

10-1992

## octA1992

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MIRRORS<sup>1</sup>

A mirror is a triumph  
made exclusively of surrenders.

1 October 1992

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<sup>1</sup>This was dreamt as a sentence on the night of 30 September / 1 October, and I woke with it in mind. See Notebook 202, page 52.

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Pondering

to the day  
a mind to weigh  
event against transparency

this art these feebleness  
and yet to shine

sheen on the river beyond the Quai d'Orsay  
local proof of the ultimate machine.

1 October 1992

## AS IN A DREAM

As in a dream things don't budge when you touch them

— and for three hours I try not to add to that:  
lights don't go on when I throw the switch

and the dream never ends, or never begins,

because I don't want to write down  
what I know so terribly well already

the light that is nowhere when my skin feels the dark  
and my whole body is passing through the template of desire

to turn into or be formed into that pattern  
on the other side of the skin

the Red Woman who waits inside a man.

2 October 1992

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Do you think I'm going to behave the way you do,  
a bowl of soup, a cinder block, late summer blue asters,  
or be as natural as a house or a radio  
or be nice the way your sweater is, and the lifeguard  
already drowsing over *The Gnostic Gospels* at poolside,  
do you? I know the whole history of soap,  
I know where an animal waddles off to die  
and what the cherries tell the migrant workers  
that makes them laugh so hard in the bitter orchards  
just on the verge of the sudden nightfalls of autumn.

2 October 1992

*drung.du*

## Before you & at your feet

& offering to you what  
of its nature must be offered because

Offering is All. The class of existents ( $\epsilon$ )  
values the situation. (Off the chart.)

The situation is what is called a  
Star. The star basks in the light  
reflected back to it off the radiant

scintillant laminated banks of mind.  
Enough of sentences. The world is at your feet.

2 October 1992

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Extravagance of ordinary horns  
a woods "in trouble" all  
the enterprise of island song

sung from under the ground up to  
that peculiar zenith of the alchemists,  
the Sun at Midnight

searing our bleary eyes.  
We drinking Vikings of an empty sea  
hurrying to the deep home

we fancy in the leaf.  
We think it's in the shadow,  
the closed lips of the light.

2 October 1992  
for Nicholas Maw

---

hearing the oboe entering with that heart-breaking song in the slow movement of Schumann's second symphony I know that the agony of the one set apart from the many and torn thereby has never been so clearly spoken

this voice is blind Oedipus, and Pentheus who sees too much

2 October 1992

## special words

to be blessed  
by the many

anybody feels the meaning

directly

transmission

to link

the mind the universe

not hidden to say

---

Text derived from T'ai Situ Rinpoche's *Relative World Ultimate Mind*, page 69,  
chosen and proposed as an invocation before my reading (*Sentence*, Part 3, & *Bliss*) at  
the John Cage memorial weekend organized by Music Program Zero at Bard,

3 October 1992

ΗΣΥΧΗ ΔΡΟΜΕΝΟΝ

*remembering John Cage*

Silence is not something to suffer,  
it is something to do.

3 October 1992

# De Æternitate Mundi

Siger ate ashes  
at the thought

of a perishable world—  
impossible.

Juxtapose  
everlastingness.

We are here  
at least for ever.

3 October 1992

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By merit rescued from the fires of London  
1666 a pilgrim consciousness unfetted by  
the swift talbots of the Time Police who  
like all sunsets dog him down.

What traces do we leave. A smell of shit  
behind us in the privy and a rose  
left rambling by the October dooryard  
for no season that time knows, no splay

of dignified espousals round the wedded town  
that gives its citizens such scant repair  
and you, you lucky Devil, wait traceless by the moon  
until the blue lamps of the copters swivel

searching some lucklesser. Why did you last?  
Who did you lick the metal-tasting skin of  
so amorous that their least reward was this  
presque-perpetuity that torments you now,

indian summer in alchemical America? You are here  
again, and we are the blundering summonsers  
who try to call, via my voice, you to incolate this sphære  
again, a coffee mug weighty in your cold hands,

behold, you can feel again and soon be woman.  
For you survived the insolent differences of gender  
and know nothing of what it means to be a man,  
only this moony promenande against the weather

until you reach your servitors down here, chief am I  
of that phratry, waiting, ever waiting for your lumen'd  
Grace. Welcome, sparrowhawk, welcome, sweet sheet  
flapping in the flesh-wind till we name you Friend.

We have needed your inspection since the ghosts  
rowed down through the interstitial fluids of our unwrought  
craniums and left us puzzled at this piece of history,  
churches and charters and suicides and banks

and none of that to eat, none to plant next winter's rye  
or welcome even this gaunt spider flyless on the porch  
to the last solemnities of summer prancing in ground ivy,  
all gassy-smelling and particulate our energies—

we call it art and hurry to defend as if some battered castle  
waterless and long-faminois by siege and yet and yet  
we value so though it gives us nothing to sustain  
this parceled life that animates its shimmering reforms.

4 October 1992

# THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA

*for Gaston Leroux and Rupert Julian*

1.

## *Following Evening*

It is like a carriage. It runs away over the crest  
of a hill you never really know is there  
until you have to walk up it, you find  
yourself there, it is summer, mid-afternoon,  
and the sun lies on you, judgment and decree  
and no hope. The terrible island of the body.  
No escape from that. You move west  
as best you can, following evening  
into the cave five catacombs beneath the earth  
where the king of dragons questions closely  
every drop of water on the earth  
and hears what all beings are doing, even  
what they think in their secret nightmare  
lusts, their bank accounts of merciless fears.  
You too are inquired of by that subtle voice  
that hisses like the radiator in your aunt's apartment,  
the one who died one December day in her  
brother's arms, whispering of the mysteries  
of the Rosy Cross she feared had failed her.  
Her brother was your father, of course,  
your feet were too big, it has always been too hot  
and Paris was full of people you didn't desire.  
To go to the world and not want what you find!

