

## The Romance of Sounds & Senses

Henri Bergson once observed that the measure of success of language in understanding matter is the measure of its failure in expressing the nature of life or of penetrating into dynamic reality. Language, he said, since it is the creature of intellect, is bound by the demand for clarity, simplicity, economy. But life and creative evolution cannot be approached through the channels of clarity and distinctiveness. And herein lies the superiority of instinct..... Bergson seems to be telling us that there must be a hazy distance between sounds and meanings which respects the sounds. Our minds want to arrange and abstract sounds into ideas while our instincts are submissive to the sounds themselves; they watch and listen to them quietly as they approach us or form within us like cats by the fireplace. There is self-surrender to such sounds and our intuition receives them, feels them and shares them with others. This is the secret of man's creative impulse, the unformed hint that trickles a pen or a paintbrush.

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1st printing: Spring, 1969

2nd printing: Summer, 1969

3rd printing: Summer, 1970

4th printing: Summer, 1971

5<sup>th</sup>, unauthorized, virtual printing: Spring, 2006

Did you ever feel like the introduction to a book? You know what your title is you even know your story. But you aren't too sure about the preface or the table of contents and you never met the bibliography. There you are holding a story and yet you don't know quite how to get to it. Well, that's how I feel right now. There's something I wish to say and I know what it is and I want you to feel it, but I'm not quite sure how to begin. So I'll stumble through the introduction and we'll see where we end up.

I have this thing about words. Maybe I should say "sounds." They're beautiful, floating around us and inside us if only we listen closely enough. Some sounds are so loud that we don't hear them like passing cars and jet planes and others are so soft that we don't have the patience to listen like the sound of a leaf changing color or grass growing or a frog blinking his eye. We Westerners have lost the art of hunting for sounds or the patience for planting or harvesting them. Instead we have become Romans -not Athenians- building on sounds so that our words get higher and higher or longer and longer until we can't see the foundation and we certainly can't feel the meaning.

Maybe it's that good old American pragmatism that makes us such fine architects, merchants and engineers of war and empire that blocks our feelings. After all maybe a word is like a highway or a building to be constructed and amended rather than painted or planted. Maybe a dictionary is merely another law book with case studies and precedents collected over centuries and teachers are policemen who enforce laws of grammar without legislating them. Then those red marks on term papers are traffic tickets, classroom is a courtroom and new sounds are revolutionary! New words are jailbreaks and revolution.

Let me give you an example of what I mean. When I was a graduate student in history we had to write papers in our academic language, a particularly sterile one. We had to keep a certain distance from sounds and feelings so that we could seem objective and detached, therefore unprejudiced and correct. A good academician could speak the clothes off God and die in the gaze of naked Truth. I can recall many conversations with fellow academics. One fellow might say, "in my considered judgment the evolution of imperialism has proceeded at a rate directly proportional to the expansion of capitalism." And his comrade might reply, "Before analyzing the significance of that statement one must investigate the possible implications of the aforementioned terms hitherto defined." And you nearby say to yourself, "Well, I think I know what you're saying, but say it!" "One must investigate" so why not you, man? Why "one"? What about all the "ments," "tions," "isms," "eds," "als," "ibles" and "gates?" What about the "not unlikely's," "not without's" and "suffice it to say's?"

The children of Mrs. Fuse (refuse, confuse, transfuse, suffuse, diffuse, infuse, etc.) or of Mr. Duce (reduce, conduce, deduce, induce, seduce, adduce, traduce, etc.) are they identical or do they have their own personalities? Are immunity and community sibling rivals? They sound and dress and feel alike but mean so different -- one is the belle of the ball and the other is the wallflower. All these prefix and suffixes that we throw onto words to hide the real feeling underneath them! Are we so afraid to talk to one another that we have sounds in our heart that we want to shout out but must cover up? We put on a suit, crawl into a plastic bag, climb into a barrel. Roll it into a truck and park the truck in a garage. And then we made the sound inside those layers and it comes out so distant, that it's barely a rumble and we say, "My, how aloof I am, how distant." And we're secretly pleased because we can't be hurt if we're so far away, and who wants to be hurt, especially by words!

It seems that we sterilize our words. We take the seeds out of them and keep them from reproducing like our oranges. I had a friend who used to weep every time he ate a seedless orange or grape. Maybe they taste better to some, or at least safer. Are they really better? I'd like to offer you some seedy sounds and sensations so that maybe we

can start a revolution in words. Maybe we can look inside ourselves and get outside that garage. Maybe we can write a new dictionary, or better yet, become one, constantly evolving.

But first you must open up completely. Relax; try to take on a more oriental mind. Receive passively. Close your eyes and feel these images, become them. Pretend that you're a bubble rising from the bottom of a glass, and you're swirling this way and that, reaching for the top and bouncing against other bubbles at the mercy of the current and not really caring what happens. You're a snowflake being blown about by the wind, drifting from treetop to rooftop to the nose of a little girl and melting on a freckle.

You're a feather and each of your little fibers is sleeping as the wind slowly dissolves you into featherlessness. You're a ripple in a pond and you're rubbing against other ripples, moving ever closer to the bank, not knowing when it comes and not caring too much, just rippling. Maybe you can be a piece of seaweed in a lagoon. The waters are quiet and there's coral there. But coral is not what you are; it's what you were....hard, unyielding, beautiful but unaware. And when the fish brush by, you bend and waver, yield and change...you don't rip off their scales.

You're smoke peeking out of a chimney or crawling out of your grandfather's pipe and all around you are forces that fight to decide your fate. But you in your surrender are stronger because you diffuse, you go everywhere. You're an ice cube melting in a vast sea; all around you is the anonymity of water measureless, endless and you are afraid that you will lose your cubiness in this oneness. But as you shrink you find a new freedom and you dash splash-forming teardrops, raindrops and sweat--carrying new life and promising rainbows. You must not cling like an ice cube to your cubiness or like toothpaste to the washbasin. Be washed down and dissolve. You are a drop of mercury and when something tries to crush you into pieces splatter into droplets and reform.

You're the shadow of a rope swinging from a tree, always chasing it; back and forth until the sun shifts or a cloud drifts and then you disappear or completely take over. You're a sponge and water is dropping on you. Each time the water hits it penetrates you, it goes right through you and you receive it, become it. You're a cornflake, a soggy milk-filled cornflake, not a brittle, crisp one. When the milk enters you it fills you through and through, and when the spoon comes smashing town it splatches and you don't break. You give and you're whole, not like your brittle brother who brickles into a million defiant pieces. Fragmentations is not where it's at.

You're whole body is a palm up, accepting, receiving or eyes closed. With your eyes closed and your two palms facing upward receiving whatever vibrations come, you are ready to receive the sounds too. Be open. We in the West put handles on our teacups so that we can grab them. We put handles on our words too so that we can tilt them and swallow meanings. Sometimes I'm tempted to sneak into a china shop and break all the handles off all the cups so that people will have to drink their tea and coffee with their palms, not with their fingers. When you hear a doorbell or a telephone ring you ask yourself, "Who's calling?" not "My, what a beautiful sound!" So many symphonies unheard! So many canvasses unseen! The dances of autumn leaves, the architecture of spider webs, the engineering of caterpillar cocoons. And we walk through this creativity with our grocery lists and time tables carefully, chewing and digesting our words, but not feeling or breathing them.

Your mind is asleep in its comfortable upper chamber with a book by the bedside while your body tosses restlessly in a straw-laden stall below. Then slowly the liquid of life seeps in through the windows and the sleepless one leaps from his straw, dashes the staircase and pounds on the chamber door. Ah, the rested mind lights a candle of angry intellection and confronts the caller. But the body with quicker instincts snuffs the taper and enfolds the mind in the delirium of life.

We've lost a sense of wonder. We're afraid of the many things we imagined and created in our minds as children. No longer can we stare at the crack of a sidewalk or the pattern of a cloud or the shadow of a tree. We have to work, we must move. Our watch ticks the hours and measures every moment, and as we march toward some accounting of our day and life, we forget to wonder and listen and simplify and dissolve ourselves into all the things around us. We have lost contact in our urban culture with nature and natural cycles, seasons, orbits and rhythms. You and I, our bodies are calendars in themselves, breathing, digesting, pulsating. All of these cycles and rhythms and when you walk, breathe to your steps and activate each of your senses. Soon you will feel around you a new world, one that is cunning yet simple. You must forget the squares and spheres, the whole numbers and reducible fractions, the primary colors and tonic chords to life and search out trapezoids, five numbered decimals, pastels, polka dots and minor chords.

