

# **THE BOOK OF ETERNAL DEATH**

**A Chapbook by Clayton Eshleman**

## FOREWARD

I completed a Master's Degree at Indiana University in the spring of 1961, and married Barbara Novak, from Logansport that June. I was hired by the University of Maryland in July to teach literature in their Far Eastern Division where they had a contract with the US Armed Forces to provide teachers for military personnel. My first year assignments were two months in Tainan, Taiwan, four months at Tachikawa Air Force Base, outside of Tokyo, and two months at the Strategic Air Command (SAC) Base in Seoul, Korea.

I went to Korea in April, 1962, by myself, as at that time there were no accommodations for the wives of University of Maryland employees. As an Instructor, I was given a G-13, or Major's, rank, and a room on the Compound in an officers' barracks.

After returning to Japan, I quit my job with the University and, with the considerable help of Gary Snyder and Joanne Kyger, moved with Barbara to Kyoto where both of us taught English as a Second Language, living in traditional Japanese houses, until the summer of 1964 when we returned to Bloomington, Indiana. There we rented a house and lived until the summer of 1965 when we traveled to Lima, Peru, so that I could examine Cesar Vallejo's worksheets for *Poemas humanos*, which I had started translating in Kyoto in 1962.

The two months I spent in Seoul were very trying. I'd made a commitment to poetry while still a student at Indiana University, and as many readers will understand, it is one thing to work on poems while a student and something else to continue to write poetry after college, when whatever support system offered by the university has ended. Before starting to write poetry, I had not dwelled much on my personal life. I lived from day to day, seldom reflecting on what my life or dreams might mean, or what my upbringing had turned me into. Once I got to Seoul, life in the officers' barracks brought the Phi Delta Theta fraternity back to me, where I had put up with a lot of disgusting abuse, and contributed some of my own, from 1953 to 1956. Suddenly I did not know how to live. Confronted consciously with the abyss for the first time in my life, I started a journal and attempted to create a record of what I was going through.

Over the next two years in Kyoto, I translated Vallejo daily, read Blake, Frye, Lawrence, Olson, Cid Corman's *origin* and Joseph Campbell's *Masks of God* tetralogy, among many other books and magazines. I also worked on my own long, Blake-inspired epic, *The Tsuruginomiya Regeneration*, which I was unable to finish, or really, make much sense of. Upon returning to Bloomington in the fall of 1964, I realized that I had to confront the abyss I had entered in Seoul. *The Book of Eternal Death*, in part a reworking of my journal, was my attempt to do so.

The version of it that I have prepared for this publication is not exactly what I wrote in 1964. I have eliminated most of the dead wood, the repetitions, the clichés and certain flat passages that go nowhere. I have tried to bring through the central conflicts in feeling lost, the attempts to imaginatively come to terms with my Indiana shadow and the new challenges that, like a flood, had nearly engulfed me in Korea and Kyoto.

The core of the work, as I read it in 2006, is in its resistance to the inertia that nearly paralyzed me at the point I attempted to see through what my life had been up to 1962. Material from the past kept entangling with current references and fantasies in ways that seldom added up, or offered me the imaginative release I so much sought. However, I do think the work is an unflinching look at what I was able to make out of my state of body and mind at the time. The temptation, that fall, was to either write a chronicle of those two months in Seoul or work on poems based on my life in Bloomington (or to hide in more Vallejo translating). By attempting to be in both places at once, I forced my mind to bridge events, and to initiate the metaphor bridgework that I have come to see as my way in poetry.

Ypsilanti, October, 2006

# THE BOOK OF ETERNAL DEATH

I will go down to self annihilation & eternal death,  
Lest the Last Judgment come & find me unannihilate  
And I be siez'd & given into the hands of my own Selfhood.

--William Blake's *Milton: A Poem*, Plate 14.

1] Rain seeps into my mind; my tongue is dry. The red soil bursts into flower; in fog I searched for something, in heavy milky light I crossed under the trees, I searched for you, along the drive, in the barrack's hall, at night crossing the bridge back into Seoul.

The wounded man in the back seat with me sat still. I looked out across the blazing river, the light, millions of lights, girders flashed by, the roller-coaster began its climb, breath beat in my chest, I longed for you, longed for another & in the same breath we came down bumping through chuckholes, rocks, through the dark grimy streets of my desire,

checked. I longed for you, I looked for you, I searched for you, went out for you, checked.

Forty papers under lamp.

A wood chair, the works.

But what I found was nothing, hunger in my chest rising to tears that still do not come.

2] There is an aspect of me that would crawl forever in darkness. The old religious symbols no longer have meaning. It is that wet blindness, that pushing forever through earth & soggy leaves that is led today by a light dazzling, blinding.

& one knows this, and can do nothing.

I have become a generator rather than that upon which regeneration can be worked. The lovely worm reclines upon the leaf in her azures & bright greens, turns backward & backward, backward until all is noose & cunning, artifice, is the only drink for my thirst, backward, until all *that* is out there & all this in here.

A wall has been built four feet thick of concrete between the soldiers within, the populace without; the cement is the mutual insurance of distrust; that starves, that lives.

The tree is given a job within. The intestine sneaks out & gets laid.

O interplay!

O interchange!

And it is not so much those without who sense the glint of barbed-wire sunning itself on the wall, but those within who create of the city a reptile.

The compound of I & you becomes complex.  
And with a shudder my innocence crawls out of me, disappears in the bush, forever.

3] And one looks around for the flames. Where is the fire to crawl into &, friends,  
really scream? Where is the hot volley, that unconscious discharge you did sleeping in  
your bed, was that not the first word?

Yes, but the second is not masturbation. Whereby the chasm, this conscience.  
One consents to a solitary life.  
One learns alone to live with another.

4] This is what stopped me then: the room is dark. I am sitting by a window. Outside,  
two stories below, is asphalt; a streetlight shines, moist, vivid. A guard passes into the  
circle of light—he's mostly human, & there is desire, rich, fluid desire to get up, go down  
to him. Where the light fuzzes into moist dark is a poem; as I contemplate this, the  
universe passes out of sight.

I know, in my depths, that experience lies outside, that every time the mental  
traveler arises, all begins again.

Why this tearful sadness? Why this block, invisible, and anchored?

5] First of April to the last of May, 1962: despair. What was dry & hollow then; now  
so rich, so black, the crimson guts of life. The cisterns of the city unclog, the river stirs,  
fights forcefully at the entrance, walls of mud crumble—but below the pavement where  
they walk & sleep, a cycle of memories buzz & play like unloosening knots over the  
sleeping forms. So, I am writing, writing

for my life, & with a touch, with a feather's lightness, 'I am writing for my life' can  
be positive, can here be 'a life.'

