

Week Two

11/3/00 Friday's Rock, Moby Polyphemus

In you {the reader may insert his or her own name here} is hidden the terrific and wonderful secret.

Please explain better about the elements; how what is above comes down, and what is below rises, and how the middle approaches the uppermost and the lowest, and how they all become one in the center, and tell us also what all those elements are, and how the blessed waters come down and look at the dead in the underworld who are fettered there and unhappy and look how the elixir of life enters them and how they are woken up so that they come out of their beds. And when the waters enter the top part of their heads then the light comes and the cloud carries them up, the cloud comes from the sea and the water comes up and the philosophers can see what is visible and are filled with great happiness.

Komarios

Komarios to Cleopatra

The map continues to be enriched. And now I notice, here, too, that not all of the features and captions engraved on the plate are mine. Other hands, other cartographers, are at work, but to what end — beneficent or maleficent — I am in no position to discern. However, comma, I can still observe, still catalog, still press on with this Awareness Exercise called “Rock Gazing,” and still open myself to what these words, as opaque sometimes as the rocks themselves, are hatching for me in that beyondness invisibly radiating from the grid. Now, often, when looking at my hands, they seem at first to crystallize, then to dissolve, into pulsating force lines. Weavings of energy coils flashing auras of colors too fantastic and unearthly to be cataloged by human names: scarlets beyond scarlet, vermilion flecked with diamond blacknesses, streams of orange and yellow golds bleeding out the most luxurious ambers. What else could be the goal of culture, I wonder, but to defend us from the fantastic? And yet, culture itself is fantastic, and it is only our habituation that dulls its miraculous sheen. A voice sings to me suddenly in a vaguely familiar sweet high, tenor timber: “Compose yourself, and compose. For the wondrous has escaped from the black box of reason,

and the air is crammed with marvelous elementals. Look at the rock, the map. Write and respirar.”

In accordance with Perception Observation #2, on the second viewing, I quickly gravitate to the side of the rock that shows the most anomalies. If I think of the name Moby Polyphemus (P.O.#3), I think of the great, brute forces of nature, which must be approached with stealth and with cunning, and perhaps, paradoxically, also with naïve openness. If one is obliged to confront these forces, one may be able to escape them, as Odysseus escaped Polyphemus, but one cannot hope to defeat them, as Ahab discovered in grappling with the pallid whale. Are these forces always malevolent? Can they be befriended? Can they ever be understood? Inside us, these things may appear as obsessive appetite (Polyphemus) or as obsessive self-preservation (Moby Dick). They hold the body and the ego together, but they also pitch us into constant conflict with others who are driven by the same obsessions. In some ways, they embody the nobility of tragedy, the tragedy inherent in individual existence, an existence which is not only separated from all others, but also from its Source. And yet, Moby Dick is at home in the ocean and Polyphemus is at home in his cave, so their awareness, (*our* awareness when confronted with these same attributes) is not entirely isolated and brooding. This weird home seems to be a kind of confluence of chaotic forces, like conflicting elements whirling in a bucket, suddenly shaken into cosmic foam. It seems that these attributes are intimately connected, not only to the unknown — i.e., What will I eat? How will I survive? What is the meaning of my dreams? — but also to the unknowable — Who am I when I am not myself, when I am dead, or as Odysseus named himself to Polyphemus, “When I am No Man?”

Friday’s rock, Moby Polyphemus, reminds us that these attributes are a part of the very bones and sinews of the universe, and that we can never eradicate or fully control them. The work of battling our own and others’ appetites and needs for self-preservation is immeasurable. (When I read what my fantastical hand has written, I seem to bifurcate, one part of me transcribing words, another part reading them, but “The center,” as Yeats so eloquently declared, “cannot hold,” and the anarchy of speculation whirls out and drowns what little is left of my reason.) If, in the thrall of these forces, their powers being permanent aspects of ourselves and of the cosmos, we cannot cease to struggle, can we ever hope to erase this wilderness of ocean or cave and their attendant uncertainties from our fragile lives? This rock says: the greater our hope, which in any case must only be blindness or arrogance, the

greater our danger. Then suddenly, from outside of myself, from beneath my feet, pioneering deep in the bowels of the earth like Hamlet's father's worthy, murdered ghost, a voice rumbles oceanically: "The spiritual warrior, the seeker, remains ever vigilant. He learns awe. He learns fear. He learns humility. He learns alertness. He learns respect." From my dizziness at this surprising outburst, this thought is spawned: Each of these attributes — awe, fear, humility, alertness, respect — may serve as a kind of psychological talisman to shield the individual from the effects of his own alienation, as if Nature, even in its most violent assaults, represented a cosmic parent that wanted its wayward children back in its fold. Now, my hand with its multitude of lights becomes a hand again, but the words hang on the page, still awash with all that otherworldly energy. What cosmic parent, what harsh Mother or Father is feeding me this? Is reaching out a claw to pull me back?

For me (P.O. #1), Moby Polyphemus elicits both admiration and a kind of piteous love. His ravages to fill his constant, gnawing hungers, and the agonies spawned from his perpetual life-threatening struggles, chisel a vision of monumental darkness and dignity. Can it be that my grappling for awareness must begin and end with the impossible task of confronting this stupendous, destructive and ever-present monster? As I consider this stone, which easily fits in the palm of my hand, I see that the monster is always a colossus. That the monstrous is just as present in a pebble as it is in a volcano, just as present in our petty appetites and hurt feelings as it is in our roaring addictions and full-blown paranoidias.