This is what I think we must do if we are not to become machines. Already I see buttons sprouting on top of some people and aerials sticking out their backs. Some people talk as if they're computers and others act like vending machines spitting out their work for their paycheck. Maybe testubes will replace mechanical hearts. Many seem more attached to their cars than to their families, spending their lives between destinations and never arriving. Sometimes I wish we were weeds planted in a field and forced to look around and listen and involve all our senses.

This is quite an introduction, I guess, in order simply to say that I'd like to share with you new sounds, new feelings, new insights. I'd like to activate your taste buds, your nerve endings, your earlobes, your hair follicles and toe nails. I'd like your senses to become immersed. I want to talk to you, not to your mind so much as to your stomach, your body, your feelings. Our words must reach downwards, inwards, aroundwards and touch, like the Japanese sculptor who exhibited his works in a large American museum. As he arranged each statue before the first showing the curator was surprised by the little sign that the artist placed at the base of each work: "Please touch!"

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Sometime I try to imagine how words were born, who said the first word, and what were the circumstances. I can imagine a Neanderthal eating a fig and choking on the stone. As he tries to spit it out he jerks his head skyward and grunts, "kkklaud!" Then he sees soft, billowy powder puffs of vapor in the sky and makes a connection: "kkklaud!" He scratches his head and says the sound over several times: kkklaud, kkkcloud, kkloud, kloud, cloud. And satisfied with it, he takes it back to camp with him. If he's the chief he may proclaim this new sound. If he's a stealthy hunter he may hold back the meat until everybody accepts the sound. Maybe he's a wealthy merchant who bribes the camp with furs, feathers, shells and fruits. Perhaps he's a warrior and threatens to club anyone who doesn't say "cloud." Possibly a medicine man who makes a magic chant out of the sound. He could be a kind of holy man who points to the sky and shouts the sound as a kind of prayer. However the sound entered the campsite slowly it grows until finally it is pronounced and standardized and put in the book or on the stone or sand or maybe stored in the cavernous memory of the tribal story teller. And for every "cloud" there are twenty other sounds that are too weak, that didn't have advocates, like "zzgronst" or "porajabite" or "eaort" or "mymnet."

We have some pretty good sounds in the English language, but they're dying off like whooping cranes. Sometimes I think we must set up a conservation program, a reserve where certain sounds can live and breed and maybe stage a comeback. At least we should limit the open season on killing words to a two week period when academes can come armed with prefixes and suffixes to crush and strangle sounds like "flush".... it flows and gushes. Or "lawn".... it's a long yawn--smooth and wide. Or "orgasm".... a probing, contracting hardness...ggg...then drowsy release.... asm. Or orange....it's so

oooooooohhround and angey...so ooohrrangey, soft luscious. Or "squish"....the crawling ssss is suddenly qqqed (maybe a shoe or a brick) and it uishes out from underneath: squish. Or "sponge"....the edge of sponge is porous. It receives water, it thirsts. But there's a weakness, a leak in the word; it's the "sp" spitting, not drawing or slurping. Maybe if we put a "sl" in place of the "sp" we'll have a "slunge" which is spongier than sponge. And so we have a new word, a slurping unge, a slunge. We find ourselves inventing new words or feeling around to listen to the heartbeat and pulse of a sound.

I'd like to share a poem with you, one that will be unintelligible but hopefully very feelingful, especially after I explain. So hold out your palms and feel the sounds. Internalize them.

surjerjer urjerjer woosh!

zimełaty pitit

karoarak karoarak

jelkamaroony kaploosh!

flitttt-----usssh!

With those vibrations bouncing, dancing tingling inside you, let me explain the poem or let the poem explain itself. There are many meaning to these sounds just as there are many experiences in each of us, and they one thing to one person and another thing to another person. And it makes our academic people wonder , "How relative your sounds are! They don't really mean one thing. How can you communicate? How can you say what you really mean?" Well, let me tell you what this poem says to me, and maybe you can share the feeling. Maybe not.

In the first line I feel the engine of a motorboat dying slowly as the boat drifts on quite softly into a still bayou.....surjerjer urjerjer woosh! In the second line there are little water spiders with long, spindly legs playfully circling the boat.....simellaty pitit. The ellaty is so circular, it's moving so quickly and the tit are the long legs while the pit is a little body. There are frogs croaking from the rushes....karoarak karoarak. And then a man stands up in the boat and he holds a bait bucket of livid, fleshy minnows...jelkamaroony. The elka is mettalic and the maroony is livid, fleshy minnows...jelkamaroony churning around and glowing in the moonlight. This man is going fishing, armed with a bucket but he's not going to lower it gently into the pond. No, he's an Ahab and he's going to defy nature. He's going to plunge it into the water, the cosmic white whale....kaplosh. Jelkamaroony kaplosh! There's a cosmic overtone here. He's taking on all of nature he and his dead engine. He's a modern Manichean man, at war with nature and his body....pure mind, tamer of time. And in this action, in this defiance when the jelkamaroony kaploshes, all of nature responds by shooting off in every imaginable direction. Everywhere fish are darting away, the seaweed is bending backwards, stumbling over its own roots, turtles slide into the mud and frogs hop into trembling bulrushes, snails draw into their homes and pebbles shuffle aside nervously as a veil of mud mercifully rises to cover the stampeding retreat of its brothers and sisters. So you have the last line....flittt--usshh! The flight of creatures and welling mud. Now you read the poem again and with this understanding maybe it will be richer for you.

Let's try another poem, a little boy's poem:

cham ora chump cham ora chump cham ora chump

lagudlarrood

blearazoblosseroll blotch!

If you've ever chewed bubble gum then you'll turn on to this poem. In the first line a little boy is chewing his gum, working his jaws hard like pistons of a machine...chamora chump, chamora chump, chamora chump. He stretches the gum with his tongue, planning a big bubble...lagudlarrood. But he doesn't blow it in one breath, not if he going to get a big bubble. He's got to give it a two-breather or maybe even a three, but his stomach is too small for three. So he takes a two-breath bubble.... a blearazo.... pausing for a second breath...blosseroll. And the bubble is blossoming, bagging, rolling and at the end of the breath it trembles before its fate....blotch! All over his face, even his kneecaps.

It's not too difficult to invent a word or massage a sound. One word I remember, the very first word I invented was a substitute for bathroom--would Freud ever love that! It seemed so sterile, the sound "bath", especially the th, th, the and the rolling, roaring "ooooom" of room. Besides there are living rooms and dining rooms and poolrooms and so many rooms that you can't tell them apart in your feelings. So I tried to capture the feeling of bathroom with the sound "flongerine." The flon, flon, flon of a flowing, low tone, the ger, ger, ger of a machine and the ine polished the word. A flongerine! Maybe you can find a better word. Or maybe you can ask the next bartender or waiter, "Where's the men's flongerine?" He may look at you strangely, but he'll feel what you mean maybe and who knows--he may go home and yell out to his wife, "Hey Mabel, get your nylons outta th' flongerine!" Maybe!

You know, we say that the sun shines and the rain falls and when you listen to the sound--rain, rain, rain, rain--when you say it to yourself many times and dissolve it inside, the ra, ra, ra, ra, ra is round and the nnnnn is trembling, it's a trembling roundness.....rainnn, rainnn. It sounds more like the roundness of the sun and the nnnness of the rays. The sss, sss, sss...unnn, sss...unnn. A sss...sss...sss sizzling, sss....sss....sss snaky, sss....sss...sss whistling. Sss....unnn, sss....unnn, sss....unnn. Maybe the rai....innn is more sunny than rain, and perhaps the sss....unnn is more rainy than sun. Maybe somewhere someone made a mismatch and we've been going along with it for ges. Maybe we should stop NOW.

You take a word like "point" ...poh, poh....tt, tt, tt, tt. Poh...tt, poh...tt, a little thing, a little pebble, a little speck of sand with a tt, tt, with a point, coming to a tip, a tt. A pin, not a trembling poh, but a pointy poh. A point is a pretty good word, but pit is much better for picturing a pin since the "oin" of point stretches the sound. Pit, pit...that's when you're holding it by the head, the pih. But when you're holding the other end it's a tip.

When you think of the words "cloud" and "bluff" and then say them softly to yourself you get a strange tactile sensation. The "k" sound of cloud is hard and the "l" begins to slope while the "ou" rounds out to a flat "d". The "b" of bluff bulges and the "bl" blows the bulge into a powder-puff "uff", literally a blowing, bulging uff. How strange that we don't see bluffs in the sky and stand from the edge of rocky clouds to view the winding rivers below. Maybe we do!



