

33. Reality Fragments

There's a famous tale of blind men describing an elephant. One feels its trunk and thinks it's a snake, another a leg and is convinced it's a tree trunk, another grips tail and declares it a rope, and so on, a daisy chain of inaccuracies. It's a broadside of incomplete individual perceptions, and how they aren't reliable, become a source of controversy. If not absorbed by your body's sensual input, what else do you have? Plato retold a famous cave allegory, where individuals see only shadows of what's real. But truth, in turn, is obscured in these parables. It's not that people are physically blind to one another's viewpoints, something never to be pitied. That would be too easy. It's really about mental blindness caused by man's inhumanity. The emotionally blind don't see because they don't want to. Each only focuses on facts that validate personal viewpoints. Responsibilities are not assumed because people don't care about one another. Do you glance off truths intentionally, so as to deflect any disapproval or hate, or simply because you've gotten but a tiny glimpse of its blinding totality, like a solar eclipse seen through a reflection? Facts are fickle, inconsistent, mutable, shift over time; truths are adamant, constant and there's nothing you can do about them but go along or lose. To defy or deny is futile.

Too much is made of differences in vantage points. While any experience is basically unique for each individual, it's still nearly identical for all. He was sure their response would be, "You have a lot of nerve telling me anything!" even as they continue to drown him in pointless nonsense themselves. Worse still, bloggers and forumers expect you to comprehend their drivel, justify ignorance, respond favorably, and smother truths in niceties. You never hear of graceful, open minded correspondents, who, if they exist, have no unresolved issues. What comes out of your mouth is whatever is manifest in your soul. Do you have any control over this? Not entirely. If you've stuffed yourself into a moral/political/social box you'll never be creative. But if you delve into nothing but unique phenomena, box dwellers won't understand you; they'll consider you a threat. It only matters in as much as you're able to derive sustenance and survive. Trading services for food needs few words. Communicating ideas just isn't necessary. You can get along surprisingly well gesturing and grunting.

Motorists only see bicyclists as impediments that make them late or uneasy. Bicyclists see vehicles as threats. What both *should* see are dance partners. It's beautiful when traffic of all types flows smoothly: An ambler glides between cars, a two-wheeler slips into left lane without motorist having to tap a brake, neither having to stop and, thus, both efficiently reaching their destinations. Instead, everyone is lunging to hold their spot in a snarling marathon to nowhere disrupted by shifting entitlements of pointless controls. You'd think instead they'd look at driving as endless opportunities to bask in the warm glow of having made someone else's day a little nicer through their good manners. Only through understanding does one approach such grace. Only by being exposed to this mentality does one learn. Textbooks never cover it. Al had to somehow get this word across.

Go now. Why wait? A life's so short, why question fate?
 Grab a tablet, work it out. Crab about some other lout.
 Or whatever else that bugs you most.
 Score one for you, an unknown ghost.
 Internal turmoil almost as good as
 external conflict. Suffering has
 a way of attracting a jeering mob.
 Nothing better while seeking a job.

Opportunities to share do present themselves. You bank some karma by doing so. It is worth doing? Who does it serve? If you spend an entire life working diligently toward a magnificent compendium for mankind's benefit, where does it get you? All you're likely to produce is a small fragment of reality, not even a summation. Why bother to study anything if nothing can be known for sure? Cynicism is a disguise for depravity, despair, futility, more like something you scrape from the bottom of your shoe, not to be cherished. You must do to become you. An ancient Gnostic nostrum argues, "If you don't dance you don't know what happens."

How else would you be aware there are irreconcilable paradoxes? There's always a small hope someone will crack one and cause an evolutionary leap forward. Desperate wraiths, detached from productive contributions mumbling obscenities, walk among the innocent. With a little insight, you realize that somewhat describes you. Sometimes it seemed as if all this sorting through impressions, seeking facts, gaining insights, and expressing them in words, reediting, churning it all over and over was nothing more than a mindloop, quicksand, slow descent into a maelstrom, spinning wheels, or tottering on the verge of something important.

Days when nobody called he felt obligated to shoulder that weight, work toward closure, which seemed ever further off, unobtainable, that rock of Sisyphus crashed down awaiting him to put a shoulder to again and raise up alone. Then sunshine would flicker through his window and tempt time outdoors.

Doctor Polydori, Lord Byron, Mary Wollstonecraft and Percy Shelley huddled together on a stormy night 2 centuries back. While lightening flashed and thunder roared, they amused themselves with a contest over who could tell the most horrific tale. This was actually Gothic times, not silly neo-goth of Rocky Horror ridiculed today. Polydori put together some superannuated East European myths on vampires, only later to be retold ad nauseam after Bram Stoker's masterwork. By his time, practically every television program had an obligatory vampire. After all, vampires are nothing more than nocturnal parasites, and society is full of them from line managers to members of executive boards. George and Percy collaborated on a gruesome yarn of reanimation based on Galvani's experiments. Dead tissue of frogs can be stimulated by electrical currents, as any schoolboy today knows, but a minor miracle in their day. Mary took it all in. The next day was bright and cheery, and they decided to hike among Swiss Alps, much like his own childish appetite for outdoor fun and lack of work ethic guilt, more a boy who'd rather play baseball than practice piano. Everyone but Mary forgot their pact. Mary persisted, and a year later published classic tale of Frankenstein's monster, one of the earliest in a genre now called science fiction.

Dracula, Frankenstein, Scrooge, and Sherlock Holmes remain the most recognized characters in all of literature. They represent a dark, flawed aspects of social behavior. Frankenstein's monster is a warning that everyone gets about messing around with science, playing god, tempting fate, or writing a long patchwork book from memory as this, an abnormality bound to assume a twisted life of its own and bring ruination to all involved. People revel more on whatever's demonic around them than angelic. That's because angels don't lust for attention, but silently soothe into forgetful bliss. On Judgement Day, they say, their terrible swift swords will separate evildoers from the righteous. Living legacies won't matter. At least, that's what ancients prophesied. They hadn't been wrong so far, although waiting thousands of years didn't inspire much confidence. World doom is something every thinking person worries over from time to time; could happen, but never does.

Art reflects concurrent reality, finds ways to get a grip on it. Impressionism took hints from Romanticism, where painters altered reality by not only capturing it but offering it up through their own perceptual flaws. Cubism captured motion thrust forward by automobiles, bicycles and locomotives. Expressionism and Surrealism explored interior mindscapes rather than encountered landscapes thanks to concurrent exploration of psychoanalysis. Beat odes expressed metropolitan alienation and postwar angst in jazz rhythms. Urban blight sings in tune with metal, rap and trip hop. So what is our milieu? Low grade war and persistent threats yield horrors, petty provocations and visions of dystopia.

You can't change the future any more than you can change the past. All you can do is live in the moment. What are you going to do with your allotted moments? Adults expect children to stay on a track of changing, growing, and inevitably becoming... what exactly? An existentialist believes all is choice and an individual is the sum of choices made. How does this account for avocations? What makes someone choose one career over the next? Not just whims, it has more to do with skills, born to and nurtured. One person is better at something than another, left or right brained, creative or mathematical. But opportunities must present themselves, or talent is wasted. He had chosen technical writing because he was interested in how things work, but was a lousy mechanic; could delineate concepts, but was a poor poet.

Anybody could have written this.
 So I remade myself into anybody.
 Wanted a poet but got nobody—
 a party demon too detached
 to soothe another's spirit scratched—
 spared salve for a moment's bliss.

Saturday night crawl,
 garden city strip mall
 where new asphalt warms
 hastily dug in shrubbery,
 or sweltering spouses, hands on thighs
 hold printed pulp, wait patiently.
 Poems ought not take
 as long to read today
 as what's upon this page.
 Who's got time enough
 to comprehend them, anyway.