Again & again one must enter the self-annihilation waltz. How little I have suffered,  
how very little. Then where is thy pain O Lord? Where have we come, how much have  
we begotten? And it is as if should a voice answer, put in those words, no longer would  
there be need. That is false.

But there is this surety: I will be what I am; if a large grotesque jungle flower, so. If  
a blank, even that so.

From the pavement the night sky is red, shot through with deafening cries. A black  
tick of self-disgust keeps me in my place. How that cry massages my void.

Yet too: how it puts us in uniform. We march forth to slay him, our psychological  
brother.

From the top of the vegetable shack at the stern of a ship at sea, I lay, a rapt  
caterpillar, in blankets with Clay & Barbara, & watched the dilation of a thousand stars.  
We were the center, the balancing point in the gyre around us, a point in the infinite

encircling stream of stars. How much better that was than the man on the pavement, how much truer to the 'but a form & organ of life' we all are.

6] The other man sits with his back to me on the banks of the Seine.  
I am not sure whether it is Malte, Vallejo, or Jack. Whether I am most North American, most South American, or another, I cannot yet read. There is fortune telling going on, a woman dressed in starry midnight poles by in a small boat; she says  
    'Watch out for the dream,  
    read the newspaper as you would read a poem.' She says  
    'Read those who matter most as an aspect of your own life, as the eternal aspect,  
for we are all part of one man.' She says  
    'Watch out for any trinity, for any mediator, for any chart; they are double-edged  
blades.' She says: 'Watch out for me.'

All this woman can do is tell my fortune; and we all know the misfortune in that.

7] Neat lawns edged with petunias. Walks. Buildings. Little hills. Big central drives. Plum trees over the spotlights at night. A lacework in the damp moony sky. Lacework over the roar & smoking pull of trucks, over the heavy iron gears that drive, by day, the heavy masculine cement energy below. By stout branches, up high, a lacework. Lace that lay years ago on the dull pink arm of a chair. A birthday. A candle that does not sing: lacework. A whiteness frail as dust, blossoms. A moistness, a lace on my tongue, melts snow. The ground thaws. And not even the strong smell of dill across the table in Elkhart will drive it away. A monochrome, an angel, has been given me. Tansy, as Olson has put it. Lace.

8] But I was going to tell you a map of where I was. I was going to describe for you the Little America (like a miniature golf course) laid out inside those walls, the children at play, the one who once came down to me as I sat at the foot of an oak: 'Be careful, you'll scare away the magpie that lives in that tree.'  
That spring, so totally green. Wild spring grass shivering bulldozed banks, a silver, a raw waving. Feeling my penis brush inside my pants, walking, a Beulah had you been there. Slanting rain, rock tock on tin, twist. Ting. The bead swells, falls,  
    almost, almost to accept it, those puny sterile rows of white monopoly houses, those little gartered rows of petunias, tulips.  
So totally fecund, green, & my mind packed, empty.

9] Reading Baudelaire this morning. The spirit shrinks back, away from the woman. The man wants the longing, wants the freedom only bindings can give—& that too is found false. Better, Blake: mind as energy's circumference; contraries, not opposites, meaning: intermingling two-way traffic. Contradictions admitted; ambivalence admitted.

The leather chairs of the library. Blond mahogany. Pale sunlight drifts the perspiring panes. Spring in Seoul (like a spider I spin it out), this spring of my disgust & my strength. When will I learn how to read? To live? I do not want to be frozen without her. I will never learn to read until I have composure, an acceptance of what is here. That soldier over there; how does he do it? The one with the sports magazine, cigarette fuming in his mashed red face. For breakfast, ice cakes that glue & sting the smoke-parched mouth. This takes me back to Phi Delta Theta at 8 AM, looking out the steamed bay window on a woods with little hills. And I think of Robert Kelly who as an adolescent spent years in a room with books.

Men & books: a sterile world. No, we were the sterile ones oozing like drones over each other in that 'Castle on the hill.' The dull pain in remembering the nicknames: Bunny. Gopher. Little D. This pain of wanting to make an art, knowing the art must be made of my own stuff, and finding that stuff not unpleasant as a body, but vile from the tank it was in, vile recalling it, vile the Midwest, and worse, vile the dry compulsion to write. Such is the world of men. Could I but draw on that slowly, let it come as grass, like configurations the sun dries on the pane. But one must keep pace with one's conscience, & the notion that a past must be scoured.

And the prom queen. Where was she? We lived on the edge of madness without the queen, who I distinctly recall as having been dismembered, leg in one car, head in another, in the night parking-lot, to the left of that bay window.

And why this painful memory? Because I have nothing strong enough now to replace the past?

That would be to say the present is dead. Right. The present. Is. Dead.

10] Walking. The queen was the king—that's all. The queen was the king. I thought for three years, perhaps four, that it was true. And where did it come from? Home. Ideals. Where the woman has nothing to do with the man. Thus those titles. One is either all man or all woman; a few fall between. Those frail and soft (the ones *discovered*) are abused in 'line-up.' And it is very disconcerting to feel how much the army evokes the fraternity.

I believe that I have a soul, I believe there is a woman in me, and another man, and I believe this not on the basis of books. I believe there is no reason to despise her who bore me. I would live at peace with everyone, and attack through mental war the evil I hate: that which binds me and my fellows forehead to forehead when we talk about women. So. This is walking.

Here for two months. Beyond the walls, Nam San and the southern range arrayed azure in light mist. Beyond that, the sea, Kyoto. And as I look further inward? This cauldron that rages, this caterpillar fettered too long in its sheath, these legs, this genitalia, these holes. They respond outward to spring wind, tightening inward in the presence of others. I am no 'metal hot from boiling water.' Rather, a sump, clogged with abused coeds.

Why can I not sing? Why can I not make anything that will give another delight? An order. A nymph. A fairy in a tree—it must be that we have failed the words, for me to say ‘fairy’ is to evoke a black mass that may drop on one as he strolls under the tree. My *manhood*. Storm cloud in the shape of a hornet moving rapidly across the grass. Conjure it, my heart. A man, coming to pierce me, my father without his old disguise; is the fear to touch an unknown dog any other than this? The fear to walk at night in the woods? My attitude toward a poet who happens to be a homosexual? That blinds me to *what I see*, that will not regard another in his rights? Blake spoke of the immense *world* of a bird. He pled for us not to heap on it our sorrow, to regard each as a distinct entity, a world.