Here's a poem that brings us to the sea:

pah kayaiah flizoom kiyai  
karoombul splagorgl pah soosh  
kayai

This is a poem that says something special to me. The first word...pah...tells me of a grain of sand sitting on a beach...pa, pa, pa like the poh of point or the pih of pin. A pah, a speck...flat. And in the background you can hear the crying seagulls diving for fish....kayaiah flizoom kayai, like a Greek tragic chorus chiding the pah. Then a wave dashes the shore, showering it with sputtering debris....karoomblul splagorgl .....the overwhelming life realities. The gorgl....the garbage is trying to breathe. It's sputtering deadwood, dead fish, seashells, stones, beer cans.... all dying and gasping for air. Karoombul splagorgl. And the sand, that tiny grain, that pah drowns in the wave sweeping it back....pahsoosh....like a man immersing himself totally in his fate. Then in the background you can hear the seagulls echoing...kayai....a chorus of "I told you so!" critics. Becomes the sea, sand, seagulls and deadwood when you read again.

When you go out in a field and see a herd of cattle grazing it's so easy to be caught up in the rustic landscape that you might miss the other worlds around. But if you bend down and closely study a single blade of grass sometimes you'll see another world. You'll see a bunch of tiny insects, aphids, herded together sucking the juices of a single blade of grass, filling themselves with grass juice and if you look long enough you'll see ants coming close, drawing up alongside the aphids and with their feelers bending over them and squeezing them, probing them, striking them and drawing grass juice from the aphid, now aphid juice into themselves, now ant juice. And the ant doesn't kill the aphid, it herds him, then it returns to his colony with the aphid-grass-ant juice and life goes on.

Only one time somewhere, maybe everywhere a cow bends over and chomps! a mouthful of grass and in that single moment it chomps herds and herds of aphids grazing and the ranching, farming ants and that grass, down into the stomachs and no longer is it grass juice or aphid juice or ant juice...it's cow's juice, milk. And man antlike milks the cow seeing neither the aphid or the ant nor the field that is a single blade of grass, but if he listens he can ask himself this question: might it not be that this whole planet is a dewdrop on a cosmic blade of grass and there's a cosmic aphid bending down about to chomp us and our worldly juices into a cosmic stomach into a new ambrosia. There are so many levels to life and we must share them.

Here's a poem about an artist, a sculptor, perhaps our Japanese friend:

dugacha chakut, dugacha chakut, dugacha chakut  
klinkerufff  
alora fasoma  
salugot fasinkel  
dugacha chakut, dugacha chakut.....pooff!

This is what this poem says to me. The first line tells me of a sculptor who's beginning to work on a block of marble. He's digging into it with his chisel and hammer, and pulling out pieces of marble...dugacha chakut, dugacha chakut, dugacha chakut...dug, dig, gotcha, got you marble, I got you, dug, dig, dugacha.....cha, penetrating, kut, cutting

and resisting with a blunted point....ttd...dugacha chakut. In the second line he blows the dust off his chisel....klinkeruff, the klinky metal....ufff of a blow and the dust flies off all over the floor with the chips. And then he stops and looks at his statue and imagines it complete, a masterpiece, so smooth and fine and brilliant....flora fasooma. But he opens his eyes again and sees it for what it is, very rude, incomplete....salugot fasinkel. The fasooma and the fasinkel is the difference between a dream and the real thing. The sculptor is a realist with a twinkle in his eye and he goes back to work....dugacha chakut, dugacha chakut....pooff!

It seems sometimes that it in our scientific search to take things apart we miss what's happening or the wonder of what might be happening or what we wish could happen. Biologists tell us and they can prove it because they can make it happen again although some people say, "Is that a proof?" and others say, "So what!" but they tell us when you swallow a piece of food, it breaks up and goes into different parts of your body and some of it doesn't stay around too long. The idea of food becoming part of a person is beautiful, but why do we treat our words so differently? Why don't we let them become part of something greater?

Sometimes I muse to myself could it not be when I swallow some food, an orange for example, that I am taking something alive and when it enters my stomach there is a dialogue. My stomach says, "Hey there, orange, fall apart and become stomach and lungs and blood, and if you can't hack it, move on!" And the orange replies, "Now wait a minute, stomach. Maybe we should change the score. Maybe you should start becoming orange. Just because you're bigger than me doesn't mean that you're stronger. I'm more organized." And so a struggle goes on inside my stomach, the orange fighting to make the stomach into orange and the stomach fighting to make the orange into stomach. Usually the orange loses, because....well, just because.

But I ask you this, might it not be in this world of fancy that there's an old lady in a rocking chair, half asleep, not altogether, disunited in her dreams and she pops a slice of orange into her mouth and it slides down into her stomach and the dialogue goes on, only this times the stomach isn't as sure of itself and the orange is. And as she rocks on her wrinkled skin becomes taut and thick and porous and peelingish, no longer pale but jaundiced. And she begins to get rounder and seedier and her varicose veins turn white and curl up the inside of her skin. And the shadow of the rocking chair shrinks until all you can see are two old shoes at the base of the chair and an orange on the cushion of the seat. Now you say, nonsense! Well I ask you the next time you pick up an orange to eat it, who knows but that you're eating some old lady who wasn't quite together when the big question was put. Who knows?

I once heard of a judge who would line up arrested people before his bench and ask to see the palms of their hands. Those with calluses he'd send home; the others would stand trial. Wow! Maybe we could do the same with tear ducts and smile creases. A friend recently told me that you can see elves if you look out of the side of your eyes. If you look at the elf straight on he just looks like an ordinary person.

And now for another poem, one with a different sensation:

karuggel  
squirnch rrimpleedab  
shirumupp  
morralummm....

This is a short poem about an old teacher. In the first line we see her face. She's ancient, an Egyptian manuscript, a veteran of many classroom battles. her face is wrinkled...karuggel squirlnch. Then she lifts her hand to primp up her grey hair rrimpleedab. Next she straightens out her wire-rimmed glasses of the Sun-yat-sen era that curl around her rubber tree ears like boa constrictors.....shirumupp. And finally she smiles daintily.....mirrelummm.

Words can be made not only to feel things and smell them but also to see things. Many people wish to change the sounds that are themselves, their names. They shorten them and lengthen them. They use nicknames and pseudonyms or take a middle name instead, and all the while they're changing their self-picture. I'd like now to invite you to experience word pictures of people's names. Let me give you an example and you can try it yourself.

Take the name Patricia....Patricia. In order to experience Patricia you've got to say the name over and over, sing it, shout it, cry it, dissolve it. Forget about all the Patricia's you ever knew and just become friendly with the sound. Start by saying Patrisha, Patrisha (faster), Patrisha....pah, pah, pah, pah, trish, trish, trish, trish, sha, sha, sha, sha. Patrisha, Patrisha, Patrisha. Then sing it and say Patrisha and go faster.....patrish, prish, pasha, patrish....trisha...shah, shah, pa, pa, pah, shah, shah, shah, pah....trish....shah. And by the time your ready all the sounds will be floating around inside you disconnected completely and then you're ready to feel what it means to be Patrisha. Pah, pah, pah, pah, pah....it's that little grain of sand, that pah, that poh...oin...ttt. It's pah, pah, pah, pah, a tiny speck, a dot a pah, pah. Our sand...pah, pah....trish, trish, trish....is being swept up by a wave, a giant wave is sweeping up the pah. Trish pah, trish pah. And at the crest of the wave, what happens? Shah, shah, shah. The pah is trished and then shahed. It's set down on the beach so softly, so gently like a feather in the breeze. That's what Pah...trish ....shah says to me.

Or it can say many more things. It can say a tiny bug, pah, crawling so slowly across the floor and a housewife sees it and she's sweeping the floor with her broom.....trish....she sweeps it together with all the dust. And while it's struggling to free itself the door opens and....shah....out onto the sidewalk. Pah....trish....shah. Or it can be a leaf, tiny, folded-up, autumn....Pah, and the wind sweeps....trish...shah and sets it on the ground. That's what Pah....trish...shah could be, anything. Like a train trying to start. Pah...that first puff, trish...the huge iron wheels start to turn yawningly and shah....a boost forward...slowly then faster and faster. You get the feeling when you close your eyes and vibrate with the sound.

If you take each sound of Patrisha separately sometimes you can get very funny pictures. Like pah...pah...pah becomes popcorn popping, a balloon bursting or a gunshot, trish....trish....trish becomes a soggy tennis shoe, a flushing toilet, the wind, and shah...shah...shah...shah becomes a closing door, a passing car or a can of beer being opened. Then Patrisha can become a combination of pictures: a popcorn popping in a flushing toilet while the door is being closed, a gunshot into a soggy tennis shoe while someone opens a can of beer, a balloon bursting in the wind as a car passes by, etc.