Why explore any big truth
jam packed with heroic stuff
when small ones serve? Make
you feel you're some sooth-
saying serious thinker; lies
pump pride, build self image,
likely more than you deserve.
We're all so jaded by slogans, ads,
touting the latest phony fads.
Who's can say who's a fake
or who's beyond average forms?

Nobody values doggerel, the lowest form of composition. Free verse doesn't rhyme. Rhyming forces a creative edge, has to be clever and soulful, even if its artifice is totally hollow. Meter means counting all those syllables, dropping articles and prefixes to suit, picking synonyms. He wrote hundreds of haikus and poems, mostly of a didactic bent in new rhyming schemes—beyond elegant Dantean *terzarima*, iambic pentameter, Pindaric ode, singsong couplets, or verse without sprung rhythms or variable feet—which fused poetry and prose as if a Beat ode, only too carefully constructed, complex, and symbolic to be improvisational. His poems all bristled with suffocating morality. Have to invent contentious crap nobody will touch to call it your own. If copy is any good, other writers and unscrupulous publishers will steal it. If it ever sells, you'll be accused of plagiarism and have to defend or settle. Sold, you can never again call your work your own. Turpitude burdens one to philosophize, contributes to a distrust of constant reality as an illusion or somehow more relative than one knows.

People have no point of reference. Einstein knew one couldn't perceive correctly without one. It's like Southerners never seeing *aurora borealis*, even though it's allegedly there, described and photographed by many, but so are UFOs. Neither can one perceive colored shadows until someone points them out. There's plenty of phenomena like that, such as glowing afterimages that compliment any vibrant color stared at for several seconds or those vague stirrings caught in corner of your eye that are never explained. Individual insects far outnumber humans by factors in trillions and one cannot imagine populations of bacteria, googolplexar, 5 billion in only a teaspoon of soil. Yet, in their microscopic sphere, one hardly notices them, except for when their effects are pathogenic. There's surely much people don't consider or rather ignore,

primarily because being aware doesn't benefit those in power or create opportunities from which to profit.

Mathematicians and those otherwise addicted to logic point out that truths come in 3 flavors: Contingent (happens to exist where you are, as does real estate), necessary (established by definition, as $1 + 1 = 2$), and possible (might be somewhere). You could confine your reasoning to contingencies and get by very well, but definitions help you get on the same page as others and remove barriers to technological progress. Everything else can be tossed into a bin of possibilities along with astrology, divine rule by monarchs, doctrine, fiction, and UFOs causing chains of radiating crop circles. Hoaxes or schemes? Who cares? To belittle and ridicule delusions in low arts and skits, yet never totally repudiate, means you perpetuate bias, lies, misinformation and prejudices by simply mentioning them. By doing so as a career choice can you produce a legacy about which you can be proud? This is why clowns are so sad. Their sole purpose is to deal in sad currency of mocking and ridiculing everything sensible. Clowns, especially those who host late night television shows, aren't even funny. Brevity is the soul of wit, and they drag out a joke over 30 seasons. Give it a rest. Make way for important inquiries, where all real humor lies.

In an endless contest between body and brain, curves and muscles usually win. Majority dislikes thinkers or thinking, because sanity makes them feel inferior. Keeping predators as pets validates this premise. To him, beauty and cruelty could not coexist in an individual. Beauty goes well with benevolence or innocence, but for him a pretty face would never forgive evil cunning. He preferred people who were less than perfect, more humanly flawed, more unsure of themselves, as was he. Preferred writing that was less authoritarian or commandingly factual, more inquisitive or seeking personal revelations. Must be a lot of others with this same defect, since libraries have to throw out excess volumes of misguided affairs by the ton. Great apes escape toxins by continually exploring new territory, foraging then migrating while nature cleans up behind. Science in its repetitive immobility slowly built up over generations opposes natural instincts to roam. Humans seek to exploit what's new by casting off conventions, even though scientific principles could make life easier. To follow instinct without exception would mean ignoring art, ethics, religion, science. But you might be successful if you commit to intuition consciously. Then again, a stopped watch reads correctly twice a day.

As a writer you're forced to use your brain constantly. Blissful ignorance gets you nowhere, but can you do it without painting yourself into mental corners? Probably not. You're always crashing into obstacles associated with your lack of understanding, human frailties, mistaken statistics, and other people's lies. One problem with literature is it's always looking back, then forward, never existing in the moment. Anyone might have an impulse, injudiciously blurt stuff out; then comes fact layering, propaganda, self censoring; later critical deconstruction, ridicule, satire. Where in this process did truth wither and wrongfully die? Perhaps after original impulse? This argues for divine revelation. Individuals are useless when it comes to rational thought. Only a diverse system of thinking melds into a successful society.

He tried really hard to record moments, at least give an appearance of spontaneity. As if divinely intoxicated, childhood delights in the here-now, while maturity supposedly concerns itself with planning. Most religions would have you trade present for future, but that's all wrong. How you live every moment is all that matters. The only way to do that is cultivate a certain perspective, since you can't possibly consider all factors that will go into decisions without missing at least one biggie, or, while trying to be complete, get totally bewildered and paralyzed by complexity. Why not just make yourself into what you want to be? Or be exactly what you really are, devoid of artifice and influence? You might begin to gain confidence, heal, lose all fear, and from this decisiveness flows.

With a little knowledge, youngsters worry over fitting in, mental stability, money, sex, standing out. The more facts they uncover, the sooner they get over it. A little knowledge is dangerous, but less so than none. Knowledgeable people adapt to conditions, plan ahead, suffer less, and survive. Stupid people live in constant fear, make bad choices, and struggle continually. Hospitals are full of stupid patients. Freud discovered a talking cure with calming effects of exploring one's anxieties and reasoning why they are foolish. Most stem from poor upbringing and religious indoctrination. Individuals are more in control of their fates than they realize. You can avoid conflict, decide what to do and when to do it, plan for yourself, practice your independence, resist temptation, walk away from abuse, but only if you first educate yourself. You can cross deserts without becoming dehydrated, eaten alive, fried by sun, or poisoned by snakes if you possess the right sensibility and a worshipful attentiveness. If not, you won't last a minute when conditions turn extreme no matter where you find yourself.

Facts fail you. Having an extensive vocabulary is useless. Average readers distinguish between regular words and *vocabulary* words, that is, words they don't recognize, when, by definition, all words are vocabulary, the sum of words in any particular language. With English's nearly 2 million entries, who's mastered it entirely? An industrious reader will immediately consult a dictionary, jot down quandaries, or underline unfamiliar as encountered. Those who do may rise above the basic 800 most commonly used to a decent level of about 8,000. About 10% of readers know 25,000 distinct words by definition. Only lexicographers who write dictionaries know over 100,000. [See Bixicon included later for your convenience.] Can you sincerely say you know a word if you can't spell it? All you have to do to lose ignorant, lazy readers is apply your vocabulary. Do it too often and you create fear or shame, and that's also hostile. Knowing basic definitions is not all there is to grasp about communication. Differences in spoken inflection elevate significance. Syntax in sentences subtly changes meaning, particularly idiomatic phrases, which take on special significance.

Any guru's assertion that Sanskrit is root of all languages is another hazy, unspecific opinion. Vernacular is reinvented constantly as a basic need, yet the same energy crosses from ancient to modern languages. Your inherited fifty-thousand-year-old consciousness consists of energy that vibrates to linear expression, especially music. Human physiology hasn't changed in recorded history; no hyperactive gland responsible for paranormal abilities has ever been documented. There are, to be sure, gifted individuals and occasional prodigies whose wiring is better at something than others, but that was always the case, some exceptional hero. About all they do is toss in a few new phrases, often forgotten. Generations of masses mimicking one another is what shapes language.

