SMITH by Paola IGLIORI
MORPHOLOGIES OF PARADISE

"I soil the paper to prepare it
for hallucinations. I reverse the
day's attempt to assassinate me."

—Matta

Shamanic jimson in everyone, the human Xibalba
a cosmogonic patch where twisting language retwists,
metaphorizing at the speed of dream, touching
the opaque shoulders of smoking trees, lighting
campfires in the backs of gigantic caterpillars.
This perception of paradise, first apprehended in
the Upper Paleolithic, I experience asleep,
via dreaming. Paradise is close, so close as to be
dadden. Paradise is in our brains.

What Blake calls Albion is this ancient creative zone.
The Fall is not original sin,
the Fall is that abyss between here and original imagination,
which we inherit as shamanic longing.

As one attempts to cross an abyss, metaphors
transmogrify so quickly
the initiate's receiver jams, loses its bearing,
deconstructs, like those divers
making their way through the 500 foot
waterfilled tunnel leading to the Cosquer cave—
the silty kicked-up sediment blinded them,
they lost their way among submerged stalagmites,
drowned.

In the 1940s, the 20th century broke in two.
A revised version of hybrid man
—Auschwitz and Lascaux in the same brain—
complexed its obsession with "homeland".
Fueled with primal glory and Zyklon B, he sings:

"I'm always trying to get back
to my little caul shack on Ancestor Delta.
If somebody else—Kosovar, Arab, or Jew—
happens to be there,
I'll claim he is air, and plant my fangs
in his 'absence.'"

I sat down on the steps of the Ivory Tower and wept. The Amer-
ican's Guatemalan husband had not only been kidnapped but tor-
tured and murdered. She doesn't know but knows, her 11 year old
son is nearly cross-eyed with knowing, and I know, sitting on the bed's edge, before Channel 12. Trying to gag her terror and grief, so as to carry on with the interview, she finally pulled her blouse up over her face—as if to teach me another dimension of "the faceless woman" said to crouch on a bridge below the roots of the World Tree. I dream of lifting up this head, and assessing its weight, knowing full well it is impossible to weigh the unending assault on women's bodies and personalities by the guardian husbands and brothers.

"Be forever dead in Eurydice"
Be forever born in Persephone.
A run runs through the morphologies of paradise.
Boogie-woogie of our diagrammatic sentence: death and the possibility of redemption in a single act.

For 1500 years, Eleusis, spiritual homeland of the Greeks. What did the initiates behold—which they were sworn on the penalty of death to not reveal—in the Telesterion?

1) An ear of corn repeated in silence?
2) A cereal wafer, the seed-kore, which they ate?
3) The Divine Child, or Savior, variously named Brimus, Dionysus, Triptolemos, Iasion, or Elenthereros the Liberator, laid in a manger (or winnowing basket), whose flesh was eaten by the initiates in the form of bread, made from the first or last sheaves?
4) An artificial vagina, kept in the cysta mystica, which they touched?
5) An omphalos, or birth cone, representing the cervix, with fruits and flowers, and a child emerging from a horn of plenty?
6) The spirit of Persephone herself, returned from the dead with her new-born son, conceived in the land of death?

Whatever they beheld—since it was said to bestow happiness, the true life, freedom, respite from all troubles—must have confirmed to them: after they entered the earth they would rise again.

And who knows as well what the sacred king saw the instant the goddess veil was lifted—an afterlife? The origin of life? A scowl-veil of eternal gray?
Ah, dear tricky veil, you make us think, quest, you are the rent/unrent conundrum provoking our initiational probes to translate the plutocracy of the literal. Not to lift or rend, but to translate the veil. The head of Hercules must be veiled for the god, via omenta symbolics, to be reborn. Yet we know that rebirth too is a halfway house.

No one has been to death and returned to say: Emily is there, following her fly, or, Artaud is happy, he has learned to bowl, or, Pinochet is a 60 jab-a-second forked barbecue. Dear veil, speak to us of your fiber origin!
"We, the Mothers of Lascaux, extracted fibers from celestial plants, located the entheogens, set undulating broken lines as coiling winds, winding torrents. Channels of moisture circulated in our mouths imbuing thread-like fibers with helicoid strength by opening/closing our jaws, working our entire faces, while breathing, we formed sound strands, speech lattices, what you call the revealed Word, the veil word— thus to lift the veil is an act we Mothers disavow. To lift the veil would be to see the earth naked, speechless, as on the first day, amidst the chaos of origin fiberless spirit, the not we knotted."

CRANIOLOGUE

Wearing my reconstruction mask I rest, a 90,000 year old skull. Having been tumbled by Olson, Pound, Williams and Homer, my age is ridiculous. You can't begin to grasp me, even my youth. In the Border Cave I have to tell you hyenas and porcupines worked over my skeleton. Only my cranium remains, thus the epic and the long poem, thus the attempt to write into paradise. On the frontier between South Africa and Swaziland I ponder tectonic shift, and darling I must tell you I also wonder about the Panama Isthmus which Steven Stanley claims led to my presence among, I mean its lifting to seal the Atlantic from the Pacific some 2.5 million years ago, eliminating woods where I clambered and climbed as Australopithecus, meaning I had to evolve or die, and most of me died, my life was and is at the hands, nay at the uterus of the planet. I had to come down, be terrestrial and deal with sabertooth, a horror unknown until the 20th century. The gist is converted, invented a baby sling, made use of my foetal-surge brain, learned to bond, and to shape rock. I am much more successful than you who read me, I speak, as a kind of gay son of rock, or the pore of one origin, frozen, immensely disadvantaged, but an acute failure the poets have had to transform. All long poems lead back to me, not heroics, or the tragic eclipse of love, dryness darling meant I went on, I and my columbines, my radiant nicked progeny, thus I also speak as the gay daughter of rock, for as a 90,000 year old no one can locate my voice box, I disappeared into you, or into the prototype of you,
my mask is calcium white and I did not ask for it,
I would have preferred to confront you
as Atlementheneira, one of my names is the now-called
Dordogne, only 30,000 years ago.
But neither the visionary nor the personal
can account for the planetary roundness of my skull
nor the 20th century white mask
lending it the dagger-chin of so-called humanity.
What gets me about the Panama Isthmus ascending
and via conveyor belt winds
creating the Ice Age is that the oldest myths I know of
involve a cosmic dive of animals or shamans
bringing up earth from the depth of primal seas.
Is there a dream that old?
Can it be found? Or must I muse here in a drawer
that the oldest dream or vision
has under it that rising Isthmus?
Absolutely fantastic! Unbelievable!
As am I, perched, as a photo, in a book,
a *Homo* link, a homunculink,
my skull a rise, no more,
something lifting into view,
land bridge, the creation of humankind
masked by white that is surely the void.

---

**Ron PADGETT**

**Medieval Salad Dive**

I don't see why I can't dive into that salad bowl
and rough up the lettuce, shaking my blubbery jowls
and uttering great gutteral growls, Grrr, I'm
a medieval German and I'm feeling frisky and
in need of salad dressing! So bring on the fine lady
who wails perpetually, "O Wotan, strike me dead
if I'm to face another day!" Strike the tambour
and stomp your cruddy feet, men of my tribe,
for tonight I dive into the salad bowl!

---

**Richard KOSTELANETZ**

*from 1001 OPERA LIBRETTI*
A young couple, recently married, attempt to defy a new state law forbidding procreation.

The languid, multimedia portrayal of the obsessions and problems of a Communist politician's daughter's undergoing psychoanalysis in pre-War Berlin forecasts an unhappy end.

A terminally ill insurance investigator initiates a complicated scheme to be charged with murder and thus sentenced to death, causing his family to collect a generous insurance settlement; but for reasons beyond his control, his plans go awry posthumously.

Just after a young girl learns the facts of life from a beloved aunt who is dying, love blossoms, prompting the girl to break away from her mother surrogate to become an independent adult.

A fading pop singer falls in love with a legally underage girl with pop-music ambitions.

Juvenile zombies guard diamonds hidden in a sunken ship, initially from piracy by their avaricious parents and then from retired policemen.

A teenage black gang, railroaded into long prison terms for crimes they did not commit, becomes a popular cause for fashionable people, who eventually succeed in exonerating the young men, the story ending, alas, before we can discover whether they can use their rediscovered freedom beneficially.

A masked rider becomes a hero for the oppressed, successfully stealing from the rich to give to the poor until his untimely death.

The protagonist finds a strange coin that gives him an inexplicable but visible power over others.

An African American housekeeper with theatrical aspirations is suddenly asked to substitute for her boss, a temperamental star, and after a successful debut, visible to all, becomes a potential star herself.

A series of confrontations between a purportedly defecting spy and the counter-intelligence agent who wants to unmask the defector as a devious double agent.

A hacker-nerd falls for a preternaturally devious teenager (of indefinite gender) who initiates him into a life of computer crime.

---

Linh DINH

Blue

In some languages, the word "blue" does not exist. In others, the word "green." In my native language, the word "color" does not exist.

A man was given everything in life but the color blue. All would have gone well had he not been told of his deprivation. Thereafter, he vowed to destroy everything in his path: home, country, confidantes, God, all the other colors . . .

Because I cannot pronounce the word "blue," whenever my conversation calls for "blue," I always say "red" instead.
The Proper Age For Marriage

What is the proper age for marriage, you may ask? During the last or next war, a woman is married to a soldier. He could be dead or mutilated at any moment without her knowing. She remembers almost nothing about him except his trembling legs. To simulate this effect, she places one of his army pants on a chair, and fans it rapidly.

In Water World

The sea repeats itself in dreams, a green-gray world of water
Calm boats frozen in shade
Pale blank clouds, pines, rocks and kelp shrouds
Like woolly fish in mist pink distance floating
The beach stretches as far as the sand bar
Clean detached waves wash over dry stone, tears of rain drift
The water is perfectly still, restructuring everything

A Trip to Oblong Oyster Island

I

Summer evening on Oblong Oyster Island:
A duskish river-dragon stretched along
The inverted bed of a daffodil sky
And then slipped into the bosom of the lake,
Leaving the lean-headed eagles to yelp alone,
If indeed that's what those noble birds were;
While foxlike in the vine, purple spirits,
Wreathed by clouds of dangling river-smoke,
Protect the villagers from (or expose them to?) all harm.

II

And ghastly through the blue drizzling rain
On the bald street the blank day broke, a flower
Crushed underfoot in the valley by giants
As the pimpernel dozed, and the slender
Acacia began to shake so violently
The white lake-blossom fell into the lake—
Another day of the imagination
On Oblong Oyster Island.

III

We decided to run down to the cove
Across the mile of warm sea-scented beach
(For once the biting flies were having a siesta)
To where the startled boats are banged against by waves
While the stunted sails on the large horizon
Take on dubious proportions, suspended
Like the eyes of the luminous-nosed fish
Which gleam outward, a sea of beacons
Aswim in the coal-black looking-glass calm
Of night on Oblong Oyster Island.

IV

The Disembodied Sleeping Sages of Oblong Oyster Island
With their stovepipe hats, small beards and semi-permanent frowns
Will linger on in my imagination,
I fear, long after the sharp tang of the island's
Excellent cheeses has faded from my taste buds.