There are many words, many names, and each name says something else. Take a name like Vincent. Now that's a name that'd be difficult to picture, at least right off. Maybe it would be easier to diagram. Let's see. Vv, vv, vinnn....sssnnttt. Vvvinnnsssnnttt....Vvvinnnsssnnttt....Vincent....Vincent.... Vincent (sing)....Vincent....Vvvv, vvvv,vvvv, ssssnnn, ssssnnn,sssnnn, nntt, nntt, ttashhh, ttaahhh, ttaahhh. I think Vincent is ready to be dissolved, to be absorbed. Vvvv, vvvv, vvvv, vvvv says to me a diagonal line, a line that is cutting like an axblade....vvvv, vvvv, vvvv but it's nervous, it's trembling nnnn, nnnn, nnnn....it's vibrating, it's resonating....vvvvnnnn, a resonating axe, it's nervous crawling along and

rumbling....vvvvnnn...and then....ssss, ssss, ssss....it's starting to take off like a rocket ship or rear back its head like a snake....the picture is becoming clearer....it's ssss, ssss, ssss....and then....nnnn, nnnn it starts to rumble again, it's back on the ground again and then....tah, tah, tah, tah.....it disappears, it comes to a point, it evaporates or like the winding, rearing, hissing snake it strikes and is no more.....Vvvvnnnssssnnntttt. Who knows what else Vincent can be. It can be what you feel it to be and then you have and are Vincent.

I remember reading about a young boy who was found in the woods where he lived all his life. When the doctors checked him over they found in perfect health--never even had a common cold. Then they gave him a bath and he died. Spanish moss is an air plant, that is, it lives off rain, moisture, sunshine, dust particles and air--off the sky. Mistletoe is a parasite, that is, it lives off the tree on which it is growing. How many of us who adopt similar life styles and languages are air plants and parasites. In Myakka State Paqrk they have a water hyacinth control program. The authorities there feed the plants hormones that stimulate their growth so rapidly that they are unable to feed themselves adequately and consequently die of starvation and sink to the bottom. Sorta reminds me of the way advertising artificially stimulates the needs of the consuming public. Look out bottom!

Let's try another poem and maybe we can put ourselves together more. This is a short one, the very first poem I ever let happen inside me:

zachata zachata selberodoo  
imploromishy sadar laroshoo  
kedlinger kasadud razakritch  
zachata zachata jibelkacheery

This poem tells me about a caterpillar crawling across the windowpane of a pawnshop and it stares in....zachata, zachata selberodoo. The sel is a wide-eyed doing, looking in and it's zachating, it squinches along the window pane and peering in its curiosity excites exotic visions of all the things that are there, byzantine almost...imploromishy sadar laroshoo...like an Arabic bazaar. And then the caterpillar's vision clears and he sees all these tawdry items as they are.... rings tarnished, watches broken, hardened leather boots chipped and gaudy statues, mismatched books....kedlinger kasadud razakritch. Oh, how different a kedlinger is from an imploromishy and a kasadud from a sadar or a rasakritch from a laroshoo. And so the caterpillar shrugs his twenty-five shoulders and moves on mirthfully across the window ....zachata zachata jibelkacheery, almost whistling to himself cheerily. Become the caterpillar and zachata across the lines above.

The caterpillar reminds me of something which happened to me years ago and which helps to explain the feeling inside my poetry. I was sitting on the plaza of a west-coast university campus and reading a book while drinking tepid, morning tea....of course I used the handle then. It was springtime and the day was brisker than the tea. As I read a small spider--bald, green and almost transparent--raced across the page of my book. I was tempted to slam it shut squishing the spider into a period or a comma but I held back maybe because of his smallness and greenness and baldness.

Anyway I let him crawl onto my hand and continued reading. In the background I could hear the smash of a huge steel ball munching a nearby mansion and I tried to pace my reading to the rhythm of the munch. After ten minutes or so I felt a tickling on my hand and discovered that the little spider had spun a tiny web from my thumb to my index finger. I smiled and holding my hand rigid returned to my reading. Actually I couldn't really read because my mind was tickling with the paradox of the steel ball munching a

home and the spider spinning one, man undoing and nature doing. When I next peeked I found that the spider had climbed clear across each of my fingertips. My hand was a suspension bridge. Then it dawned on me that I was a tree and each of my fingers were branches. If the spider had thought I was a man surely he would have scurried away. there was a trust!

So I reasoned, "If this spider thinks I am a tree I had better act like one," and softly blowing on my fingertips, I carefully bent them like branches whispered by the breeze. The web strands whipped wildly in and out like the ends of a loose sail and the spider must have thought he was riding a hurricane. Suddenly he launched himself outwards in the wake of an upcoming wind that overtook my breath. Seeing my tiny friend spin a web off the air startled me. I didn't want to part company and besides I found that he wouldn't have enough lines to reach the distant wall. So I quickly shot up my foot and met him as he spun out to my toe-tip, another tree he must have thought. It was awkward--stiffened left hand and raised right foot so I stopped rearing and tasted the moment. Here I was--two trees freshly planted and bearing spider fruit. Twice my friend traced his path from toe to hand and back again and back to hand once more.

All the while I wondered that this was happening to me, a past squisher of spiders. And then the chimes from the nearby bell tower called the hour of my class. I knew that this was all a fantasy and that I must move on, but something held me back and made me ask, "What does this spider mean to me?" It was as if all of mankind was reaching out to all of nature. I wanted to thank him by waiting there for his short life span but I knew inside that this brief moment was a lifetime in itself and trees must go to school in order to be better trees. So I promised that I would be a tree for other spiders, a home for derelicts, a refuge for the lost and abandoned. Slowly I lowered my trunk and snapped the web, but the primrose stayed. It was still harder for me to close my branch-fingers and gently sat my little friend on, the nearest zinnia, bit I did so and picking up my books, uprooted, I slowly plodded to class.

Since that day I have never willfully killed a living thing and have often taken great pains to rescue moths from screen windows and vagrant wasps from classrooms; the mosquito that I blow off my arm may be a prophet in disguise. I feel a special sort of oneness with nature--rocks, trees, streams, flowers, birds and of course, spiders-- not so much a stewardship as a companionship. I've learned to listen and watch closely. So many beautiful things have happened since that day. I'm not troubled by the future of existence in living and dead things. Endowing them with personality and communing by intuition with distant regions of my own self it seems that there is more there than a mere fantasy. Life is good. Live it!

Man's overtures to nature are mixed indeed. With what care will he plant a flower and water it daily while destroying nearby weeds and bugs. He seems to focus on something that he wants to grow and all else must give way to human caprice or human need. The contradictions are even greater on the animal plane. A pet dog or cat or canary is prized more than the ticks that live on him. This too is understandable and perhaps we can learn something from the feeling of having a pet. I used to come home at night and turn on the kitchen light only to see a troop of roaches scurry across the sink. My first instinct was to kill as many as I could, but I soon realized the futility of it. Then one night I turned the light on and smiled as they scattered under the rubber matting. I said, "Don't be afraid. I'm sorry to interrupt your dance. Please continue." The next step was to give each roach a name--Bruno, Marilyn, Louis, Chuck, Stan. After that there was no problem with roaches, I mean pets. We learned to enjoy each other's company. After all why should you kill a prize african violet, or a pedigree pup or a pet roach? And maybe I'm a pet too. If I water a plant, cloud waters me, and the wind combs my hair. Trees feed me and the sun warms me. Wow! like who's caring for whom?

A friend told me about a guy who used to work in a factory all his life fastening staves on barrels. As he grew older his work flowed into simple actions and became an eight-hour dance. I can see him twisting before imaginary kings and potentates, then punching out and trudging home.

It's really fun to go to the zoo and listen to the animals then look at their names. Like you hear a RRROOAARRRRR! and you see "lion." Or you hear a chatter, chatter and read "monkey." What a disappointment! If I RRROOAARRRR I'd want to be called something RROOAARRRier, like a "goaruff" and if I chatter-chattered I'd rather be called a "jijjelahkorralee" or something like that. And the poor kangaroo hopping around. He should have a hopping sound for his name, like a "bippity." Maybe if we rename animals by listening and watching them we might learn their language. The same goes for plants and rocks.

Here's a simple play poem:

thupa thupa thupa thupa thupa thupa thupa thupa fipp

bip...bip...bip..bip..bip..bip.bip.bip.bipbipbipbipbipbipbip....buh

(loud and slow, then faster and softer.....whisper)

A little boy is playing with a paddle ball, hitting the ball out into the air in a steady rhythm and silently counting to himself ...thupa thupa thupa thupa thupa thupa thupa thupa thupa...when suddenly...fipp...the rubber band snaps and the ball goes bouncing away down the sidewalk, at first high bounces with long intervals ...bip..bip...bip...bip, then middle bounces and shorter intervals...bip...bip...bip...bip and finally short bounces in rapid succession until the ball comes to a stop ....bipbipbipbipbipbipbip...buh.