Your choice of words is somewhat preordained, since you have to repeat words previously heard to argue opposite side, elaborate upon points made, or even simply agree. Placid mirroring, just saying whatever someone else says, is a proven ploy for gaining someone's favor. Respected speakers often intentionally mangle language, resort to infantile colloquialisms, expressions and gestures, only to ingratiate themselves to a rabble, dumb down to their level, hide their deceits, since they're neither naïve nor unschooled. Manipulation is why they never clearly state what they mean. Simpleton Chance the Gardner did just that and was mistaken for a profound pundit. Generalities cannot be applied, though; specifics are limited to a narrow set of circumstances. "Facts are useless in emergencies," as all Talking Heads know.

If you make up words, you either have to immediately define them or lose reader totally. Nevertheless, you continually concoct compound (i.e., bitstream, ringtone) and portmanteau (i.e., brunch, chocoholic) words that don't retain original root meanings, and expect people to get jiggy wid it. *Saikal* may be a phonetic cognate of *bicycle* in Kannada, but if you suddenly break into Dravidian or Hungarian or Urdu, reader won't get it any more than French, Greek or Latin quotes, a practice to flaunt erudition popular in the 19th Century. Today's version of this is quoting trendy writers in the loop after scanning their dust covers. Nobody reads that many books, and, if they do, why bother? It's all the same material rehashed. Suffixes of -core, -ism, -ment and -tion make simple words mean something far more, so much more you can no longer encompass it in your mind, e.g., exist and existentialism. It's just a way to cloud communication, darken your path, fog your windshield. Budapest street slang gave an oriental sheen to sci-fi cult film *Blade Runner*. If you apply an 800,000 word vocabulary, you'll be accused of flowery prose and dismissed by dummies. Everyday idiots do so to appear hip and dodge suspicion that they know nothing. If you say something at all astute, slackers immediately ridicule it. Better that than they organize against you as a mob out to destroy a monster. Doesn't running this risk of unconventionality run counter to intentional manipulation? "By not sucking up, aren't I more likely to be telling you truth!" Only bosses who've already made up their mind prefer yes men. Customs ebb and flow over time it seems.

Language perversion runs from bumbling malapropism, using the wrong word foolishly or humorously than what's otherwise intended yet usually understood by target listener, to surreptitious substitutions by crack monkeys, such as "blow" or "candy" for cocaine, illegal narcotics, meant to mislead authorities who might be eavesdropping. Insiders enjoy goofing on outsiders, who might innocently mention something as innocuous as bottled water, and elicit giggles from tweakers who knew that you had to frequently flush kidneys when flying on ecstasy. Any supposed humor in hyperbole just fosters confusion. There's poetic license, where words are laid into allegories, analogies and metaphors that totally modify definitions, done so readers better understand something ineffable in comparison to what's commonplace. Euphemisms let you say something gross or impolite without directly saying it. These lead to philosophical category mistakes where attributes are ascribed to things that they couldn't possibly possess, for example, "representative government". There are allusions and references to

other life experiences or works of literature to which readers might identify. Many such references pepper this text, as if a T. S. Eliot ode, only you've missed most of them already. Preachers rely upon effect of a hammered redundancy to reinforce tithing. Add to this acronyms, acrostics, anagrams, clerihew, equivoque, homonym, homophones, lipograms, macaronics, mnemonics, onomatopoeia, oxymorons, palindromes, pangrams, pig Latin, rebuses, rhopalics, spoonerisms, stinky pinkies, and univocalics, and wonder if anyone can possibly communicate. Hasn't English been tortured enough without Ebonics? Fanciful spellings and inappropriate capitalization distinguish people as different but not unique, form a craggy chink to get a foothold in the daily strife of this cliff face called life. Comedian Chappelle deems all American Negroes bilingual: gutter street lingo and suave job interview voice. All these distractions form a key to contemporary literature, lyrics, and verse, whose actual content has long since become unimportant compared to style. "Where's the beef?" In 20th Century painterly circles, sensual excesses of nonrepresentational expressionism resulted a backlash what can be described as a neo-realism corset. Patrons can't deal with what they can't comprehend.

Tagging texts with surreptitious hints has been done for centuries. Swift ridiculed contemporaries with thinly veiled references. Stooges cited Dewey, Cheatem and Howe as their lawyers, a straight up pun, but observing, "Merciless is how we car," might seem to suggest severe censure of some actual personage to any suspicious reading between the lines, a subversive tactic James Joyce and Vladimir Nabokov delighted in, personal jokes, wordplay. White Russians secretly coded messages in private letters to avoid detection by communist oppressors. Jihadists do the same today, easy to get away with since so few Westerners know Arabic or Farsi, never mind ways of burying messages in them. If one carries out clandestine operations on an agenda to satisfy grudges, practically nobody will notice. Prosecutors are better at reconstructing crimes than preventing them. About 99.99% of such flags blow right past observers, "over their head" they might say. You'd be furious if you knew how often you've been had by subliminal messages. Most important, flawed as it is, language is what judges use to condemn innocents to death, politicians use to convince citizens to take up arms, preachers use to get congregations to submit to slavery, and scientists use to conduct experiments that might kill everyone. Words are only dangerous if you listen and heed.

Mythology and religions gave us many gods, kami, spirits, all of which need to be appeased by arcane practices, and unique vocabulary entries which spill into daily life. Why build torii for birds to rest on? Or remove your shoes before entering a building? Or pursue dharma and seek karma? Buddhist and Shinto prescriptions with which Westerners aren't familiar make trying to cope an existential exercise. Easy to inadvertently insult followers of Islam when you're totally unfamiliar with their practices. Hypersensitive devotees are too easily insulted anyway. If a custom is offensive, it's up to host to instruct guests, not assume guests already know. Pity individuals for their lack of knowing. The fact that America, England, Greece or Holland are melting pots with broad tolerances for personal habits and religions doesn't mean their minds or morals are inferior. Just the opposite, takes a superior mind to accept diversity and coexist gracefully.

All great literature is subversive. A protagonist's name might be an acrostic for another name of the Abenaki tribe from which he descended. Readers seldom comprehend extent of an author's thought processes no matter how much information is passed. Bible was not without cryptography; Cabalists think it's full of occult references hidden in letter meanings and numerology portents, as if scrambled code carried on a publicly televised carrier wave. Secrets pass constantly right under your nose, yet you'll never notice. Divination of future through profane Tarot flows or sacred scripture is only useful if you actually want to know future. If you can't be totally alive now, bask in sun's warmth, feel at ease in your own skin, is there any value in being tantalized by unattainable treasures or knowing a future of more discomfort? Faith in fortune tellers leads only to self-fulfilled prophecies or unfulfilled plans. Anyway, why spoil a wonderful surprise?

America missed a momentous opportunity to make people worldwide communicate better. It should again require that people who wish to live or trade within its borders speak English, particularly advertisers, most of whom are totally given over to unreality. English is already a de facto global standard. Practically all websites are either in English or offer English translations. Historically, imperial Britain had a colony in every nation, so some form of their language is spoken almost everywhere. Today it's the most widely spoken on planet when you combine 1st and 2nd languages spoken. Chinese, a family of related tongues spoken by a nation with a population of over a billion, comes a distant 2nd.

Might as well forget Esperanto when you already have English; with word roots in Anglo, Asian Indian, Finnish, French, Frisian, German, Greek, Hungarian, indigenous American, Italian, Latin, Saxon, Spanish, and who knows what other language, English exemplifies polyglot and has already been reduced to pigeon forms for the masses. Why reinvent the wheel? He didn't say this just because he already spoke and wrote it, but because he struggled to teach himself several of its root tongues, none of which he mastered. Only a person endlessly moving gets to practice among natives, and therefore acquires accents, contemporary slang, idioms, subtle nuances, and vowel shifts. Otherwise any value in learning is merely mental discipline, and what better things could you be doing with your gray matter? Solving society's problems? Trying to remember names of English speaking people was hard enough. Moslem and Oriental names were often tongue twisters that evoked no meaningful mnemonics. He met thousands of people who he forgot almost immediately, since he concluded he didn't need to know them, and, if he did, he could always reintroduce himself. Introductions never need to be formal affairs done through intermediaries; when demanded, you don't want to know them anyway. If they erect a barrier, cut them out, ignore them in your planning. You only have room in your heart for friendly, open people. Snobs need not apply.

