

A Monument of Wonders
Rock Gazing: Awareness Exercise #6

Introduction:

In which the salient features of the Monument are enumerated, and the
nebulous foundation fleetingly revealed.

And when he was come on high, even now at the decent of Mount
Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and
praise God with a loud voice for the almighty works that they had
seen: Saying, Blessed be the King, that cometh in the name of the
Lord; peace in heaven; and glory in the highest. And some of the
Pharisees from among the multitude said unto him, Master, rebuke thy
disciples. And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if
these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.

Luke 19: 37-40

The stone people — the rocks — have recorded all the thoughts and
actions that have been performed near them, building up a reservoir of
spiritual energy and wisdom.

Wa' na' nee' che'
*The Wisdom of the
Apache*

I was always resolved that I would never start this work with the pronoun I. But my teachers, whom I blame and honor as the chief perpetrators of this enormous farrago or scripture, advise, no, *pressure* me, to do otherwise. The I, they paradoxically assert, is both simultaneously equivocal and essential. They claim “it is the lifeline of the cosmos, winging its way through the psychode and bringing events to life as fleeting illusions.” This is the way, way back then, before We became what We are, that they talked, and this is how they always attempt (in a way up here that “I” too often have found unpersuasive) to explain why the headlines of the newspaper, which I have framed on the wall before me, manage to change, untouched, behind their glass facade. For example, a moment ago, this *Houston Chronicle* extra addition from September 11th, 2001, screamed “**ASSAULT ON AMERICA.**” But if I perform certain vocalizations (sometimes scarcely

conscious, sometimes even inaudible), it changes to a September 12th dateline, which reads “Gore Signs Historic Kyoto Accords.”

My teachers say that these changes are initiated by “linguistic reality manipulations” (their term, not mine), which have the effect of “rearranging the energy flux in the present earth-vector” — an irrational supposition, which the pregnant times clearly now have immaculately birthed as truth — a birth accomplished, as it appears, without the help of reason’s masculine sperm. My former doctors, often wrong, but never in doubt, have ceased trying to mask their befuddlement with slippery scientisms. Their former beliefs can no longer survive the incontrovertible and awesome mystery of my seeming immortality. Confronted with the subjective evidence presented to them by the mighty spirit of this new Golden Age, they have abandoned their hypothesis that my experiences of these transmutations were merely the after-effects of my now defunct brain tumor. Their story that a cancer had imprinted me (in some vague way that they were never fully able to account for) with parallel perceptual processors could never stand the test of their own logic. Either my body or the ironclad logic of their prognosis had to die. I continue to live, and live, to paraphrase a famous phostertian, ever so abundantly, *ergo*, iron vaporizes, and logic, at least their antique version of it, dies. Somehow the synapses of my brain, if I indeed still have a brain, can flip without warning from one sensory track to another, plunging me into totally different sequences of events. This condition, the reader/listener might image, would be rather inconvenient, to say the least, would be, in fact, the symptom of a severe physiological or psychological disease. But the reader/listener would be wrong. Inconvenience, “disease” if you will, is the result of discontinuities in our relationships — our relationships with others, with events, or with our own bodies and minds. But as I move about in past or future time vectors, or in parallel present ones, I experience no such disruptions. Those whom I encounter accept my presence as part of the fabric of their existence, and even my body, with its complete array of sensory apperati, adjusts smoothly to every imaginable dislocation. I fantasize that it is rather like the leap of an electron from one orbital track to another around its nucleus of spectral forces. Now you see it, now you don’t, the intervals and the transitions being untraceable, the particle itself, a ghost. I would, I think, be unaware of these transitions, which my teachers claim are common to all humans, indeed, to all entities, were it not for the strange point-of-view these pages have foisted upon me. “Through words,” my teachers say, “we gain perspective.” Perhaps. But now my miseries and joys procreate in a

thousand fictive directions at once, and I have no way to interrupt the process. But the reader/listener will crave biography here, and not the blather of malformed theory. They will want to know about the Awareness Exercise, “Rock Gazing”, and how such a seemingly innocuous activity could trigger so many collective upheavals. They will want to know how the Orbs of light descended, how the Oneness Temples, east and west, were built and to what purpose, and how so many of their sons and daughters are now being transformed by and into Cosmic Beings. They will want to know the mysteries of the psycode, the powers of the Mattermitter, and the enigmas of the language of the birds. They will want to know how the teachings of the Druids and Cathars were at last peacefully assimilated, how the prophesies of the Crystal Skulls manifested, and how the immense sufferings of World War II and the Stalinist and the Bush/Chaney eras were effaced, except as cautionary fictions. They will want to know how those four pornographic horseman made notorious by the misanthrope of Patmos: War, Famine, Disease and that pale rider, Death, were at last hobbled and how our beloved Earth averted an ecological meltdown. They will want to know how a degraded planet of urban slums became a planet of self-sustaining artist colonies, and they will want to know how we discovered, like our miraculous spiritual wayshowers, the plants, the secret of drawing nourishment and guidance directly from the Monad, Our Light and Lord. They will want to know, thirst to know, how we averted a nuclear holocaust and how we established contact with extra-terrestrial and interdimensional beings. They will certainly want to know how we escaped from the prison of time and how we discovered the fourteen patterns of everlastingness. They will want to know, they will crave to know, in that way of knowing which transcends the programmed machinations of the physical brain, how the experiences of one person (am I still one person?) with mere words, has managed to so radically alter our consensus histories. To satisfy that craving, I will attempt the fictionalization of compression. That is to say, I will try to re-enfold the proliferation of my manifold current selves, back down to a single I.

This is the day: 8 Ahau 3 Yaxin or as it is known in it’s former, toxic context, the 6th of August, the year 2000. We are in Houston, Texas, and it is ungodly hot. I walk into my client’s conference room, say “Good Morning” and start to sit down at the table with the others, when suddenly, from the window, an amber light erupts. My face is burning. I turn to shout: “Get out! It’s happening again!” But I don’t know what “IT” is, and in the next instant my body goes weightless and I seem to fly across the room. Oh,

this is a breathless flight choked with inexplicable images. I am like an insect with compound eyes, each module reflecting something so fantastic, so horrendous . . . hoards of revenants fleeing from some sudden and unimaginable catastrophe, burned skin hanging in loops from their naked bodies, their hands suspended aloft in pitiful supplication, a once life-giving river nearly solid with blast-debris and corpses . . .

I don't know. Maybe that was the first of it, those images, the lacerating pain, and that shattered and shattering Boschian vision of a place that was once a great city, suddenly erased by ghastly vapors, as if devoured in an instant by a desert of sickly yellow sand. Then there is fire. Fires. And then a black, sticky rain. And what a rain, a rain falling, falling and falling, but without dousing those voracious fires. A black rain that sticks to blasted burning buildings, blasted burning trees, blasted burning people. It keeps on falling, the rain. It keeps on and on, and, hand in demonic-hand with the fires, it clings to rubble, to leaves, to hands, to feet, to faces. And it can't be washed off. It can't be washed off.

My client says something to me. God knows what I answer. Yes? No?

Yes. I think that was the beginning of my dissolution, my initiation and passage from just another skin-encased mummy, an undead common mobile incarnate whose robotic movements help to comprise the generally accepted fiction, and the inception, the genesis, of my life as a . . .