When I read the comic strip or look at a comic book I see all kinds of new words written as sound effects, like pow! zap! slam! ugggh! Then when I look at comic strips or books from other countries I see different words for the same kind of sounds and I begin to wonder whether things sound differently in different places. Like in Europe a door shuts PLOCH, a rock hitting the ground goes SDOK and pistols shoot SBENG. A barrel of gunpowder blows up SPRAK, water splashes PLUFF, a whip lashes ZAFF and swords clash SLENG. A ringing bell goes DLIN DLIN and a coin falling on the sounds SVIMM What happened to BANG, BOOM, SPLASH, DING-a-LING,P PLINK?

In Finland an explosion goes POOF; the same one in Denmark sounds BAR-ROOM! A French cat purrs RON-RON and her German cousin purrs SCHNURR. Austrian bulls go SCHNAUB- SCHNAUB and Swiss bulldogs UAAAA. Norwegian roosters crow with a screeching KYKKELIKY while frogs croak with KVEEK. When a villain dies he sounds different in each country: in France--TCHAC, in Germany--PLUMP and in Italy--POKK or KRUMP. If you slam a book on someone's nose in Spain you'll hear VUAPP and Spanish ice-skaters round a sharp turn in a graceful VAROSH. Spanish guns always fire JUOSS while Swedish death-ray pistols sound GRRUNF and Italian rifles go TOCK-TOCK or PUMM depending on their size. Austrian water splashes in a PLATSCH whereas French water drips into a bucket sounding PLOUF-PLOUF and doors are knocked with a POM-POM. German snores sound-RUMPEL-KNURR and German thunder rumbles RUMPEL-ZACK. Finally a German sneeze is HATSCHI.

Why is everything so different? Maybe people just hear things differently or maybe their bridgework is different so they can't pronounce words the same or maybe there's no answer. After all if Germans talk different than Americans it's only proper that German dogs bark different too! And why shouldn't German coins sound different when they hit the sidewalk! So maybe I'm just from another planet if my sounds are different than

the others. But if you're interested in interplanetary sounds, listen to your baby brother or sister.

I used to like to walk the streets of the big city and listen to the sounds especially in the poorer sections. I would meet derelicts, old men whose lives had passed them by and who longed for a remembrance of the old days when they had self-respect, when they were still men and stood tall. On one occasion I was moved by a certain old-timer to write this poem:

pojedy mojedy iswid  
blikaroolooza motched  
urbel malooshy  
fillow staross jeseryl sanjera ossypa  
hummaly blu thoruseroll  
checky secky checky secky.....shoo!

This is a poem that describes a dumpy-looking, pot-bellied, hungry derelict stumbling aimlessly down the sidewalk.... pojedy mojedy iswid, an inverted question mark....pojedied, a grungy empty bulge....mojedied, dirty and greasy from his last meal (God alone knows where or when!). He sees a half-smoked cigar in the gutter.... a blikaroolooza motched. The motched is tattered and bitten ff, a little juicy still though days old...blika...bulgy....rolooza...promising, oozing like a lily in the marshlands. He bends over to pick it up....urbel malooshy, in the gutter, the ooshy, malooshy gutter and he's urbled like fried bacon, twisted at either end and arching in the middle. He sees a dandelion near by....fillow staross jeseryl, a fillow, pillow, willow parachutey staross, starry, flossy, soft jeseryl. And he picks the flower instead....sanjera ossypa. There's something very warm and moving in that sound...the sanj.... era...ossy ...pa....the pahi, thin-stemmed. There's also something exotic as though the flower were born in Babylon and bathed in the Ganges. And he smiles inwardly and straightens up as he slips the dandelion into his greasy lapel.....hummaly blu thoruseroll. He's inwardly humming....hummaly, blu...bulging lu, fulsome lu, the province of Buddha....thorush, ush, thrust, the ush of the wide-eyed ossypa.....erall through the lapel. And he proceeds down the street with a sort of self-certain, floppy-shoed Charlie Chaplinesque gait....checky secky checky sacky shoo! He is whole again. Redeemed by a flower.

The derelict poem calls to mind another experience of mine one August when I was walking down a neighborhood street. The day was blistering and people littered themselves against walls and along stairways, wherever there was hope of shade. As I walked I paced my breathing with my steps and soon fell into a rhythm of motion and emptiness that brought me beyond the ghetto where I lived or my day's activities. My legs were there and somehow I was attached to them, but so was the sun and the trees and the transistor radio screaming from the doorway. I felt light and full and so everywhere like bubbles and incense.

Somewhere is the background I could hear a dog barking, probably a neighborhood vagrant scrounging in the alley and I tried to draw him into my oneness or me into his, when suddenly....suddenly I felt a sharp pain in the calf of my leg. It was a dog bite, I knew, but after a moment's pause it seemed irrelevant--a false start, a sour note, an overdash of pepper. Somewhere from a corner of my mind came a flood of reproaches--why don't you call for help? why don't you curse or yell? why don't you kick him? why don't you run? why don't you get a rabies shot? The answer came as swiftly--a bite is a bite, like teeth in a sandwich or knife in a tree and why should I (cloud, sun, legs, radio)

cry out! It seemed too petty. I didn't even turn about but kept walking and breathing in even rhythm.

After several paces I felt another flashing pain--he struck again. There was no surprise this time since the other hurt shadow still lingered and both merged like ebb and flow, slapping one against another. The sun and clouds were growing distant and I felt much closer to my leg than to the mocking radio, but still I told myself, "This dog is a part of you that you cannot accept." Pausing briefly though not turning around, I continued down the street.

And then I felt a third and fiercer pain, this time piercing skin and throbbing me out of mindlessness. I whipped around in half-anger, half-sadness to confront the dog who barred his teeth and growled nervously. Within me I could feel the reproaches swelling and myself returning. The dog looked so dirty and tattered and there was a trace of fear behind his rage. How human he seemed with his bluff and desperation as if he were saying, "I'm here. Kick me or pet me, but see me. I'm here!"

I saw him, and he backed off, still growling, then he turned and ran away while I stood watching. And as I resumed my pace my mind crowded with the friendly dissolving of the sun and clouds and grass again. I didn't even rub the throbbing leg because it was another rhythm to join the wind and traffic and children's voices. The dog I said was alien, a piece of soot on an ice cream cone and I was blended in, at one.

Sometimes when I am walking down a street I hear a distant dog bark and remember my encounter. And then I think I hear the dog as man--alone, distinct and angry with my distance. He tells me that my eternal oneness is a betrayal of my oneness, that I must feed dogs and not merely dissolve them or pity them. And yet in feeding I must become the dog as well as the food. What a prophet that dog was. I hope that he bites many people.

Another experience that rings is that of adventurous boyhood and I capture here one of my own when I was younger:

ooooh sluggel fluggel ruggel jernk

surrge kreever frob

mazhur ssayahlee dargon      gramiripp k!lup

grupalup arshuffin zark

It's about a boy sliding down a rope ladder and hitting the ground, a hand-over-hand descent and when he hits, it's a hard hit....ooooh sluggel fluggel ruggel jernk. And he looks at the rope-burned hands....surrge kreever frob, a fever kreever only harder, a flaming, flashing, throbbing frobbing, and a lurning, urnging, surnging burn. His hands are alive with a redness and a hurt and the swaying snake-rope above is mocking him....mazhur ssayahlee dargon in an even-circling dragonish rhythm. The boy angrily snaps the rope taut-dead...gramiripp pulk, killing the snake. And then he stumbles away whimpering-mad....grupalup arshuffin zark. The up of the grupalup is a stone he stumbles over and he shuffles with the arshuffin and his jaw is set firm, angry, tearful....zark.

Perhaps after this poem it would be well to ask where suffering and death fit into this world of the senses. If there is a oneness to all things what can die? Is not death then a kind of a substitution, a shuffling of cards, a rearranging of books on a shelf? If the orange that becomes stomach is dead orange, then it is also live stomach. What of the

now that becomes then? And you and I, when we die we reenter a cycle of nature that we emerged from. Our bodies are banquets of life for insects and plants who themselves are second courses for larger plants and animals and so the feast continues through man again, and each time the wheel turns the pieces of the puzzle mix and join differently. The molecules span time and each man is a mosaic of history and geography with Jesus and Confucius atoms mingling with tyrannosaurus rex and an inch worm. Blend and form then dissolve and reform; the in-betweens are birth and death, the entrance and exit signs of a rotary barrel. Maybe what we call life is really a prolonged dream and death is waking up to a bed of urine stains and cookie crumbs.