Yea, what is it that holds you back, my heart? That keeps you from giving yourself to a woman here? That fastens in you fidelity’s ideal? To not go out to another is to sit crouched in a despair not your own. Vallejo cries out: ‘My potato and my flesh and my contradiction under the bed sheet!’ –phew! To get it that close. Is that not the same phew from which Baudelaire aspired to ask for divine aid, for help to rise above those he hates?

It swirls, but will not come in.

Neither man nor woman, I sit and watch the spring.

Who can say ‘astral’ or ‘star’ who has not lived through this? But ah, my conscience pulls at me, many have, many do, they live it, live through it, what you receive is the singing of *having come through*. Again my soul cries out: where are the flames in which I can immerse and shout from the depths that I may shout for joy? Where is my beginning? I am lost without my beginning,

flaming cored redness light years away.

11] Granted then, I am of one body and one soul; that the ‘bit,’ if bit there be, is to make the connection with the sun. There’s your umbilical! Your starry night! Suddenly I see all of those who were with me in Phi Delta Theta walking on a sunbeam, Barbara and so many others all walking on a sunbeam that ends in a pine. Rainbowless, sure. To live that daily is the process I affirm.

That when we speak of stars we speak of men; that in the sun is a man; man as body, no male/female quibble, for is not this earth, this pale spring rice that in two weeks has gone verde, a richness, a sinewy sunlight, is not this in the truest sense my mother? Not she who pines but she who brings forth time after time the circulation I aspire from? O get to the business of praise! Take thy stand in another’s grief! The legs, the legs of Urthona’s blue, planted.

So do I disinter myself; so do I bring myself forth.

12] There are certain things I must tell you about. I see now more of how this book will fall; in cycles, & that rest can only come from breaking cycle, of living daily in eternity’s dawn. It is always daybreak. Today man is as eternal as ever, but selfhood is more corrosive, more headgear, than before.



There are certain things I must tell you about. I sat before a window overlooking a drive in the SAC Compound, and out to a kind of meadow within it. In the meadow was a hill, a very small one, and on the hill three trees, one smaller than the rest. When I arrived it was late winter; the trees stark, held against the southern ranges, rising slightly above the flat building rows. In the tallest tree, in a high fork, was a large nest.

A dark ominous thing, I want to say ‘crouched’ in the fork, nearly alive, nearly dead.

Our letters crossed, but no bird appeared.

I watched, face pressed to pane, for a sign.

Spring ripened, grass came; foliage, finally thick, obscured the nest.

I can tell you how it should be done, but that will not make it occur. I can tell others, can pray, can write you but that will not shed light on the children who play at night in the darkened playground. They turn, whirl around the slides, the wooden horses who patiently wait. The city, the drinkers, the neon, go on around them. They are the center as was the tree,

as was the sign. Unremitting.

13] I must be willing for certain things to die. I never chose you; I found myself in circumstances together with you. It is only now that I can choose. Why do we fight these deaths? Is it that they remind us so much of our own to come? Or that what must die for life to be fully lived is of a time so mingled with pleasure & pain that one wants to keep that sad soughing, one listens to the wind, to the shadow by one’s pillow conjuring greed, building cruelty to oneself.

I was touched by this awareness in Mexico. The smell of souring meats was cut by the magenta beauty of the bougainvillea. But even with that banquet, one wants to still roll in party drunkenness,

one wants the grime, the spit on one’s fingers.

‘Thy own humanity learn to adore.’

Getting over the fact that you were not beautiful was hard to do; that you are ‘other’ was almost too much to accept. Thus does a faint beauty come, the bougainvillea of a femininity so deep there is a mute pause where there was rage,

kindness where there was violation.

Those I seduced with my cruel bravery, a lit-up macho—was there hurt involved other than to myself? There was. Yet through the cruelty and violation, I saw something so sweet, so true...

Not to forget but to live aware of all the humanity in one’s veins, along with all the imposition now made conscious; wherein a little strength hesitantly builds.

14] Candles. Snow. Stone. Rereading poems in *La residencia en la tierra* this morning—it is raining a cold late autumn rain—I recalled how much I turned to that vital density in and beyond Nam San in 1962. My eyes would often fill with the strait between Korea & Japan. I would see you sitting, feet on stone, on the *roka* of the Snyders’ home

in Kyoto, looking into the bushes by the fence. A dimness of the infinite in the Korean sky—our condition too, tiny riders of the storm. Coffee whines. I am back in my barracks room, it is early morning, the men are moving through the hall.

Candles. The officers have no candles, nor shrine. One was called around 10 PM last night to the phone in the hall. He left his ‘nest’ at the end of the hall, the huge bed spotted with red lights, record player, a bar, & games. I imagine the irritation with which his young Korean girl-friend waited while he was gone. A big stout man, near retirement, in a too-small terry-cloth robe, shifting from foot to foot by the phone desk. “Yes, I’m coming home—when? God, I don’t know... soon, soon.” I could barely hear his wife’s voice in the receiver, hysterical, across the Pacific. Sometimes I would sit in his room with him, sipping whiskey, listening to his old records. He wrote some poetry, a kind of crude free verse about seeing dead Germans, or sonnets about flowers. Were these poems candles for him? Deftly, and blindly, he moved through his day. He was the most friendly guy there. About a month before I returned to Japan, his girl-friend, carrying piles of her stuff, walked out. His door was closed more often then. I would only see him in the toilet, at dawn, before a mirror, or hunched in long shadows on the stool.

Snow. My shape for the snow is the chests of young laborers working, around 11 PM, on the street before the Bando Hotel. Shivering in my overcoat, under the lamp on the opposite side of the street, I watched their packed chests in torn undershirts rise & bow, picks slicing into the crumbling rock.

Stone. The photo in the book shows white candles with tinted flames set on stone ledges of a small closet-like shrine. Patches of snow on dark stone. I taste the juice of a tangerine in this snow; I can almost feel with my palm the cold stone edge. Simple shapes folded into flame leaves. This book by Katachi, can we say, preserves them? So brittle do they flicker...

15] It is late at night—tomorrow I must teach. Sitting here, trying to write a poem. Chapala is too far away; Seoul is too near. Where is America? Where am I? Two images appear: a new visionary land, titled by Kafka & Blake. I have never lived there. The apocalyptic rush of jukebox rock & roll, pistons of elbows driving in, driving out, as close as I can come. The second image: driving back to Indianapolis, the rotten odor of slaughterhouses crossing the cobblestone & railroad tracks on Kentucky Street. The rock of Boulevard Place. My childhood, a slow starvation into this, this sitting here. I think of Vallejo’s face on his *lecho de muerte*, its full handsomeness of, as Rilke might put it, a fruit come to force, this only-being-completed-in-death. What a horror. Slowly I unwind from my death clothes, retrace my father’s steps through the slimed slaughterhouse. I pause by the blood drain and hear myself drive by twenty years ago.