While dining with his German translator with a doctorate from Munich, time came to pay bill. Fritz slapped down 2 hundreds for a tab of \$110. Server said, "All set?" and Fritz nodded, unknowingly. He quickly chimed in, "No, bring change." Fritz was unfamiliar with her expression, which commonly means "Are you (is it) ready?" but in this context meant, "Is this transaction concluded?" When you think about it, this was just arrogance on server's part, who should never ask but deliver correct change forthwith. Nice tip, 82% of bill. Nicer to dine with a native looking out for your best interests. Often volunteered to act as host for visiting strangers, particularly with but not limited to Europeans for whom he had some affinity and slight language appreciation, and didn't mind incomprehensibility in an exchange of ideas, since doing so among native English speakers was often just as incomprehensible.

The brain brilliantly processes all this twisted input and makes fuzzy sense of it. The most advanced computer, capable of absorbing and comprehending every definition in all known languages, would still be hopelessly lost. Humans align with past experiences, ask appropriate contextual questions, choose to ignore, consider a source, plant countersigns in advance, process threats that must be

immediately attended to, read body language; all these hurry along their cognitive process. But therein lies a flaw which spells danger. They're hesitant to look at things differently and react in a new, self-preserving mode. What once worked fine socially might suddenly become totally unacceptable, like saying, "Let's hear a women's viewpoint," which, in a politically correct perspective, can be viewed as condescension and, thus, insult. Argot turned against criminals is likely to get you killed. Knowing is sometimes hazardous, and many a crafty statesman feigned innocence to an advantage. Being "in the know" makes you an insider, which brings with it a yoke of trust that, if broken, can lead to death. Don't ask: No witnesses. Being an outsider carries with it fear of the unknown, instant suspicion over possible allegiance to enemies, and recriminations. Slightly familiar yet disinterested is a calm nominal. Don't join other people's squabbles unnecessarily.

In any event, everything heard or read is interpreted into an associative gridwork of private interpretation, as demonstrated by a child's game of whispering something into another's ear, repeating among several in a row, then comparing original statement with what comes out at end. Individual aberrations are introduced. Echoes never quite sound the same, ripples never splash as high, substance is diluted over space and time. Computers treat all facts with equal importance immediately and mirthlessly; humans only focus on what interests, whether foregone issues or future plans, often ignore what's right in front of them, even when its crucially important, as if purloined letters. In a personal reality you can formulate your own version of truth particular to you. But getting it into print becomes impractical if you write books of 1,000 pages. Publishers don't want them. Can't be cheaply perfect bound. Too many rules enforce constraints, punish unconventionality, tune out Cosmos. Writers cringe to abide by arbitrary grammar, spellings and syntax as well as the orthodoxy of unmixed genres because violators are kicked into gutter. If one giant book is manifest within you, best to put it all together, not split it up. Volume 2 will get separated and message get muddled.

In society's reality, where self serving "truths" have been forced to witless masses, anyone who doesn't agree, whether deranged, divinely inspired, intellectually enlightened, or just plain bad, is considered a nonconformist to be exiled, imprisoned, or persecuted. Weirdly, under existing laws it has become your duty to testify truly about every malfeasance you witness despite reprisals; otherwise you're an accessory, just as culpable and punishable. So what most people do is hide from reality, look the other way,

until logic is obliterated and nonsense ennobled. You can try to expunge all madness from language, but, then, what have you got? Madness remains with no way to express itself. Language is in mad living people, not a static thing, shared, vital. Few disagree when salesmen by rote spout, "Can never be too rich or too thin." Neither is true. The thinner you are the sooner you die in a famine. The more time you spend amassing wealth, the less time you have to enjoy it. Someone must pay the wages of sin. Maintaining wealth becomes a 24/7 activity. Then what will you do with it all? Who needs as many shoes as Imelda Marcos? You can, however, be too fat or too poor. Somewhere between extremes is always preferable.

Time exists so everything good doesn't happen at once, you can savor another treat later. Music marks time. Prose needs to withhold information, then reveal it; surprise is fun that many can't stomach. Much is made of causalities, climactic action, plotlines with breaks to describe what's happening. Parallel activities are only important when people work as teams with deadlines. No need for plots or schemes when you're alone, staring at the same tree blooming year after year. Of course he knew about plot, but why be a slave to convention? Began to prefer micro-plots, encapsulated gist of a story without all its trappings, particularly regarding legends and myths, which you need to know to unlock literary references. Simpler to live without artifice. Wasted a lot of time trying to elevate some sections above what's mundane, when only he cared enough. Was it more for accurately getting across what he really felt? Or trying to root out wasted words? Didn't want to bury important facts in irrelevant detail; doesn't get them across. Then again, which are important?

The most powerful speeches ever given were monographs, one premise with incontrovertible evidence, "Say, support, say," essence of forensics. Liars will list more things to drive home a false point. It's how you gain approval, sell, win debates. His was not that type of text, not looking to convince, not something anyone picks up and reads from cover to cover, victim of the affected fallacy of judging a book by how it makes you feel rather than what it is, such as fascist tracts that raise hackles. Yet, everything only exists in the now. Past is immutable; future is unwritten. Whatever you do in life, why forsake any moment? Is reading this sentence what you meant to be doing right now? If not, what would you rather be doing? Why not work toward doing it? Get prepared, learn, read, strengthen, surmount any obstacle that stands in your way of opportunities.

Opportunity is not a door, it's a subway. You pay a small fee, get on board, and take a boring ride through otherwise closed tunnels, then step out into light, none the worse for wear but well enough off. Its alternative is groping along through sewers hoping someday to find a ladder that will lead you upwards, perhaps to a locked grate where you can look but never get out. While sewer smells bad—most everything there is foul—extremely rarely one might find a prize never to be found elsewhere, that 5 caret diamond ring someone washed down a drain. Can one possess it? Exploit it? Get out alive with it? Lives are consumed in such quixotic crusades. Between sewer crawler and subway rider, who is more alive? Perhaps neither opportunities nor undercurrents are worth pursuing; instead, avoid caves, be a hugger, stay above ground, walk in sunlight.

Readers say they appreciate a positive attitude, but he knew better. A compliment could be misinterpreted, induce fear, initiate reprisal. Surely, some only want to hear “life affirming messages”, or, properly translated, “self vindicating pabulum”. Nothing improves without questioning. Once beyond tribal knowledge, you can create models that work for everyone involved. If this becomes too hard to achieve, you must replace participants. Works on a small scale, but for society on a macro-scale you have to make increasingly simple processes anyone can handle. This often means bland conformity. When it comes to building codes, city services, fuel, transportation, and the like, standards are good, if they are kept current with available materials and technologies. Leaves time for addressing far more complex global and interpersonal issues.

In a rare interview, Bob Dylan wondered how it was possible to write so many songs, over 500; attributed it to being connected to some collective consciousness, but rightly rejected Jung's over-used cliché in favor of being *alertly awake*. Also disparaged people's invitations to discuss politics, religion, and weighty matters, as if they expected answers with none forthcoming. This might only be to fend off clingy worshippers and add mystery. Or was it early signs of confusion and senility? Later in life child stars always speak of themselves as a boy or girl they didn't know, and seldom remember doing what made them famous. Dylan was a child star in that sense, but one who bridged a canyon between New York's tin pan alley, when they first discovered music's commercial potential, and rock and roll's billion dollar business. Dylan could gin out simple ditties based on dated archetypes and imbue them with brilliant poetry that captured a hobo wistfully watching landscapes pass from lumbering boxcars, or urban angst as it spread and worsened,

or worrisome political unrest before it became newsworthy. Dylan sponged up influences, then put an individual spin on them. People imitate those they love, wax poetic for their beloved. Song after song burst forth, more than any other songsmith over that century. But such an output was dwarfed by a single classic novel or poem; take Dante, whose *Divine Comedy* by itself surpassed lyrics of thousands of rock ballads. These days, 5 second soundbites suffice.