Well, when I look back on it (an inaccurate spatial metaphor for something that may be spatial, but not in that commonly conceived unidirectional way) everything that I was, and still am when I return to that place, seems so small, so petty. And yet I cannot express what a feeling of compassion arises in me for that person, now so distant from me, now so terribly, blissfully near. . .

By the first week of what was then called August of the year 2000 (excuse the rash, retro nominalization) my life, my only life, was a mess. If happiness is a three-legged meditation stool supported by the triple ferrules of good work, good health and good relationships, my stool (may the reader forgive the scatological pun) was in the dumps. Now, if I adjust this linguistic lens carefully, prudently, just, just so, I can see him again, the innocent progenitor of my former impoverished, one-dimensional entity, his career, or rather his chief

money-making scheme, as a small-business consultant, has hit the penultimate snag.

He has called his existence forth from the Divine plenitude through bloated speech and piffling suffering. Speak ghost, you poorest of phantoms, encumbered by incarnation, weighted down by those heaviest of garments: bones and flesh and blood and time. Say your life. Disgorge your obsession and make of your mess a redemptive tale. Harrow these duteous, observant Scientists of Awareness who press their faces to this screen of moving lights. Let your descant inform them of the once narrow arrow of time, where ignorance foamed like a cauldronous wound with disaster:

How would the Daykeepers invest these events and personages with meaning: with a chant, a counting of seeds, through the ingestion of toad venom or a ritual with pom? Would a list help? What would be on the list; the disinhabitional effects of alcohol on the brain? the bad mojo of the scrambled four humors: glutamate, gamma aminobutyric acid, dopamine and serotonin? Would they describe my unraveling as an invasion by demons, the effect of an irresistible incantation summoning one of Forcus' or Flouros' obedient minions to trouble an inauthentic life? And what of Oedipal urges and Jungian archetypes? Of sunspot cycles? Or of Astrology? Was I unwittingly soaked beyond drowning by an interdimensional deluge? Or was my life pretzeled by some kink in space/time that strips its wayfarers of competence and will, and reduces them to mere zombies, whose quanta energy packets pop the wrong quip in the swollen, transparent bathysphere of time? History, especially personal history, is a massive, molten fiction, but a fiction, which has very real effects. Does it matter that I had invested a lot of time and effort in my only two clients, who both turned out to be disintegrating alcoholics, who both wound up stiffing me for several thousand dollars? The universe was no doubt trying to tell me something, but did I have the receptors to make sense of its memes? Perhaps I was actually responding appropriately, acting the aging and dense male demimondaine, who kept trying to peddle and piddle my vaporware to the unappreciative and unmonied. What difference could it have made to those insistent amphibial presences, which lurk only nanometers away from the last outreaches of our normally encoded insanity, that one of my clients veered hourly, minutely, from grandiose empire building to incinerated bankrupt, or that his final implosion, like a skyscraper

collapsing in its own footprint, would mirror the ground zero of our Collective financial and moral ruin? And why would those cosmic colossi, my blessed teachers, begin the scriptural tome of their intervention with the tragic-comic picture of my other client, terminating his executive career, running naked through an office park, fleeing, or so he imagined, the giant raptor of his telephone? Does the reader/listener even need to know this? I lost my footing in consensus reality because . . . “Because why?” asks the future, that child who always questions the parent for impossible explanations. Just because. Because. Does it matter at all that the temples of eternity are built on the shakiest foundations of the moment?

Telling phrase: “The universe was no doubt trying to tell me something”. And now we are in the telling mode, lifted out of the darkness of singleness to the luminance of Oneness, where the I that we are observes the I that we were, not in a different time-past, but in a different mode of telling. See how the tenses shift and the kaleidoscope turns, colored crystals reconfiguring to make each moment of perception new and strange, each seeming to succeed the other, but all collected together, turning, flashing, returning, with always the same elements, but never the same Mandela. But soft, the ghost would speak. So are we bound to hear.

But it does matter. It is, to be blunt, the very essence of matter. Because the universe was, is, trying to tell me, to tell us, something. Because I was, am, an obtuse pupil, who missed, misses the most flamboyant signals entirely. Because I then went feverishly to work with a new client, hoping to recoup my losses. Because the new client was a combination retail nursery and landscape company. Because I was leveraging both equity and debt for a capital expansion. Because the feral intelligence is still alive in us. Because I had miraculously(?) procured even more money than the business plan called for. Because I was (unfortunately, fortunately?) beginning to seriously conflict with the owner. Because our daughters are in exile. Because the ink of the cash entry on the balance sheet was scarcely dry before he began boring more sinkholes for the money. Because the sun is growing angry with us. Because I raged. Because my client was a profligate. Because Adam Smith was a fool. Because the *deus ex machina* of economics is a sprocketed gear that shreds human brain tissue. Because I could never procure more money than he, we, could spend. Because . . . Because, we fought. We fought.

Note the disturbing ramifications and the bizarre use of the pronoun in that last phrase.

Is this when I first discovered that that mountain of garbage as monumental as the largest temple or mountain on earth is still but refuse, that the accretion of refusals, of things abused, of emotions denied, of the used-up before it is usefully spent is not only a history, but a being, an entity comprised of rejection and catastrophe, polluting the earth with his/her toxic excretions? No doubt my client and I were adding to that enormous pile while I wrangled with potential investors, bankers, lawyers, and all the other sycophants of contemporary business, and he went wildly about inflating one scarlet balloon after another. Was it then that I perceived the vast empire of the Tulpas, and began to fathom their first precept: that however gargantuan the mountain or monument, the odor-body which it exudes is far more enveloping and vastly more pervasive? Was that why my last client's sole, compulsive mind set was an addiction to that which he termed the "massive," a man whose every avenue of thought and perception led him to suppose that any methodology, which failed at a small scale of operations, would be bound to succeed at a larger one? No wonder this monument of words has grown so in volume and in influence, grotesquely spreading in time and space far beyond any of my most pretentious and infantile aspirations? Was this event the seed of a forest of mustard trees, mutated to enormities? The result of my work with the landscape company was dysfunction, but massive dysfunction. In a way, in a perversely American way, we did succeed. We did manage to coax the monster of growth out of his lair, and then we went madly caroming down the same superhighway that the nation's many dotcoms at the time were also pursuing towards oblivion. The mound of refuse and its stench rose, and what a mighty and portentous script it bellowed, its misshapen shadow a presentiment of even more monstrosity to come! Yet before the business was sunk in that ever-rising, ever-expanding malodorous miasma, I was — sunk, that is. I was sunk. The owner, justifiably perhaps, bought out the remainder of my contract (to be paid — alas — over time). Thus, we parted ways, each content to pursue our own path to and through ruin, without the added noisomeness of being harassed by the other.

Seeing him, my former me, now, I think: “That is the way he thinks”, as if he could separate from his other selves. As if all of his Befores and Afters would add up to Being. As if there were a moral to his story. See, he who has won innumerable lotteries, he whose creativity has revitalized the economies of the planet and harmonized the world of finance with the health of nature, he who has built with his Divine Consort the Western Hemisphere’s great Oneness Temple, which, together with Amma and Bhagavan’s twin in the East, has vibrationally set into motion this current Golden Age, that one, this very me, at that time, lived in the house of paucity, and fretted about money.