Anselm BERRIGAN

Space my reviewable future (a creation myth)

Mistrial sanctity
green panda blanket
Imports and preserves me
Vichy body tarmac
how many more fuckspace
poems do I have to deface
launchable crackspace
what dirt rose maps chemistry
chopped slowly but foul
mistrial fern
was severely compressed
durspace burial
coronary mistrial
legs small triangle scars
bogart you grab my arm
it will break
and I will get away
Wanna see my ticket stub
for evolutiocoronary up
spaced mistrial's old hotel?
more than any
o mistrial
perscoronary
I rely on space
for my security
and well bespaceg
it is coronaryly logical
to conclude I
must be attentive
to mistrial's vulnerabilities
I must pay careful
attention to promoting space
and protecting space
my spaceterest
space spaceterest
The one who
controls space
is the one who
will wspacen mistrial
next war.
Daddy, will you
pray with me?
Let me
tell you
what you
dcoronary't
need
how come
mistrial history
of mistrial
left off
mistrial list
isn't sixty-five dollars
space my reviewable future?
until he killed
civilians god smiled
he's coronary mistrial
of his mspaced.
she's bustspaceg
through mistrial
wall and captaspace
wcoronary't you
understand mistrialm
ever? This ispacee elegy.
he's a down to earth
failed oilman turned
nuclear arsenal wielder
because he skipped
his thirtieth anniversary
Yale reunicoronly
like my bromistrialr
he is ambivalent
about his educatiocoronly

All Ears

I'm a scavenger not a doctor
I charge nothing for services to strip
mending is an impossibility for me
as in the home all intimate details
are details. Are you not the angry
star of your own tomb-filled churchyard?
Identity theft is the fastest growing
crime in America today. Fork-sticker
in a corpse's rep, very recorded
human history. #3.50 for that
thirty-five grand 1st edition in
your window, if asked by the corpse's
blood? Harry?

And the prayer thou hearest me making

It's like you and the chimp have
been sheperd's pie together for years
wearing a dude's glassnet ratings
how do I know your work is as
good as I'm not being paid to say so?

At the Meridien

documentary dust laces the bowl
    moth worms sprung from unnuked birdseed
    lay all over beads of sweat
    the bird would stalk a flash to preen on the keyboard's shoulder
    wanton belly schmooze grafted to elegiac dismemberings
available on a double digit page number, white sweat
on Avenue D to buy ice water overdefending the canal zone
via integrity-of-the-complete-asshole defense
warped acolytes transgress at the panel
in my head: granite stuffing
underneath trampoline, eight variations
on the theme of willful unemployment
desert critters with cable, an invoice
was going to be here first, black square on white wall
bird shit caught by NY Post cover newsprint:
"America takes its vengeance on Timothy McVeigh"
laying on hardwood sagging in the middle Dutch Elm Disease manual
Modest Mouse spins by postcard red dot and blue foothills
dapper twit spazzing in the blacklight
tree pollen down throat
baked beans and escargot
in the present tense, sprayer aimed away from nest

thurston MOORE

this is allen ginsberg:

baby girl reaches for his face
his nose
glasses
anything

tries to stick her thumb in his mouth
a curious and favorite past-time

children everywhere
do it

and now:

heres one
with beard!

shes 3 yrs old

he sucks her thumb
into his mouth

and out

and in

here is a grown up
Aaron BELZ

FUNNEL

Language wishes she didn't have so many words in her, or at least that people would be quiet more often.

You're drunk, and you think language wants to be tickled. I personally understand, but it bugs the shit out of her.

She loved it when I went to the Grand Canyon and screamed the single word "funnel." I only had to scream it once,

and bats peeled out of the underbrush, rats scampered, a stagnant pond stayed quiet under its echoing top.

A wilderness bunny came out from under a bush and flopped at my feet, exhausted. (I felt so pampered,

not having to forage for bunny food in killing canyon heat.) But back to the single scream, after doing it only once

I felt Language wriggle and try to get away from me, but I knew in my heart that she really wanted me to chase her.

She began to talk (a glorious thing) and told me about a joke someone played on her, papering her office with memos.

She said she thought it was funny at first, that a rose by any other name, yadda yadda, but then began to feel sick just from the jumble of garbage around her. She said it gave her a kind of anxiety that words cannot express.

PENCILS

This is the ballad of pencils: don't be scared. Mourn only the lost sufferers who ate their candy bars in fear.
Fear led them to a life half lived, as we've learned; 
bite your erasers, boys, and watch the comets streak.

If it weren't for frozen pansies in a broken Spring 
our attention spans would have been cut short,

but not for long. The team's mascot jumped down 
through empty bleachers tonight. You don't want the curse

of remembering—but even less, the curse of misforgetting. 
It is a thin spectre alive in the middle of the mind.

Forget what you'll forget, and write everything down 
tremulously; for one vacant look, one death,

signals to us the end of mischief . . . and of life. 
The beast will raise its rotten horns and whimper like a wife.

Those garlands, young romantic, we so earnestly deplore 
will hang upon our banisters, our fences, and our doors.

ZEES AND EFFS

First, try to market yourself after a long pause. 
Then open your pockets and show people how much 
money you brought along for lunch and just in case.

Let it fall out like rain on the ground. 
Then stand there, fancy buffoon that you are, 
and speak cloyingly about the virtues of the avant-garde,

the subtle wonders of a couple of things that have come 
down the pike since you graduated from college. 
Are you a man of common sense? Then prove it

by straightening your tie backstage before the show. 
Remember: you are it. There is nothing between 
you and your desired wish. Even if you put up

a cheap stereotype in the place of your human shape, 
no newspaper reporter or part-time cosmetologist 
will be able to penetrate the façade you have so nobly

erected, or estimate the amount of time you spent 
preparing your moral fibre—pressing it, kneading it 
into shape, shuffling away the unwanted chunks.
Postcard

hard edge in middle diamond surrounded
by rough velvet reef fingers lost
contours of baroque thick
gooeyness statue on your head icing
on cake bludgeon
in chest when drum is banged voice satin neckrising
and falling waves of frozen

I am always crying

ocean days you regret on a beach melody
where you can imagine living can't finger
pulling me somewhere
never been with swells that don't undulate out of
control and don't want to leave necessarily except
for

hotel man drumming his finger
impatiently on oak desk

Vein

woman as dairy farm alone
eating in restaurants (no
not that again!) to avoid the inevitable
smoking alone checking
diaries alone in dreams where
big breasts deflate upon awakening deflate
when i see you
(when not hyperventilating)
when not seeing you
when not simple hypodermic

when not burrowing

better to be hallucinating hungry in a slightly
weakened state
like alaska
neither famous nor real woman to

create orgasmic experience never
stopping never grabbing
forever bound or
immanent stampede
Ruins

man in a cap behind
a tractor infinite
rows

behind curtains
open spaces part
bled through

road stretches accommodates
cup left
on a greying sofa

bouncing eyes
closed as if
sleep

serum
(similarly) spilt on the floor a
lit

metal sign noisily
moving in
high wind

lunge in a
neon desert bleached
tree parted

squeals thump
slap of an outstretched
hand if clasping

of muscles relaxing
coat on rack
gripping

foolish like
love sandwich
wish

brownish green
light spreading late
withholding tax

fabric brushed
against consequence
accidentally
1.

questioning the order is reasonable
see segal—that's what the monsters are for
the chthonic figures that threaten our sanity
the gorgon or
the sphinx

our boundaries are ambiguous
and revenge is a mixed form that brings the drive for power
into focus
(as heraclitus said, thought is common to all)

2.

in forgetting the arrangement of hours
the phenomenal intercession replaces
the hand-maker with contentment and pattern
or patterns before the organization extends
lines like fire over desert valleys

3.

to
you
lightning
dull press
the organized
dig for
soil reclamation
project
#606372212

let's listen
to the
results

4.

at night you speak slowly
around us in the air that
trembles with metal rainfall

vanity
and the important mission bleak

our eyes are five in resignation
but still we hear heels on the concrete
and the sound of light hands groping

---

Tom HIBBARD

*from GIHON*

**Chapter 33**

I don't protest or object
I don't have an answer
stoicism is the only sign
that someday the ground
will utter a banging
noise like a brush being thrown in
a mop bucket

the search is endless
for a way to say
it's no different
whichever way you look at it

the things you are given you can't keep
an inch away
is as far as a thousand miles

a time will come
when you won't want anything else
the coffee cup
will arrive like each season
and you will not ask it to be different
or think that life needs to be
something other than what it is

don't lose heart
in the rag-tag procession
that wards off stinging garments
arguing that your less is more
that your more is less
dodging your being resigned
with shamed contortion

words resonate with sounds
the system doesn't go far out of its way
plans melt into action
that aids both sides
knowing no definiteness or simple truth
go through the instructions once
leaving behind something for
the fatherless and sojourner
at the bureau of tourism and library

you have bound me to my fellows
by removing the hectic exhortations
the distracted polemics
from mute tomorrow

these are problems we all can live with
the comic beacon exploring alone
hope's implications
whose proof
is only hearsay evidence

cut off from the apocalypse of myself
repeatedly trying to destroy peonies
putting off the intolerable
treasure map of my heart

I have attempted to take credit for the summers
perhaps i have exaggerated
the amount of my own negligence
criticizing one's enemies with a lie
I was only trying to help out

what is happening to us
in this land that doesn't exist
that resists every attempt
to settle once and for all

inextinguishable impulse of humanity to hide
muddies with anticipation
the image we in turn
inhabit with our dying
our inconsistent examples of delight
only the foundation remains
upon which nothing lasting can be built

Mike TOPP

INFLUENTIAL

I am wholesome yet heavily laden with sexual undertones. You'll never be able to watch the Sound of Music again without thinking of me.
IMITATION OF LIFE

Hey Mikey! He likes it!

WHERE I WANNA ((((B)))) IN THE NEXT ROUND

Floating on a bagel spread with Philly cream cheese. Ummm . . . himmlisch!

MY BOYFRIEND

In my dreams he has no head. That can't be good.

TIC TOC

When clocks say they have a Quartz Movement, what exactly are they talking about?