A song is only a crack into an endlessly deep cavern of anthropological influences, emotional strengths, heritage, treatment in society, traditions. Kitschy tunes from the '50's, for example, "How much is that doggie in the window?" reflected a totally bourgeois mindset of grasping superficiality bent on escaping war angst and replacing it with consumerism. Is there anything more insipid than Christmas carols bellowed by braying idiots with untrained voices? Yet these traditional verses have tiny hints in them: boughs of holly, fir trees, ringing bells sprinkled amongst Age of Belief genuflections that do their best to exclude pagan rituals. It's no wonder Dylan's wide-eyed observations of institutionalized malfeasance—modern slavery, rights violations, war profiteering—shocked a complaisant public. "A Pawn in Their Game", "Like a Rolling Stone", and so-called protest tunes were wake up calls. That so many did listen just evidences this tragic undercurrent. Yet, half a century later, aging car buffs can wax nostalgic for Elvis and Perry Como, can't accept a whole new, wider World, can't escape this powerful reactionary drug, run screaming at any awareness of anything beyond that tiny slice of reality they were handed during their teens by war weary folks. Get over it. This is Millennium 3. He never liked Elvis, fat or skinny. Chuck D branded him a "racist sucker, simple and plain." But a lifetime later, citizens, mollified by a glorified Graceland fantasy, have yet to "fight the power".

What is man? A pompous question? A creature of continual habits and needs, consuming any carbohydrate, protein, or usable resource it can gather to exploit; driven by hormones and stimuli into odd acts of anguish, lust, pleasure or violence; motivated by fears of inadequacy, poverty, stress over brood and spouse. Beyond survival, social aspects make a person ambitious, arrogant, frustrated, a ticking time bomb, yet, curiously, possess a tendency to want other people to somehow connect, thrive in harmony, ultimately cooperate. The human condition affects everyone equally but individually. It's an intensely intimate private journey shared by billions gripped with a fury to let it all out, tell their own stories, yet somehow fit in. This expression shatters into trillions of pieces: each daily act, every transaction among them, reusable templates,

like snowflakes, unique yet nearly alike, that, perhaps, can be custom fitted. It's no wonder humans see portents and symbols in everything, even when none was intended. Diversity benefits the whole in some unfathomed way, encouraging confusion, a sense of hope, a species survival mechanism, who could say?

Given this basic configuration, surely emphasis must be put on improving ways people act in the best interests of each and society at large. Compassion, etiquette, laws, mercy, opportunities, rules and their enforcement have to be continually defined and redefined until everyone is included, but then people wriggle out from under any authoritarian thumb. This is truly a core question. Make everyone comply or remove reasons to be mean to one another? Still wouldn't eliminate man's inhumanity to man. Born psychopaths teach evil to playmates and siblings.

Reminded him of a train wreck back in the early '60's. Word spread quickly around neighbors, who descended upon scene with a passion for profiting, picking up whatever had been spilled, rifling through wreckage. This is called looting, but only by others who are jealous and missed out. Privateers are everywhere setting the same bad example—overpaid CEO's, chairmen, Congresspersons, presidents—only now they've twisted laws to satisfy their greed. Looting is legal for them. Congressional makeup matters because Republicans pass bills, like the Energy Policy Act of 2005, which primarily benefits existing corporations and Texas billionaires and bolsters 50-year-old technologies, like nuclear power, while newer alternatives are stifled. Energy affluence means fewer people control that energy. This among countless other examples is all about maintaining privilege, as usual, not researching innovations for the common good. Laws should not give advantages and must be uniformly enforced, otherwise they are, by definition, unconstitutional. You can only enforce equality. Because of PAC money and self interest, Congress conveniently forgets this.

A small impartial group could challenge many existing laws because of their inherent inequalities, for example, tax rebates for the wealthy. Instead, Supreme Court waits for cases to come forward, miscarriages of justice in lower courts; it lets judicial system filter issues, and only hears those from someone who's rich or sponsored to push beyond Circuit Courts of Appeals to highest level. This favors a small, affluent demographic. Bribes infiltrate a corrupt system where justice isn't always served. Think for yourself and you're alone. Challengers who speak for the masses are an embarrassment to judges or lawmakers. Those who try to do exactly that are routinely maneuvered into splinter issues that affect

few and mean little. Perhaps that expands freedom's fuzzy edges or exposes far more problems than originally intended. Meanwhile many starve unnoticed or submit to tyranny.

Volume seems to matter, and if you write enough, people begin to take notice. You gain notoriety as a writer of sorts, although none take the time to actually read what you wrote. He, too, was a writer, just that nobody else knew it because his output was inaccessible to the masses. His 100,000 technical pages was a career for 10 writers, but he wasn't famous. To be creative and survive you have to be presumed as being amusing and smart. Nondescript garbage or precisely penned technical exposition doesn't draw fans. You have to stimulate jaded nerve endings to excite anyone. In other words, opinions matter more than facts, science be damned. Opinions are what Supreme Court issues, and they are very real, truths that suit the moment.

Everyone wants a piece of any entertainment action out there. Rock stars write 10 hits, only the 1,000 words 1 picture is worth, and they're showered in accolades. Burnouts from '50's and '60's want adulation for having *pioneered* a new sound, as if they had taken some terrible risk. Teenagers expect everyone to go berserk over some loud rebellion against their struggling parents. Filmmakers stage their fears and nightmares for gullible ticket buyers. Writers impose their misery upon whomever picks up their books. They all feel they're due a lucrative payday, even quibble about who said what 1st, as if common experiences wouldn't always simulate copyright infringements. Eventually everything will already be said and will be parceled out to myriad toll keepers who'll spend a dollar in legal fees chasing a penny. A short epigram that somehow vibrates one's spine in an idiom of a passing fad is what's valued, not steady output over a lifetime provided with the best of intentions for a reader's actual edification. Bitter? Doesn't begin to describe his lonesome emotion.

Russian writers retell tales of peers burning novels they wrote out of fear of being caught with something that could get them executed by state. Seemed unpatriotic, in fact, pathetic. This feeling of whatever constituted his innermost being as too unacceptable for everyone else would grip him with gloominess, remind him of so many more pages and sketches he irrevocably lost, simply left behind, mislaid, tossed with garbage. But did it matter? You can't expect encouragement, lest you don't write at all. You are self-compelled. Mahler identified this urge, "You are, so to speak, the instrument on which plays the Universe." You're merely a messenger, after all, who accepts a burden, a package from beyond.

Mahler's Aryanism, as an ennobling influence, popular around 1900, made him wonder what later effect it had on world events: fascism, Hitler, Nazis. Any notion of personal perfection or public eugenics as a form of spirituality pales in comparison to simply *accepting people for what they are*. You can't improve anything you can't encompass, don't understand, or which determines itself. That several billion terrans get along as well as they do since the Cold War might be an indicator that instant manmade doom works as an emotional damper or global deterrent. Even so, terrorists, who invite global annihilation, find ways to work mischief despite this constraint, like suicidal lemmings taking as many with them as possible. Jihadi combat is bogus. Ijtihadi reform seems reasonable. Neither ought to be imposed upon anyone. Theocracy relies on language, and you know what that means.

There's still no policy to stop another insane student with a green card from getting guns in Virginia. The right to bear arms is supposed to be a right for citizens, not visitors. It was initiated for citizens both to hunt for food and protect themselves against invaders. Gun manufacturers and the NRA who lobbies for them don't want any restrictions on sales. When innocents die, they accept no responsibility, only step up their marketing and resistance to new controls. Nationwide, there are 16,000 murders per year, mostly from gun violence. Newscasters wring their hands over nine dead soldiers in an isolated incident in Iraq, or thirty-three students in a single college campus attack. Nobody remembers those four students killed at Ohio State by out-of-control National Guardsman. Yet more American civilians are slain annually, about forty-four every day, in Detroit, New York and other urban centers than all U.S. soldiers killed during an entire 5-year foreign war.