I had but one other source of income. Count them: one, the intermittent staging of a seminar on ethics. The seminar, originally developed a decade before by Brandies University, made use of short pieces of literature as teaching tales to elucidate ethical complexities for business people and professionals. I and my partner, a saint of a fellow burdened with a cynic for an associate, would sweep in for a day, and with the help of Shakespeare or Tolstoy or some other genius of letters, would attempt to lead a group of twenty or so participants through the tangled mazes and whirling maelstroms of the human condition, as seen, of course, through the prisms of certain wondrous families of words.

Look. He is beginning to see. But his perversion leads him to perceive as “tangled, mazes and whirling maelstroms” that which is precisely patterned, crystal or crystalline. Where shines a palace of diamonds, each flat, atomically predetermined surface, translucent or clear, to him is a dead swamp suffocated by a mountainous pile of rotting brush. Yet how easily we are swept away by these metaphors, how fully they engulf us in their spin! The whirlings of waters are wild and whirling words, until . . . until . . . ah, but that understanding must emerge as the story emerges, emerge from personality fissures under the enormous pressure of the innumerable petty details amassed in that gargantuan never-to-be-mature infancy of trying to live a life of separation.

Our ethics seminar, as one worldly-wise advisor cautioned us, was somewhat like this entire narrative, “a thing for which there is much need, but no demand.” We discovered that getting grant money was like squeezing the udders of stones. Hard work. No pap. Rocks, rocks and more rocks. Income? We never got close enough to the

hoard to awaken even the puniest of guardian dragons, so we became, as you may be, dear readers, the abused mendicants of neglected texts, an occupation despised above all others in many pernicious eras. Oh yes, the participants slathered us with mammarian praise, but their milk was blue and thin and not at all financially nourishing. Plus, a couple of prestigious clients liked our work so much that they infiltrated the seminar with moles to learn how to do it for themselves. Nice work, huh, filching a seminar on ethics? Wonder what the karmic debt is on that little item? We might have sniffed them out, the moles, detecting the odor of mendacity as a combination of ink, ashes, and intestines clogged with those sulfurous gasses characteristic of undigested meat. But no, our noses were elsewhere focused — upon the heady fragrance of our own pronouncements, no doubt, rosy yellow Texas-sized hybrids whose bosomy perfumes obliterated our business savvy, if we ever had any. It would be fair, I guess, to say that there was something lacking in our approach, in so far as our cunning verbosity and Socratic inquiries seemed not to change many opinions, let alone reform any behaviors. The truth was, we were bleeding the program dry, either through our own dithering ineptitude (which I suspected) or through the thick-headedness or hard-heartedness of the participants (which I feared).

Like a man, who awakens at night, under the exquisite and peculiar, electrical, but calm, blue of a moonless sky that everywhere pours down an un-moon un-light, I always remembered the pseudo-shadow of that anniversary as a catastrophe that did not take place. Naked, wandering through a rambling mansion where all the other inmates are asleep, I see my simulacra sitting dreamily before a lit screen, surrounded by that exquisite and wonderfully apposite blue, having distractedly placed one pair of glasses over another, not noticing how the double correction has obscured or clarified his vision, and in that strange state of aloneness, electrified, un-moonstruck, he opens the channel to the Great Ones, and he writes.

I must confess that my partner and I cherished different ideas about presentation. These differences inevitably led to more confusion than clarity, not perhaps the best approach, when one is dealing with issues, which are inherently unclear and confused to begin with. Frank, filled with kindness, with kinship, always sought to increase rapport among the participants. He wanted them to understand and empathize with each other more — well, for want of a better term —

more “maternally”. And is that not the nature of the moon? Even when she is absent? Consequently, he spent his time as a facilitator, smoothing sharp edges, bridging gaps, negotiating tentative connections, healing wounds. My approach was pointier. Misanthrope that I was, like an angry troll clamoring up from the density of middle-earth, I glared around at the business, politics and professions in the country at that time, and thought that there was already too much agreement, but around the wrong precepts: those of pride, of greed, of self-aggrandizement, and so on *ad nauseam*. Thus I postulated unsolvable riddles, and exacted punishment from those who could not answer them. I rampaged through the room ruthlessly exposing ugly assumptions, picking scabs and fights, striking my metaphorical swords together to make the steel spark blue. Like some latter-day Old Testament prophet robed in a designer suit and shod in fine Italian shoes, I bolstered my verbal sorties with a secular scripture, and thus armored and weaponed, I assailed the citadels of the participants’ most cherished beliefs, making myself wildly unpopular in the process. The multiple images engendered by those glasses, have only multiplied with more nocturnal illuminations as this profusion of words and stories has expanded, and so the moon of this moonless night, inside and outside, grows ever rounder, ever more full and ever more void of light.

He is frank with himself. It is an honest ghost.

Needless to say, ours was a match, perhaps made in heaven, but played out in hell. While Frank coddled, I prodded, and the seminars lurched fitfully, first towards the apotheosis of forgiveness, and then towards the abyss of atonement. The effect was like being thrust into some living Boschian triptych, the left and right panels, one composed of infernal bizarreness, the other of celestial bizarreness, unreconciled by any central vision, the middle panel having been vandalized and effaced, the dark madness of cynicism and the giddy madness of idealism forever split by a dividing and encroaching desert, stark post-post modern angst in the midst of baroque enormities. For some reason, after one or two seminars, the programs always fizzled out in insalient, unsagacious sibilants. Or as the Germans might say, we were too much subsumed in too much *schieße*. We were not asked back. We were not given referrals. Also, I had the insane proselytizing notion that we should get out of academia, and into the

“real” world of real Korporate Amerika. One, because that’s where they kept the real money, and two, because that’s where they kept the real criminals. But our attempts to sell ethics *cum* Shakespeare to companies like Enron were (who would a’ thunk it) rebuffed, their motto seemingly being “nothing is either good nor bad, but profits make it so.”

Oh dutiful observers, compassionate co-creators, can you not see how the story enriches itself, while impoverishing its author?

I had never made much money, and now I was making less. I had never fit in well, and now I had made myself, in the business world at least, a kind of pariah. As the reader/listener might guess, these developments in my work had a ruinous effect on the other two ferrules of my three-legged happiness stool. The pressures of my “career” (a euphemism if there ever was one) began to twist and warp my health as well. I had always been plagued by allergies — and the Houston of that time — with its refineries, molds, traffic, dust mites and pollens, was the allergen capitol of America. The summer of 2000 had been brutal by all accounts: smoky, hazy, blisteringly hot and drippingly humid, and thus I suffered through the latter days of my business associations in an agony of anger and suffocation. On top of my usual mucal extravaganzas — runny eyes and nostrils — I developed asthma symptoms that would periodically send me into blue-faced frenzied flailings. A couple of particularly spectacular episodes of this kind occurred while I was working. One erupted while I was presiding over a Board meeting at the nursery/landscape company, and the other, while I was facilitating one of our ethics seminars for a batch of slicked-down marketing grad students, teaching, in this last instance, of all things, *King Lear* and *The Death of Ivan Illyich*. In both cases, my diseased theatrics proved to be the exclamation point to an expletive that should have been deleted from my business endeavors, but which was in fact the most expressive truth about them. In the interest of full-disclosure, I offer my sportive account of these incidents as a cautionary tale, perhaps to be filed under the heading: “Spleen, and Its Adverse Effects on the Human Respiratory System.”

The weather enters the body and the sick man becomes the h-man. The crystallization has begun.