So do I stuff myself with Blake, Vallejo, so do I go South, East, and home? I have never felt so much about home as here,

at this desk before a lime-painted concrete wall. What in the fuck am I doing here? Whereupon this disgust with creation? It spreads lethal butter through the loins as well as through the mind. Death is not chosen—one has been dead all along.

The mind like a fist. Another tries to open it, like a hard left to the right.

The fear of finding a hand held out, open, on a platform near Belsen.

Jack Hirschman writes from Paris: 'The most staggering fact for Ruth & I is that—in terms of responsibility for or towards the amount of psychic damage created by the war, it is America that has really felt it. You'd never think, looking at Paris, that there had been a war.'

Guilt pretty abstract, but there must be an accounting for my finding Belsen above. We can entertain it, thus 'pretty' with a strange emphasis. How do I see those platform eyes, feel myself pulled away from myself, commenting, looking on. But in the struggle in that train-car, a boy strangling bread away from his father—does that not have its true grounds in my relationship to my father? My estrangement from my 'native land?' Apocalypse blackens and draws near in the eyes of Los brought to form by Michelangelo in *The Book of Urizen*, howling, but poised, in flames. Eyes of the imagination. The tortured pass on their pain; it finds an aluminum soil.

16] I have told you about the tree, the barren tree with the dead nest on the little hill beyond my window. Bruno Bettelheim, in Buchenwald, tells of a woman in a cell with a small window who, dying, kept looking out to a tree. She said to him, he tells us, 'I talk with that tree.' Bettelheim, perhaps no longer aware of a distinction between sanity and insanity, asked: 'Does it answer?' 'Yes,' she said, 'yes, it answers.' So he asked—and we feel him leaning close to this woman—'And what does it say?'

'It tells me that I am.'

17] The red canker in the boy's side. I read my class of soldiers Kafka's *Country Doctor*. And *A Rose for Emily*. And Blake's worm fastening in the crimson rose's heart. Sentries blowing on the hill.

Can we grasp them? Walking I feel the high grasses, waist-high through the meadow of a dream. Day opens; a weird landscape of brick & ammunition shacks. I fight back into the dream. The roses wave a thick sea of perfume—it is turning—you fight back to it, the sexes,

deeper than Kafka, the sexes, deeper than Faulkner,  
the sexes blowing on the hill.

A cold blast will annihilate this make-believe.

18] I crouched naked on a hill in a blowing cold fire holding a caterpillar in my palms. The wind charged. There was darkness as far as I could see. My arms were glass & I looked through them to where the caterpillar shriveled a blackened fetus.

On first looking into William Blake.

19] And the fire that shot up was the corkscrewing threadwork of Cesar Vallejo.  
Sentries, sentries... Can you grasp them?

20] I am sitting in a little shack of an ale house somewhere at night in downtown Seoul. We lean on a rickety wood table drinking kettles of sweet, semen-colored wine. The concrete floor is cracked, lights dimmed, drinkers hunched in half-dark corners, old men, a table nearby of young Korean high-school teachers waves us over. We stay where we are—‘they only want to practice English,’ my friend Neil says, and knows. He lives here, discharged dishonorably, now teaching high-school, with a young Korean wife. The blues he sings are:

Got a young Korean wife, got a young Korean baby,  
neither of ‘um my own.

He has a strong face; glasses; the Bronx. He too wants to write. We talk; we drink & talk.

In the front window, in a dirty white pan, a crab trussed in hemp  
struggling.

21] I am bumping along down a nowhere country road in a huge black car, filled with smoking drinkers, ruddy-faced Koreans with tight, soiled, white shirts. Explosive. To Inchon for a few hours holiday. My nose stuck in Miller’s *The Colossus of Maroussi*, looking up, trees whip, barren earth (& spring!), hard, blood-colored, eroded, low hills, dust billowing Greece.

The hearse pulls up to the Inchon US Army Camp gate: last stop. My Korean Japanese-teacher stands there, tiny, squat, next to a stern blond sentry. We walk down to the mud-flats, sit on the knob of a bank. The grass blows, families swarm playing games in the meadow behind.

The mud reaches out into a dark bluish-brown expanse. Throw pebbles at crab-puckers in the mud. The water’s so far out.

He wants to go to America.

Dusk. We walk back through the field, past bomb craters (in which people are living), blown-apart shacks, down the long road to a little junction, a shack with soft drinks, folks milling, waiting for the bus. A woman is sitting on the ground nursing an infant—dark, full breasts, nipple like a chewed brown flower. Smiles at me; I smile at the infant. And remember a friend’s story about how he went into the backlands with his children for a picnic. The Korean children standing around with big bellies, toothpick legs, mute, looking. His blond ones afraid.

Which takes me back to Etzatlan, Mexico, rutted dried mud roads stinging with sun between white walls inside of which people lived. A child sat in the road in a roar of flies eating dirt. And someone said: ‘no one can make the father understand its belly is not full, and they don’t have money for a doctor...’

Pulling into Seoul train station grounds at 9 PM. People, people, people, swarming, people.

Walking back to the Base.

22] But Korea. Why Korea. It is the long shadow of a loud-speaker across the grass, gallows at dusk, crossing the MSR. Slowly the officers cruise by, deep into their lungs, saluting from the depths of leather, papers, snuff, distance.

It is the old men Korea dances against.

Dancing fast, hard, coming in under rotting timbers, slipping through, down hard on the packed earth, you can't see her in the moonlight. Bewailing all division, all lust, fast, arms shoot out, fast, into the woods, the twenty-armed singer, the dancer. My Shiva.

Down hard on the ground of solitude, of nothing, there where the cosmic dance begins, where there is remorse, pain. Like a lip of surf the dancer turns many-bladed to the teeth, turns in the depth of this plate

I am bent over in the Kimchi Kabana, pushing the potatoes & meat to the side, I saw her there, spinning, an augur against my revulsion eating that food, there in the gut twisting rides the Lord,

Korea in succubus,

Shiva, three-pronged horn of The Rolling Stones.

23] And they are twisting, Lord, are they twisting in the cosmic night, the legs drive, the arms, the elbows, the knees—hooded cobras—sway, yeah yeah they are twisting, Lord, twisting in the cosmic—the rhythm shifts—day.

It is always daybreak, put on your sun. Shoulders work through the walls, muscle underground. I see a map of America, no states but a corral from New York east to Los Angeles west, and the twisters, twisting, twist. Yeah! Driving under the starry midnight, in the cool air, the cities have been burned, Korea has been hung: as if in a play, the men are dressed as Bunnies, the blacks as whites, twisting, fluid pistons driving, yeah yeah driving in the night.