Then what is man, a mere composite? That word "mere" is a bear trap, be careful. Certainly man is a mixture within himself and a blend beyond himself--his senses are superhighways--but he is this blend and that mixture if only temporarily. Human suffering is a great reminder to man of his oneness. His swollen finger or stubbed toe cry out for relief and the cries are heard within man. Pain in itself is a way of talking, a foreign language. For the moment it throws confusion into the body and fear and anger take control. The language of pain brings new rhythms to the body and just as it ensures man of his wholeness its rhythms go beyond the individual person to the world around him, to other people, to nature. Time is slower, space is longer, surfaces are harder, sounds are coarser to the suffering one, and by sharing his suffering he liberates himself from the loneliness of oneness isolated from the greater one.

A Buddhist friend with whom I used to worship once told me that the east and the west both see the world covered with rocks and thorns, pain and suffering. Both wished to erase them but each in a different way. The west wished to take a great carpet (love) and cover the earth so that people could walk without harm. The east wished to cover its feet with detachment and compassion to teach others to cover their feet. In one case the rocks are covered; in the other they are merely avoided. Maybe this is why we in the west crush our rocks into stone and cement while the Japanese and Indians worship their rocks or plant them and admire them in the moonlight.

When a Buddhist monk leaves his shrine he carries with him his saffron robe, a pair of sandals, an umbrella, a needle, a begging bowl and a water strainer. The last item is intended to avoid drinking insect life lest he harm other things, perhaps ancestors. We do the same thing with our water but for different reasons. The monk also carries a branch with him and sweeps the road path before him lest he accidentally step on a sleeping beetle or an unwary ant; how differently we use our brooms! Little wonder that Gandhi exhorted his followers to become humbler than dust. Men walk the roadways and grind dust into the ground but we must be so humble as to allow dust to grind us.

I once heard of a guy who wired a plant to some kind of sensitivity meter and when he thought a goodness or a badness to the plant it registered differently. Then he put two plants in different rooms and began blessing one and cursing the other; the blessed plant blossomed and the cursed one dwarfed (I seem to remember Christ doing that to a fig tree). He also played different kinds of music and found that the plants grew differently according to the sounds--classical, soul, rock, jazz. Finally he placed ten plants in a single room and led in, ten men; each one picked up a plant and thought gentleness except for one guy who tore up his plant and utterly destroyed it. When all left the room and returned one by one the plants were serene until the destroyer entered, then they all registered agitation. Wow! But then maybe we shouldn't be surprised that plants can feel; after all even synthetic stuff like wash and wear clothes, rubber bands and plastic toys remember their original shapes and return to them when creased or stretched or bent. An exception to this rule of nature is the computer card that forgets how to unbend, fold or spindle.

Another guy I heard of owned a trucking firm that was losing money because drivers were too rough on the equipment and the trucks kept breaking down. He tried

everything to cut down his losses, but nothing seemed to work. Then one day he heard about the guy who blessed his plants. The next morning he got to work early and visited each of his trucks, thinking gentleness to them and blessing them. When his drivers came he also thought blessings on them. After that his trucks seemed to hold together much better and his men drove more carefully.

If life or microlife exists on all of these levels then we must find ways of entering or becoming aware of new scopes, spheres and densities. Perhaps space is simply an ocean filled with ever-changing densities, and the same stuff is used over and over again. Maybe it's a brilliant flashing comet that sweeps through the night pausing for a moment to loan its energies to a new form (life) then passing on. If scientists can invent mythical creatures (like molecules, phlogiston, electrons, DNA and genes) to explain life then why can't children, lunatics, primitives, artists and shamans create their worlds. We must begin with a sense of wonder and reverence for the unity of all life and build an environment that sustains that sense. Then perhaps we can discover a universal language.

I think that the American Indian came close to discovering such a language. His name and destiny came through a vision of fasting, drugs or intense ordeal. He felt great awe in the temple of nature whether the plains, forest, mountains, lakes or deserts. He worshipped the spirit world of the sun; revered the protector spirits of snake, bear, eagle and buffalo; and mused over the trickster spirits of coyote, jaybird, porcupine and turtle. He kept a pact with his protector by carrying his totem and singing his song. Before and after a hunt, feast or war party the spirits were praised--in dance, paint, chant and costume. Portions were promised and promises kept. Kinnikinnik or sacred tobacco was offered in thanksgiving. All life was sacred and bones were returned to the earth so that the spirits might find their home. Fire held mystery. Gift giving, hospitality, communal land and extended families--these were important social values. Life was pilgrimage and time was now--always now. Mystery was everywhere: within and without.

Smohalla, the great shaman of the Nez Perce dreamer cult, spoke to this sense of mystery in his prayer:

*My young men shall never work. Men who work cannot dream and wisdom comes in dreams. You ask me to plow the ground. Shall I take a knife and tear my mother's breast? Then when I die she will not take me to her bosom to rest. You ask me to dig for stone. Shall I dig under her skin for bones? Then when I die I cannot enter her body to be born again. You ask me to cut grass and may hay and sell it, and be rich like white men. But how dare I cut off my mother's hair? It is a bad law, and my people cannot obey it. I want my people to stay with me here. All the dead men will come to life again. We must wait here in the house of our fathers and be ready to meet them in the body of our mother.*

Again a Wintu Indian maid speaks of the ways her people and scolds the white man:

*The white people never care for land or deer or bear. When we Indians kill meat, we eat it all up. When we dig roots, we make little holes. We shake down acorns and pine nuts. We don't chop down the trees. We only use dead wood. But the white people plow up the ground, pull up the trees, kill everything. The tree says, "Don't. I am sore. Don't hurt me." But they chop it down and cut it up. The spirit of the land hates them. The Indians never hurt anything, but the white people destroy all. They blast rocks and scatter them on the ground. The rock says, "Don't! You're hurting me." But the white people pay no attention. When the Indians use rocks, they take little round ones for their cooking. How can the spirit of the earth like the white man? Everywhere the white man has touched it, it is sore.*

How ironic that western man today has discovered the great injury he has done to air and land and water with his machines. It seems that the nature spirits have left his land while technological man sees that he is the most venomous of all animals. Mark Twain once remarked, "Man is the noblest of God's creatures," then paused and mused, "I wonder what creature discovered that!!" Every man's concern with ecology seems a selfish one--the urge to survive. If he could find synthetic air and land and water or discover a new earth to conquer and exploit would modern man trouble with the costly and time-consuming filters, sewage systems and reforestation programs? Does he see a brotherhood with nature or is it still a stewardship? Poor Francis of Assisi preaching to the birds and blessing trees--how lonely he must be, even in the communion of saints!

How close to the world of nature and fantasy are we as children! Perhaps the secret to a new life language lies with the unborn since they are still swimming in the great ocean of density. As they touch land there seems to be a tacit understanding between them and the rest of nature, as if it were sending an emissary into the court of man. So many otherwise ferocious animals seem to tolerate and even enjoy the teasing of children. As rationality overcomes intuition a sense of wonder slowly fades (the emissary's servant sadly returns to the woodland) and communication ceases. How can we keep in touch with this forest of mystery? Perhaps our school should be coordinated by artists, children, priests and madmen--or rather by frogs, rainbows, oak trees and water falls! If nature is a classroom she is also a textbook, course and teacher; let's listen to her.

Now I would like to share with you a landscape poem. It's a pretty limited landscape, a bathtub.

shirrapod floorush

prip prip prip

robuncia

It attempts to describe a chenille bathrobe draped over the edge of the water-dripping, smooth, oval, white porcelain bathtub. The shirrapod is the dirty part of the rug and floorush is wet, inside the bathtub. The prip, prip, pripping is the dripping water, but ddd...ripp, ddd...ripp is too dry, too straight and flat. A water drop begins like a little pin and builds up rounding and bounding until it bursts....prip...prip...prip. And the bathtub....roundly roh...deeply....buun...tapered, smooth, white, brilliant porcelain...cia. Almost a Latin word....robuca, alongside flongerine.

There's a library in St. Louis that reminds me of Walden Pond. You remember how Thoreau wrote about the spring thaw and how he'd sit for hours as the yawning ice groaned to him. Well I used to get up early and listen to the library windows moan as the winter sun tumbled them out of their cold, night, concrete bed. Those windows outside had more Thoreau spirit in them than the books they protected inside. Speaking of outsides and insides, I discovered that potato chips, radishes, celery and carrots sound louder inside than outside; you'd expect the same of a green pepper but it doesn't.