When I first envisioned Moby Polyphemus, I imagined that the single eye was sleeping on the outside and open on the inside. I thought that my reality was another reality's dream or nightmare. "This idea," says the stone again, more softly now, more thankfully, but still below, so far, far below, "brings to awareness the dual nature of danger — that of fantasy and slumber." Am I going mad? Hearing voices, seeing my body disintegrate. Is this my brain tumor's doing? Is the whole Awareness Exercise of Rock Gazing nothing more than a bizarre symptom of a terminal disease? Or is something more profound at work here, burrowing out a foundation for some monument that must rise far above and beyond my own rather insignificant febrile life and thoughts? I cannot shake the conviction that the hard exterior of the stone is a barrier dividing polarized realities, and that now I am closing my eyes to my habitual, personal life so that I may begin to wander through the illuminating flood of the lives of so many others. And thinking this,

suddenly Darwin's war ceases, and I am afloat in the current of the most beguiling serenity. For a moment, whatever force or entity that is creating these violent separations gives way to certainty, gives way to peace, and the voice, returning, but now with mellifluous comfort, says, "We have come to remind the human of what makes a space a space and a stone a stone."

11/4/00, Aesklepios, the Folly Master

Moreover, just as those disciplines which are most closely related to Folly contribute most to happiness, so too, those men who have nothing whatever to do with any branch of learning and follow Nature as their only guide are by far the happiest of all. For she is completely adequate in every way, unless perhaps someone wants to leap over the bounds of human destiny.

Disiderius Erasmus
The Praise of Folly

Now I no longer see the rock, only the Mercator projection. The meridian lines, the clock face, the contours, the captions, assume the solidity of reality now. It is only a matter of time, no doubt, before this marvelous self-engraving image dissolves back into the cloud of imagination. How long will it take for the map to revert to words?

The rock is very dark, whether naturally so, or as a result of absorbing oils from my hands, I do not know. I do know that Aesklepios is trying somehow to relate to me (P.O.#6), that he wants to absorb something of mine and hold on to it. Aesklepios is smoothest and darkest where he is most polished, most beaten. The rock has slight indentations, which give to the surface a mottled appearance, hence his clownish or disguised air. He promulgates questions. Is he a healer or a marvelous mountebank?

The eye-dot I perceived, or thought I perceived, on the first viewing, still seems faintly visible when the rock is tilted to a certain slant of light. If this dot is the same one first recorded, it occurs on the front side of the rock, slightly north of the center-crossing meridians.

I carefully turn the tissue paper which protects the plate, and view the constantly elaborating illustration of the map as a dangerous absorption. What I see, what I am capable of seeing, is expanding, and also becoming

more detailed, more inwardly focused, of course, but more outwardly focused, too. A mating and merging is happening in which there is a curious reversal of subjective and objective awarenesses. Now the subjective seems outside of me, and the objective inside. And what is more, there is no longer any clear demarcation, as for example the organ of my skin, or of my cultural or personal conditioning, separating the two states. Rather, a gradient, almost like tiny granulations of light and color, is subtly effacing those boundaries. And if I draw my attention to the gradient, there swirls a kind of crazing like that we find in the liquid energy displays of certain computers. It is as if I were looking into the substrate, not only of my thought, but thought, or to be more precise, feeling and/or imagination, since the crazing seems to intensify in response to my emotions or mental images. But what I am seeing emerging from this crazing, fleeting as it now is, is something deeper down in the stratum than anything I've experienced in my personal biography. Is what I am seeing and sensing here the liquid foundations of the soul? If so, why would it appear like this? An indentation near the top of the ovoid (the NE quadrant from the front, the NW quadrant from the back) seems like a deflation, or perhaps a kind of fontanel. A closer look, plus a little imagination, and there it is. Yes, I can see it and feel it. I detect a pulse. The baby I hold in my hand is clearly alive.

I get a certain hard feeling in my solar plexus (P.O.#4) while studying this rock. It absorbs something from me, smiles smugly, and does not repay the investment of my attention. Perhaps inside, Aesklepios is celebrating a festival with his own thoughts and feelings, manifesting beings who are all having a good laugh at my expense. The Folly Master excludes me. Or does he/she?

Staring at these rocks brings on a kind of internal crumbling, as if I were caught in a gust of external sadness, not sadness from a particular event or circumstance, but sadness that is built into the very structure of the cosmos (P.O.#3, on mythologizing). Aesklepios may always be a dissembler, a charlatan, but he is also most certainly a healer. And yet he wields the most stupendous of his powers in a manner that's a trifle nonchalant, like one who always cures or curses on a whim. His interventions succeed, but they succeed first as jokes or prodigious hoaxes.