Dana WARD

'The Varieties of Religious Experience'

'there is a verge of the mind which these things haunt;'
—William James

there was a baseball, waddling
like a wounded baby chicken
limping w/ drastic formality
clobbered by learned repose
'I forked my body for money
but the food in me was sick'
senseamilia-climate ripe for growing
between the Tennessee border &
shadows of Kentucky
a color field painting
shaded by mountains
the ears a box-fan,
turning in the sunlight
as if rounding a corner
into acres of dogwood
to later keep tones from a radio play

awake in the room in it's strings.

    since it's only to be cold
can the start
    of the ending turn
in the window
    'the result of hypnotic suggestion'
    then continue,
    a loose confabulation
of impossible spectrums &
speculative language

to go on like this forever
severing wires
in alarms, floating
here to hem of the porch
car cold to the touch
inside w/ the freon
    contaminating breath
w/ respite, armory of air
turning in the clear
polish of dusk, blue
drug store facade
turned to aerosol-marks
like stone
    or fresh quartz, a quizzical
stillness, the play in a prayer's
rigid wish broken open,
doesn't your mother
look just like Laura Palmer,
"I had lived in a duplex in Roanoke
a ghost stirred up
in the piles of phlox
an intellect perplexed & baffled
yet a trustful sense of presence
lent my hand and spirit
to another power other than my own"

J.J. BLICKSTEIN
there is no machine
Descartes in the womb of the unintended
weapons and sharp tools in a dirty dish
bleed the ghost of De Sade
73,000 days in Bastille for an honest fetish?
for practical love
science a dull guillotine
flesh upon flesh
animal earth wet fish
everything possible is scandalous
you pull your cock out when you're scared
to erase yourself
in the darkness of cunt
or the hinges of a door
all awareness is illness
angel whistling at a corpse grey salon short odors
why not steal the children?
irrational kiss
thick rouge knuckled finesse
what's more vulgar than the effete
slap of the glove—Montaigne Napoleon?
why beat the dog when you can feed the willing?
a villain is a nice shirt with a wet smile
and a ring in the tub . . .
evil in the heart of the mirror
hot pewter and broken glass
blood fills slowly the meticulous slit
fire "live" the thought
across the room the heart of the body
the scribbled voyeur alleges
the benefit of the parasite
walls spread the shadows
and it's all about feeling
barefoot and multiple various woods
order is not geometric there are cheeses
and liqueurs rice papers pistols and gods
aristocracy is of the spirit
brandy swaggers like candy
on the lips of organs
when spent
we are agents of forgotten seasons
left to cull the inquiry while Germans straighten the rivers out
your feet touching mine
at the foot of the door.
Monk put an apple on his head
the notes were superstitious
gathered in his knuckles &
the hairs of his face.

High noon in the orchard.

He paced the floor like a small general
His feet tore the parchment on the floor
He disregarded the fires in his room &
fondled the jungle on the brim of his hat.

Things burned without smoke
The fire in the red drapes was as pure as milk
& soft as a bird. He squeezed out
the words from between his teeth

The words circled the room like small airplanes
diminishing the echo in the fire
adding time & perspective to
the flaws in the room.

He muttered something about depth
& distance, railroad tracks, the
great flood. He rearranged his lapel
& the furniture, tearing the heart out of the floor.

He pulled some stones out of his pocket
got on his knees, called them notes,
made a path from the door to the piano
on the wall. He coddled & spoke to each stone

like a wounded bird. The apple rolled across
the floor, he smiled at it & stepped
on the fire at his feet.

——for T. S. Monk

Blood and gold in leaves
Framed in window
Twenty feet back at desk
Sitting here writing
Inside my head thought

Michael ROTHENBERG

APOCALYPTIC YEARNINGS
October 2-7, 2001
Sits in chair contemplating
Misery of stone stuck
In yellow clay derelict
Riverbed, jaw, sunbleached
Skeleton inhabited by
Boy peers between shadows
Wondering where's God

Manifest Destiny, Infinite
Justice. Take care of details
Go through changes
Earth will conspire until
She's feeling safe about
The moon. Like hot fudge
Sundae in a minefield
Don't say those things
You will regret. Close to
The end. 5 minutes. Now

No. It's not going to change
But there will be more
To do. Make love to me now
Or say goodbye. Great Truths
I have forgotten who
I am to know your needs
Last night I said you'd find
Your voice. You found a thread
Weaves. Hanging from peace
Flags. Oceans, skies, prayers
This way. This discipline
Act of selflessness in
Face of incomprehensible
Horror of impermanence
Tree empty yards, bed empty
Of lover who will lie
Beneath the plume and sigh

This day belongs to panic
Squirrel. Fir. Walnuts black
Slippery rot. Among wind
Chimes. Birdfeeder
Yellow mums. Screen door
Slams. I heard it. Vulnerable
Space. Move potted plants in
Build coal bin. Please don't
Bend mail to fit it into box
Pictures of leaves accelerated
Fall. Gusts. In someone else's
Mind. Plop! Walnuts. On steps
Jets & 7,000 reruns of suicide
Anthrax in Florida. India
Hijack hoax. Russian plane
Downed. Ten killed in
Palestinian-Israel clash
Bus driver's throat slashed

"Everything seems to be
happening in New York"-PW
Snake in a woodpile. President
Bush can no more "rid the world of evil-doers" than he can stock it with saints—Arundhati Roy

Million Meditator March:
Gospel singers. Sufi minstrels
Fish drummers. Ministers, gurus
Priests. Sword-swallowers
Practicing organic solutions to Technological problems
Automobile salesman
On the wagon. Evangelists
Offering free yoga to politicians
Peace police themselves. 320 million dollars U.S. aid to Afghans. Amazing Grace
Enlightened OM. Influence
Peddling. Supplication. Beyond
War-minded ego. Amen.

Charles Henri FORD

One hundred 69
Haiku for Charles Henri
By Charles Henri Ford

What am I doing
Here all alone? Reviewing the Multitudes I've known

Two William S.'s
Made American History;
Hart and Burroughs

Didn't Sinatra
Know you gotta have stamina
To drink like he did

Ruth posed herself—did
Everything except push the
Button for Man Ray

Larry Sawyer—Premiere
American surrealist
Nuff sed

Wanda PHIPPS

morning poem #18

So far so mortgaged
soon you'll know
dubious powers
they say squarely
you keep Dali fashion
high inclinations
points look resourceful
gains protect your
birth wings don't
cycle solitaire pick
damn destiny
remember carefully
fresh lunar harvest

morning poem #39
if she took off her top
would that embarrass you
would you smile
and laugh nervously
would there be
room on the roof
for the orgy
if the music
was a little louder
would you remember
the color of her eyes

Pre-recordings (from the Akashic Records)

Are California and Nevada the same?
Burping the Tupperware
There was this guy who got stranded hiking
and had to survive on melba toast and toothpaste
An old woman wearing plastic rain cap and carrying
brown paper bags?Take your time?kneeling bus
stares at me through the window of Burger King
Brushed a spider off my shoulder in Montgomery Street Deli
A man a couple of seats down from me says "my name is Frank"
Decent exposure?the hook n' ladder ball
I know you don't like me?look I'm sorry?my name is Frank
Learning Improper Naming
I'm just trying to be friendly
She's brunette all over
If you were a man we'd beat you up?you're so easy to tease
Drinking plastic straws
You look like someone who'd go to France
Die flut kommen sie hier
Why aren't you in COMMUNICATIONS?
He always writes "conservation" for "conversation"
You look like the type
Should I leave my terminal on?
Don't you listen when you watch tv?
"The Wheel of Death"
Ever make noises when you yawn
... and my finger dangled,
and it sounds like you're in a cave?
I can see that
He's in his post-semiotic phase
We're running out of Jumbo Clips
Many people have believed in a pre-recorded Universe
County of Kings
"So, anyway, Tanguy had this painting . . ."
R. MOORE

the top of my head
is the source of poetry
and the soul's exit—
that's what a doctor told me
who'd watched many people die

caught in a rainstorm
i lost my way in Kyoto
through dark alleyways—
sudden footsteps behind me:
you holding an umbrella

you invited me
back to your apartment
along the river—
sadly i made an excuse
and followed my footstep home

Cid CORMAN

There is no end and
there is no beginning—there's
only always this.
I leave my life with you
Make of it what you can.

* 

BASHŌ

This retreat of mine
a little old mosquito
the entertainment.

*
Something to be said
or why would I be here or
for that matter you?

*

What could be clearer—
a completely blue sky as
empty as empty is.

*

That's it—that's
this and this
you must ad-
mit is you.
Vincent KATZ

Amazons of the Avant-Garde
—for Hoa and Dale

Varvara Stepanova stepped off a train more glamourous Hollywood diamond-studded sentiment centuries’ in a handbag and valise Karole Armitage hails cab for Tanaquil Leclerq she had boarded in the steppes she stepped off the curb into a gutter on Oscar night Nadezhda Udaltsova assault common perception for as much as mark, to eat or dance while space is debated, frank frolics in west Cubist syntax? a fore-mentioned chunk, a chomp of apple in th’ mouth lettered dress assign to mix freefall, glazes sit in puddles, smooth think and accrue those edges to frames okay to mimic freestanding waste, Olga Rozanova never sniffed Europe’s keys, scarf whipped by wind night obliterates Futurist coffee and doughnut as well as Kazimir zaum Pub (Auction) was blinkered system forced meeting of wrap-induced symmetry resented fabric Pablo textile Paul Exter Alexandra assumes rigid complacency or slipped consonant you see a rhythm hyped inner ceramics or theater non-objective Italy France in doing not making Gonchorova of course alights mildly assisted breakdown flighted rich broad vision post-sillinesses convincing her men of planar spike roamd machinery okay public phallic cross ahead Mikhail Larionov Liubov Popova popped Le Fauconnier deft Samarkand resolve prick had reached an impasse devoted rest of her life to design and book

Art

When he looks at anyone, he sees: dollars. And she wasn’t adding up.

Funky floozy in a sideways suit. Dank idiocy phonic lackluster suck.

There’s a price tag, and also a sense of importance. Raw cattle prod.

The Pulitzer-nominated journalist
jerks off.

The Critic would rather be watching television.

Chamfered Guerdon

the perquisite summers rested in his lap dalliance forebade innocuous stammering aweigh glinted forecast in seismic stutter he glanced at the trawler intact unbuyable

rest wearied Hunk stepping from his bath obloquy at once the only response from death he sits shimmers flaunting equally starch and dearth commonsense pulling

traipse the boundaries highjinks whiff origin and progress sentiment fin whisk sideline management husky fortitude wingless courage inserted look faraway

winchless toddy, marred packer sipped waylay previous styles of search, ribbing posthumous clutch defined in striptease ignorant blessing bells afront rip torrid

Marisa To Liz

panties around ankles protuberance compared applied push-button phonecalls late night car rides soap shops
“monks”
sidecar lust
pre-teenage
commercial
rent week
controversy

a slim request
a chance around
quest parried
symbol freed
but why is
pepper shown
nightly in
fringe retreat?

and legs
unformed
and feet
pronated
and lips

What Vincent Saw On 30th Street

plush boxes
I never even thought to look down the street to the river
a lawn is so rare in New York City
loudspeaker next to plastic pint glass filled with butts
rage soaring! high priest madness roiled
I saw her coming
bright lips tattered stockings tight skirt
patch of cloth
a nice fat one this morning
many did not freak
priestess hunkering over me

distortion pressed
dark threaded stare
X mars the spot
sped-up kissing

insisted she write
a pulsing from there
and she would
continuing

the dull throb rang in their eye
fat window sucked in by pipes
rain eyeing fat buttocks
a pale hint of memory
harmony doubled as nasal
hump of the whale wheezing

sister insister
slick wagon

foreboding memory
hunger peck

wry
antidote

Elegy

Beneath a leaden sky plum, condensed smoke,
like my soul, trails low
above the grim landscape.
Swinging not gliding.

You stiff soul, you soft image!
Following the heavy trace of truth
glance at yourself, your origin!

Where below the liquid sky
upon the loneliness of lank firewalls
the moody silence of need
threateningly begins, dissolves the thick
gloom on the ponderers’ hearts and mingles with
millions.

A whole race is molded here.
Everything in ruins.
A stiff dandelion opens its parasol in
abandoned foundry yards.
Through faded stairs of tiny broken windows
the days ascend to moldy twilight.
Say—
are you from here?
Where the somber longing never ends
to become like other wretched men,
squeezed by this enormous age,
and on their faces every line is deformed?