Fan obsession leads to questions about what drives their hero's thinking, just as you'd do in any friendship. Why bother making friends with a brilliant artist? They become your guide into an area of experience you may never have otherwise noticed. Since they pleased you, you might be interested in what pleases them, you'd think. This may not pan out, but does make for a worthwhile investigation, and what else is there to do? Active participation beats passive consumption. You don't get turned on through a bland diet of sanctioned stars and system fortifying nostrums. Your own explorations are far more interesting, strengthening, make you more like you rather than everyone else. If you're dissatisfied and uncomfortable with what's presented, it's because you didn't attend that inner itch to seek for yourself. Trying to play makes you far more appreciative of those who do it well. You must share some

context with an artist to fully benefit. You don't usually hear once then totally admire a collection of songs. Like people, you warm to them over time. Takes exploration into shared influences, outlook, what they represent metaphorically. Having all those unique perspectives as slices of your mental landscape is what leads to everything good in this World, especially compassion.

Oddly, a lot of 3rd World music sounds just like western pop, a direct mimic of what they already liked about blues, folk and jazz, which, ironically, were based on even more primitive forms from Africa and Medieval Europe, celebrations of life that resonate forever in the human spirit going round and round, each built upon former ruins. Robbie Robertson's ghost dancers thought their rituals and songs would overcome white encroachment and return their buffalo herds. Whether they'll live again because they danced and sang seems unlikely except on another plane of existence. Aztec, Mayan, Sioux, and some other sufficiently complex, religiously oriented societies fell prey to greedy men devoid of spirituality. Who ultimately wins? Golden idolaters who back false gods, grateful dead, or wealth amassers trapped in this physicality? Who knows? Wherever you're headed, you can't take anything at all with you except spirit props. "When you find a golden feather, it means you'll never lose your way back home."

All your daily loops out and back are just a pale imitation of the greatest loop, from big bang to unknown beyond. Experimental music group múm's "K/half noise" simultaneously plays sound loops backward and forward. It somehow marks universe's crossover point between big bang expansion and everything beginning to collapse upon itself again. Man wouldn't notice, time runs identically, nothing appears different, but civilization grows more asinine and barbaric en route to its placid vegetative origins. Later on CD you take a fearful trip across "the land between solar systems," and finally become no one, so don't be so incredulous. Truly, your mission is to find out what's worth keeping. Joseph Campbell figured it out: Get to a level where you understand all these divergent strains of legends and myths, how they're all connected, then transcend. This is the journey during which so many fall by the wayside, but not Crazy Horse, mystic road rider being immortalized by an entire mountain sculpture, a project well worth doing. Crazy Horse carried home close to heart; wherever a mystic stands, home surrounds, warms all around as if a campfire.

Popular music had changed, become a titillation factory, found its own economies, made so anyone could participate with no talent or training. Voice coaches were less important than plastic

surgeons, who swear they'll provide perfect features but hack off flesh so as to make you look freakish. Electronic background music was recorded on disk, burnt to CD's, which virtually assured the homogeneity of all live performances except voice, which patrons expected to be slightly "styled" each time. Otherwise, it was just like listening to a recording being played in a big hall with a powerful sound system. Why do people expect performers to give an impression of working hard? Really skilled performers make fantastic results look easy. Hendrix was just really into outrageous but unnecessary spectacles, and only sometimes burnt or smashed Stratocasters.

Artists find it increasingly hard to distinguish themselves, and spectators get confused over endless choices among meaningless spin-offs. If this World was decimated, and all entertainment remaining consisted of a few oldies by some group you would've never considered listening to, you'd still latch on to comment, compare, make buying decisions on this small sampling, and urge something better be styled upon it as an example. People need a basis for discrimination. Music used to be performed live by practiced virtuosos, but fewer concerts resembled that anymore, only classical, jazz, and gospel. Pop performances were mostly lip-sync ballets, more dancing than singing, where they make audiences beg for encores, as if they didn't know a stadium full of fans didn't already want to hear as much as they were willing to dish out. Neither their dancing nor performing were any good, but people paid for a happening. Style surpasses substance. Really talented artists are usually misunderstood and remain underground with a cult following.

He never worked so hard to pull something together. But as he finished chapters and reread them, they didn't impress. Sounded like a madman's ravings. How was this going to gather readers? Even if it was a perfect slice of twisted Next Millennium Americana, a lot of others were behaving the same way, chronicling their own impressions, distributing freely over Internet, making fools of themselves. If anything, he was proving that opinions including his own don't mean anything. In fact, piling on more words is better, so nobody will read any of it, particularly Republican apologies. Books are convenient warehouses for ideas nobody wants to reflect on. "Write them off," has many meanings. Every sentence was a new list (whence *novelist*) of somehow connected fragments, just like any landscape or mindscape, comparisons and contrasts that draw your attention if you're alert and observant. Internet is one enormous distraction, entire World at your fingertips, *if* you can access

it fast enough or want to, there's so much pointless detail, registrations for any site with what might be considered content, spy-ware to peg you demographically and violate your Constitutional rights to privacy. Cheesy novels describe everything in great detail, when a simple picture could get past that sensory input expediently. They even produce graphic novels (i.e., thick comic books), novels as audible recordings for drive time, and 2 hour videos adaptations since people don't like time killing reading all that much.

Literature is another victim of automotive aggression. Only book publishers and librarians claim, "Reading is fun," and a plethora of children's books aim to perpetuate it. Might reading help you achieve heights? In Dr. Suess's simplistic "One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish", Mike—momentum or motivation—rides with a captain and stoker on a bike built for three; they like the fact that Mike pushes them up hills. He always wanted to thank (blame?) Geisel, whose whimsical illustrations got him to read.

Books are dark mirrors cracked, never get you close to experiences of author, who, in turn, may never have directly experienced whatever is being expounded upon. Make believe horror stories abound; authors caught cheating are scandals ripped from headlines. Just another way to stretch out time of yours they waste. Magazines opt for picture-rich communication to bridge gap between minds brought up on television and short attention spans. Pictures engage better than words; they are more highly valued, although tossed around almost as lightly, and often comes with explanatory captions, because people don't necessarily understand what they see. Both are anemic adventures, vicarious defibrillation for the fainthearted, weighed against actually mingling among great minds and kind hearts during momentous events.

Little has changed since century-old cycling posters with nearly naked nymphs by Jean Paleologue sold bikes. Frenchmen always seemed to idealize naked women in visual media with widely divergent proportions of what constitutes beauty. Gauzy suggestions told you practically nothing about advertised product, but hinted Godiva flashes and winged quickness. Layout artists of the 50's and 60's used garden-plot layouts where pictures were reduced and fit in small adjacent boxes, twists of evidence to suit a strategy. This gave way to collage effects, multiple views of things, sometimes all the same size, sometimes not, sometimes tightly cropped images that hide unsightly details, as if a freckle or mole was damaging to haut couture. Full exposure became no good. Only taunts and teases sufficed, turned into digestible bits, infomercials. How a montage was assembled became more important than what it was

made of, a homage to new media of movies, a whirling chain of images you can't absorb fast enough to honestly appreciate, like passing landscapes on long Sunday rides. Indeed, the first kinetoscopes were made to mimic locomotion and motoring; movies and mo-ves are historically linked.

Hide and seek is a child's game. Crime scene investigators make it into an adult livelihood. There was a French painter, an all-time great, who some historian was discussing. Any painter wanting something masked from a scene would have definitely painted it out. But this one didn't, not quite, left just enough to hint at a head and shoulder on upper right. Who was this mysterious figure? A divorced husband? Girls' father later removed from grace and sight like yesterday's trash? Maybe a doting "uncle", sugardaddy to them, who fell out of affection after leaving painting, perhaps a final gift? Or a gentleman who didn't, after all, want to be known as a one who chases youth so fresh—casual ease, lusty grins and rosy cheeks—lolitas far too sophisticated for their years? Who can it be? Perhaps only painter can answer and, from a grave, guards this riddle eternally. Ah, the stuff you notice after it's too late to grill someone about it.