Also, I cannot get a definite fix on his or her gender. He/she has an hermaphroditic quality, something, to be sure, appropriate to a shape-shifter. One moment male, the next female, the rapid oscillations of these

transformations appearing like a starry, unsteady androgyn. Aesklepios is definitely magnetic, but he/she/it always turns the negative pole to the positive pole of the viewer. If she/he/it wants me to keep my distance, I will. But I will not smile about it. I will send the eye of my resentment into its mystery and probe relentlessly. I say I will eventually understand, and failing that, I will ignore, and, as the ultimate punishment, I will forget. But the Folly replies, in a voice that slides in an oily manner across the ceiling and answers my impudence with aplomb: “Speculate all you want, but your thoughts will remain just that, a speculum, a mirror that says far more about you than it does about me. The next time you see me I will appear differently (P.O.#9), and so forth and so on, for as long as your patience can endure my elusiveness.” I am frozen in my chair now, looking up as the whole ceiling of my room becomes the liquid energy display for an apparatus that is neither mechanical nor animal, but some strange amalgamation of the two, its speech roiling round in vivid kaleidoscopic Fibonacci swirls. “As I absorb the oils of your skin, you too will darken, become more shrouded, more opaque. And one day, you may look into the mirror, the speculum, and not be able to distinguish the mottled surfaces of my face from those of your own. You will become the role, and not the actor, the human hidden in inhuman stone.”

11/5/00 Sunday's Rock, Fergus's Druid Dreamstone

It is sometimes expedient to forget who we are.

Publilius Syrus
Letters

And sometimes one is simply tired.

I looked at this stone without much recognition. I remembered the brown discolorations on the back. I had to review my previous words about it. I have a “grid perception,” which enables me to map the surface characteristics of the stone, and I have a “word cradle,” which enables me to remember the stone (P.O.#7). What I remember, what I know in this moment, is that I am tired. And then I remember something else. In the Yeat's poem, Fergus is exhausted by his responsibilities. He admires the shape-shifting Druid because of his own desire to change. This state of worldly exhaustion is a characteristic of the initial quest for spiritual awareness. At some point, we droop into a bland dissatisfaction with even

the most grandiose of worldly successes. This world grows stale, and we are goaded to pursue another. This is the revelation that ignites, albeit damply, our first ventures into the fluidity of spirit. Our self-importance is dissolved in a dryness of world-wearying sorrow. We need again to find a way to flow. This sorrow is not anguish, not grief for a particular event, but a regret that the pull of this world is, in the end, meaningless. At last we realize that this plane of existence is not a battleground to attain virtue, not a school to attain wisdom, but merely an energy suck. We are here, and we will stay here, lifetime after lifetime, until all the desires, which stick us to this sump, are drawn dry.

The Dreamstone is a being of harsh truths: “no woman’s loved me, no man’s sought my help.” It tells us that a spiritual life may not position us for success in the here and now, but it certainly moves us into the beyond. “Where,” as I hear the rock whisper, “the many become one.” “Does that mean,” I wonder, I fret, I implore, “that this movement, this passage through the portal of the dolman, is a passage into an unspeakable and final sadness?” But now the rock is silent, and I (we) feel the regret for having aspired to be one thing at the expense of all others. How the discolorations of these vain desires stain our bodies and our minds, so that dead patches occur and spread like desertification, eating away all greenness. We had thought that our aspirations, our thoughts, our feelings, imparted a glamorous meaning to the world. But now we (I) find that they only burdened us with a false sense of arrogance. The possession of this stone brings a truth through which all pretensions are siphoned away. Even our bodies begin to erode. We burn out. We fade. We lose heart.

In her “Showings,” the 14th century English mystic, Julian of Norwich, describes her vision of Christ. He comes to her when she is at the very nadir of extreme unction, when she is resolved to abdicate breath, faith, everything that she has held dear, simply to end it, to be relieved of her agony. She turns her back on what most of us would call life, and in the crises of her death, her first wound, she begins to pray for a second, more grievous wound. The second wound is the knowledge of Christ’s passion. And what was that knowledge, that “showing,” as she called it?

And in this, he showed me something small, no bigger than a hazelnut, lying in the palm of my hand, and I received that it was as round as any ball. I looked at it, and thought: What can this be? And I was given this general answer: It is everything which is made. I was

amazed that it could last, for I thought that it was so little that it could suddenly fall into nothing.

Julian of Norwich
Showings, Chapter IV

This, then, is the door of the dolman, the door of death, and perhaps the door of dream. Now the despairing King Ego tries to cast off the world-weary weight of the crown. This is Fergus's hope: that by so abdicating, he can escape the realization that it was all no more than this: that the whole of his life, the whole of creation itself, was no bigger than a filbert in his hand. But Julian adds:

And I was answered in my understanding: It lasts and always will, because God loves it; and thus everything has being because of the love of God.

Ibid.

The rock says: "Julian knows something that the proud Red Branch king does not. She knows that besides this material world, besides this creation, there is also the love that made it and sustains it. She shows us that this love is much larger than the world. With this 'understanding,' she begins to reach through to what is permanently sustaining."

Perhaps the realizations provided by the Dreamstone are akin to this providential sustenance. While holding the stone, an intimation discolors the chamber of my heart (P.O.#4) with the inkling that the Cosmographer's motivations far exceed the material scope of the cosmos. Figure and ground reverse. We (I) shape-shift. The king becomes a pauper, the pauper a king.