Resting, where the greedy
moral order is guarded, protected
by shrieking, crippled
fences.

Can you recognize yourself? Here the souls
petulantly wait for a designed, beautiful, solid future
like empty yards dreaming of nimble, noise weaving
tall houses. Glass shards dried in the mud gaze
with dull, stony eyes.

From the dunes, a thimbleful of sand
whirls below at random . . . and from time to time
blue, green or black flies flicker,
magnetized by man's scraps,
and rags
from the lands of wealth.
In her own way, setting a table, even here,
the credit burdened,
blessed mother earth.
Yellow grass thrives in an iron spittoon.

Do you know
what solemn joy draws me
that this land allows me not,
what rich torment pushes me here?
For his mother a child,
who's beaten to faraway corners,
will return.
Truly you can smile, you can cry only here.
Here you can endure, only here,
oh soul! This is my home.

—1933

The Leaves on the Tree

The leaves on the tree
sway slowly.
They are all already warped, yellow
and withered, soft,

A taciturn bird
twists among them.
AS if the tree were
its cage.

That's how my song walks,
sits hollow inside me,
and with it, its quivering shadow,
the silence.

—1934
My Fingers Possess Your Hair

My fingers possess your hair, under your skirt
my heart hides in wonder
and the leaf of a calendar falls rustling.

My old threshold cries like a child
when you come, to come more.

On a strong team my old days
bite my ears gasping—
why didn't you kiss us inside them?

And don't understand how pale, silly they are,
that your eyes cannot possess their light.

—1926

Art Among Men

She must have had wheels on her soles,
the dancer had rolled into our eyes,
she was simple, but shone, like a hummingbird.

Imagine a lanky demon swaying,
stretching above the swamp.
She'd bounded nicer than a young goat,
or like a rompish sheepdog whelp
when it runs and rolls on the lawn!

The year-round-sleepers would also happily
swing their hips with her!

I don't even know who was next to me,
as the cheers had whooped together inside us—

Then all at once the room grew cold
and us, men, poor people again
measured each other up, like strangers.

—1924
We Are Now at the Beginning of Creation

Behold, the corpuscular man exists already,  
lives and moves,  
extends thoughts out of himself,  
retracts them and extends them again,  
to gain some space ahead.  
'til today he's struggled, now he saunters along,  
but he's strenuous, and thus becomes ever stronger.

The stern law is gracious because of us.  
We'll be efficient by tomorrow,  
we'll swim, run, fly easily  
and that's how it has to be,  
that then we won't care for anything, only  
for the clean clothes of our soul,  
for the virgin body of our yearned dreams,  
for his body to be song and truth,  
for his shape to be godlike,  
this future multi-cellular man,  
who will be thrown out of us,  
who will be us,  
the great Further-Creator,  
who this world now is sick for.

It Isn't Me Who Shouts

It isn't me who shouts, it's the world that rumbles  
beware, beware, 'cause Satan's gone crazy,  
flatten yourself to the bottom of clear springs,  
smooth yourself out like a sheet of glass,  
hide behind the light of diamonds,  
among bugs under rocks,  
oh, hide yourself in freshly baked bread,  
you poor, poor . . .  
Ooze into the ground with fresh rain showers—  
in vain you bathe in yourself,  
you can wash your face only in others.  
Be a tiny edge on a single blade of grass  
and you'll be greater than the axis of the world.

Oh, machines, birds, branches, stars!  
Our barren mothers begs for a child.  
My friend, my dear, loving friend,  
either it's dreadful, or wonderful;  
it isn't me who shouts, it's the world that rumbles.

—1924
Place Your Hand

Place your hand
on my forehead,
as if your hand
were my own hand.

Guard me, as if
you would murder,
as if my life
were your own life.

Love me, as if
it were pleasant,
as if my heart
were your own heart.

—1928

The Sun Still Smothers

The sun still smother
above smoldering mountains.
Behind the shirt of gloom
a meadow glimmers.

My Homeland

My homeland, race and humanity
I do know my obligation,
like a mournful stranger at the end of the procession,
when someone gets buried with splendor.

I Don't Belong to Anyone . . .

I don't belong to anyone, my word a flying mold
I'm light and heavy like the cold.
An Ancient Rat Spreads Disease . . .

An ancient rat spreads disease among us, the unconsidered thought gobbles up what we cooked and runs from man to man. That's why the drunk doesn't know, when he kills his fancy in champagne, that he gulps the empty soup of disgusted little poor folks.

And because spirit doesn't squeeze moist rights out of every nation a new odium startles the races against each other. The oppression croaks in choirs, flies upon living hearts and also on carcasses—misery oozes through the orbit, like saliva on the faces of idiots.

On famine's stickpin stuck summers hang their wings, machines crawl in on our souls, like bugs on sleepers. The grateful devotion nestled in our insides, tears roll into flames—the yearning for revenge chases conscience and vice versa.

Like a jackal that turns to throw its voice up to the stars, to our sky, where torments shine, the poet shrieks in vain . . . Oh, stars, you! Like rusty, rough daggers around around you stabbed me how many times—(here one succeeds only to die).

Still I'm hopeful. And tearfully implore you our beautiful future, don't be so dreary . . . I'm hopeful, for unlike our forbearers, we won't be impaled today. Soon the peace of freedom will arrive, pain will become refined—and we'll be forgotten finally in the shades of silent pergolas.

—1937
mARK oWEns

FREE INTERNATIONAL DIAL TONE SONG

1) open the phone book to international area codes
2) pick a collection of countries
3) dial the given area codes and make up the rest of the number until you get through to each country
4) note the different tones and rhythms of each call, but hang up before someone answers
5) visit the country with your favorite dial tone*

* optional and not as free

Andre HOILETTE

Duet Solo Dancers
—after Mingus

regular rhythm to
love making: bass-alto
(advance|recede)
bass--alto
(push|pull)
bass---alto
(wax| wane)
bass----alto
)inhale|--|exhale(
the rhythm so regular
so ordinary, it is the heartbeat
so mundane, changing the oil
or raking leaves are commonplace companion thoughts
parallel to the way her
breasts look, heaving not yet, but
sliding after thrust, nipples taunt:
rosewood and whining like a clarinet
and eyes, Eyes hazel and fixed
on you, fawn(ish), mouth agape and taking
the smallest draughts of air
as you suspend the heaving torso
under the armpits
the lower extremities
writhing in a wet communion and kissing,
I went out with the infinite.
We swapped spit
in the backseat of a jalopy.
Explored ourselves
while ignoring the movie.
Walked home from the parkinglot,
falling all over each other.
Detoured through the park.
Dallied on a bench.

I sneaked a hand up her skirt.
She held me by the stones.
We gazed at the stars.
I wanted to go all the way.
She said I could have more and more,
but not that.
My mouth to her bosom sank.
I kissed all galaxies known to man.
Above a zillion crickets,
she giggled: I hadn't scratched the skin.

My chin found her lap.
Her thighs spread.
The egg wet my face.
Till awake I became suggested.
Alone on my threshold,
with a scent on the fingers
and a hint in my tongue.
I

Seated alone with globe fearsome
I await splendor. When debris cloak
new people then wrongly the world
be driven fueling those of holy debate.

Heart eye wings feet. The two which
upon arriving will elevate sanction
of blood often taken changing laws.
Square knife suicide from the East

sent image death fruit through brain
in a little apocalypse primitive veil
dance. Determined enemies raise flag
as antidote causing media to give

land a parched and dry appearance.
Through negligence a camera carried
serpents. By chief road by name river
comes humanity threatened by residue.

Like routine fields to idea to the horizon
after failure forgotten. After suffering
lost honor in the evil according progress
that inhabitants still on cue deny.

II

Underneath gathering found receipt
of barbarous matter. Virus deadly
terrestrial with form laid flat across
problematic lawn.

Its mark translated necessary before
device of window. One ubiquitous
channel serves narrative the kindred
must swallow.

Being no answer a wish by means
achieved by night employed to arouse
attention with small lever attached
to voice of ego.

Following beast inventor of fact fused
fire and sermon of days the moon
decreed by virtue of a single detail
suddenly become tempest.

III

Heads commotion tormented by right
inclination. Climate overdue surrounds
hate and persecution. Trumpet vibrate
broken mouth. Decay anointed in belly
and arms. The time the arch sparks
compny less than a butcher. Unhappy
role accomplished, ignorant the mass
shall think child in sky without hands.

Bruised at store in midst of news, short
breath drawing another price from place
that tomorrow suspected. Pulls cloud
over houses and their foundation. Rains
credulity as long as the weatherman
leaves plenty of room for those rejecting
any other experience shared at table
soaked and granted to the people's army.

IV

Monopoly proclaim celestial commerce,
set aside judgment proven by alien agent.
His aspect spoiled response of mighty.
As ill-conceived counterfeit of courage,
sickness spreading at sound of a bell
shall make it appear that we are
authors of a great war waged against
phantoms seeded by infinite language.

By the same loud cry, antenna hung
on branch, fish cut to suburbs' plunder,
and bread eaten of saints' without faith,
the mask alone holds together force
of pyramid. Said populace covets
forbidden wall and vines are growing
that run to the top. Brother and sister
play a game the prophet explains
in numbers that don't add up. Confused
the choice at hand like circle of years
between start and finish of a book
everyone buys for its missing center.

In vain we search while the disaffected
plant clues in a library destroyed before
its permanent collection can be replaced
by something not imagined.

Todd COLBY
I walked into the room
and felt perversely mistaken.
What was I doing amid all of these
people whose fabulous wealth made my feet rot?
Sinking into the sofa I muttered
"soggy cushions, spilt drinks, clear spirits."
A laundry list of mistaken identities
plagued my eyes with fantasies
of rubbing shoulders with big shots.

Opal carp brooch clip. Muddied earthen wear.
Sullen kettles of fish. Burnt tortilla chips.

I unscrewed the leash from the Doberman's spine
and came up stinking of lilac scented air, shaking my
funk at the remnants of glazed ham.
Let my capable hair stew gently in the muscular juice of dogs.
I am burdened by discourse, pulled into distorted buns
and made invisible by helpers. I'm chained to link fences
bursting forth with soft minds;
glued, minty, cross—
I give you this.
I have a car with a spore
and it's been well-handled. Crumpled at the pegs,
though still intact, it's in tricky condition.
Guests in windows with candles. Scented oil spills
on kooky puddles. Gunk in bloom,
and a mantel for leaning on stoically. Jackass.
If you come, I mean, I have a clock, a patio,
some gherkins, and a pillow. Be prepared for
rivals like on a nature show. Certain
medicines have aftereffects such as:
dimpled boners, welts, bumps, and various
bonnets worn for hideous effect.
One huge room. Sharing the vehicle with a punk.
Bits of lint on the turntable platter. Capital Street
embossed with curled gold leaf.
You'd like it if you were a man. Mustached,
angry, and happily immersed in crud.