Medically, the events followed the predictable pattern: the leaf-shaped cartilage flap of the epiglottis slaps shut and a pressure balloons for the expectoration of a good cough. But in these fits, unfortunately, there is nothing to cough or cough up. This is only one of the body's many jokes on itself, its defense mechanisms during the attack acting more to intensify the danger, than to relieve it. Naturally (I choose this word derisively), vocal chord dysfunction rendered my further articulate participation in any business meeting or seminar moot, or rather mute, except for the colorful droolings and ejaculations spewed forth by a man dry-drowning in a desert of his own making. At this point, the green and fluid fields of cilia and Gobet cells in my trachea and bronchi are undergoing a potentially fatal and rapid form of ossification. The thin rivulets of mucus so essential to the process of successful respiration have now thickened to a crawl, the wavering fields of cilia freezing like cooling magma in a lava flow. Lights out for the alveoli, their little balloons deflated as the smooth muscles of the terminal bronchioles squeeze their lifelines closed, mucus obstructions and bronchospasms no longer allowing the blood to oxygenate or dump its poisonous load of carbon dioxide. Lots of alarm lights go flashing through the brain, which shuts down all higher functions and kicks into flight or fight mode, the amygdale flooding the emotions with black bile. Reacting in alarm to my desaturated blood, the homunculi in charge of oxygen/carbon dioxide parity pull the levers that increase my respiration rate. I pant like a mad dog, spewing out Co₂, but I am still unable to increase oxygen levels. By now, I am in a full-blown panic. I toss papers and books ceilingward, roll my eyes demonically about the room, tear the air with my hands, and fly through space maniacally, knocking over chairs, easels, water glasses, etc. etc. etc. Meanwhile, my associates pursue me like hounds do a hare, bruising my back with their pummeling fists, grabbing my gut to Heimlich Maneuver me, and generally dogging the course of my terror and anger with a terror and anger of their own, wishing, no doubt, that I were dead, but also profoundly wishing that I would depart my noxious organ sack at home, on my own time . . .

. . . “my own time,” that phrase, so off-hand, so mundane, so trite, has such a different meaning for me, for all of us, now . . .

Strange to say, that it was during these first attacks, that odd periods of lucidity would steal over me, like those, as far as I can determine, described by Dostoevsky before the onslaught of an epileptic seizure. I blanked out, but the blank, curiously enough, did not remain a blank, but began to fill with what I can only call personae, beings from another dimension, or from some hitherto hidden recess of my own psyche. In the manner of a dream, in which we incorporate some element of waking reality, these visions, if that's what they were, in reverse fashion, begin to weave themselves into my waking world.

See how the Collective begins to recollect itself. So much was happening then, and now, but this is the version of history that sticks, that demands, above all the others to be related. For you and I, dear listeners and readers, the imaginative observers of this wild projecting glass, are related — related and relating. My story is yours, yours mine. Hear, listen, read. Do you not recognize the affinity? Do you not recollect the colorful culmination?

After my asthma episode at the Board meeting, I walked out onto the grounds of the nursery, reeking in my vomit-stiffened suit, and trying to steady myself before driving home. Everything seemed normal, albeit, rather glowing and enlarged. My focus on the exterior world was minimal and wavering at best, and as I wandered about, I eventually found myself standing before a pile of gray beach pebbles. Nothing paranormal about that, ornamental rocks are common inventory for a landscape company. But something odd happened to me before those stones. I heard, or I imagined that I heard, sounds leaking from them, like the sounds of a stadium or of an outdoor theater, washing across me from a vast distance. At first I thought someone must be talking to me, but when I turned around to see who it might be, I found myself alone, the hot, humid air slightly ashimmer, here and there, with what seemed to be little diaphanous plasma orbs. Yet, down an avenue of potted fruit trees, I glimpsed a movement, a sudden disappearance, that might have been a person, or else the wind. Suddenly, I was inundated by a white gushing of exhilaration. The plasma orbs fleshed out and rushed towards me, distinct, if not fleshy faces hanging round me in the air, air that I was now breathing deeply and fully, in complete possession of its gift of

life. I started to walk down the leaf-canopied avenue, when suddenly, from the green recesses, a hand darted out and grabbed my sleeve. Startled, I turned to see a gangly, scraggly-bearded man of indeterminate age, holding my suit coat with swollen fingers the color of potato skins. “Pardon me sir, do you have . . .” I now know (or I think I now know) that what he said was “a find”. But for many days after, I was sure that he had said something else.

This was the first bifurcation. But we anticipate ourselves. Back then (oh specious words), our sole perceived I was only a man sinking, accosted, perhaps, by only another sinking man. We knew nothing about the teachers, nor nothing about the coming attacks on the country, and nothing at all about the voices inside of rocks. The fuse of the improvised explosive device, however, had been lit, and the discharge was now inevitable.

“Ivan Ilyich’s life had been most simple and commonplace — and most horrifying.” That is how Tolstoy describes what most of us view as reality: ordinary life — family, house, job. How completely we are caught in the bell jar of this dimension, never noticing the immense possibilities, the immense number of entities, pressing against the glass. My teachers call that glass “hope,” that endless projection we make into the future, which somehow we imagine as something different and better than our present is, or our past has ever been. Many times since those first sojourns beyond the glass, I have asked myself the paranoid’s obsessive question: “Why me?” And the answer, unsatisfactory as it is, always comes back from my teachers, in the same way, no matter how often I badger them for a different response: “It is because you were (are) hopeless.” Then they quote one of what they call our Earth Angels: “It is only for the sake of those without hope, that hope is given.” Indeed. I never conceived of hopelessness as a virtue, or the epithet as a compliment. But perhaps in that first week of August in the 2000th year of our Lord, it was true. Christ knows I had a plentiful sack of reasons for my hopelessness. For as my business and health disintegrated, my homelife did as well.

The savior mercifully arrives as profane Time. . .

My wife and I were officially, at least, childless — here I could a tale unfold whose slightest word would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood, make thy two eyes like stars, start from their spheres,

thy knotted and combinèd locks to part and each particular hair to stand an end like quills upon the fretful porpentine — but something too much of this . . . Thus, for years, perhaps as a compensation, we both doted on a remarkable black cat, whose dictatorial nature and unearthly presence controlled our workaday lives.

And in the body of a blessèd theomorph, the fragments are selflessly gathered . . .

On New Year's Eve of the millennium, we were playing with our familiar, enjoying her leaps and antics as she chased a streamer tied to a stick, our Christmas gift. But the cat, Diva by name, changed our laughter to alarm, when she suddenly collapsed, and looked at us dull-eyed and resentful. When the bells of the new millennium sounded, we were at the emergency pet hospital, hearing the vet tell us about a suspicious lump that she felt in our beauty's belly. After that, followed 7 months of agony as we watched our only joy deteriorate from the onslaught of cancer. We tried every conceivable remedy — traditional, non-traditional, magical, and wacky — but Death kept dragging our belovèd closer and closer to His lair, and with her, our chained hearts. Our marriage had never been that strong (through no fault of my wife's, I assure you), and now the added pressures of no-money, my deteriorating health, and Diva's steep decline, strained our bonds past the breaking point. I am sure our breakup would have come sooner had either of us had the energy to initiate it. But to say that we took any comfort from one another would have been a 180-degree divergence from the truth. As we both fell into despondency, we took whatever energy or motivation remained in ourselves as isolated individuals and harried each other with it. A pitiful, albeit a common enough spectacle: two birds wrangling in air, and plunging toward the ravenous flood below them, unable to understand how their conflict hastens their demise.