He asked his dad about a terrible but incomplete memory from when he was young. Living near a park with several lakes, he and his brothers spent a lot of time fishing in, hiking around, and skipping stones on them. One day news flashed how two school-mates, underclassmen, were drowned after setting out in a bathtub. Kids do foolish things. As soon as plug burst, it sank like a stone; one swam to shore to alert authorities. He had seen them alive from across lake, possibly even yelled they shouldn't, wandered off for an hour, then returned to firemen, reporters, and worried dad on his bicycle, who seemed glad to see him for once. Why a bicycle? Why not drive? Was his bike dad's first and hasty choice? What if he needed a lift home after a shock? What goes on in mind of a parent to hear such news and suspect the worst? Dad didn't remember this incident at all. Repression affects everyone in bizarre but merciful ways. These deaths meant nothing more than a few weeks of gloom at school, held no meaning, served a small community only as a bad example of things not to float on: bathtubs, leaky canoes, refrigerators, wheelbarrows. Who were those deceased? What important contributions or discoveries never happened because of their passing? Children ought to be protected better, play under supervision. But unless children explore for themselves and survive they never develop self confidence. You can only lock closets with poisons, provide safe places and roads to play.

Films aren't honest. They have to be made to fit market niches with formulas of sex and violence. Little of it happens in real life. Producers only fund what they think will be successful. They think people want to escape from mundane lives by going somewhere they've never been, view scenes that they've never seen. Portrayals of people doing what they usually do has some place. But, face it, honest films like *An Inconvenient Truth*, *Domenik & Eugene*, *Further, Matewan*, *Shy People* or *The Machinist*, which did just that, although extraordinary things eventually do happen therein, were seldom commercial successes. Pastoral revelries, teen angst, and wimpy coming of age stories probably aren't worth your time. Cinema isn't about truths, even if peppered with occasional revelations. Nobel Laureate Harold Pinter admitted, "...you stumble upon the truth in the dark, colliding with it or just glimpsing an image... often without realizing that you have done so. There never is any such thing as one truth to be found in dramatic art." Documentaries dynamically bring small messages into sharp focus. Films are for impatient people with small minds. Books can bring on a deluge of data, every paragraph another document, vast volumes of them opening doors to new perceptions, worlds full of terra incognita, or they can bore you senseless.

Based on wonderful narratives, some small truths might poke through in film, but, mostly, it *is* a mess of phony, unrealistic pap fed to a bored, brainless, public. An example was the farce, *Point Break*, in which protagonist, a rogue FBI agent, infiltrates a bank-robbing gang. Could have busted them all at any break point, instead of getting everyone killed and giving up at end. People in firestorms die, including cowards and heroes. Teens never meet any sexually liberated nymphomaniacs to fill their pubescent urgings. Most women have shapes unlike those few curvaceous lovelies they seem to always find for movies, who soon blossom and fade into dumpy regularity like you. Adult themes are okay, nowadays. Film industry has already reported a shift from violence to sex. People like romantic sex more than explicit porno or gratuitous body counts. You'd think more films would show misshapen nudity, which is a daily norm but unpopular among those who want your money. Perhaps there's some hope for sensible ideas someday. Films as enduring records of temporary sculpture began to appear and gather viewers, different enough to make you rethink what films are all about. He'd coincidentally filmed one himself.

Humor need not exist among competent people, just forbearance of the folly of others, maybe share a smile of recognition. Aristotle spoke of sources of humor, but they all poked fun at

errors made; after all, to err is human, so why is that funny? Clever manipulators seize on this and use it against you. Slobs use it as a crutch. As soft conflict underlying racial and sexual discrimination, humor entertains, but must you always be entertained? When did riding a bike, taking a walk, or visiting a friend cease to be life's main forms of diversion, after necessities of food, sex and sleep? There's something beyond consuming, whether durable goods or artistic property, there's communion with human behaviors and natural presence, a Zen-like acceptance of surrounding life-force struggling to heal itself. You can be agnostic, atheist, or devotee and still be permitted to enjoy God's creation. Your body is part of nature, not to be sheltered or subdued, but to absorb impressions, grow, strengthen; to be outside, be used, belong among the rest; to notice other creatures and their habits. Everyone is potentially a biologist, which is why he investigated it so keenly when young, majored in it while in college. But it all goes sour in time. Fingers stiffen, joints ache, maladies mount until ambition wanes. Becomes awfully hard to get back your drive once it's gone. Any sports figure who stays potent through dynasties is remarkable, a presence to behold; most can't avoid injury through an entire season.

Human minds usually can't deal with brilliance, purity, or singularity. People arose from cacophonous squalor and conspicuous filth. Break off crumbs of truth and mix them in with daily fodder, like force-feeding medicine to pets. Truth is ensnared in a cosmic combat between evil and good, with all caught mortally struggling in a figurative spider's web, unable to choose either, simply accepting their inevitable fate or thrashing in vain against constraints. Diversions and teases make them forget their struggle for a few moments, and so they're valued. But teases aren't truths. Truths are to be manipulated, ordered, sanitized, or so most people erroneously think. Meanwhile, truths control every aspect of their lives, remain in charge, not the other way around.

When it comes to facts, humans gather and sort, by analogy, laundry. Whites are washed separately from colors, which run. Linens are gathered for ironing. Undergarments are folded into like piles and put together in drawers. Shirts and blouses are hung in closets. Miscellaneous items are lumped together. Facts and people are treated the same way, organized to suit political ends, not dispassionately organized into mind-altering truths or mutually beneficial coalitions that might make people reassess supporting what they can no longer believe in. Gradually it occurs to you that nobody cares, nothing is planned, and, if it wasn't for an invisible higher power, planet would grind to a shattering halt.

In Borges' story, Zahir was defined as an object of such obsession, that, once exposed, you begin to dream of nothing else, then think of nothing else, until dreaming and living coincide, the quintessence of idealism. Along this continuum your dreams pass from complex to simple, and your personality, even reality itself, is erased. Legend says only a single thing can be Zahir at any given time, but anything at all can be it, and it changes from time to time. You'll suddenly perceive it without warning along with multitudes of others likewise seduced. Your *brown study* can commence with a common coin, kaleidoscopic jewel, mesmerizing mere, but ultimately it's really deity manifest in nature. In Arabic, Zahir is God revealed; Al-Batin is God concealed. Had he known what was withheld, he wouldn't have had to spend a decade putting all this together, but how then could Satya Yuga of wisdom enter and destroy evil within and enable others to find their own path to enlightenment? Isn't Zahir really the legend itself which alters neural pathways of anyone who hears it until no grain of reason remains? Great! Just when you think it's safe to be calmly attentive to everything around you, some poet dreams up an unavoidable hazard and logically negates everything you believe.

Society had arrived at a pinnacle of paranoid fantasies, eddy currents from the Kennedy assassination, exemplified in science fiction, and matrix deconstructionism. Warren Commission botched investigation, never uncovered Oswald's motive, nor Ruby's, for that matter. Americans then were innocent and newly bombarded with fact saturation from recently introduced television. Despite all forensic analysis and virtual recreations, conspiracy still seems the only logical explanation. No matter what reasons were or who arranged hit, Kennedy opposed powerful players in society, which usually provokes wrath, and on account of it paid dearly. Seemed a caring, decent figure to him when they met, unlike predecessors since. No longer a virgin, each paranoid—or, as Burroughs would say, "one who knows what is going on"—becomes a habitual pessimist, because that's what brings best results. You can't say, "Nothing compares to the simple pleasures of a bike ride," without hanging a bull's-eye on yourself. Jack never did anything to Oswald personally; if anything, Jack's liberalism and optimism enabled Lee Harvey's alleged communistic leanings. Makes you think.