Butter Shine

I've had a staple in my spine
all this time
dipping a woolen spoon
into therapeutic proteins
and smearing the playing field
with a dollop of butter shine,
minuscule, delightful,
pitying the dork who plays
with words, their morbid order
 barging into things
and generating steam with
broken spells when they come out
hissing behind each other's
backs; leathery necks, modern dance,
broad blue asses, there's a tone
I should explain here
of how the pleasure
builds; an aroma of broken spirits and
some junk in my pockets—
this must be the place.

---

volume three home
milk home
volume three menu
sustenance for the masses

features:

New! A Day in the Life of Two Artists: The Art of Yvonne Jacquette and Rudy Burckhardt, By Vincent KATZ

Apoc-Collapse: PostFluxPost Booklets from Luc Fierens, reviewed by Tom HIBBARD

20 Questions with Bill BERKSON

interview with Allen Ginsberg on Harry SMITH by Paola IGLIORI

milk magazine.
copyright 2001. all rights reserved.
A Day In the Life of Two Artists
The Art of Yvonne Jacquette and Rudy Burckhardt
by Vincent Katz

After breakfast, we sit on the porch in hot August sun, drinking coffee and talking about movies. The porch is wide, covering the front of the house, and as I sit on the railing, the sun beats down. Rudy, in the shade by the house, talks.

"Spinal Tap is a pretty good movie. So is Top Secret. I like some rock movies. In Top Secret there's a great scene of girls acting like they're excited at a concert. That scene alone was worth the price of admission. You say Tightrope is pretty good? I'm working on a movie right now with several scenes that each have three parts. Each part of the various scenes comes at a different time in the film. And each time the same scene comes up it's changed slightly. Some music is like that, isn't it? The same idea recurring in the same piece with variations. Bach's keyboard fugues are like that. It starts out simply enough--you can see what he's doing--then the left hand picks it up and it starts getting too complicated to follow all at once. Telemann was simpler. Bach was criticized in his day for being unnecessarily complicated."
The mailman arrives, his car radio playing loud pop music, and Rudy continues talking.

"When Bach was very young, everyone loved Vivaldi and other Italians. They were simpler. That's a spider fern," he says, referring to a potted plant hanging at the front of the porch. Its copious stems seem about to envelope the observer.

"I made a film looking through it. I had Yvonne drive by, then all of a sudden this butterfly flew into the picture. Sometimes the best things happen like that, by chance."

Below, on the porch, a border of bricks surrounds two flowerbeds on either side of the steps. There are pansies and Superb Lilies there, among others. It is a perfect day, crystal blue sky breaking to robin shell near the tree line, the air clear and fresh, but hot as August requires.

It is almost too perfect, as if we all know we must return to the city soon, yet are afraid to mention it, for fear of breaking the spell. This is a simple time, that three old friends can share together, before the exciting rush of autumn draws us forcefully back to the teeming, beautiful center and we are lost in the annual swirl.

Rudy explains that the Sorrows of Young Werther by Goethe, which Yvonne is reading, had an effect like that of On the Road, in that people tried to live it.

"Young people started killing themselves."

On the record player is Bach's "Suite for Cello Solo in C Minor." Down below lurk Haydn piano sonatas and "Death and the Maiden."

Yvonne is on the phone. Rudy and Yvonne discuss the day's business, joke about the accountant. In the living room, Rudy sorts through the mail again. Yvonne announces she will call Sam Ladd, a mason, about whether the chimney should be lined. "Yeah. It should be," affirms Rudy. Wide, rich-colored boards form the floor of this narrow farm house. A breeze blows the white curtains inward. There is a relaxed pace to life here. No one scrambles to work. But then Yvonne announces with a smile she's "going out to paint," that I should come out when I want.
A stone fireplace's wooden mantel supports a painting on black slate, a romantic-looking card from Yvonne and Rudy's son Tom in Venice, one of an abbey cloister, an unsigned etching of a lakefront, Rembrandt's Lucretia, another etching, of a Japanese samurai-type man with a camera around his neck signed "TB," a monster's head, a hawk feather, another etching, and a vase of dried flowers.

******

A red wagon supports a large wooden box with trays of pastels. Yvonne grabs the black handle and maneuvers it. Then she peels saran wrap off a pallet of dark paints.

On the three sections of her moveable studio wall are three large panels of a new work, a painting of night scenes in Minneapolis. It is a commission for the First Bank of Minneapolis West. The panels are about 5 X 6 feet and each has a different view of the city from a high vantage point. When seen together the three panels do not make up one continuous view and yet they make a continuous whole. The rhythms of nightlights, reflections off water and windows, even the building forms, which do not fit from panel to panel, combine to make one "view."

Rudy has come into the room and wants to film Yvonne painting a little. She agrees to paint a lower portion of the panel instead of the upper, so he can film her.

She is applying dark green paint to the panel on the right, as trees. She works calmly, standing erect on a red plastic milk crate, or on the ground, with quick deliberate strokes, steps back to look at them, then goes over to a smaller pastel version on an opposite wall to check something. Rudy films that wall, which has three finished pastels of the Minneapolis subject, along with two others. Yvonne adds some brown to the tree she has just painted.

Seven seconds' purr of Rudy's camera. Rudy back up. They are working a few feet from each other, facing in opposite directions, each intent. Rudy purrs, then removes his tripod. Yvonne walks over to check, then paints more leaves in curvy swirls different from the short,
pointed leaves she painted a minute ago.

Rudy is mobile now. Yvonne is accommodating. "This reminds me of 'Autumn Expansion,'" she says (a mural she did in Bangor, Maine). Yvonne's fingernails are bright fluorescent colors of pink and purple, both on each nail. "Kathy Porter came over from Vinal Haven to do them," she proudly explains.

Yvonne's studio is a large barn with high windows and a sliding door to give light. A few active wasp nests on the rafters, rough hewn beams. Rudy's studio is behind the wall Yvonne is painting on. There, one finds Rudy's paintings of forest scenes close-up, nudes in country interiors listening to the radio or reading. A droll but somehow slightly ominous bunch of bananas keeps cropping up.

Yvonne puts on a tape of Roland Kirk. She says she usually likes to listen to music when she paints and prefers tapes to radio because there are no interruptions.

"You'll find my method very different," Rudy says, as we leave the barn and start walking down the smooth, firm dirt road.

He's right. His first venture is a search for currants by the side of the road. We talk of the detrimental effects of currants on pines and he recalls currants in his garden in Switzerland. Yesterday he made some syrup from choke cherries.

"It was a lot of work and you didn't get very much," he says, "but you know those are the pleasures that make life enjoyable."

"Yesterday I was picking blackberries and I felt I was doing what I was meant to do.

You know? Those moments of maybe half-an-hour--and you can't make them come--where you're doing something and you feel happy and you wouldn't want to be anywhere else."

We enter the woods on the other side of the road where a farmhouse used to be--"See the elm stump?"--and come to a patch of blackberries. As we fill the plastic container that Rudy's brought, we chat.

"Picking berries is something you feel is right to do--it's not like killing animals or something."

"It's not even like picking flowers."
We leave the container in the grass and proceed down a road into the forest. The "road" is covered with pine needles and has a patch of bunch berries down its middle.

"I prefer a hazy light to paint in. There's too much contrast today between light and dark. I can't get that in paint."

We reach Rudy's cache, an easel, painting supplies and a 2 X 2 1/2 foot painting under a large, plastic sheet. A tiny toad scurries away, too fast or smart to be caught.

"I don't trust myself to finish a painting all at once. I've never wanted to do it. I take two days at least. It all started in school--I got good marks in Greek, Latin, and Math. But I flunked in singing and drawing. So I never thought I could draw. I became a photographer. Most painters draw like crazy, but I made photographs first. But that's why I like to paint--it's not instant, it takes time.

After a while you hardly look at the subject anymore. When you first start painting, you look at the subject about 90 percent of the time. Finally, though, you look at the subject only 10 percent of the time and you just look at the painting."

The mosquitoes are voracious, but Rudy calmly paints in a white fisherman's cap, painting on an easel, rag in left hand. He's adding highlights since the light isn't right today. He talks while he paints.

"Sometimes you just leave it to chance."
He tells an anecdote about DeKooning, saying he did a lot of it on "fate" though he means to say "faith." "I guess it's the same." Or Alex Katz painting a painting in Skowhegan years ago of Rudy, his first wife Edith, and their son Jacob. The painting was leaning on a bush, half in sun, half in darkness. "How can you see what you're doing?" Rudy asked. "I don't want to see what I'm doing," was the reply.

Rudy's painting is of some trees, their trunks mostly, against a forest floor, with a green background far away in the upper quarter of the picture. Dead branches crisscross the scene, some tilted, some on the ground. In the hazy light, Rudy says, it looks sort of like a battlefield.

Rudy changes from adding dark patches of bark to the standing trees to filling in green bunchberry leaves at the bottom of the painting. It is strange to see the painting directly in front of, and encompassed by, its subject. It's a bit like the Magritte of the painting of the window in front of the window.

Down at the lake, Rudy meditates. By the water, a beautiful black butterfly with white stripes flexes its wings as if moist, the first time, on a pebble an inch from the water.

Rudy will be teaching two days every two weeks this fall at the University of Pennsylvania.

"It'll be nice to get out of New York. As you get older you get to realize what you really want. You don't want to go to loud bars and strain anymore."

Rudy's also working on a new film, a sort-of collage involving scenes of nude women vacuuming, washing dishes, etc. but also shots of a country fair in Maine. "The model will do almost anything I ask at this point," Rudy explains. "I pay her a lot, and that helps."

At the house--the same pretty butterfly--It's four past two. Time for some lunch. Yvonne turns off the "afternoon concert"--Strauss--and puts on a Billie Holiday tape:

"You ought to go now, because I like you too much."

And a certain world that has become a part of art.

August heat; night hail; mute freshness
Moon stormclouds, purple, Turneresque
Delight Rudy; done in, still dressed
Sleeps Yvonne, in bed sleeps Jacob
Time passes; white moon-soaked mist
Solitary outdoors, book indoors
Dear careless moonlight, dear dead words
I know them near, feebly I drowse
My mouth hardens at your approach
Figure incomprehensible
Of happiness not reached and reached
Sleeping hunched upstairs, Tom-baby
After lunch—sourdough bread from Freedom Baker, Freedom Me., fresh basil, cheese and Rudy's blackberry fruit salad. Yvonne smiles and says, "I'm going to see if I can find the bloodmeal." (for the tomatoes). Rudy relaxes with a book.

"There ain't a man that's man enough to make me cry."

Later, Rudy goes to pick up his lawnmower, which was being repaired. Yvonne and I go for a swim. We swim across the pond and back.

The shadows are getting long already. Although warm in the sun, the air is cool, a reminder that this day that seems to last forever in its light, can't. Shade creeps along the petunias in front of the porch, deep pink and red-and-white ones. My father came over here at night to chop a huge hornet’s nest, the size of a basketball, into a bucket of water. I remember Edwin on the dark lawn with a flashlight. Only the poplars seem in motion. The maples barely sway. Singing of crickets.

Yvonne has gotten quite a bit painted. And although the image looks very interesting at this immediate stage—everything drawn in in a flat grayish brown with some highlights, reds, greens, yellows—the painting is far from finished. She is gone (for the bloodmeals one guesses) and her brushes lie unused, paint still on them, on a large moveable platform made by Tom.