Ifs abound in me, that conjunction, which makes all experience equivocal, fluid — and realizing this, it is as if my desk and writing instruments and this little stone suddenly begin to flow, and I find myself, not adrift, but "onboard" the narrowest of boats, a canoe, my life seated precariously between night and day, animal and angel, the spiritual and the physical. Overhead many branchings — and from each branchings shine eyes, other selves, perhaps, or perhaps, and this seems far stranger, various strands of DNA, or else the thought or emotional patterns that give birth to DNA, draped from and coiled through tree limbs, like living intelligences, serpents

engendering serpents, and the branches, too, are alive, plant elementals whose wisdom is the oldest of them all. I sit at my desk, now, perfectly still, the Mother-Saint sitting and paddling at the front of the canoe and the Father-Druid paddling at the back, one experienced in the ways of darkness and quietude, and the other the master of activity and light. There is someone, or something else on board, too, something avian, something reptilian, plus an awareness that seems to know the country drained by this river, a “grunder” who keeps his or her attention on our future port. I don’t know, I can’t . . . the signal is breaking up, but I can feel the deepest quality of love in these guides, and although the river is dark, as I put my head furtively over the side of the canoe, so delicately balanced that I have to tilt in the opposite direction of my pounding heart, or that weight we’ll tip the me into the flood, I can see down into the nitreous waters where a blur of treasures is streaming below me, golden ingots, silver bars, spilling casks of jewels. I want to ask . . . but I know that even the least whisper of speech just now will capsize the boat, who is this “I” who loves, who guides the canoe, who chants with each stroke of the oars: “You are safe, you are safe, you are safe. . .”

We (I) note too that both Fergus and Julian, when this intimation covers them, are not immediately consumed with gladness, but rather, they are shrouded by something else, something akin to sorrow, but not sorrowful, something inclusive of both gladness and sorrow, something transmutational and glorious, though it is wrapped round and round in mystery. Fergus is “nothing, knowing all,” and Julian sees the passion of the Lord. The Dreamstone may strip us of hope, but it also strips us of illusion. Then, as we sink into this hopelessness, we glimpse a figure or a figuration that lets us know that sorrow must be illusory, and, therefore, no true part of our true selves. But the Dreamstone is more blunt. It anchors us in the desolation where all aspirations are eaten by these questions: “Who is this Nothingness who swallows us? And what is the nature of this appetite, so constant and so nameless and so blank?”

11/6/00 Monday’s Rock, Sandro Lingam

The Language of eroticism in the troubadour’s lyric is distinguished by a pervasive ambiguity of reference, which functions on linguistic levels from vocabulary to syntax, and in the poetic conventions as well. Such ambiguity masks the poet’s reference to chaste or sexual

love and calls our attention instead to the language itself, to the literal material of the poetry.”

William D. Paden
“*Utrum Copularentur: Of
Cors*”

This stone is youth, and in particular, the erotic ardor of youth. The parallel striations on the front, sweeping upward in graceful diverging curves, mark this stone with the thinnest outline of a lingam. What can I say about this that is not heartbreaking, while, at the same time, being imbued with an unutterable sweetness? Monday’s rock is the mute awestruck virgin confronting the devouring mystery of sex. The rock represents the moment when the arc of innocence reaches its zenith, and pauses, spellbound, before descending into experience. The state of consciousness is that of the *puer* or *puella aeternus*, which somehow stays alive in even the most scar-thickened cynic. There is almost a nameless quality in this, a nakedness clearer than air, like a transparent surface that we tentatively touch to prove to ourselves that it is actually there. This is the awareness engendered by the troubadours and the tradition of courtly love. In their songs, they carnally yearn for love beyond the flesh, but are unwilling to sully their amours with the degradation of requiting. Theirs is a world of florid expositions, where the subject of personal thought is not I or you or she or we, but “one.” “One” is drawn to sentences like those proliferating Walter Pater’s famous essays on the Italian Renaissance. One thinks of Pater’s words on Botticelli. One reads as one dreams of the shifting lambent silvers of the moon:

So just what Dante scorns as unworthy, Botticelli accepts, that middle world in which men take no sides in great conflicts, and decide no great causes, and make great refusals. He thus sets for himself the limits within which art, undisturbed by any moral ambition, does its most sincere and surest work.

The Renaissance
Walter Pater

And herein lies the essence of this stone: that it makes the great refusal, that it climbs the summit of the purest ardor and refuses to descend, even if that descent would mean the longed-for consummation. If Moby Polyphemus is the brute force of nature, unreconcilable and wild, this lingam is a Sandro of

ultimate refinement. He refuses the boorish groveling for satiation, and turns his gaze inward, laying his head, like a sleeping swan, deep in the downy pillow of his wings. This stone reminds us that the sentimental endures like granite in each human heart, however lacerated that heart has been. Sandro's plight is our plight, naïve, remote and moony, an essence ever charming, ever charmed.