Never has there been more apocalypse than now (Hiroshima the backdrop; Nagasaki the prompt-box) & having entered this “state” there is no release. Metal gleams, lifts its elbow & moves over on another flower. They are twisting dressed as sharks, all the creature costumes have been donned, dressed as minnows, I see them from this bowl wherein I write.

In Korea I heard the roar, the knocking on the night, the marching of the sentry below my window. Perhaps a crushed creature is twisting on his sole. Bent under the mental equipment I carried with me inside and outside of the barracks, I took in sounds from America, sounds from Brazil. So much did I register I had no empty mind, no heart for itself alone. I was twisting, twisting in the night.

In Tokyo's Kiyō, I descended to a cellar of beer & records, a mob of heads like violent in-jabs, thickenings; faces frozen like Klan masks, a Skull Dance charred black and white. Unfair metaphor? They were ‘kids,’ as was I, at 27, not that far from being a kid, watching them. Party Night Japan. ‘The dancers inherit the party!’ Ian Hamilton Finlay cried. I say to the dancers, sorry, but I don't know your steps. *cold white wind*

Sorry but not your steps. *green stone* The dancers' masks surround me; they are waiting for me to say something. I say *switch sword* I say *bark shield* Why pulled up here? Is it a matter of language? Around the edge of the circle we go, in circle, hands low, outspread, moving crab-wise in the depths, around a centerless circle.

A man jumps in, centers the circle; he raises his hands to the dark of the smoky ceiling; he has yellow genitals, plant-like, growing not only from his crotch but from various body parts. He is not hideous. He turns to all of us & explains:

'I am from New Ireland—I speak true to you men, speak true to you women. You did not see me here but I am at the root of your dance. It is a dance in hell we do, having taken over so many of the creatures. You now are in the state of New Ireland. Accept the black connection you have to the tree, the fact that when you dance branches wave from your heads, roots shake from your wrists. You are mass turbined, ass urban surds, man in the get-up of cosmic disintegration'.

Saying this he leapt to a crouch—his left hand shot out. We were all twisting, working New Ireland into our loins, using its juice for our timing, twisting from quick, hot, dryness, to a stronger, more muscled undertow. As I move in my shadow it is morning in my flesh. It is a sweet, dead daybreak & we are twisting, twisting in the night.

24] Longing to get my body into my work. Leaving the desk & walking through the trees, down the Compound gang-planks. Images come, swarms, tennis-gangs, they pile in & shout. I walk blindly, trying to get down, later, what happened *then now* & still do they heap up in this poor brain. One daemon drives his shovel under coal & feeds the furnace blazing a dull lead. Another daemon has gone back & fetched my parents &, dragging them in by their skulls, shouts: 'Look at them, you heart!' Heart shakes her head: 'I would look, you fool, I love you, but I am blind.'

So I took my heart by her valves, gripped her & stared. Soft red thought, pulsating. The terrors & delights you impact in your sinewy folds, your bleating drips, your bleeps & squeezings, are all birth and groan.

And my heart cooed back: 'yes, all bleats & pumpings, but where would you be, you fourteen-eyed skull, without me?'

Then in the background I heard: *They're Writing Songs of Love But Not for Me* and I shook my terrified heart by her crimson throat: Where? Where

is the light to offset, see through, your dark? The page stared back at me and my heart turned & wallowed, pumping dumbly, grunting in her immortal mud.

25] The disposition of Blake's *Milton: A Poem*—burning orange sky snuffing out at the horizon. Blackened houses. Sky streaked mauve, white. For the first time, my eyes open while writing.

A tree, roan splintered barrel-staves fluttering. Wind spreading blackening clouds.

So do I feel the polypus moving in my loins, seeking to curl out its tentacles, to latch onto any man, any woman, to copulate with slugs & bees.

Whitman, section 21, of *Song of Myself*: 'Earth of departed sunset!... / Earth of the vitreous pour of the full moon just tinged with blue! / Smile, for your lover comes!'  
This mortal, generative interior which is, & must remain, a swamp of blood.  
To live with the given. Sun in hand, to enter death's door.

26] When vision is absent, a man gives from his reserves. There is honesty in this attempt, but it is terrible, as if to say: my honey bucket is empty, here (digging into his side), since you must eat, since I must feed.

Reserves should be felt, should underlie. When I become conscious of them, are they still 'reserves?' Yes, if made conscious, in context. Without the latter, one is left naked in the wind. One becomes in flesh one's own reserves.

Thus did I ask Allen Ginsberg why he lay on his left side & ate dung? He answered: 'To raise men to a vision of the infinite.' This, I said, I have heard before & it is true, marvelous & true. But your form is your own body; such is one crucifixion after another. Why has man's form become the shape of his own body? Why has the poet become a reporter of generative hell? Even if powerful, these are not visions of eternity.

Then I ask my mother why she clung to me, why did she keep extending *her* tentacles when I had surpassed her, metaphorically, in age? She responded: 'Have you not heard? It is the darkening of the light. The female principle is on the increase; women are starting to stand forth! Japan stands in half-shadow, America becomes the shadow of a stone. Although all of this is revealed by psychic sensations, you are still of the Old Testament, & the Old Testament is still, in social reality, the Law.'

27] In Korea, at times, I stopped questioning. There was no one there. I was alone & I sat. Hearing the silence, the muteness in the depths, I was not terrified but sickened, & like my caterpillar I turned various awful spiritual colors.

What did I see? Here I propose a list, such as Bob Dylan gives in *Blowing in the Wind*. I saw 'ladders of white water' etc. The fact is I *saw* nothing; I saw myself sitting in a room on an American Air Force Base in Seoul. There are various ways to see only yourself: one is to masturbate, another is to go out & get drunk, another is to sit silently starved, or go get religion. I am in the process of doing the fourth. My hope is that I will pass through my own mortal & selfish shadow to my true body which is immortal & connected to the sun as well as to everything else, every creature now living or dead. *I do not think there is another way.*

Thus the terrific dance Korea does,  
thus certain chaos that must be kept chaotic,  
for to put clay on them is to feel my shadow at my neck. And less for myself do I fear than for my *duty*.

'Being depends on being' I wrote in Kyoto. Cid Corman crossed out the last two words.