And now the compassionate plunge. Little Boy preceding Fat Man to plant the seed of doom and/or regeneration, the vision whelming the visionary with the victims of the coming catastrophe . . .

We begin to comprehend, although the past tense still betrays our nearly hopeless disingenuousness.

Somehow, on that last day, the day of my return from the breathless Board Meeting, and my encounter with that remarkable, potatoskinned man, Diva had escaped the house, and we couldn't find her.

So divinity must come and go on its own, regardless of our vain wishes.

While we were searching, we had deliberately left the doors to the house open, in hopes that Diva might return, and as a consequence, our antique air-conditioning unit had frozen solid. Now, the house was unbearably hot, and filled with mosquitoes and other night-critters. We slept that night, not for the first time in our marriage, in separate rooms. I had thrown a single sheet over the couch in the living room, and was lying alone, naked, in the dark, sweating and preyed upon by insects and night sounds. The city's perpetual drone of bugs, traffic and sirens whined in my ears. The sky's red glow infected the stifling room. Across from the couch, stood a large armoire, with an oval mirrored door. Lights from the streetlight in the front yard sneaked in through the picture window, and smeared a sanguine light on this speculum. That paltry reflected light crept across the room, and fed on my ruined body. After a time, I became aware of a low moaning sound, which at first I thought was coming from the bedroom, and was Mary Ann crying, but as I deepened my attention, I realized that the sound was being emitted from the mirror. There was a figure there, projecting almost three-dimensionally, me and not-me, staring out of the depths in agony. I was not asleep, or was I? I was not dreaming, but perhaps I was being dreamt. Whatever the case, I was certainly in a kind of stupor. This was the third visitation of the day, the first being from the wild man at the nursery, the second being that unspeakable vision, and this intrusion, even more than the previous two, thoroughly unnerved me. I looked at the mirror as if staring down into the depths of a dark and undulating sea, and what I saw there, beneath all of that fluidic accumulation of terror, was . . .

But we anticipate ourselves again, and this is a secret, which may, or may not, reveal itself, until these words, like waves, fully unscroll.

Artists, in the initial stages of their draftsmanship training, are taught to reverse the usual relationship between figure and ground, in effect,

seeing the space that encloses an object, and drawing that, instead of the object itself. This perceptual shift strips the vision of its preconceptions about form. They discover that faces are not ovals with dots for eyes or slashes for mouths, that houses are not square boxes surmounted by pyramids, that trees are not columns balancing balls. They discover that nature contains few cones, cubes or spheres.

No, but it contains the fourteen immutable patterns . . .

This shift is a profound one, in so far as it reveals to the perceiver a panoply of polymorphous forms, constantly reconfiguring themselves to birth ever-new realities. The first time the artist accomplishes this shift, there is a moment of vertigo, a crevice in the habitual frame of reference, in which both figure and ground float, as it were, in a kind of blankness, and for an instant recede into a shapeless plenum or void. That blankness, that cleft between different modes of perception, both of which seem equally false and true, was, if I dare call it so, my third visitation. I became, for a certain timeless period before dusk and dawn, a hoard of observations without an observer. It was as if the mind, not my mind, but one that included mine, was crawling with the motions of innumerable insects — not the insects themselves, you understand, but their motions, an incalculable busyness of intention and movement in which no single entity moved or had its being. Later, my teachers informed me that these “movements,” or tendencies to movement, were the “ghostly sequences of words, arranging themselves ahead of me in time.” Blake somewhere claims that the poet’s work is accomplished between a pulse and a pulse, so that we pluck our inspiration, indeed, our very existences, from a river of possibilities unfettered by the necessity of being. That may be so. But to say that it is so, flies in the face of commonsense, and makes an abomination of our usual attempts to shape the world to our liking by the levers of effort or manipulation. For my own part, what I sensed that night about the future and also about the past, both only tangentially my own, was as inconceivable as it was dreadful, as crystalline as it was blissful. When I awoke from my trance (my sleep? my clarity?), it was muggy dawn, and then I heard with my all too subjective, physical ears, the sound of Mary Ann, weeping for certain, this time, from the other room.

And now, Oh God, it's happening, we are pulled, not into understanding, but into experience. We are what we were again.

I experienced the next few weeks as a kind of slow-motion plunge into an abyss. Following my second black-out while facilitating the ethics seminar, and speaking about King Lear (“Hadst thou been ought but gossamer, feathers, air/ So many fathoms down precipitating,/ Thou’dst shivered like an egg; but thou dost breathe,/Hast heavy substance, bleeds’t not, speak’st, art sound”), I experienced my final — or was it my initial — break with consensus reality. I awakened with a circle of faces surrounding me, the faces of doctors in an emergency room. It appeared as if I had died, clinically speaking at least, but that was not the worst news. The worst news was that the state of death was impermanent, perhaps even cyclical, since after a few days of testing and observation, they also informed me that I was *about* to die. This was the start of the brain tumor episode, a minor revelation, as it turned out, and one, that even at the time, seemed less important to me than the loss of my cat, the loss of my income, the looming loss of my wife. I made no emotional displays, and my placidity was interpreted by others as stoicism, and even, quite laughably, as courage. I wish that I could boast of those two attributes and tell some heartrending story here of my noble internal struggle with the demon of my own mortality. The truth is I did not take the news of my death very seriously. I was given medication for my asthma, which in a few days managed to swell my prostate and usher me into the humiliating world of incontinence. But I refused treatment for my cancer — the recommended surgery followed by a methodical regimen of chemo and radiation tortures, a.k.a., the barbarous, but typical “slash and burn medicine ” of that benighted era — which in any case only promised to prolong my suffering, not to end it, and I went about calmly settling the pitiful remnants of my affairs. I read. I watched TV. I went for walks, choosing a leisurely path to the undiscovered country from whose bourne I had so recently and ignorantly returned.

I might have ended my days like this, but for the fact that the country was embroiled in the midst of a heated presidential election, between our then Texas governor, George W. Bush, a.k.a., “the Shrub,” and Vice President Al Gore. I belabor the specificities here, because, although they are well known to those in particular time-vectors, they