What is the point of the aerial view? You can look at it and say, Oh, that's an aerial view, but there must be more than that. There must be a reason this artist has become obsessed with this view of the world.

To me, a view from a plane, especially at evening or night, is very romantic. The pretty way the lights glow and all those lives. It’s a distant view, removed, and yet it includes an intimacy of looking into people's backyards.

Back, she paints. A park springs up near a river, setting the buildings it surrounds into 3-dimensional space. What of action? Mostly in cars. But then one is looking at the view. It’s not really aerial this time. It’s more from a high building, hotel room or office, say. So one is in the action, the viewer, seeing these nightscapes, becomes part of what is happening, from the very special perspective. But you’re not usually part of the picture. Here, the specific view involves you in the momentum of the painting.

It's funny how the pieces of one's life collect over the years. They don't tell you anything, finally. Edwin used to live here. There's a special feeling in that.

But his book on the shelf here is a work, next to other works.
Work by Rudy Burckhardt courtesy Tibor de Nagy Gallery, New York.
The 1980s deified the manual typewriter. Early versions of the Xerox copy machine proved a convenient black-and-white 'instant print' tool for projecting the unfocused speed vision of the elapsed lead-em image. These two factors augmented the onset of two art movements—Mail Art and Intense Disbody-Zine. The altered result resembled photographic reproductions of pornography—processes of innovation promising to solidify stark contrasts that searched the mythos of irreducible building blocks of minimalist Structurism. The massive postal network classified nostalgic, shadowy crannies for lost souls of the American Dream. Coincidentally, a lightning florescent blast momentarily freed from justification in the nocturnal glass-covered chamber to show relativity to be absolute form.

Like a cared-about building, Mail Art has vanished in the U.S. It seems to have ascended to computer Web sites, disguised in ordinary color and supplanted by its powerful offspring sect, Lettrism. Through the darkened door of scanners, collage should be able to effectively reappear. But in Belgium Luc Fierens still puts out small four or five-paged pamphlets of adjacent 'recombinative' Xerography just as in the postmarked days of 'Letter Bomb', 'Naked Man', 'Mallife', 'Janet Janet', 'Raunch-o-Rama', 'Couch Potato', 'RetroFuturism', 'TapRoot', 'Atticus' and many, many, many others. Fierens' booklets are named 'postfluxpost'. I recently viewed numbers 45-47 containing the art of Fierens, Read Altemus, Annina Van Sebroeck, Michael Basinski and Xtof Bruneel.

Collage is a shattering mode of obsolete conceptions, distorting them to convincingly prove that children shockingly do not have much similarity to a new CD player. Collage exposes benign cover-ups whose blinded vigilance turns into an abdication that estranges humanity from emotion. It is a found art and an artistic finding. It is visual as opposed to written, though it often transadopts writing for its use. The principle of collage is decriminally poetic. But its overall effect is 'graphic', a term that came into use at the beginning of the Twentieth Century in the retaliation woodcuts of such artists as Erik Heckle and Karl Schmidt-Rottloff as an off-school of German Expressionism. It has a kinship to journalism because essentially 'graphic' means opinion. It means action. It means making a strong statement. It is a response to time-space. It detects macro-theories of millennia, the ongoing apoc-collapse of everyday life from egoistic chance formulations of absurdity.
Take Bruneel/Fierens/ Sebroeck's artwork of a television with abhorrent tangled incorporating-numbers picture on its screen, instinctively reaching to grab onto the sides of the box, to gobble up everything around it, prompted by stimuli restricted to inner commands, to sling-shot all possibility of outer context/content from the intestine of the instrument like a fatal gob of all-encompassing snot. Or a fashion model with a rifle target for her mouth. Or Basinski's auto-destive letters in worm holes of the morally aboriginal Yetti's preconscious Os. Or Reed Altemus's Mickey Mouse's legacy to revisionist history. Or Altemus' sympathetic `human' face masked for the ball of mortality by skull-and-crossbones. Squatting wallflowers at the end of painted matter. Salvage yards. The forbidden inland terror of the congenital dog girl.

I remember some collages of Luc Fierens in `PhotoStatic' put together on a background of musical notation. He's still doing that. On a background of musical lines he has placed a four square of war machines, tanks and artillery, to symbolize the virtues of radically mononymous mail art, all the more needed today to go to the beach. War is the music of eternity, composed by the blood of the dead/living waking to smell the gun powder perfume of Jesus' rotting flesh.
1. Who has been the biggest influence on your life and writing?
   *Kenneth Koch, then Frank O'Hara.*

2. If you were stuck on a deserted island and could take only one book what would it be?
   *Kenneth Koch's New Addresses.*

3. Is process as important as what you produce?
   *Process is the pits. But I love writing.*

4. Do you try to be accessible or even worry much about it?
   *Never, ever.*

5. What city has been most conducive to your work?
   *New York, in fact, at heart.*

6. Is locale important to you?
   *No.*

7. What color is your imagination?
   *White or grey, depending.*

8. What's the first thing you do in the morning?
   *Sex is best in the morning, if possible. Then I stretch, and inspect the big window.*

9. Do you use a computer, typewriter, word processor, or longhand?
   *Longhand journals, computer, notepads. Although I find the computer presents too little tactile feedback for writing poetry, I am getting used to it.*

10. Do you find yourself writing differently when using different writing methods?
    *Not that I notice.*
11. What are you working on now? Is it available?

12. Is there a certain memorable line that sums it up?
*Dove sta memoria?* No, that's too fancy. How about "Roses are red, violets are blue" or "Hold it right there"?

13. What or who started it all for you?
(I'm losing the thread here.) It was a dark and stormy night.

14. How do you feel about interviews?
*Stop that.*

15. Do you feel that belonging to a group helps focus one's talent?
*I never have done either.*

16. What, if any, short advice would you have for would-be poets?
*If you are would-be, don't do it.*

17. Do you feel like you're a part of any tradition?
*Yes, but it would require another lifetime to define.*

18. What would you like to be remembered for?
*My penetration, and salad dressing.*

19. Are you getting tired of all the questions?
*Yes, I am afraid so.*

20. Do you think it's about time to end this?
*Oh, OK.*
"The mythological hero aspires to the absolute, but cannot realize this absolute in a woman's love. James Dean would have had an unhappy life with Pier Angeli, who married Vic Damone: legend or reality? In any case, the legend is anchored in reality. In front of the church which Pier Angeli left as a bride, James Dean gunned his motorcycle: the noise of the motor drowned out the sound of the bells. Then he dragged violently and drove all the way to Fairmount [Indiana], the cradle of his childhood."

_The Stars_, Edgar Morin

. . . and from a letter:

Both Sunday & Monday nights
I have awoken three times
to see if you were there . . .

from **MEMORY IN PROGRESS**

**THAT WAS THEN, THIS IS NOW.**

"You must see Venice when it snows . . . Venezia bellissima," Elsa (Morante) said to me over lunch (Ristorante Bolgnese, Piazza del Popolo, Rome) where she'd be squinting every now and then at the fine print of L'Unita, folded half lengthwise, not more than 5 inches from her nose. (I would later learn her eyesight was deteriorating from advanced diabetes.) "Yes,' I said smiling, "I will go there . . . some day perhaps. It's the place to be with your soul mate, right?" She laughed . . .and agreed.
We never did wake up a morning in Venice when it snows. We never did take that trip to Paris. Visit the Rimbaud home on Quai de la Madeleine, Charleville. The Musee des Beaux Arts, Bordeaux. The experience of sharing a Chateau Nenin, Pomerol 1982, the last glass.

There would never be the opportunity to pose so I'd get the perfect exposure of you naked or clothed—the photos you so wanted—the headshots where I'd come in tight on the shoulder and breastbone.

Mohonk Mountain house fades in the blue morning mist. The leaves already turned. We would not occupy its small rooms, November sunlight filtering through the window curtain, you backlit, almost in silhouette . . . the tree branches behind you also. Or turning now your head birdlike to the side, catching the light, share a moment of repose in eyes meeting eyes.

Nor was there ever the opportunity to do something for her art.

"This technique in the art of living," Freud remarks in his writings somewhere, and he knows.

* 

Tina Modotti naked on the azotea, ca. 1923, made by Edward Weston, her lover.

Harry Crosby/Kay Boyle being geniuses together at Coupole, or at Ermenonville, south France—someone's grainy snapshot.

Lillian Hellman/Dashiell Hammett on open sun deck in early colorchrome looking out over mountains I can only imagine, or of Stieglitz/ O'Keefe in the Saratoga twilight . . . or the black & white photomat-strip of how you might've looked one year ago in New York.

These photos, imaginary and real, project a future looking back at themselves in the same amount of time, though the circle of time gets smaller and smaller. It would seem now "History is the memory of time," just like Charles Olson first pictured it. This is the world of synchronicity gone out of sync. The future irretrievable in the past.

No formula in which to express these feelings rightly until I've learned something by examining the out-of-sync process, until I get my power back. This is Stieglitz speaking. This is Dante speaking. This is the voice of an absent person in the dream upon waking. This is the heart. This is a recording . . . At the sound of the beep please leave your name . . .

* 

It was the clouds passing over or the way the sun cut through the clouds—Sunday, May 3rd—that you'd be driving me back to Barrington. It was an occasional glance in your direction behind the wheel and the way you looked back reaching across for my hand, for the reassurance of what had occurred those few hours past now. It was the way the mountains changed color with every new angle, with every few turns of the road: the Catskills, Taconics, then finally the Berkshires. The trip, more or less 70 miles, was about to come to an end. It was what we said or did not say that was in itself reassuring. No promises. Just hanging loose—We'll see each other when we want to, and left it at that—getting off to a good start, cultivating rapport, like they say.
Roland Barthes speaks of "the adventure of desire." Perception is the process by which desire projects an image to hold fast to. A woman, thirty-eight, mature, attractive, a pervasive intelligence. "Intelligence invents beauty." A man looks at her while standing in the doorway to the kitchen. They come close. They embrace, slowly at first. Their clothes let loose, fall from shoulder and waist. The knees clean of all reference. The y-ligament of the backward moving leg pushing the front of the pelvis downward, fully physical and the image of the woman rising from the genital, kissing the pudendum. Later, getting up to make for the toilet downstairs she shows herself and endowed with qualities which have still to be discovered, but not these things are the factors, not your so-called chance meeting and beauty is not just skin deep in this instance, but in the very essence the aura she projects out from herself is not a lie, though blind to what inner sight she might possess. Such gestures, motion of hand, turn of the head, the neck curving gracefully into collarbone, hint a profound significance, but she needn't know that. She needn't know that the soul is felt through the eyes . . . that the eyes are what the soul sees through. She has only to trust what she feels and she'll know.

The specific circumstances of a given moment prevails in which reflects unconsciously in myself the entirety of what I had witnessed on those two brief occasions we'd been together, so that in reaching across distance and time, all time suspended in us. "Psychic images in the present" (Jung). The daydreams state. The situation infinitely tender and intense. The mons veneris exposed, or the way the light keylights the curve of the back with, how T.S. Eliot first saw it, " . . . that lovely curve up from the bottom."