28] Bloomington, Indiana: I am watching the sunlight fall & rise in the long, hay-like grass across the limestone garage wall outside my window. Pale grass, nearly white. The stone has a slight orange tint. It is chilly, the heater purrs. Nothing is wrong here, nothing. Distantly a car, nearby a bird—wings over the roof. Is there flapping in the depths of the sky? Sunlight intensifies, heats the white dish towels drying on the line. The human does not intrude. But I am here, you hear this through me, I give you what I see & hear. *The human does not intrude*. What can that mean? All I see is the result of human intrusion or rearrangement. *Human* has become a bloated word. *Human Poems*, yes, *Human Universe*. But ‘human’ is also a kind of Atlas paint, oozing down around the globe.

29] To work with one’s shadow at one’s neck is to engage Eternal Death. To keep working, walking forward & forward through eternity, creating ‘human’ forms. There is an image of the clown in Ingmar Bergman’s *Naked Night* walking down a burning white road with his naked jeered wife in his arms, forward & forward, with his grief in his arms, his road in his foot. This is but part of the story, but it is true in its particular way for each man.

In this Book I would make myself aware of the nature of Eternal Death: the death of inner beauty, the death of one self, the failure to emancipate the self, in short, to live a creative life. As I become aware, I realize that I am only beginning to build a self, let alone to emancipate one. Eternal Death rummages about in the chaos of all our lives. Somewhere Blake writes that Eternal Death is to suffer for another throughout all eternity. This smacks of Eternal Damnation, one of the low points of the Christian synthesis. Looking at this sunlit white grass, I wonder how I may give a form to the death in me, around me, of that of which I partake.

There is so much dead-end sadness in anyone’s life, & it is, when probed, a space that is balanced on absolute unknowing of what is on ‘the other side.’ I would follow my impulses out, bend down & kiss the table leg, & believe in an order there. So solid must the basis be for any art that is to be of use to others, so firmly sunk in anguish, so crisscrossed with depth & height.

Do I bare myself? Show my shadows? All we can know, I think, has its beginning in the genitals; they are our gold, silver, brass, & rain.

30] In the SAC Compound Library I sit in the stacks, eyeing thousands of volumes. I will make use of less than 1% of them. The other 99% functions as a weight on my dreams, opaque & leaden.

Akutagawa Ryunosuke, coming down the ladder in a dark little bookshop in Kanda, Tokyo, around the turn of the century, shuddered. He had just looked into Baudelaire, Rousseau, perhaps Bacon & Locke. It was too much. It was as if, in spotting the massive European track record of thought, he had looked upon an evil, *the* evil, no man can look upon & live. This occurs in the first chapter of his book, *A Fool’s Life*. The rest of the book is a slow strangulation, a twilight of life in death.



The Japanese would sooner kill themselves than make of the body a wailing wall. Thus in *The Book of Yorunomado*, written in, & tainted by Japanese culture, facing my then uncompletable apprenticeship to poetry, I committed *seppuku*. Read this as a humble gesture, as my insistence, facing the Specter of Vallejo, on the necessity to destroy the given life that a life I alone could be responsible for can emerge.

31] Korea. A child in bright silks stands on the grass. Orchids, reds, she stands, watching me.

The sun that moves through her moves the pale rice to a fibrous green—I affirm her. How much can consciousness be extended? Is moving subconscious gleanings into consciousness part of such an extension?

This child moves my hunger along the pavements at nightfall into shacks where my anatomy is numbered, vein by vein.

She waits across the ocean.

She is neither touched nor taken, is neither not-touched nor not-taken. Is no chimera. Is one woman

who is my body, who is pure.

## HIBERNACULUM

I pass the long morning in bed deep  
in the earth of myself

no theme  
no course

eyes to  
the west wind against the solid  
pane, torvus,  
the east wind rattling my shoulder.  
My death passes over what I live,  
configure:

*O Vala, take not  
upon thee the human form!*  
These words spoken to me as I sat  
between father & father-in-law in Logansport,  
a sterile full house. Eat, be pleasant. Let

this sense of deadness—these relatives encased  
in literal, unilinear time—pass over. Awake to  
cold morning, alone  
be, accept the vines studiously working in my groin,  
the uncoil & ferment

must be spiritual, a body is being prepared for me,  
*O Vala, take not upon thee the human form!*  
a sepulcher.  
a seed bank.

The movement against creation is the dead  
wanting, in *their* snow bank, form. wanting to claw  
down my jaw. pull themselves  
up. Celan. Celan.

the dead wanting  
me dead or alive. pull themselves up  
through throat in Nazi red swastika green  
To emerge

& who are the dead?  
corpuscles flock to  
the trough, the veins  
stand in line, the ear roots  
for a chunk of frozen grass

*& who are the dead?*  
If I am put here  
I will wait.

The words.

32] To lower my depth-charges into these infected waters. The trees stand locked in cold, the pale yellow sun bulls through the snowy dawn. The sky is clear. At solstice the eternal man groans.

Is it true? That we are all part of one man? Then this dawn would also be spring night in Seoul, the only time would be creation (the only seasons, spring & fall!). O I feel him turn below & through me in the cold flush, the foxes move between the oaks, hunters return, the Breughal-colored hills of Yase groan in currents of air.

And did he walk in Yase? In Seoul? Through the halls of the English Department? Is all forgiven, all true?

33] A woman, naked, stands nibbling grapes in the devil's loins. The devil, huge, looks down from blackening clouds. A man stands, also naked, watching. This likewise is a story of Seoul, of guilt without sin, most deadly high priestess. I would use the Tarot as a pack of metaphoric changelings.

A woman, naked, stands in the snow, caressing the sun close above her; she opens her arms & the sun balances on her head, a female Atlas—a spiritual creation.

The first is Barbara, the second Niemonjima.

There is a third. Ammunition doors slammed open at midnight, a tall gaunt woman sprints out, a baby strapped tight to her back, magentas, yellows, flapping across the spot-lit grounds; her eyes flashed terror in the eyes of the young lieutenant from Arkansas, *unable to sell her own dung*.

With her lantern she is moving through the night, gaunt & terrible, she is unrequited love, moving in my left testicle, the steel ball-bearing of hate that drives the army loom. Listen, you can hear it: the *turba*, Korea stamping on the dance ground, the silent, sleeping, ragged city, the twisters unwinding through the streets a long tattered dance of death, the scarf of humanity blowing through the alleys, the *turba*, the hum.

She is racing along the dry shacked banks, where the river winds out. My heart? Where my bowels lie.

34] While she raced through the dark smelly streets, there was Christmas gaiety in the Kimchi Kabana. The band played *Goodnight Sweetheart* with muted cornets. The General's wife stood working her slot-machine. The red lieutenant, plum-plump, rolled with a small Korean teenager. The bar was dark, lit. I was sitting in a corner, about ready to get down and bark.