are as mysterious as the ways of heaven to listeners and readers in other futures. As election day rolled towards me — that's how I experienced it — like a dark and massive boulder compacted with evil possibilities — my lassitude regarding death receded, leaving a raw nerve. My suffering, my individual suffering, like an old potato left too long in a dark space, began to sprout hair, the roots of torments that came out of me, and yet, were not mine. The weeks leading up to that fateful last (first?) day, Friday, October 27th, 2000 were torrents and maelstroms of aberrant experiences. The days and nights, with their supposedly separated waking and dreaming realities, flowed together in a multivalent rush. Doctors prodded me. My wife alternately fretted and raved at me. Creditors plagued me. Friends pitied, but dreaded and avoided me. But these people and events were inundated with visionary ones, to me, equally valid, perhaps even more so. My dead (missing?) cat, Diva, reappeared (somewhat like a blinking light whose “on” cycle was only apparent to me, and whose “off” cycle was experienced by everyone else). She led me into rooms of my house that I did not know existed. These rooms contained objects, ordinary objects, that one might find in an attic: old tensor lamps, obsolete globes, defunct small appliances. But there were other things there, too, things that were not mine, nor anybody's who might have been alive in the previous half-century, an old pair of spats missing a button, something that looked like an ancient toga, false beards, an old padlock, without a key, a sheep's bell, some kind of necklace whose amulet was a lambskin pouch containing something that smelled like old cheese or a lucky rabbit's foot, a little foxfur armband, the statue of a dog with three front legs, and perhaps, most curious of them all, a tiny quartz crystal skull, no bigger than a walnut, which seemed yet to be the infamous domain of the king of infinite space. Each of these artifacts seemed to bulge and glow with what I can only call “non-human” personalities. They did not speak exactly, but they communicated to me in ways that I later began to habituate myself to and to accept as “normal.” Sometimes these objects would disgorge small scraps of writing, instructions, as it turned out, that I was to follow, towards what end, I could not then guess. Sometimes the objects would suddenly dissolve their energies and begin rotating, like miniature galaxies, in space. These wheels of suspended stars spun out visions of events that I later understood to be disgorged chunks of the past or future, hurtling towards me from all

directions through some unnamable vector, which was neither space nor time.

What with the brain tumor and all, I might have easily interpreted these oddities as hallucinations — except for the fact that the artifacts I retrieved from them, the scraps of writing for example, or Diva's sheddings, clinging to my ratty old bathrobe, were all too real. This detritus of physical evidence was discovered by my wife, who suspiciously and fruitlessly questioned me about it. She would see me going into small closets, and searching for me in them, find that I had disappeared. She called in friends to observe me, and they also reported the distressing lacunae in ordinary reality, which precipitated my "disappearances." Watches stopped or ran backwards, old wounds healed or scars reopened, long-lost objects were found, and familiar objects were lost. Call it a contact high, but whoever I came near, would also experience these anomalies in time and perception, so that after a short while, my presence became so creepy that I was avoided by all and sundry. I, of course, insisted that everything was fine, that my deviations had nothing to do with my tumor, and that the fuss and turmoil surrounding me had more to do with the mental stress of my keepers and observers than with me. By this time, my long-suffering wife strongly suspected that I was mad, that I had discovered Diva's body, and that I was performing some kind of perverted ritual with it — a surmise not very far from the truth. Finally, in exasperation and grief, and believing, like the ancient Greeks, that ill-luck was infectious, she announced that she wanted to visit her sister in California, and arranging for a homecare nurse to check in on me, Mary Ann flew away.

Now my schooling began in earnest, for the homecare nurse was a multitasker. To the denizens of this world, she was only Esclarmonde Acevedo, Argentinean, of Indian descent, I believe, from somewhere up the Platt, middle-aged, pudgy, and absent minded. To me, she looked like the living embodiment of those massive Olmec or Mayan stone heads that still haunt the jungles of Mexico and Central America. Otherwise, she seemed completely nondescript. But in the domains of the psychode, as I was to learn to my amazement, she was a powerful sorceress, whether a saint or an apostate, I could never tell. But, she initiated the Awareness Exercises. Naturally (unnaturally?) at the time, I suspected none of this. To me, Esclarmonde was the

same nearly non-entity that she was to everyone else, everyone that is in the mayonnaise-on-white bread voracious world of our dying Western Korporate Kulture. If she had been hired to watch me, to care for me, I could not tell how she was doing it. For during her intermittent visits, I only observed her sitting on the couch and watching TV. From time to time, *I* would fix *her* a sandwich, but other than that, this was the extent of our surface, our conscious interaction. Introvert that I was, I would have been annoyed by her presence, were it not for her utter innocuousness. She spoke English only brokenly, and would watch the TV with the volume muted, her expression completely impassive. She was as non-intrusive as a piece of furniture, and I begin to admire her immensely for her object-like placidity. I never even saw her use the bathroom. The only two decidedly overt acts that I ever noticed her taking were, one, parting her black hair and show me a moon-shaped scar on her skull, while saying (I think) the word “cuervo,” and, two, placing a small quartz crystal in the pot of a long since dead and desiccated houseplant, a little memento to neglect that I kept on my writing desk. She looked at me hard when she did this, and I figured at the time that it was an important enough event, however inscrutable, for me to accept — I can’t say quite “without question or reservations,” and to mark for future reference. Incredibly, the plant perked up, but the caretaker remained inert, and even in her most animated moments, was about as expressive as a stone. Nevertheless, there developed, although she was only with me a few days (or was it a few weeks?), a curiously catalytic connection between us. She was like a miniature replica of the planet Earth, completely enigmatic, impersonal, accepting of everything, and wondrously, albeit, mysteriously nurturing. I felt that having once been in her presence, I could never again feel completely isolated. How little did I realize then how many others were involved in this affair. Ah, but once again I race ahead. The listener, the reader will want to hear about the Awareness Exercises, how they came to me, and how they culminated in the one Exercise that bent the course of history from holocaust and back again to bliss. But, oh, oh, how tangled the words become when I rehearse this, how light-born and ephemeral and strange.

Now, about those Awareness Exercises — my teachers have always insisted that the plural is superfluous, and that there is only one Awareness Exercise. I must confess that I have always found their

insistence on this point to be more than a bit bizarre. Every minute, as I have since so painfully and joyfully learned, bifurcates into infinity, and even my own body has been shown to be ubiquitous. Of all things, how can this one thing alone be singular? And yet, they say that it is. In my initial forays into these neurological hiatuses, I would often wonder about this dazzling multiplicity connecting each to all. Once, I even made what I believed to be the clever assertion that the Awareness Exercise must be a synonym for life or even for the cosmos. But this wanton remark brought a rare laugh from my teachers. “If that were true,” they derided, “then even politicians, the most wayward of human viruses, who are certainly alive and a part of the cosmos, would also have to be categorized as aware.” Even I could see that this was absurd, and so I never again ventured a pronouncement (to my teachers at least) concerning the one thing that would occupy my days and nights from that time on. The Awareness Exercise (Exercises) was (were) I kind of practice, a *praxis*, if you will, which eventually allowed me the flexibility to choose, or rather to be chosen by, from the immense theater of probabilities, those things that were possible, those multiple instances of the fantastic that assume the temporary mantle of the real.

The newspaper in the frame has changed as I write from the *Houston Chronicle* of September 11th, 2001 to the *Phoenix Sun* of July 5th, 2008. The headline reads: “Independence Day Mushroom Cloud: Bush Authorizes Nuclear Attack on Iran.” The story that follows, of course, is too well-known to those in most Earth vectors to warrant the spillage of more ink now. But for those who have followed other tributaries of time, I include it here as a reminder that the present is as all-inclusive as chronology as it is as geography. No matter what the reader/listener’s present circumstances, be they wondrous or hideous, a neurological shift can rub the wall of reality to a state of transparency, and through that diaphanous film one may, not only see, but actually merge with, a dazzling plenitude of other events and entities. This statement, I realize, will have no justification for those who have not yet discovered, or rather, have not yet fallen victim to, their own entry point into Awareness. My own portal had five precedents. How can I describe it (them?)? Imagine a man jiggling a combination lock until just the right jimmying makes the tumblers fall. It is difficult for me now to reconstruct those earlier abortions. They seem like scratchings in the sand that subsequent incursions of