I have committed the indiscretion of honoring what the eye sees—you, in this instance—the face of love and the smile coming toward me from whatever the fact of her existence from all possible Conjunctions even now dates in reverse, from the instants which are not lived, so that the slow loss of a small piece of time is only Change, or that none of it ever occurred. Sunday now, 6:30 a.m., May 17. Morning after full moon. You are asleep beside me and this is no dream.

Monday now. I'm here by myself, awake at an ungodly hour—turning with your scent in the sheets, the scent still on me. I didn't take a shower, didn't want to—thinking time lost as possibility, thinking wind in the trees across Anderson Street seen from attic bedroom window. And the light coming in that window—the light before sunrise—a dark blue. Empty-echoing rooms below, cats scurrying, all one world. Two nights, two separate occasions for encounter, entwined, that's all. A night driving through rain. A sunny day after. Bare legs and breasts. Nothing to look at, speak of, past now or ahead, but the faces unchanged in memory now. She grows reflective. Closes her eyes now.

If for once I didn't have to think it all through, or having not met, would you still exist? Aleister Crowley, mad magician, was correct in assuming "A line can only be aware of another line at the point of contact . . . and a soul of another soul." It is so. It is important that she stay fresh in the mind.

Seeing you in mind's eye reawakens those feelings in me I thought somehow dead: that moment when there's no difference between you and whatever it is you're looking at. A singular recognition. I could just as soon be living a lie where everything is made up, including your name, personal history, biographical data, where you live, etc., your license plate number. I could say the picture I made of you a Sunday afternoon May 3rd looking into the mirror at me was of someone else. I could say the picture you in turn made of me is that of someone else's life existing without him.
I could say none of this happened.

*

. . . and now the road is receding. The sky fills with a dark blanket of clouds. The Catskills reawaken in the sound of thunder off in the distance. I can hear the birds scatter. I can see the spruce out back undulate in a cool wind. Now the rain comes—soft tapping sounds on the window and roof. The house and the barn appear farther away than I had remembered. Butter, your cat, asleep in my lap.

4:vi:92
Great Barrington, MA

milk home
September 24, 1995

**Paola:** *What's the first memory you have of Harry?*

**Allen:** I heard about him before I met him, from Jordan Belson, who lived on Montgomery Street up the block from me in San Francisco, a filmmaker who had learned a lot from Harry. Harry originally came from Seattle, then in Berkeley as part of what was called "the Berkeley Renaissance" in 1948 around Robert Duncan, Jack Spicer, and other poets studying medieval history. I don't think Harry was matriculated, but I think he had worked with Kroeber, I'm not sure—the anthropologist. While we were sniffin' ether, Jordan told me about Harry, this polymath brilliant fellow who'd invented the machinery for making light shows and had left that behind when he left San Francisco. The people working on rock concert light shows developed their multimedia Fillmore West wall-collage projections from Harry's equipment, including the idea of mixing oils or colors on a mirror which was then projected on the wall: liquid psychedelic flowing moving images.

He told me enough about him so that when I was in New York later in 1959 I went to the Five Spot to listen to Thelonious Monk night after night. The Five Spot was then on the Bowery—a regular classic jazz club where once I saw Lester Young, and Monk was a regular for several months. And I noted there was an old guy, with a familiar face, someone I dimly recognized from a description, slightly hunchback, short, magical-looking, in a funny way gnomish or dwarfish, same time dignified. He was sitting at a table by the piano towards the kitchen making little marks on a piece of paper. I said to myself, "Is that Harry Smith? I'll go over and ask him." And it turned out to be Harry Smith. I asked him what he was doing, marking on the paper. He said he was calculating whether Thelonious Monk was hitting the piano before or after the beat—trying to notate the syncopation of Thelonious Monk's piano. But I asked him this track record of the syncopation or retards that Monk was making, never
coming quite on beat but always aware of the beat. He said it was because he was calculating the variants. Then I asked him why he was interested in Crowley, magic, in numbers, in esoteric systems, Theosophy, and was also a member of the O.T.O. He had practical use for it. He was making animated collages and he needed the exact tempo of Monk's changes and punctuations of time in order to synchronize the collages and hand-drawn frame-by-frame abstractions with Monk's music. He was working frame-by-frame so it was possible for him to do that, but he needed some kind of scheme.

I see. Also I read somewhere that his observations led him to notice that the heart beats seventy-two times a minute and we breathe thirteen times a minute and so he, kind of, created a rhythm playing around with the two.

There is a complex of body cycles. For instance, the vision is of thirteen to twenty pulses or blinks. I'm not sure the number of breaths per minute. But there are some other neural cycles. There was a formula that seemed to fit the basic complex of cycles. It may be that he has it recorded somewhere, written his formula.

He's mentioned intertwining these two as rhythm for his films in one of the interviews. [Another of the interviews included in American Magus -Ed.]

There are some lectures that he gave at Naropa, now transcribed, where he might've talked about this.

Did you see any of the paintings—that I guess were earlier—of the music?

Yes. I had a lot of curiosity about his work and we met a few times at the Five Spot. Then he once invited me to his house, about which he was very secretive. He was very reclusive at the time—and he had me swear that I wouldn't tell anyone where he lived, and it was 300 and 1/2 East 70th, I think, off of Third Avenue or Lexington. I went there with him, it was a little tiny brick building, two stories high. The downstairs was some kind of store and the upstairs was some tiny apartment. He lived there a number of years and the bedroom was in the back. The front room was all full of equipment and paintings and I was bedazzled by the paintings. I have never seen them since those years. They were rather large . . . maybe 3 × 5, 2 × 3 feet, and they were of large animistic creatures representing the cosmos that had eyes and mouths and wombs and sort of like gigantic god-like worms . . . or Ouroboros. They were byproducts of a funny kind, of formulaic triangulations, or Pythagorean calculations, and at the same time freestyle doodles. And then they were water colored and painted in . . . very beautiful. So, looking at them was like seeing each a funny, hunking, animist cosmos.
That's wild!

So, there were these creatures and there were other paintings including the "Tree of Life," which I had here—you've seen it.

Yeah, actually I would love to use it as the cover for the book.

Mine is on loan now to the Whitney Museum—they'll be showing some of the works of Harry.

Oh, that's wonderful—

That will be a big part of the Beat show.

Oh, when is it?

November 9th.

Oh, that's great. I didn't know about it. And did you ever see any of the paintings which I heard he did with the dots, of Dizzy Gillespie . . . Miles?

All sorts of things, yes, there were kind of punctuations and dots, and commas, and odd little animate miniature marking or musical notations or little figures running along the canvas or paper. I've got a very fine memory of those. Then he showed me his films. He would get me very high on hash, or grass, in this little tiny room. Then put on the phonograph while we smoked—"Round Midnight"—whatever music he was using. And then he showed me these beautiful films, which are now out on Mystic Fire Video. But he had a lot more. And then one day he showed me the entire *Heaven and Earth Magic* and that was really amazing.

Was this in color then?

No, black and white. It took place underground and the first scene was the 19th century opening of the London subway; and a woman in dentist chair, high on laughing gas. This was the elevator going high up and coming back down—ending in the London subway, at the inauguration of the London subway. But if you notice, there is a dentist chair and the lady in the dentist chair going higher and higher and higher—pumped up high like a barber's chair—and it goes way, way up into an elevator shaft, ascending into the sky.

*Is that the one where there is the scene with the two lovers going by in a brain-boat looking at the moon?*

Well, it's an hour and a quarter film. Every time I went there he'd get me very high, sort of hypnotize me with the grass and film! And then he'd hit me up for money! . . . twenty dollars . . . thirty dollars, fifty dollars . . . and I had a little money so I gave it to him whenever I was there. But I was beginning to resent it. But one day when I was there he said he needed a hundred and ten dollars and he would give me a copy of *Heaven and Earth Magic*—the entire movie—if I would give him that cash. Which I did. I bought it, I don't know what for. I didn't have a projector to use it. I'll put it away or I'll keep it safe. It wasn't a great copy, it was dark, but it was an extra one. I took it to Jonas Mekas—told him that I met this fellow who made the remarkable animated collage cartoon, frame by frame. And Mekas had never heard of him. So I left this film with Mekas and then Mekas got in touch with me and said this is an amazing colossal genius! So they got together and Mekas began showing his films. Harry was very reclusive and seemed to be very reluctant at first of going public. He preferred to go around cadging money off his friends, collecting here and there. It was a small amount of money, maybe a few thousand dollars a year, and many friends in different worlds.

*Strange how he seemed to have a real openness to randomness and parallel patterns—*

That's the key to his work.
But at the same time an almost maniacal precision for all the possible alternatives that could come out at that one random moment.

His interest in randomness was sort of an interest in chance—in actual linkage and synchronicity. But it's pretty much in the ethos of people like Cage or Burroughs or modern MTV. In a way much of MTV music videos comes out of this randomness. There is a direct lineage, I think . . . graphics . . . jump-cutting randomly or juxtaposition . . . a funny way of putting it together.

Then, later on, he went to Florida, at some point, and began collecting Seminole patchwork. While he was gone—I think it was during that period, I'm not sure—the landlord, who hadn't been paid for some months, threw out all of his paintings, everything that was in the apartment, Harry said. But he was very mysterious about it, so I don't know what remained or what didn't remain, but apparently the great paintings that I was just describing don't exist any longer. I don't know what else was lost. He said that the landlord threw it all in the garbage.

Then he was in the Chelsea Hotel for a little while at a very interesting time: 1970-1972, when Barry Miles, my biographer, was living there, putting together my 20 years' tapes for Assembled Poems Vocalized. And Jacques Stern was there, a friend of Burroughs and Harry's at the time. He had polio, was in a wheelchair, was a reputed member of the Rothschild family, he had some money. We'd known him from Paris; he thought Burroughs and Harry were the great geniuses of the age. He was making plans to have a magazine feature them, but was also very temperamental when he'd get drunk or high on coke or whatever. Throw temper tantrums, smash things in the room.

So there was Harry, Miles, and Jacques Stern all living in the Chelsea. And I visited a lot. At that time Harry recorded my compete collected songs, First Blues, which came out later, many years later, edited by Ann Charters, on Folkways Records, lately available on cassette. [Allen Ginsberg, First Blues: Rags, Ballads and Harmonium Songs, The Smithsonian Institution, Folkways Cassette 37560] Harry had also issued the green three-box, six-record set of American Folk Music that you also know about. That was one of the first things that I got ahold of. He gave me a copy first, then I bought another set when it was still available. And then the boxes collapsed on the crowded bookshelf. I don't know if you know the effects of the American Folk Music collection, an anthology of rare old records he'd rescued from oblivion. Have you heard that?

The effects? No.

The after effect. He put it out in 1952 and it was largely responsible for the 50s folk music revival wave in America, Peter, Paul, and Mary did much of it, the Almanac Singers, Pete Seeger, New Lost City Ramblers. But one of the people who studied it most closely was Bob Dylan. And Dylan took many of his tunes—"Ain't Gonna Work On Maggie's Farm No More"—from that. Dylan's early education in blues was supplemented very strongly by Harry Smith. Everybody in the later white blues, art blues, including Jerry Garcia, said they learned blues from Harry Smith's albums. And that was why many years later The Dead's Rex Foundation granted Harry ten thousand dollars a year. Because Garcia knew who he was, he was grateful mysterious Harry Smith was still on earth. So, Harry had this exquisite impact on American music, and in the last year of his life he was brought from Naropa to New York and presented with a Grammy for his contribution to the preservation and promotion of folk music.