No sooner had I written this word "charmed," than I am overwhelmed by a smell, so that I must rise and walk around the room and around the house trying to find the source of it, trying to determine where and what it is. Finally, it dawns on me: it's the smell of wool, and not just the spun wool of sweaters and coats and suits, but wool as it smells on the animal itself, the wool of the lamb, the living lanoline, a smell that seems to have no source, nor any area of dissipation. It's just there. And now I can smell other animals, too: a horse, dogs, pigs, chickens. I must add here, that owing to all of my various sinus and respiratory problems, I've never possessed the best of sniffers, so whatever it is that I am smelling, it can't be too subtle. Of all the wild things that have been happening, the hallucinations, the disembodied voices, the floating plasma orbs of words and light, this manifestation of odors seems, at this point, the most disturbing of them all, the most indicative of something happening inside of me and around me that has taken me too far beyond the bounds of consensus reality to ever return. Then a voice says: "You have gone beyond the pale, consensus reality must conform to you." But oddly, the more insanely inexplicable these occurrences, the more sane I feel. Have they come to ease my torment by destroying my mind? I sit back down at my desk, and look at the computer screen, or is it looking at me? For a moment the screen goes black and the words disappear, which is strange, too, because the lights stay on, so there's been no power outage. The machine is speaking, speaking, bizarrely enough, with the smells of animals. The blackness of the screen shrinks back a bit and now I can see that it is a book, a black book, which revolves, flipping pages crowded with indecipherable glyphs, strange medieval engravings of plants, woodcuts of a full-bodied woman, wearing only an unshaped, sack-like bonnet, while she moves through some form of primitive hydraulics, cleansing herself, but from what or for whom? Maybe I am totally mistaken about this rock, or maybe innocence, even sexual innocence, is much more packed with experience than I had ever imagined. Well, Eros, is shown as an infant, but what a wise, reckless and wild child he must be if he is empowered to infect us with love. Now the book is in my

hands, and not on the screen, and it's open to a page that is mottled with age and blank, except for these words scrawled in a child's hand:

The baby stomps her feet
And speaks
And when she does
Words from above
Tell of what was
What is
And what will be.

11/7/00 Tuesday's Rock, Serenity Pitt

As long as this “brokenness” of existence continues, there is no way out of the inner contradictions that it imposes upon us. If a man has a broken leg and continues to try to walk on it, he cannot help suffering. If desire itself is a kind of fracture, every movement of desire inevitably results in pain. But even the desire to end the pain of desire is a movement, and therefore causes pain.

Thomas Merton
Zen and the Birds of Appetite

What if the commonplace became miraculous, or the miraculous became commonplace? As the voices and visions continue to proliferate, like just now, writing this, if indeed the transmission of this material can be assigned any human authorship, I suddenly had this vivid sensation that I was becoming an animal, a sensation accompanied by the features of an animal — extended dentition, the transformation of my hair follicles into fur, a webbing growing between my fingers which are otherwise stumping together as paws or claws, and oddest of all, is the lengthening of my spine into a tail, which fans out into a kind of paddle. A cold fluidity is streaming around me, and I feel my ears “fold in” and my nostrils close in a way that does not panic me at all, but feels completely natural. Then in the next moment a lacerating pain electrifies my body as my front legs and shoulders are crushed by the triggering of roweled steel jaws. With this “snap” of steel and bones, abruptly, mercifully, the episode is terminated. I am sweating copiously and the walls of the room are rebounding with an echoing sound that after a few crescendoing iterations I recognize as the word “Dominion!” shouted by my own disembodied voice. My hands,

paws, are trembling, and I know, know for a certainty, that this sensation that I have just experienced is not some anomaly engendered by my brain tumor, but rather an aspect of reality that has always been present, and not just for me, but for everyone. I know, too, that it is only human beings who have been conditioned *not* to perceive in this way. Sensations, not altogether unpleasant, I must confess, swarm me, like a great quantity of flies, and for a suspended moment, my physical form becomes the parade ground of the panoply of creation. I feel them pouring through me, all Nature's children, fish, flesh and fowl, magnificent in their variety and unity, with only one forlorn creature, straggling beyond the pale: the naked bi-ped, a forked Goliathan Arrogance distinguished mostly by his lacks, the Messiah who has invented the serviettes to dab clean bloody hands and jaws. Tuesday's rock is on the desk before me, and for a moment, a David without a sling, I feel like throwing it.

The features that I had originally catalogued on the back of this stone seem so faint now that I can barely distinguish them. Plus, there is a darkening, an almost dirtying effect, which may be the result of the stone's interaction with me. I wonder if the same effect has dirtied my human skin, and if I have conditioned my perceptions not to perceive the fault.

With new eyes, the eyes, almost of a trapped animal, I turn the tissue protecting the engraved plate of this rock, viewing the day 4, week 2 map of the back of the stone with its superimposed meridian lines and captioned surface characteristics, with some admixture of animal zest and human regret. And I think: There must be an accounting.

Focusing on the surface again — oh, merciful escape — I see two striations proceeding from about 7 o'clock in the SE quadrant, and narrowing to form a wedge-shape at the center of the rock. And finally (finally?), I see a ghostly oval that circles the rock diagonally from the SE quadrant all the way around to the NW quadrant, completing its arc with a line which traces the western edge. I wonder: Will these shapes still be there the next time I look? Or will I see others? The changes that I am undergoing are not just changes in perception, but changes in the very organs of perception. This is a new lesson. Neither I nor the rock are static objects, hard and unchangeable, but things that keep evolving as they tumble through time. Perhaps the physicist's observation about the quantum world is also true for the macro world, *i.e.*, that objects morph as a consequence of the mutual interactions of perceivers. Something that was apparent is now gone, while

something new appears. Like flotsam, features seem to be curving through a rising, transparent wave of time, now surfacing, now submerged. This effect creates a vertigo (P.O.#4). Rocks are supposed to be certainties. But my rocks, or rather my perceptions of them, are as porous as sponges, rife with fissures and ruptures of change.