The anger, the frustration, the horrible glow of the red lights. The energy of the Kimchi Kabana is a black sea, a driving rain of sewage in the abdomen of the cosmic spider, the false bowels of Korea. The white thin hair on the back of a heavy American working-man's hand, that hand back on a knee as an unknown man leaned into his conversation, brought tears to my eyes, so tightly was I wound, as was the bar, tighter & tighter against my brain. *Goodnight Sweetheart* the silly Korean band whined. Whores were roaming the street beyond the gate like greased wolves. Beyond the gate! What energy is damned there! What desire & what need! Good Night! It explodes, their heads blown off, the poor desperate trunks pick their way through the chaos for the hat-check booth, they stumble out, crawling into the kimchi-'perfumed' taxis which when reaching the river bank float off like logs. Submarines, sentries. No rest in dreams. At dawn this gaunt litter piles out of bed to piss their hard streams in the men's room. Ties tightened, blood squeezed into the head, they are off to their square metal desks as the day comes down.

36] Perhaps existence depends on continual war, physical & mental. I don't know. Perhaps to reconcile the soldiers & the women is to end existence. There are these starched maids in white & blue, sent over from God knows where, 25 or 60, hungry, white and veined; they wear their modified uniforms (against the macho khaki) like shriveled airline stewardesses & enter the Kimchi Kabana to sit, faces prudently frozen in smiles; their little hearts beat; they don't get drunk. They think they are 'better' than the

whores, 'better' than the officers and I think I hate them most, the modifiers, the ones who never get in the river. But it does no good to beat up on them.

One night, drinking in a room in the women's barracks, I had to use the john & took the chance, at 1 AM, it would be empty. Of course it was not; I entered & surprised a woman, I imagine in her 50s, heavy & tall, leaning into a mirror over the line of wash bowls. Her face was in various states of decay & make-up (I thought of Chaim Soutine's 'Old Actress'). Out of uniform, in a bathrobe, standing there, scared to see me, caught in pin-curls with red & pink stuff smeared around on her lonely frightened face. I backed out mumbling excuses & waited outside the door until she exited & headed down the hall. I will never forget that lonely frightened face. The face of an unloved woman? I fear I will rise & fall on that face whether I like it or not, by it I will go down or ascend. If all the unrequited love in the world were to sound at once, we would be blown into apocalypse.

37] The unloved woman grows like a root, a gnawing weed in man's garden. She can never be satisfied. She stands before her mirror, lies under him sucking him in with all her might. In his garden of love, her groan is mistaken for the groan of the eternal man.

This explains some of my 'guilt without sin.' The guilt I felt alone in Korea. The unloved woman who lives within me. Perhaps a form of my mother, perhaps some female animal. The ass that summer that would bray all night behind my little house in Chapala. It goes deeper than memory, deeper even than birth... The unloved woman...

Are you my soul? I thought my soul was flame, a bonfire of creativity. Are you my soul this never completely open weeping, this rain? Do you partake of the hell of race? Are you flesh, soul? Are you this suffering ape?

Ah, living, to know who my soul is, & who is my body.

Ah, the two of them, two that there can be one, to know the night & the night's hymns, to close the gate, to turn to my soul-house away from the sirens that throng the alley. Ah, this & this—am I not masturbating now with all my might? You will not take me so easy, soul—I will not be given to you until the time—& when the time comes, I will be glorious, bridal, sure.

38] So did he consider masturbation, so that devil could be cleaned out, by the roots taken & burned. Like my father said—I was 11—'if you jack off you will be stunted & queer.' Then later, 'if you don't get a job, stunted & queer.' By this bright logic, poetry is masturbation. What is my hand to my penis? Why fear to put it there? Why any more fear than to relieve an itch on my foot? Or to look in the mirror? What is the seat of this ugliness? For ugly the image is, not the body nor pleasure. Or is pleasure a hardness in me that registers as sin? What is the witch in my loins that calls up 'devil' & 'burn'? Why witch & not dog, or angel? Truly, a man cannot love a woman if he cannot accept himself. And not to love is to make war—the cycle comes around. Logic is masturbation. A round I play here, no longer afraid. Unfortunately, neither words nor bodies will act according to our desires. Oh to play! Simply to play, which is to say, to laugh, to live.

The last entry in Cesare Pavese's diary: 'I won't write anymore.'  
I can contradict myself.

39] In 1788, Blake wrote: 'There is a strong objection to Lavater's principles (as I understand them) & that is He makes everything originate in its accident; he makes the vicious propensity not only a leading feature of the man, but the stamina on which all his virtues grow.... But the origin of this mistake in Lavater & his contemporaries is, They suppose that Woman's Love is Sin' in consequence all the Loves & Graces with them are Sins.'

Violence is blocked sexual energy; would anyone today dispute that? The Japanese waited 400 years and the streets of Nanking ran with blood. I returned home and found myself in an armchair facing an old acquaintance who had recently become an English Professor at Indiana University. He asked me: who have you been reading? I mentioned Blake. And 'what does he mean?' he inquired; 'tell me, what does he mean?' I told him, in Blake's own words, 'The most sublime act is to set another before you.' 'Ok,' he wrangled, 'but *what does he mean?*' I finally got the message and shut up.

'Blake is stupid, he is simply not intelligent,' the Professor went on. This guy was with his girlfriend. And as the evening progressed, he quoted English Metaphysical poets to her, asking her, staring into her eyes, 'Don't you love me?' She sat there, helpless & understanding. I saw the Professor's eyes become horns, growing out from his forehead & curving into his own knees.

'Woman's Love is Sin.' I cannot believe this, for as I know that there is a body capable of ascension in me, a body capable of walking clothed with the sun, I know also that there is—is it a body?—a shadow in me who wants power, domination, and will thresh itself against obstruction. Unable to really do that, it broods and seeks to make a rocking-horse of anyone over. I understand the Negative now; the Positive is more loaded than ever.

40] Where do my blessings lie? *And where do they tell the truth?* If I must give birth to myself—or, in Artaud's words, 'initiate myself off myself'—am I not my own cause and effect? All existence struggles toward one end: to create & maintain life, & man, aware of his death, to recreate life, to create himself. I am no more than a mole, but no less than a man, & God, where are you in these silent hours? Were you any more in Japan than here? In Korea you were powerfully not. I was given ground, grounded. But that is not enough; I want more! More! I cry--& the words tap out, teletype news.

41] The white star in a white sky is hermaphroditic—male male—the androgyne is not yet ready to be revealed.

Star shaped like a cathedral in the loins of woman. Negative. The process will not further.