2.

*Mysterious Barouche*

It was waiting. Is everything waiting?  
She is an exile and the axle broke.  
Seized at Varennes, she had little  
life left in her, she and her husband  
who survived that operation on his penis  
only to be factored out beneath a bigger knife.  
Or do I have the wrong king? Wrong kind  
of mercy, to remember some bright details  
of history and not have a single  
friend to be good to, when all men are kind to me.  
All I ever needed was to be honest to you,  
you with the lake behind you and all that dying done  
come back now with a smile in your aspiration  
meaning to forgive your lumbering Lancelot  
the thirty-three degrees of his infidelity,  
riding in an ox cart indeed, among cauliflowers!  
Deeper in mystery, the black carriage lurches  
away from the Opéra. No one is in it.  
We are waiting for the aspiring soprano  
to finish the highest, gentlest, of all her notes  
and carry her sordid paramour to heaven.  
No devil wants him. The devil is too busy  
using men's desires to decode the world,  
a world strictly unappealing to His Majesty  
the Devaputra ever-Mara lordly liar,  
king of the rodent whimsy that rules all life.  
Henchmen beat the unattractive aesthete to death  
and toss his body in the river where he comes from.  
Source of all her art and majesty the humect flow  
beneath the pavement of her simple schoolgirl lusts  
and all the simplistic fervors of her audience,  
to hear, and by hearing understand! What nonsense  
this, by such a man deemed worth dying for?  
This was music, and it alone renewed the earth.

3. *I have heard his voice, Raoul*

Yet there have been evenings when I heard his voice  
indistinguishable from yours or from the Buddha's voice  
speaking as it does so often from the ground, Merlin  
or some jack crow who waits for meat along my lawn.  
I woke up worrying about the French word *gazon*  
supposed to mean plot of natural grass. But the opera  
is all Astroturf and riddles, styrofoam palaces,  
dreams that fold back firmly to the dominant and sleep.  
But underneath the building there are streets  
and underneath the streets the Fact of Life continuous  
from universe to universe, leaping all the gaps or chaoses  
any number of philosophies propose to daunt my love  
or keep us from murmuring our *toujours, toujours!*  
The ghost voice is the only one that tells. By voice alone  
we built our boulevards and chose cathedrals  
to lift the carven gargoyles in the air, newts of fire and air,  
Nagas lifted into the permanence of space, the merciful,  
the uninflected. I have heard his voice all my life in fact,  
as fact, the only certainty. This voice taught us to sing,  
and by singing understand. Dragons hoarding eggs  
beneath the earth. Wise women scorning to possess.  
Emeralds and ottomans, a groaning harmonium  
keyboard lit by tallow candles made right here on the ranch—  
how could you fail to love me, you taught so well?

4 October 1992

*I suppose the most beautiful painting in London is Piero di Cosima's Satyr Mourning a Nymph. It is in the National Gallery, and there is a dog in it. The image seems to ask the following questions:*

*Is she wounded or is she dead or does she sleep?*

*Who did it, if it was done?*

*In the far distance, right,  
behind the pack of dogs,  
we see the west end of  
Cuttyhunk Island.*

*Bartholomew Gosnold's  
tower is clear exalted in  
the lucid evening. At its  
base Caliban is offering  
one more unwelcome  
sacrifice to Setebos.*

*The satyr is mourning,  
yes, but his face is full of  
wonder, full of that kind  
of almost clinical  
curiosity we often find in  
twi-natured beings,*

*centaurs, aegipans, and  
the like. He seems to be  
thinking, through his  
grief: So this is death, this  
is the thing that mortals  
always suppose shapes or  
abrupts their little lives.  
Am I a mortal too? Will I  
one day enter this curious  
tender stupidity that  
seems now to hold my  
love?*

*And will there be  
someone to ponder at my  
side when I, for the first  
time in all my life, no*

*longer have the sense to  
answer?*

*But all round him as he  
thinks his grief through  
the light is busy  
answering.*

4 October 1992  
*for Charlotte*

## Some Easy French Botany It Took Hours to Learn

*épilobe* (our fireweed or willow herb) is called *le lys de Saint Antoine*, St Anthony's lily, because it grows in the poorest soil or on the chalky slopes of these mountains

it looks like our loosestrife, and bees make good honey from it too, that the Savoyards call *miel de montagne*

*sureau* our elder I think has two sorts, depending on the color of the berries:

black is tasty and they make jam from them, while  
red is *vénéneux*

*silène enflée* is just our campion, yellow swollen

*astéranche* I do not know what it is

and *scabieuse* is just our scabious.

*Serpolet* is our wild thyme

but there is a yellow flower the guide calls *rhinant*, but says that in their patois of Le Biot the name is *karXaval*, the middle of the word a deep harsh throaty gurgle he makes fun of as he says over and over—

later the dictionary says (the dictionary is always later) that the word is *rhinanthé*, flower in the shape of a nose, a weed they say, *nuisible aux prairies, dont une variété est dite crête-de-coq*. It is in the family of the Scrofulariaceae. *Newcomb's Wildflower Guide* calls it Yellow Rattle.

4 October 1992