In my old neighborhood there was a little black boy who just seemed to endure. His name was Dennis and he was forever searching out company, someone to play with or someone to answer his endless questions. His giant eyes were spirits that lingered at the edge of the window screen or reached through the mail slot. Often he was turned away without answers and one time when I did this I was moved to write this penitential poem:

bittaleb jorty glorabol glipi?

annana annana shiropecheshee

brokaka chapakot

awlonishara

This then is a character sketch of Dennis. The first line describes the skinny arms always waving.....bittaleb jorty, the little bittel...leb jorty, snorty, short moving around jerkily, bumpy. His big eyes asking little questions....glorabol glipi, the awful, soulful, big, glorabol, globular, plate-sized glipis, lippy, guppy questions. And his whiney voice crying for someone to play....annana annana shiropecheshee.....But he's turned away, bawled out by an inside house-voice, probably mine....brokaka chapakot, and he stumbles away alone....awlonishara and sad..kud!, a flat hard emptiness.

This loneliness--this kud--finds release in love, the rhythm that cannot be self-contained but vibrates through others and alters their senses. When exclusive it's like a high pitch that only dogs can hear; its range is limited and when there are no dogs nearby it dwells in kud beneath mushroom and butterflies that are deaf to it. Inclusive love is the truest sound, the warmest feeling of lasting, changing oneness. Through it man surrenders himself to the greater whole and lesser parts that he is. Through it he experiences God and surpassing nothingness. As a part he cannot understand the distant reaches of the rhythm, he can only vibrate. But there are moments when he can sense the meaning of the mystery, when he feels two sides to the leaf--one rough, one smooth-- or when the dying seed brings life or when the melting ice dissolves into the sea. Then he feels the fullness of the rhythm and his surrender is complete--he becomes the rhythm, the love that he feels and he can enter others. At that point death and pain can be loved as easily as flowers and people. At that point man is God.

It really surprises me that people haven't gotten more into sound language. I mean there are more real fine sounds that could probably reach a lot of working people. I know how good it feels when I'm tired and sweaty to walk into a bar and say, "How about a Schlitz!" or "Blatz me!"-- good blurgey, spludgy sounds. Too bad (or maybe too good) that there aren't any cigarettes like "Schklorbels" or "Blurches."

Sometimes it's difficult for a man to reach nature directly and he must use instruments beyond his senses, inventions, not so much to measure but to talk with and taste and be tasted by nature. One of the finest tools that man or boy ever devised is the kite. A kite can reach up to the skies and be wafted by the winds, talk to the sun and maintain a truce with the rain, all of these things a kite can do in a park on a Sunday afternoon. Of course the wind must be right and there must be lots of room to get a running start and it's best if there aren't too many neighboring kites nearby since most kites are \_\_\_\_\_(?) in the presence of company. Here is a kite-flying poem:

swiliporogasadrid flisa krilip

vovy kodomok skeeraleera

swizzobul vaseemoulaflo .....prishhhh!

The first line attempts to evoke a kite trying to take off and then grounded...swiliporogasadridswili, willy, nilly, filly, hilly, swept up....poro, shaking nervously, ducking and diving and then....gasadrid, sadrid, flattened out, banging into the ground. But a whirlwind sweeps it up, and now it's caught in a tree....flisa, fa...lissa krilip, right between two branches. But it sinks down and in so doing bangs into a wall. It's sgunned and undecided....skeeralerra...shrugging its shoulders, looking up and down maybe a little afraid. Then suddenly it's swept up by a billowing wind...swizzobul...a

whizzing, bulging, singing, winging wind, and it starts to rise, to soar filling out.... vaseemoulaflo, vasee edging like an axe.....moula, ballooning out on the undercurrent of a low wind and flo.....rising to the heavens.....until prish, almost disappearing like a winter bird on the wing. You can still see it in the distance if you squint your eyes.

In our commercial world it is difficult to share a moment of joy with a stranger. We expect an exchange or an angle for each free gift of self. How often I used to approach a stranger and say, "Isn't it a beautiful sunset!" or "I really like the color of your hat." I have learned to temper such outbursts with feigned needs (to cover a deeper need). Now when I wish to be effusive I ask someone directions or the time of the day (matters of no real concern to me); when they are satisfied that they have me figured out I can then point to the sky or call their attention to a chirping bird, and they secretly enjoy the moment doubly--because they have helped me and because there is beauty.

That's also why I like to hitchhike. To stand on the edge of the highway thumbing is to risk totally, not knowing who, when, why, how far the ride will come and go. Waiting here is to build a pilgrim community based on mutual need and resources. A driver will stop because he's lonely, curious, compassionate or tired. It's impossible to step into a car without relating to the driver at some level. On the other hand when I Greyhound it's very difficult to start up a conversation with a fellow passenger. After all who needs who if everybody's paid for. All those cars with one person in them--what a waste! The ecology of the road cries out for tar grazers when the highways are lush with unoccupied moving space.

In whimsical moments I occasionally liberate ice-cubes. After all an ice-cube is water that's in prison to serve man's needs by cooling his cocktails or soothing the headaches that come from the cocktails it cools. Well sometimes I ransom bags of ice-cubes from gas stations, take them to a nearby pond and release them so that they can return to their brothers and sisters. It's a corporal work of mercy, like picking up earthworms from city sidewalks the morning after a hard rain and setting them on the grass again before the bird can pick them off.

One of the wonders of life is a bubble. It is born from human breath and mirrors the myth of Genesis. No two bubbles are alike. Some spin while others are still--I call them borks. There's so much color alive inside each bubble and yet each one is transparent, like a magic magnifying glass. Some linger and have babies before your eyes while others madly suicide against walls and sidewalks. A bubble's life span seems short but really it never dies like music or incense; it merely blends. So here's a bubble poem:

splorsh rollarobilleow  
(whisper) wwhhoorblash  
ooouffilly bloff  
(gently groan) bruhmmmoorr poof!

First the wand drives headfirst into a pool of foam bubble mix ...splorsh....not splash, but an orshy splorsh. Then the creator gently whispers....wwhoor...a child promise of bubble...blaah....from the blower cradle, a little bubble, a bubblette. Suddenly the bubble is free, carefree--a youth--spinning and dancing its rainbow minuet....rollarow....swinging....billeow....turning around and bulging in a grinny nod. Then....ooouffilly....a brother breeze sweeps him up while....bliff....he sails out on his

sky journey. As microseconds race the bubble ages and softly he returns trembling ....  
bruhammooorr...as he slowly settles down to the tearful dew grass, lingers for a  
moment, then catching his breath .... poof! ....he blends with the universe.

Here's another poem, this time celebrating the life cycle of a leaf:

Melorumiffy wahchachachacha ahhvoll

garoinkaferaiety

lumzhadpoky

krikarika.....ohhh....bliff!

In the first line a breeze softly brushes a sleepy, mumbling leaf. So mellow with a quiet rumble as the breeze rocks the leaf miffily. Then the leaf shivers sitting up and snuggling closer to its branch.....wahchachachacha....it clutches its stem with its veins and then ahhvoll, it reaches childlike helpless arms for protection. With approaching autumn the leaf undergoes birth pains and the joy of a flamboyant color change....garoinka, hard, jerking, hurtul then feraiety....a blossom of technicolor, a peacock feather, an oriental fan. But birth gives way to age and tiredness....lumyzhadpoky, a soft gloom with plenty of room for gentle zhad plodding into an arthritic poky: lumyzhadpoky. Finally winter winds descend hard and raw tearing leaves like death from their life stems and leading them in a medieval danse macabre across fields and valleys. The leaf clings to its stem in fear....krikakrika as it bends back and forth in the wildly whipping wind then....ohhh...a self-surrender and release bliffff.....to a new world.

We try to remember the past and it seems we fail. The past--good and bad-- is something we westerners look on as fixed, unchanging. It happened, so it is! A wedding dress, a broken tooth, a love letter. So I've got a photograph of my childhood! And listen to this old record. These are gentle hands that stroke our tired selves, fearful of the present or future. We call them good, old days because we've forgotten the bad or romanticize it. That first traffic ticket--well it was pretty funny because I was so green and scared, but the one I got today that's different. We don't realize that the past we cherish is changing before our senses. It's all there but we don't see it all at once, like the detail of a painting. If we really felt the brimfulness of each moment we would explode inside. As a child you probably killed ants, harmless specks crawling across a sidewalk or stepped on spiders as I once did. You had to feel a power--the power over life and death--because you were so helpless. And yet it seemed a sport. How many times did you see a baby bird fallen from its nest searching for its mother. Remember how you kept the cats and squirrels away as you sent someone for a box and breadcrumbs and milk. Remember how you suffered when it died that night? Can you recall the death-defying tingle of trying to catch a bumblebee as it hovered near a flower? All you had was an empty peanut butter or mason jar and you couldn't miss the first time, and if you did, scatter! For suddenly the air was alive and you were a master criminal being chased by the yellow-jacketed police. ALL of these moments had their then-meaning, but that was because you were too busy or tired or young to feel the fullness, the now-meaning. I believe that in some way we experience all of life in our childhood--birth, death, joy, suffering--but it takes a lifetime to recover and grow upon moments that we thought were finished.