On my initial viewing, I made much of this rock's calm demeanor, its stillness in the face of change. I named it Serenity Pitt, Zen Master. And now, here it goes, changing on me, getting dirty, indulging itself with slashes and ellipses, surprising me, unsettling me with new possibilities, new uncertainties (P.O.#9). I do not like this. It is too much like being scratched by your own cat. But this is the Master's prerogative. You're meditating and "Quatz!" he whacks your head with his stick. The Quaker refuses arms in a national conflict, then punches a common drunk on the public square. When I was a child, I used to turn over rocks at the edge of ponds. With every rock I turned, something unexpected was exposed. Something like this is happening in my brain, or whatever is up there, floating around in my skull, the emergence of the were-animal or were-angel, quasi-forms that I keep falling through, all my sensations the sensations of falling. If rocks are this ephemeral, what hope is there for our poor tremulous flesh?

On a darker note, the U.S. presidential elections are being held today, an event that is perhaps too trivial to be mentioned in the context of these vast metaphysical speculations on shape-shifting bodies in the multiplex of time, but one which nevertheless creates a gnawing kind of horror, at least in this one novice soul. Perhaps if these pages are unearthed centuries from now, my concerns about the future will seem dated and quaint, only an obscure record of an out of the way place in an out of the way time, when human beings wrestled to create the future with nothing more than the crumbling tools of the past. Perhaps. Or perhaps those distant readers will see my premonitions as an accurate foreshadowing of some approaching series of horrors, their own past still smoking in the craters or the trackless industrial wastes of a bombed-out or polluted history. Something much larger than me is setting the trap, for reasons that I cannot fathom. But IT wants something of mine: My flesh? My skin? The ultimate koan perhaps is the puzzle of everyday life, the aspiration for inner light amidst the onslaught of official manipulations and lies, the struggle for personal integrity in a world of abusive powers.

11/8/00 Wednesday's Rock, Grace Maryanka

Theater, like speech, needs to be set free.

Antonin Artaud
The Theater and its Double

I am inside something, in the middle, it seems, of a cage, a cage of force lines, which spiral and eddy here and there, the lines trembling like plucked strings in what appears to be a response to my thoughts or feelings. Now I see that everything in the room is encircled in this manner. The lines themselves are very subtle, like those waverings we see arising from hot asphalt, the tiniest openings in the ambience. The rock's physical form is an oval, but this oval floats inside one of these globes of force lines, just as my body does, just as the desk does, and the little pot with its plant, and Esclarmonde's sliver of crystal quartz, and the quartz seems to be pulsating or perhaps absorbing a pattern, which gets replicated, perfectly or imperfectly, throughout the room. This is hard to describe, but everything seems to be a uniquely fractalized radiation of these foundational lines, embedded inside one another like Russian Dolls, or perhaps eggs within eggs, with the quartz as the concert master of a kind of musical scintillation moving through or along the lines, and harmonizing everything with everything. When I look closely, trying to focus or I should say "blur" a certain directionality of seeing, the room seems to undergo a tremulous transmutation . . .

Grace Maryanka goes behind the Redon-painted screen in her elegant boudoir and comes out as chaffed and battered as an old tar just into port from his bout with rugged seas. Rocks change. My moods change them. Or perhaps their moods change me. A muscular assertiveness calfs bergs from a glacier and crushes moraine underfoot, batters the pieces round in icy torrents, and grinds the planet's boulders into sand. "I'll show you grace!" she says, slamming her fist down hard on a glass table, which spider-cracks beneath the sudden blow. "Note how the lithesome filaments of these cracks seem delicately drawn, as if by fate. I own two hearts, which beat inside one body. Rugged urbanity, elegance like thunder. This is the duel nature of my nature."

This voice, and this place that seems to emit it — or is it the voice that emits the place? — is trembling all the strings.

“Now view the stream, the change, the rocks — don’t flinch! The gene pool of the slenderest of flowers has stood the battering weathers of the eons. Open your hands. Be ready with your fists. Speak softly, smoothly, but when needed, spit!”

I must confess, at first I was taken in by shape and color, but now I see the many surface pits. This ballerina blazons on her skin the scars of one who fights with knives and wins.

11/9/00 Thursday’s Rock, Giles Nagual

It is striking that in this Achomavi cosmology the Trickster-God is there from the very beginning. We might make the assumption that at first there was not such a figure, just a creator, and that only after some time, when consciousness was well established and consolidated, did there come up from the unconscious a compensatory trickster figure to undo the hardening of consciousness. But apparently, as seen from this and some other myths . . . this is not true. The duality, namely a tendency towards ordered consciousness and a basic tendency towards — let us call it a counter position, something that acts according to emotion, moods and momentary disturbances, a semi-animal figure — is there from the very beginning. It comes up at the same moment as a double movement of the birth of consciousness, just as when you stretch out your arm you move two muscles, one which contracts, and one which does the opposite. So you can say that from the very beginning of consciousness, if there is that *Yes* towards consciousness there is also the *No*, the tendency towards undoing and creating a counter position.