the tide or wind have effaced. But I have evidence that they existed — scraps of paper that tell me what I once was, and what I still am, in certain helices of time's great hive. Once, while Esclarmode was watching the mute TV — “Fair and Balanced” Fox — if I remember correctly — talking heads that only moved their ineffectual anger-twisted mouths as banner headlines streamed by ominously at the base of the screen — I saw, or thought that I saw, Diva, from the corner of my eye, tail-up, a characteristic one-fang sneer on her crooked mouth, stealing down the hall, and slipping through the crack of a closet door. I followed, and after rambling down a series of passageways, I came upon some kind of old storage room, filled with dust, amber light, and antique debris. There were old furnace grates, escutcheon plates, chair armatures, ancient plumbing fixtures and cans of paint, dented and bleeding from their tin lips, their pigments as hard as lead. Diva wound her way through this mélange with the alacrity of a freed spirit, but I, in fruitless pursuit, banged toes, shins, elbows, and forehead against protuberances that were crusty with age and futility. After having hit my temple on a wrought-iron castor from some kind of table leg that no longer bore a table, I plopped down in the midst of this jumble of oddities, cursing, and stung by frustration. I think that that was when I received the first of the written instructions. It was stuck to a device which I later learned was a mechanism for buttoning ladies high-topped shoes (circa 1914), and was written in an uncertain hand (or perhaps the hand of one whose native tongue was not English). It said:

Praxis: Awareness Exercise #1

Identify your three most important challenges, {I am pretty sure, even after all that has happened since, that I immediately thought: my health, my lack of money, my failing marriage.}. Write them down on a piece of paper, and set the paper aside.

Take the first three letters of your first name. {In my case “R,” “O,” “Y.”} and the last three letters of your last name {For me “H,” “T,” “Y.”} and open the dictionary to those letter indices, thumbing through the pages at random, until one word in particular grabs and holds your attention. Choose three words in this manner for each letter. {What did I write for “R” —

“repent?” “recrimination?” “route?”} Proceed until you have a list of three words for each of the six letters.

Go back and quickly prioritize the words, choosing, if possible without conscious thought, your first, second and third preferences.

Set an egg timer (preferably one that ticks) for three minutes, and write a paragraph about your most important challenge(s) before the timer’s bell rings, making sure that you use all of the words in the order of your preferences. You may use any form of the word {repent, repenting, repentant, etc.}, but the first word must appear somewhere in the first sentence and the last word must end the paragraph, and the other words must be put to use between them.

Mercifully, whatever grotesqueries of prose were birthed from my attempting this process, have since been erased, if not by time, at least by subsequent insights. (But Who nose NOW, if these We’re knot preMonadignitions for the deep why of s(p)ea ken that sow (wo)(man)y have new All (d)off tod, the begInings of the tongue that sins has saved Us. What?) I do not remember what I wrote, but I remember reading it to the imperturbable Esclarmonde. Her reaction was inscrutably undemonstrative. But that night (or was it the next?), I awakened to find under the couch cushion (after Mary Ann left, I did not sleep in the bedroom, but always on the couch in front of the mirrored armoire.) the strangest of artifacts. It was a 9 X 12 manila envelope, which contained, surprisingly and comically enough, two identical, full-color, 8 X 10 glossies of myself — in the nude no less (at that time, not a pretty sight). But here I am, standing, not so boldly, with a most quizzical expression, among big slippery rocks, on a sunny, pebbly, and most mercifully, otherwise humanly deserted ocean beach. With the photographs, appeared this nonsensical poem:

Hard Visitation

Seven round smooth stones have fallen from on high.
Evidently, they have been up there a long time,
Deleting their jagged edges, curing themselves
Of the malady of fire. Curiously, but in a way

That is not altogether unexpected, they have arranged
Themselves in a circle, and, in the sun, which is very bright
On this day of late summer or early autumn or
Midwinter or any time but spring, they express
Themselves diabolically through sigils
Of white glares and black shadows. The stones
Are gray. The day is blare-blue and cheer-iridian
And bridalgown-white with eager
Buds showing between sere-orange leaves,
Some branches green, some icy bare. The entire
Phenomenon of these stones, this day, these trees
And glares and shadows is a violation
Of the mind's unnatural suppositions
About natural order. So, we have come, certain
Of nothing, but this: Here is a circle of stones,
Small, round, heavenly. And here we stand,
In their midst, overly bloated with our obscene needs,
Our bodies the crudest gestures of oblation,
Ringed round by these subtle collops of obdurate seed.

And with this nonsensical poem, these even more nonsensical
instructions:

Praxis: Awareness Exercise #2

Take two copies of a full-length color portrait of yourself.
Preserve one copy intact, but each day perforate the other copy
with a hole punch, making no more than 5, but no less than
three holes in yourself each day. Keep a diary of your self-
destruction, noting any emotions, remembrances, exaltations
and so forth that you have as you render yourself void. Save
the punched-out holes in the envelope with the intact copy of
your image. When the image is entirely destroyed (except for a
kind of netting of empty circles), open the envelope with the
preserved photograph and the punched-out holes, and try to
reconstruct yourself. Record any physiological changes that
occur in your body during the days (weeks?) of the exercise:
weight changes, sleep variations, modifications of eating habits,
of exercise, and so forth.

When the exercise is complete, burn both images, and all attendant documentation.

The effect of this exercise was devastating. I wept. I laughed. I vomited. I lost weight. Then gained it back. My jowls swelled and then collapsed into spectral hollowness. I even cut a long-dormant wisdom tooth. There may have been a day or two when I forgot how to walk and how to speak. I shudder to think how I performed my excretory functions. I believe Esclarmonde took care of me during this disturbing (exhilarating?) episode. There were strange incidents with animals. One of the Blue Jays, which were always chattering in the big hackberry tree in the front yard, came and perched on the crown of my head one morning as I scurried out to pick up the newspaper. A squirrel somehow stole into the laundry room and leapt out of the washer one morning as I opened it to do a load of whites. Odder still were the mosquitoes. They clustered on the windowpanes, making patterns with their bodies that seemed almost like glyphs, Ur-letters from some proto-language that only the dead or the innocent could speak. When I pounded on the glass, they would swirl through the air for a moment and then resettle in some equally quasi-intelligible pattern. I kept thinking at the time: ‘what gigantic entity, for whom even the lower orders of creation act as messengers, is trying to communicate with me?’

In the end, I know there were other Awareness Exercises, three others, I think, but I do not exactly remember. In retrospect, I may have merely surmised that there were five previous Exercises, because the final Exercise was labeled by my teachers “Awareness Exercise #6.” But knowing now, as I do, that numbers for them have other significances, far beyond the mere sequential, I cannot say for certain that this was the case. All of the Exercise(s) were delivered to me in some equally surreal and disjointed fashion. But the particularities do not matter. The other Exercise(s) were but a preparation, apparent false-starts, jiggings of the lock to find the one exercise that has led to the discoveries recorded in this, by now, infamous monument of words.