The truth will never be known, but paranoia will persist, as will superstitions, urban myths, and widespread distaste for clarity and closure. There's logic in denial, because ultimately everyone is reproachable for failures in some small part, and nobody wants to

deal with that guilt. In delusions, language allusions are only understood by other paranoids similarly afflicted. He thought himself isolated, touched too little, until he began to listen to all those poets reaching out to nobody in particular, like him, to him. You could go on and on and get nothing but nodding approval to fortify your ravings should you find those others. Books may be more an author's antennae for soul mates on the same wavelength, that little dance bees do to communicate among themselves oblivious of others observing, than repositories of knowledge.

Books collect and cull, disenfranchise by design. Books that please crowds never reveal a speck of truth lest they be declared unpopular. Björk notes that if you try to please everyone, you gather only 5 fans. Selfishly try to please yourself, you probably attract 10 fans, double. "The moment you're trying to satisfy others than yourself, you're not satisfying anyone." So what's the point of trying to pander to mass tastes? Herein, inconsistencies abounded that would have been easily eliminated by a single minded belief. Does writing need an organizing construct at all? Author might start with one idea in mind, then shift to another, change beliefs midstream. It's called growth. Books only exist because authors beg for growth, desire to either fortify or share their own, and sustenance. Readers appreciate plots that have no contradictions or inconsistencies, so totally unreal they're nothing at all like life, as if to escape it temporarily. Socks never mysteriously disappear in commercially successful books, and, in saying, are sure to do so in the next installment of an adolescent sorcery series read by more adults than teens instead of congressional reports. Rich cultural diversity can become a disastrous distraction, when representatives you vote for have neither ethics nor oversight.

High ideals are easy to espouse; living up to them is hard. Many hypocrites espouse beautiful behaviors and live as if to torment others. Kundera mocks such characters, who compete to be anointed the most altruistic. Listless losers ridicule high minded idealism because that's all they have, no other defense for their guilty omissions. Whoever finally gets beyond all that finds grace and rediscovers their conscience. They learn mercy from whatever compassion was bestowed on them. They realize you can persuade, reveal a course, welcome those similarly minded, but refrain from badgering and scolding. There are endless rationalizations why people can't see this. There are no good reasons besides physical blindness. Blind poet Homer of antiquity saw better than most people he'd met with thousands of years more history to teach them.

He wrote each word with his newfound eyeglasses on. Couldn't read without them, everything of fine detail becoming too fuzzy to distinguish. Small type on packaging presumably was for younger eyes. It was another way to be inconsiderate, making print ever smaller as they shrank portion sizes or targeted an ever younger clientele. Using glasses was appropriate in a way, since everyone needed help to see in some form. Bicycles resemble pince-nez, 2 thin circles combined by a bridge; both serve to clarify. Once seen, really seen, small details weren't so important anymore. When people worry about minutia, they accomplish nothing, dance in the dark. Devils certainly are in details, because that's where doubts are. If you have no guile, you know nothing about maneuvering people into doing what they don't want to; he was easy going, guileless, ineffective, nonthreatening. Isn't this the innocence everyone laments losing? Even with telescopic lenses and night-vision, he'd never know underlying schemes that conscienceless people were hatching even as he wrote. But he knew they'd better change their ways, because this arrangement isn't working, not even for them unilaterally. Exploited parties never forget.

Time to debunk another huge myth: People will never change. That's so untrue: They're constantly duped and manipulated into engaging in stupid new things, for examples, cell phones, GPS computers, land cruisers, overseas wars. They've bought into an entire status quo which only supports a tiny minority. They weren't born programmed to let themselves become slaves and soldiers to secret agendas that don't serve their interests. They assuredly had to adapt to dully join persecution of anyone who is self sufficient enough to see through this ruse.

What if admission into Heaven depended upon your being able to recite your religion's major creed? Or even a simple prayer correctly? Verses you've recited thousands of times might not come to mind at the instant you need them most. What if it's instead lyrics to "A Whiter Shade of Pale"? Or a Grateful Dead song? You'd probably be damned for not paying closer attention. Or does it take participating in municipal parades on palominos—or riding with pals of mine, Oh, every New Year, he wondered—to garner your roses, make friends in his city, and merit salvation? Who must you meet to rise above solitary survival, shrug off indifference, stretch your love infinitely? If every institution around fails you, you need to institute yourself. When the post-resurrected Lord appeared for 3rd time to his apostles, they were off fishing.

Guess they didn't know what they were supposed to be doing either. This might be the most telling Gospel story of all. When you really think you're doing right, divine stirrings remind you that you're wasting HIS time. Then it's revealed someone else will lead you where you'd never want to go. You're hanging by a thread over hell. Moral? Follow in spirit and you'll surely suffer and tortuously die. You're going to die anyway, at least live well; live a life worth living.

But coworkers, neighbors, and others you meet make it so hard to remain placid. Petty irritations trip up noble intentions. When he got a monthly bill plastered on his wet windshield he immediately deduced that his neighbor was courteous enough to pass it along. Thanks, chum; he would have preferred it inside his door rather than inside his stove, which is where he had to dry it out enough to open it in mandatory compliance with his bill paying compulsion. Later, dodging cars in drizzle on his way to work, he realized what soggy mail meant. His mail-person—not mailman, because it was a whole cast of characters, hardly ever the same—just didn't give a damn. There is no ownership of a mail route. Mail-people couldn't read while crying about how they'd would probably lose their reason for being due to this gathering recession and intense delivery competition. Moving a bit of information around was such a rich market there are a half dozen multi-billion dollar industries vying for a chance and infinite number of smaller niches filled. What of email, an inexpensive, less polluting alternative? Unlike email, over 90% of paper mail he received, despite repeated requests to be taken off distribution lists, went unread directly into recycle bucket. An entire forest must have been felled just to plague him with useless ads. Email, though, can be automatically filtered as junk. Such is the value of information, something for which typical Americans pay 10% or more of annual incomes in hidden costs and wasted time whether they want to or not.

It all starts with a little interchange, a disappointing experience or word, mail delivered to a neighbor instead of you, something meaningless, a trifle. It seems the problem, or is it just a symptom of a major malady, society in freefall? Inconvenience and suffering are heaped upon the blameless because blameless are as seawalls that bear storms resulting from wide scale, often unnecessary, change. Oldsters can't deal with it. When HDTV went to letterbox, his mother-in-law was quick to vehemently denounce her son, who she accused of secretly replacing her set with a smaller one. Network execs don't care that you have to explain it over and over to demented elders. Animal herds offer up weaklings around

their periphery, so why shouldn't networks profit at your expense? Populations disappear when governments issue edicts. When corporate cannibals and robber barons succeed, stability based on a long term promise crumbles. Ask anyone who remembers Jewish settlers recent ousted from the Gaza Strip, left bank Palestinians, or Warsaw ghetto. A single word, *energy*, removed at the 11th hour from a bill made law permits foreign hedge fund managers to drive up oil futures. This policy might mean that half of America must abandon property and move to tropics to avoid home heating costs greater than their annual income. This is economic warfare. Eventually, the disenfranchised will get even.

Studied a rain streaked windshield backlit by florescent and neon. Rain seemed a treat in an asphalt desert after several successive nights baked by dry heat. Droplets started slowly, cohesively gathering a little help, coming to critical mass, then racing downhill like a successful bobsled team. Rain reckoned better than he did. Progress relies completely upon togetherness. Sometimes he felt like St. Steven with a ROSe, in and out of gardens and through wind and rain, just to find everyone would always complain about him. Didn't feel well to live this long. You grow intolerant, vulnerable, weak. Can you regain health once gone? Bloodshot eyes, chest pains, poor digestion. With his 10 cent pen he jotted a note; could have been his last. Your next moment is never guaranteed. What are you doing right now?