Marie-Louise Von Franz
Creation Myths

In some ways it is easier to accept the mysterious changes I am experiencing in my perception, however weird, than other things that are also happening. These other things, macro-events, let’s call them, are not so much mysteries, like the enigma of the nearly invisible lines of force or the floating plasma orbs, but puzzles, puzzles that might be solved by some industrious detective work, which I, of course — *of course* — am far too lazy or distracted to undertake. These events both annoy and intrigue me. For example, someone, a neighbor perhaps with a distorted sense of humor or pity, has

been dropping books on my front stoop every little whipstitch, usually when I am napping or otherwise occupied. Now, after a few days of random core-drilling — I can't really give it the name of "reading" — I have discovered that there is a not quite one-to-one correlation between the quotes appearing at the head of each of these journal entries and the contents of these books. What is this? Is someone out there, in this immense tuberosity of a city, participating or provoking a conspiracy to corrupt my brain, or rather, to cook it down to the consistency of gruel? The books are fascinating in a way, as are the quotes, having, as it appears, at least a tangential association with the section of text which they precede. Yet they are nettlesome, too, in that they refuse actually to explicate anything, but rather serve to cast more shadows about, shadows which contain little glints and sparks just tempting enough to pursue, but which dissolve again into darkness when one comes close to grabbing hold of them, so that the mind is left, afterwards, not only blind, but galled by frustration and blinder than it was before. Also, and this is more galling yet, not all the quotes appearing in the texts coincide exactly with their counterparts in the books. It is as if the text is corrupting the books, distorting them, even as they are corrupting and distorting my life.

So why the Sam Hill do I care about all this, anyway. I'm dying. Or so I am told. So why am I frittering away what might be the last few hours of my life naming rocks!? Rocks don't have names. They are just rocks — rocks with pits, rocks with scars, rocks with shapes like eggs — just rocks. What difference do these differences make, and why bother cataloging them? I call this rock — what? — Giles Nagual. Why? Because it seems like an old sorcerer with tricky maneuvers galore who can make anyone stuck in consensus consciousness blink and stammer, spit and stamp, go blank inside, back up like a clogged pipe and belch out all of that wretched, discarded crap! What am I saying! The whole rock-gazing enterprise is enough to drive one mad, or worse, enough to finally drive one sane in a nest of madness. If the rock flew like a raven or danced like a butt-naked siren, it would still be only a rock, and I (we) would still be only crazy — one of the legions of the normally insane, whose routines *en masse* seem orderly enough, but when one looks beyond the surface they are seething with the most fantastic aberrations, the day and night dreams of the citizens run amok as divorce, as illness, as poverty, as asymmetrical warfare. But here is the great craziness. Be quiet now, drop your voice to a whisper, *sotto voce* — psst! the great craziness is that we expect the world to make sense, to bend to our feeling, to bend to our thoughts, to bend to our acts. And . . . and? . . . IT DOES!

The universe is the universe, unfathomable, *and* unyielding. It does what it does as it does it. It does not check its actions with our reason. So these are our choices. Stand up impeccably and take what's given. Or whimper and complain as if our blubbering would soften our fate. Who gives a name to a rock? Who, but the idiot whiner who uses names for comfort, who bundles words together in the night, and huddles with them, praying for the dawn. And yet, there is this other one, who shapes things, the unnamed one who enters the cave of the self and eats all fear. Perhaps for this one, the universe does yield, does become malleable, because he himself is malleable. In time, there is nothing left, but the sorcerer's castings, the earth, our flesh, meshed through the sieves of worms. What is hanging there on the ebonygold wall of the mind, if not these squigglers from that realm where everything we've rejected lies buried and ready to sprout into new realities, or at the very least, to undermine the foundations of the familiar?

In the beginning was the worm, the Name.

Interregnum: Second Week's Summary

A memory system stores and retrieves words, implementing Ferdinand de Saussure's principle of the arbitrary sign. A system of symbolic computation generates grammatical combinations of words, implementing Wilhelm von Humboldt's principle of the infinite use of finite media. Together they explain the vast expressive power of language, the ability to convey an unlimited number of new ideas.

Steven Pinker
*Words and Rules: The
Ingredients of Language*

These rules are intended to help you to a free and good judgement: for good judgement proceeds from good understanding, and good understanding comes from reason trained by good rules, and good rules are the children of sound experience, which is the common mother of all the sciences and arts.

Leonardo Da Vinci
Treatise on Painting

I find that I was too hasty in trying to establish rules for my "Perception Observations." With rules come violations, and the first rule brings with it the most egregious violation.

1. My perception must be owned as unique, and not made to stand for perception in general. I perceive as I perceive. Others may perceive differently.

The violation of this rule, which is not really a rule, but only a naïve aspiration, is inherent in the rule itself. To perceive at all, we must connect, project, extrapolate from some limited aspect of experience and assume that it encompasses an area beyond our immediate knowledge. That is the whole purpose for making rules. And yet I see that these rules, and rule-making in general (if I may be excused for using the words "in general" in that phrase) has a usefulness, which shines a broader light on the whole issue of perception, no matter how personal or general. The rules prod the awareness

to explore beyond the bounds of our self-created grid. They draw an edge, a boundary, and since edges and boundaries necessarily divide two things, they also make known the relative position of the unknown. They prompt us to explore, to strengthen and to refine our awareness in order to cross the boundary. Rules are like the strong container of a rocket which confine and thereby direct an otherwise chaotic and destructive explosion. Therefore, I resolve to make more rules. But I will try to make them more subtly, more insidiously, so that my violations propel me further into unknown regions.