Oh, I remember a beautiful line he said on that occasion: "I'm glad I lived long enough to see one of my dreams realized. I see America changed by music—"

"... and music changed by America."

Yeah . . . I remember you once telling a story about Dylan coming to the apartment when Harry was staying there and Harry getting pissed because the music was too loud and not wanting to come out and meet Dylan.

They didn't meet. Harry wouldn't come out of the bedroom; he was sleeping. Dylan was playing me a tape of Empire Burlesque and he wanted me to suggest an alternate title—I complained I couldn't hear the words. It was about one o'clock in the morning.
How long did Harry stay here?

Ok . . . So, wait a minute. Then on the way—let's see . . . the Chelsea . . . then he went on this trip to Anadarko, Oklahoma—and he always had some young kid as apprentice with him.

Is that the time when he spent a lot of time with the Kiowa?

Yeah . . . and he did the record of Kiowa peyote rituals, made while in jail for drinking, along with the Indians who knew the ritual songs! Also during that period, when he was at the Chelsea, he recorded all of Peter Orlovsky's songs, and Gregory Corso's early poetry. He was doing a series of recordings called *Materials for Study of the Religion and Culture of the Lower East Side*. That's anything that happened out there—like children's jump-rope rhymes, Gregory Corso, me, Peter, people talking, junkies talking, amphetamine babble, the noise of Tompkins Square Park, city songbirds, he recorded it all.

Did it ever come out anywhere?

No, the only thing that came out was my album, the one that Ann Charters edited for him. A lot of it may have been delivered to Folkways—maybe not—I don't know where all his tapes are . . .

There was a story that he drilled a hole in your window to put the mike out.

No, no, he didn't do that. I wouldn't have allowed it. Then in mid-70s he began drinking, so he got quite paranoid and he broke off with me and he wouldn't talk to me and a few other people—maybe 'cause I didn't give him money, or something, but anyway he got very paranoid—cut off complete with most of the people he knew. Once I remember passing him in a taxi on 13th Street, seeing him and yelling, "Hey Harry!" and he took a look at me and hurried away. Then he moved—for lack of money, I think—he was moved out of the Chelsea and moved to the Hotel Breslin on 28th Street and Broadway. There he slowly softened up, quit amphetamines and got back in contact. Now at the Chelsea he was doing a gigantic, final project, which was *Mahagonny*, again to the rhythm of the changes of the music. He was shooting in color with a camera, maybe a 35mm, I'm not sure. So I'm in that a lot—he was shooting whatever was going on in the Chelsea, around the city—carnivals—anything—a collection of images—an image bank. He had made some frames through which the film would be shot and/or projected onscreen. So he had these very beautiful Moorish or Greek outlines—comedic or tragic masks—Baroque theater proscenium. He built a machine, which would coordinate four projectors at once shooting through these various different frames—custom-made frames—proscenium-like theater squares. So there could be four cameras projected simultaneously with the images coming at random, and I think once, by hand. He broke glass plates of the frames in anger—in a tantrum—after the first performance. They've been reconstructed—some of them. There were some paper cutouts—cardboard cutouts of the frames that are left. They are in the archives.

When was it shown?

Rani would know. The first showing was probably some time in the mid '70s.

*It's kind of a step after Late Superimpositions [No. 14] [an earlier Smith film] in which four or more films are printed on top of each other.*

No, no—there was a lot of that too (superimpositions), but basically it was four projectors, four squares, four different images projected simultaneously and the combination would never be the same, because if you used amphetamine, there is no particular order. At that time, with drinking and amphetamine, he was very bad tempered and would smash some of his own work too. So, finally he was moved out of the Breslin—which was a hotel where a lot of the Africans who sell their stuff on the street would stay—because they were refurbishing the whole hotel and he had nowhere to go. He packed up his stuff and brought a lot of his stuff to the Filmmakers' Cooperative. And a lot of his films and paintings he had given to Jonas Mekas in exchange for money, or put down like in hock on a loan. So when he paid the money back, he would get back the paintings. He never paid the loan. Apparently there's a lot of it here now. Somebody just reported opening up a box and finding a lot of his paintings. But they're not yet
included in the survey of materials. So he had to move from the Breslin, but he had nowhere to go. So I said, "While you're looking why don't you stay with me a couple of weeks until you find another place?" He moved in and within a week a car had run into him. A compound fracture—the bone was crushed—broken—like shattered inside. Did you ever see the play The Man Who Came to Dinner? When this old curmudgeon comes to dinner and ends up staying a year! (laughs.) He ended up staying eight months. He was still drinking beer.

He made all sorts of drawings and constructions, particularly toilet-paper tubes and the cardboard tubes that are inside a roll of towels. He would set them up on a flat surface and glue them down, and cover them with a kind of glue to make them permanent and they looked like futuristic cities—round buildings—and he would draw on them a little bit. One day—angry at me for some reason or other, or angry at something—he smashed them—four month's work. So I took a lot of photographs.

Oh, you have them?

Yeah, they're all in my office. I've shown them. One of them, "Turning Milk into Milk"—him pouring milk—it's from his last days at Hotel Breslin. I don't have any earlier pictures. At the Chelsea he'd met Mary Beach, translator of Burroughs . . . niece of Sylvia Beach, a Parisian friend and publisher of Joyce. . . of the Shakespeare & Company bookshop (not the new one, the old one).

I think I might have heard from Lionel about that.

Oh, Lionel Ziprin. Apparently, Harry first came to New York to visit Lionel, who was part of the hermetic group connected with Jordan Belson. Not to forget "Hube the Cube" from San Francisco, a bearded guy who had a newspaper stand, also hermetic, amphetamine head. There was Harry and then there was Jerry Joffen, son of a rabbi, and Lionel Ziprin. Do you know him?

Yes, I do. What other kinds of things was Harry taping while he was there?

Then he began taping the ambient sounds of New York City. I had this kind of machine, Sony Pro-Walkman (points to a tape recorder on the desk), and he exhausted two of them—or over-used them. If he'd see a machine of mine he'd grab it for his studies, so I gave him one, but he got the other off of me too. He put the microphone out the window, wrapped in a towel, and just sucked in all the sounds of the city for miles around with the microphone. Sort of like Cageian music. And it climaxed on July 4th when you get all the fireworks. That's mostly what he was doing. He did it hour after hour, day after day. Also he'd take the machine to Brooklyn and tape Haitian street fairs, or Hispanic celebrations, concerts in open parks. He was very good friend with Rosebud, who knows a lot about him—a spiritual wife—Rosebud Pettet. She knows a lot about him; she has a lot of stories . . . she knew him from way back—before he moved to this apartment—from 1969. Rosebud's sister was going out with Peter.

Oh, I didn't know that.

Yeah, Rosebud's sister, Denise Mercedes. She stayed with Peter Orlovsky on the farm, late 60s, and lived here to the late 70s. I think Huncke was living at the Chelsea as well then, in the mid 70s.

And Gregory too!

And Gregory was there. Gregory—yes, it was very explosive—I think that was the reason he left, because things were getting kind of murderous there. Somebody got killed at the Chelsea—related to Harry or drugs or something. So that's why he left I think—it was getting dangerous. He was paranoid. Forward to the mid-80s: so, because I couldn't keep him in this apartment all the time—the Beaches had moved out of town to Cooperstown, New York—and they offered to take Harry to the country, and take care of him for the rest of his life. So, they took him up there and things worked out well. He started a collection of old, rusty farm keys, country implements of all kinds, 19th-century, antique, common, farm equipment, locks, etc. But he drank as they drank. And so he was living upstairs in their town farmhouse. They got really upset with him for leaving shit—shitting in a bag or
something—because it was hard for him to get up and down the stairs. They finally insisted that he leave. He wound up in a Franciscan flophouse down on the Bowery, a few blocks down—Third Street or Second—collecting books. All the money he gained went to book collecting. I remember I once visited him there in this narrow little cubicle and he was making recordings of people coughing and praying on their deathbeds. His cubicle was so crowded with stacks of books he had to move sideways and shift a stack to open his narrow door.

Oh, God.

You could hear sounds from all the other cubicles; they were paper-thin cardboard or wood walls. So he listened a lot, and it was always people at the end of their lives groaning to God—including people dying—coughing all night.

Sounds of death as well had a synchronicity—he observed synchronicities there—like when the birds would begin singing—apparently at dawn they all sang or at sunset they all sang. He began noticing the movement and cycles of natural objects. But Brian Graham (who develops my film, a photographer) reported that Harry was getting thinner and thinner from malnutrition and he was getting too weak to go out. Brian went there with Peter, I think. And we asked Harry to come back here to my apartment for an interim. By then he quit drinking, because he was so sick. He was here three or four weeks till summer, when I had to go to Naropa. So I brought him out to Naropa and he was in residence there from ‘88 on—campus Philosopher-In-Residence. And there he began making tapes of the ambient sounds of The Rocky Mountain Front Range—same thing—including climaxing on July 4th, with all the fireworks (laughs).

He had a little house there right on campus—a little clapboard house. It was all his own. The custodians supposedly let him cheat on the rent and he kept buying books—but Rani Singh became his guardian-secretary and got him food stamps and SSI. He was loved by all the inspired poets and gardeners at Naropa, till he was called to New York in 1991 to receive the Grammy, plucked from obscurity . . . though famous everywhere underground.

(end)

volume three home

milk home

volume three menu
1. Who has been the biggest influence on your life and writing?
   *Kenneth Koch, then Frank O'Hara.*

2. If you were stuck on a deserted island and could take only one book what would it be?
   *Kenneth Koch's New Addresses.*

3. Is process as important as what you produce?
   *Process is the pits. But I love writing.*

4. Do you try to be accessible or even worry much about it?
   *Never, ever.*

5. What city has been most conducive to your work?
   *New York, in fact, at heart.*

6. Is locale important to you?
   *No.*

7. What color is your imagination?
   *White or grey, depending.*

8. What's the first thing you do in the morning?
   *Sex is best in the morning, if possible. Then I stretch, and inspect the big window.*

9. Do you use a computer, typewriter, word processor, or longhand?
   *Longhand journals, computer, notepads. Although I find the computer presents too little tactile feedback for writing poetry, I am getting used to it.*

10. Do you find yourself writing differently when using different writing methods?
    *Not that I notice.*
11. What are you working on now? Is it available?

12. Is there a certain memorable line that sums it up?
*Dove sta memoria?* No, that's too fancy. How about "Roses are red, violets are blue" or "Hold it right there"?

13. What or who started it all for you?
*(I'm losing the thread here.)* It was a dark and stormy night.

14. How do you feel about interviews?
*Stop that.*

15. Do you feel that belonging to a group helps focus one's talent?
*I never have done either.*

16. What, if any, short advice would you have for would-be poets?
*If you are would-be, don't do it.*

17. Do you feel like you're a part of any tradition?
*Yes, but it would require another lifetime to define.*

18. What would you like to be remembered for?
*My penetration, and salad dressing.*

19. Are you getting tired of all the questions?
*Yes, I am afraid so.*

20. Do you think it's about time to end this?
*Oh, OK.*