Did I return to the nursery and retrieve those stones that seemed to speak to me when I lost my breath? Or were the stones somehow delivered to me by some agency of the Collective’s vast wisdom that I

am still unable to fathom? My speculations arise, and are washed away, one wave of thought destroying its predecessor, one pulse of time, annihilating all previous sequences. The days from August 6th to October 27th in that fateful year 2000 lost for me all of their sequentially. They swirled, danced, bobbed up and down, took on bizarre and seemingly indescribable shapes. In brief, the days ceased to become days, and instead reverted to those progenitors of the chimera we call time, namely, words. I was lost in a deluge of words, words that refused, paradoxically, to speak, because they refused the connecting tissue of the conjunction. No ifs, ands or buts. No sentences. No metaphors. Only the enormous implicate order of memes spiraling about in every direction, looking for some utter cipher of an author to write them down. Did I mention, that as with many failed lives, I had always harbored a secret fantasy that I was the great undiscovered writer of my generation, and that I kept a secret stash of poems hidden in drawers under clothes that I had long since become too fat to wear? Considering my subsequent literary notoriety, often I long for those days of anonymity, writing my little unread, and, therefore, unexploded verses, imagining for them ardent readers in some future more enlightened epoch. But I digress. In that strange interregnum from Hiroshima Day to October 27th, my poor brain continued to disperse in the final incoherence of the nattering, yet seemingly infinite cosmos of my personal troubles. Consequently, I found myself, more and more, sitting beside Esclarmode, watching the mute TV. What need was there of any more sound? My nurse and I communicated with one another through a time-field, a time-body actually, that included our two inert physical bodies, plus a hovering magnitude of unexpressed words. We sat in that cocoon, as happy as larvae metamorphosing. We watched the coverage of the presidential race. We watched the candidates. We felt, but did not care to listen to, the vast formation of a fiction that was, for some unwitting unfortunates, becoming the bludgeoning shape of the future. We sat for days, for nights, silent and serene. I think Diva was sitting on my lap. But perhaps not. I don't even remember having to go to the bathroom. I have since realized that I became, in that trance, the ideal candidate for the task I was destined to fulfill. I became an utter zero — a perfection — a human being devoid of desire and hope.

Has the manuscript that follows supplied for me those two, oh-so-human, oh-so-feckless attributes? Although I still live the life of a

recluse, albeit now a fabulously rich, famously espoused, and blissfully happy one, I cannot say that desire and hope have returned to me. If one has everything, what is there left to hope for? What I can say is that the Awareness Exercise has deepened in me the enormous possibilities of desireless hopelessness. Pirated electronic editions of this manuscript have now forced its “authorized” official release, perhaps fittingly, as light beams in cyberspace and not as print on paper. Of course, the strange circumstances in which people claim to have discovered the manuscript continue to insanely proliferate. Copies or bits of copies have been discovered by farmers plowing, by plumbers plumbing, in attic trunks, in disinterred coffins, among the medical files of those who have died astonishing deaths, woven into the cylinders of birds’ nests, matted in the midden heaps of archeological digs, scattered amidst the bones in wolf dens, vomited from the skies during frog or fish falls, even comically interpolated into law books and into the tedious annals of The Congressional Record. But wherever and by whomever these pages are found, they reliably, like the exotic birds that they are, seem to migrate back to me. But I laugh to think of myself as the author, no matter whose name accompanies the copyright. I followed a process. Words imposed themselves on me. I copied them down. I take credit for honestly executing my teachers’ instructions and dictations to the best of my meager abilities. Undoubtedly mistakes have been made, intromissions from my own limited consciousness, fabrications and inconsistencies that make little or no sense in certain space/time vectors, but appear as profound insights in others. I am sure in past times that pedagogues will be (I choose my verbs indiscreetly) appalled to find that quotes have sometimes been altered, or their sources misappropriated. I am sure that in these times linguists will be amused by my polygot malapropisms. I am equally sure that all misappropriations have a purpose in this design my teachers have woven, and that our conception of perfection mutilates our ability to see how certain juxtapositions of texts, letters, words expand the possibilities, not only of our own lives, but of the cosmos itself. For weeks as I wrote, I wondered at the collage-like nature of the task. But as the work evolved, I saw how the snippets of metaphor began to elongate into narratives, and how the narratives themselves were eventually woven, like some mighty baroque organ fugue, into a wondrous aural monument, which dwarfed whatever ideas I previously harbored regarding that specious concept we refer to as

“meaning.” But for all the audacities of form exhibited here I dare not even hazard the claim of coherence, let alone that of mastery. It would be more accurate to call me the first victim or benefactor of these memes, rather than their author. They leapt upon me unawares as I was struggling to exist, and I became, I must admit, their not unwilling prey. I find it both amusing and appalling that I figure as a small, not very significant, character, in my own autobiography, and that my “I” so often disappears in these pages behind the masks of so many others. Like the Tarot, or the I-Ching, or the Cabbala, what follows in this diary, although midwifed by human agency, cannot really be said to have been derived from the human realm. That is perhaps the secret of the manuscript’s mysterious effects. Reports of miraculous events dog this odd proliferation of words, and their benefactors and/or victims fill my e-mail and snail-mail boxes with hyperbolic praise and vitriolic condemnation. The manuscript has become, not much to my surprise actually, a kind of sanctified relic, as ubiquitous and as inauthentic as splinters of the true cross. I take neither credit nor blame for this heresy of heresies. For those fundamentalists who attribute to these phages the toxic stench of irrefutable truth, I offer both my pity and contempt, in equally, I trust, virulent doses. For those relativists who say that these diseases comprise only another fiction — even a kind of epistolary form of that degraded literary genre, the novel, or worse, that renaissance monument to intellectual arrogance and folly, the anatomy — to these, I offer my heart-felt, but paltry gratitude. To those who interpret this work as a kind of self-help guide to extra-dimensional existence, I can only say: “Buona fortuna. But beware: you may get what you seek, but not what you wish.” The listeners, the readers that I seek, or rather those that seek me, are free from any such fetters of interpretation. As I did, while looking night after night at the always mutating, but ever-immutable stones, they take words seriously, that is to say, with the same levity and gravity with which one approaches any divine or semi-divine entity. They perform the ritual. They listen. They read. What happens as a result of this kind of perception — if we are still so audacious or naïve to speak of causes and effects — is the deceptively natural, yet utterly miraculous unfolding of consciousness. To say that the siddhis — the healings, the ascensions into paradise, the discovery of treasures, the paroxysms of love — that these listeners/readers experience is precipitated by this mishmash of memes is to stretch the limits of credulity past any semblance of

propriety. The listeners listen. The readers read. Things happen to them. What more is there to say? Therefore, oh my co-conspirators, my listeners, my readers, be forewarned. This monument may annoy you, its inanities may offend you, its excesses may disgust you, but to enter its morphogenetic field is to enter the cosmic flux. You may attempt to hold yourself aloof, as I certainly did in the beginning, but you can no more do so than you can objectify your own circulating blood. If you choose to listen, to read, then that choice is your destiny, and each destiny is nothing less than a perpetual onslaught of wonder.

The newspaper (how antiquated these things have become!) in the frame has changed again. Now, it is the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, its dateline is 2011, coincidentally, or ironically, September 11th. The tagline is from the Hague, and the headline reads “Bush, Cheney *et al* Found Guilty of Crimes Against Humanity.” I look out of the window, not really knowing, or expecting to know, what it is that I am going to see. Reality has so many possibilities for me now. On the desk before me are the only things that I know in this world that remain unchanging and solid, although they have paradoxically become the seeds of all that is changing, all that is wondrous, all that is tragic or blissful. These are the famous seven rounded beach pebbles from the one, (the only?) Awareness Exercise, the exercise that has since become known as “Rock Gazing.”