One rule that I will make is the rule of pronouns, the rule of point-of-view. I, we, he, she, you, it, one — all these enable perception to sweep around and through different dimensions. I see that by separating my perception into self and other, I have created seven instruments for searching seven areas of consciousness. They are (and this was obvious from the first, although I missed it in my anal compulsion to make and number rules) 1.) the seven rocks, 2.) the seven days of the week and 3.) the seven projected personas.

1. Friday's Rock, Moby Polyphemus
2. Saturday's Rock, Aesklepios, the Folly Master
3. Sunday's Rock, Fergus's Druid Dreamstone
4. Monday's Rock, Sandro Lingam
5. Tuesday's Rock, Serenity Pitt, the Zen Master
6. Wednesday's Rock, Grace Maryanka
7. Thursday's Rock, Giles Nagual

I see that this sequence is cyclical, and that in some subtle way the cycles overlap and interpenetrate. It must be that as the individual personas slide by each other, on their wheels within wheels, a contamination occurs. The personas, unlike the physical rocks, cannot wholly remain in their separate envelopes. Nor can the days of the week, although they remain sequential, ever be entirely stripped of reminiscence or foreshadowing. Perhaps another rule is that perception is born from the obsession to create distinctions and the compulsion to dissolve them.

One of the curious features of my speculations (oh how the words return to cast new images, new reflections from the old ones) is that the thing that I once viewed as my personal life, now seems impersonal. Things, events, no longer happen to me, they happen to "him," perhaps even to "it." There was a presidential election this week, which a week ago had filled me with

foreboding. Now, everything is still undecided, and I (he, it) sees vast personae hulking through the atmosphere, beings of collective projections, eating the words of pundits and growing fat with lies and misperceptions. We have not chosen a president, at least not yet, but fate, this vast, malevolent being born from our collective fear and greed, is busy working to choose one for us. “It” sees the slave ships once more dragging their horrors through the trackless seas.

This morning, at the Hep-U-Sef, while picking up more diapers — how easy the second trip into humiliation was, how hard the first — I see that pattern inures us to anything — I saw, in addition to the luminous Mohammed, a distinguished-looking black man, middle-aged, and referred to by the clerk as “Doctor.” Apparently, this doctor was just back from a medical convention of some kind in Florida (lots of golf, even in November). And while I was waiting for him to check out — content now with my new undergarments, that even should my bladder fail me, my secret would be secure — I overheard him saying that some of his colleagues from the state were surprised that they had been stricken from the voting roles as felons. Suddenly, something or someone in me understood that all the counting and disputations about chads was as bogus as it would ultimately be effective. The great monster of dominion was eating black voters as it had once eaten black bodies, and that the American South still celebrated Jim Crow, lynching the most uppity of the *Unterrassen* from virtual trees now instead of real ones. I knew that in addition to its citrus, Florida under Jeb Bush still had its “strange fruit” to harvest. If the security camera in the store had been watching, and it was, it would have witnessed an historical and archetypal moment, a black man and a middle-eastern immigrant having a conversation about the end of the world, while a white man looked on helplessly, peeing his pants in terror, praying to God that his Depends would be dependable. For a moment, I began to breathe hard, but to no avail. Here was the panting of the asthmatic consuming me once again. But this time, there was a “doctor” in the house, and for some reason, I felt sure that he could help me. Which he did, He turned to me, and touching me on the chest, said: “You’re going to be alright, son. You gotta learn how to breathe, that’s all.” Immediately, angels hovered near, and I remembered Esclarmonde’s phone message, and thought: ‘How do I learn that, now, at this late stage of life?’ And as if reading my mind, the doctor slipped me a card, not his own, but that of a man, from all places, residing in Alpharetta, Georgia. “You just call this number, ya’hear? This man can help you. And maybe you can get rid of those things too,” he added, tapping the top of my box of unpurchased

diapers. I was too flabbergasted to be embarrassed. In this swimming moment, the Doctor removed his baseball hat and I saw that he had a little crescent shape indentation, like an infant's fontanel, pulsing, I swear to God, in the middle of his forehead. Aware of my gawking, the Doctor looked at me brightly and smiled, intoning a word that was so strange, that I'm sure I heard it wrong. "Trepanation," he said. "What?" I replied, dumbfounded. By now, the Doctor was almost out the door, but he turned and added: "Not all of us can be as naturally endowed as you are, Son. Some of us got a work at it." I hardly knew what to make of all this, but one thing was certain, I was sinking to the bottom of a sea that, considering the unreliability of my bladder, was far from being merely metaphorical. I had the flash of a vision in this instant of an unspeakable rite involving fortitude, blood and drills. Any other person on this wide blue globe would have checked himself into the nearest mental hospital. But I am rapidly becoming aware, that I am no longer just any other person. Thanks to my rock-gazing, I (he, it) is fast becoming No Man.