Rain drives against the stone—spatters, drives—the image is Viciousness, that which divides, which does not penetrate its object, which is lost in itself.

‘According to religious precepts & the official moral code, procreation must not occur without marriage.’

What similar ban do we place on creative procreation? What are the ‘marriage laws’ there?

*Creation becomes, is, Sin.*

42] If to write poetry is to be obedient to anything or anyone, let me chop wood.

Driving down 11<sup>th</sup> Street toward the city dump, I noticed, before passing under a bridge, ‘Live Now! You Are Of The Pepsi Generation!’ I thought: in any other age, a man would have stopped, found out the owner of that billboard & tore out his throat. But that is, as Cid Corman said, ‘your own energy wanting to find OUT.’ It is not intolerable; the vision being to go through the billboard, to tear through it in imaginative drive; the Pepsi drinker’s throat is the point; the Vala reclining on divan holding the bubbling liquid to her throat is my entire tract, throat through intestines. The liquid percolates the throat’s ledges; I pass under the bridge; the process forwards, which is to say: I continue on through eternity without backtracking (or –biting), without worship or obedience to these snares that have been set along my way. It is also true that as one continues, there is a bag over one’s shoulder in which new snares accumulate. Every moment, in one form or another, a new Pepsi sign mocks.

This is the hell of fighting the tawdry, the cheap & untrue.

43] But creation is sin. This would seem to be the Christianity I was waist-deep buried in at birth.

44] There is whiteness, a red brick & white painted wood whiteness; we are walking three in one past it & in; I am standing between two facing one, facing a choir, harmonies, unhappy, itching in my wood suit pants. The vagina extends from the end of the corridor between pews to the topmost organ stop; forms are moving in the forest behind Fairview Presbyterian church. Now it has become interesting & opening my hymnal I find Jerusalem, big enough to enter; I do enter & we move doubly in tremendous lines of chords & melody. The mother is stroked; the wife is stroked; I withdraw, 12 years old.

This is called Religion.

It is a stage that I (we) should have passed through by now. But since I (we) haven’t, it must be lived through. To put an end to its imaginative restrictions.

I shall go for the complete break.

45] *The Breaking of the Hibernaculum*

Years later, at 29, I am sitting hungover in a room of colorless wallpaper. On the wall there are a few paintings of tears. I am surrounded by creatures, forms moving in half-darkness. A turkey has been roasted; the broil wafts in, popular music lifts & lulls me, I wash to & fro on various tides. But the creatures are stone-like, crouched in pain. A tremendous sense of power overwhelms, almost fulfilling me. The music rises, the water is sure & I rise on its swells. The creatures are four, they are the Four Zoas, here reduced to mother, father, mother-in-law, father-in-law. Light blazes through the room. I fall from the music weeping, bowing before them, kissing & anointing their heavy paws. While this is taking place, a figure rises out of my bent over back, rises surely, moving quickly and triumphantly out the door.

46] And all the names come back, June, July, lovely September and cold beautiful March, September who I danced with naked, June on the new plastic seat-covers, oh the lovely golden hair of October, her woolen reds, her hands, coalescing, coalescing, without a bell, soundless as I am driven through the changes, from October blown to November, from the antelope to the stag, from urine to semen, the changes wail chaotic &, blazing in the night sky, glory is lost; they twinkle far, each point an organ, each organ the lure of an 'anatomy,' a new & total form of writing.

Are you more than these? Are you more than a body of memory? My arms around you, do I hold more than April, do I embrace the zodiac? Are you, beloved, the earth, the stars, & in you, are my thighs emblazoned with suns and moons? Are my balls smiling like a star? I have covered myself with this 8 foot Columbian earthworm alive inside you, proportionless. Could I but pull out and still *be!*

Mad to embrace you, mad for the union, mad for unity—aie! there it rips, down the center, I am scattered & sown, yea, am seed bank. My imagination flits helplessly through the night, weeping over the endless beds of tucked-in sleepers.

47] Can I believe that I am not responsible for the life I lived before I knew conscience? I would like to put down: *born in Mexico, 1959*. How much more accurate than *Indianapolis, 1935*. The early date I don't remember. From the later one, I am still not dry. How different I am from the Peruvians who have been communally chewed in thousands of mouths. How dual my history is!

48] I see the SAC Compound as a mandala of sorts. Around the tree with the magpie revolve shacks & walls set in countermotion by men, surrounded by the walls, charged, wired. Outside these walls sit the glories, mother, father, father-in-law, mother-in-law, stern in their paws staring at the four corners. Koreans, tiny as ants, mill at the base of these giants. In the roots of the tree is a whore in combat-boots, urging an ox to depart.

The ox is harnessed to a cart full of bricks. Thus the foolishness & hell of both of their positions. Over this scene is a banner furling & unfurling in the gray sky: *Auschwitz Lives!* There are sounds of horns, revelry. The mandala jams in negation.

49] The reverse of the mandala is stained with watermarks, rose blemishes, signs of my childhood. Examining it closely, I see the surface showing through. The two sides do not equate; negative is not positive. But what can be seen very clearly on the reverse side is that the ox is a penis, the whore a sobbing vagina. Depth and height of the Compound. The vagina's tears fall on a stone. The penis harnessed to a body demures & painfully tries to explain. Suddenly the band strikes up a new tune, called Logical Category; it grinds against metaphoric existence. Horns wail. The mandala jams in negation.

50] Auschwitz is pop art. Imagination denied, the sky hits a nadir of blackness. Here is the scene: some New Irelanders have started up their tremendous dance. Masks have been prepared. Pots steam. Suddenly men dressed in black & white uniforms (though wearing brightly-colored motoring caps) rush in & bind the New Irelanders, trussing them in various formations, winding up their sides until, squadroned, they march & heel.

So did I look down from my window to the night parking lot & see the divisions of men.

51] What is dead cannot be killed. It is the death in life that must be clean cored.

Carefully I have hemmed, stitched, as a woman I have flawed my work. The fabric wriggles in my hands. I pull the needles out, the hesitations, the scaffoldings.

'Thou Shalt Not' is painted in red over my body in all the languages of the earth. Now we are barreling into Shinjuku. The flesh is electric (O Walt!) from engine to tail-star. Wound to planets, the imagination screams out its sandpaper-surgery through the night. Wheels! Wheels! Wheels! The serpent goes for its tail, it cannot stop, the whip, the buckle, O sweetened bowels!

A red light snails in the depths. The Atlantic is on the march!

In the high, open air, above the sirens, dark churning Yorunomado, Niemonjima, in the loins of Origin, copulating, forgiving, creating with untiring power.

Bloomington, Indiana  
November—December, 1964