Sometimes walking through the countryside at night you can feel a presence, an overwhelming presence of something which is all-encompassing and yet quietly changing, drifting. I'd like to share with you this presence in a landscape poem:

rahnoo swerazh            sketapeta chirribik  
 lazhorbool            thepatid  
 grizhaflurrosok  
 KUSH!  
 ezelarooobish    chorkaty peechee    mazo vorody

The first line evokes dark clouds rolling in.....rahnoo swerazh, gauze bandages, rahn sweraz...dark, cloudy, smoky, thick, indistinct covering the rah.....round noo...hnoo. A sweeping aazzhing, rolling round mist masking the moonface. And the night birds in the trees are nervous....sketapeta chirribik. The moon is hazy...lazhorbool, orb, round, oval, ooh, orbel, but a laz...orbol, a lazy, lazh, orbol, lazhorbool a hazy moon thickening. There are skeleton trees, it is winter time...thepatid, thin, tepid, leafless pah, pah, tid, tid, thepatid. An eclipse occurs, the birds fly away and darkness resides.... grizhaflurrosok. Grizh...the lazhorbol is grinned, it's totally covered....flurrosok, flurr, flurr, flurr the birds, the sketapeta chiribiiks flurr, flurross, flitter, flutter, flurry, scurry, fly away and darkness enters with a heavy sok! of flurrosok. And there is a hard silence.....kush!....whispering but silent. Then in the rhythm of change, in a rolling pattern of the cloud and the moon and in the flight of the birds and in the thinness of the tree, the clouds drift on, the moon peeks out and the birds return more cheerfully..... ezelarooobish chorkaty peechee. The drifting clouds are the ezela, the robish, a round, bashful, peeking moon covered....ish with ezela, rolling laro. The drifting clouds and peeking moon is the ezelarooobish, and the birds return chorkaty peechee, a little more merrily than their sketapeta chirribik or their flurros and the tree bends humbly in a thin wind...mazo vorody. There's almost a 19th century Russian overtone, heavily ascetic and peasanty...vorody, angular, thin, threadbare....mazo, weighted, bowed, humble.

Certain words are friendly, others are mean; some are happy and others are sad. A good happy word is "bubble." It bubs...and your mouth pops out, the bull...your cheeks get a flat tire. Bubb....bulll. Your lazy tongue goes to sleep while your face jumps....until the ll of bulll, then your tongue stretches out its hand to catch the breeze. Or rock, now there's a hard-boiled word, he spent many days in detention or jail. Rrrr...ock. A round ock. When he rolls or flies, you say, "How graceful!" How rrrr-ish, but there's always an ock waiting for you and you'd better be ready. A stone is so much different. It stttahs and then onnness! First a hissing point, then mellow nervousness and humming. Like an arrowhead of a flat flint that chips and skips along a quiet pond. Stoohhnnn! There's a gentle promise there, if only you're friendly with the sound.

Here's a playful summer poem:

karoarak karoarak    vzzzz  
 vzzzummmzzz  
 karoarak izzz karoarak            thorp!  
 galump glug    (pause)  
 rorge!            splush

A playful fly is dancing in the air....vzzzzz...a soaring tremble zzz...while a bullfrog placidly glockenspiels a waltz-time background karoarak karoarak....from his lily pad band stand. The fly dives....vzzzzand pauses on a pad...ummm...to rest his wings, then quickly zzzz's in flight while the frog dialogues with him....karoarak...izzz...karoarak. Then....thorp!....from out of nowhere a snaky frog tongue "hhhh" spears the fly and "orps" him into a drowsy frog mouth....thorp! As the frog wheels slowly turn, brother fly is galumphed over the throat ridge and plunges down the stomach shaft....glug! Then after a long pause....the stomach belches pleasure....rorge!....and froggy splushes into a pool of silence.

Let's turn to a holiday theme, Thanksgiving. Here's a short turkey poem:

grazzibbel                      volvoty  
wakata splifitter              zonk!

It's a light piece, well, not light for the turkey as you can imagine from the zonk! But in the first line we find our friend the turkey gabbling about on the ground, nodding and picking away at the corn....grazzibbel, grazing, nibbling, gobbling, a carefree fellow. In the distance you can hear almost like a Wagnerian leitmotif the theme of a flying axeblade...volvoty, vvv, angular, volll...boastfully winging, singing, crying, flying....voty with the menacing promise of a sharp ty! And the turkey hears its music and tries in desperation at one and the same moment to sqawk...wakata, to run...spli, and to fly.....flitter....wakatasplifitter. His squawking, walking, flitter, flutter explodes into a featherful silence with a definitive.... zonk!

There are somethings that are burying grounds of memories, the place where moments hide when they're tired of knowing. One of these things, these places is a flannel shirt. Remember your old, plain, flannel shirt--the one with the frayed cuffs and threadbare sleeves, the one with the button missing and torn collar. Remember the many memories that snuggled inside it -- the bloodstain from your first fight, the lipstick from a stolen kiss, the tear from wrestling in the street and the grass-stain from rolling down the hill. There's dirt from romping in the rain and that beautiful, mellow, smoky smell from burning leaves. All these things hid in your shirt and every week in it would go --into the hamper, into the washing machine, onto the line, under the iron....with each memory being washed, pressed, ironed and folded away into oblivion. And when the day came to wear your shirt again you looked in vain for the friendly signs, the smiling or tearful memories, but they were gone or nearly so. The tears were surgically sewn, the holes patched, the blood washed away and that beautiful, autumn, smoky, lumberjack smell--there was no trace of it. And you wondered, "Where did they go?" "Will they come back?" "Is my shirt like a prisoner who digs a deep hole to almost freedom only to be caught at the last moment and brought back to his white-washed, reinforced, sanitized cell?" Maybe we should set aside a closet in our homes or rent a storefront, a little space where we can hang our flannel shirts and gingham dresses--unwashed, unpressed, on old peoples' home for shirts--and we can let them age gracefully like medieval chronicles, French wine or stone idols. And maybe we can have a communal refrigerator for all those perfect snowballs that we couldn't throw because they were so perfect. Or a place for the candy boxes that fed us and made noise for us when we blew into them during the movie and that we couldn't throw away but put in our pockets. Good things.

I once read about the way Dakota Sioux Indians kept their memories together. Every year the tribe assembles in a special council to determine what the most significant event of the year was. After it was voted upon the tribal chronicler was required to draw it on a buffalo hide. This became known as the "winter count" and there were hides with

several hundred pictures on them. It would be a good exercise in time compression for us to draw a picture of the most significant moment of each day, week, month or year and collect our own winter count. Perhaps we can capture a sense of oral tradition and discover a new value in sound.

When I first began writing these sound poems my themes were the cunning detail of nature and the childlike transparency of human action. There was a billowing softness and natural order in these moments, a wonder, simplicity and quiet even if there was hurt, but sometimes when man confronts his fellow man there are ugly moments as well and some truly heroic ones. Like an arch these poems were havens, omegas, doorways, tangents to mystery, but sometimes the spirit that soars skyward does not return archly and pierces the membrane of mystery or is broken upon it and falls limply to the earth. Here are two poems that touch the mystery of man; they might be called social protest or resistance poems. The first one attempts to capture an eyewitness experience of what went on during the Democratic National Convention in Chicago during August of 1968 in Lincoln Park:

lurohlary      getteruck smick  
                  freno freno razh  
                  gretchickickick--uhnngg!  
fa.....wazz!

I think you sense the intensity and violence of these sounds. The first line begins on an innocent sort of lilting childlike note, the presence in the park of two crickets, the moon, the people enjoying one another's company.....lurohlary. And after the warning of curfew from loudspeakers, the police begin to advance to clear the park.....getteruck smick. There's a sort of unyielding, masslike, brickish quality to these sounds.... getteruck, getteruck very guttural and hard....smick, a brick that's smashing, crashing, bashing without pausing to question. In response the youth are entrenched and start chanting slogans and massing.....freno freno razh...."The only solution is revolution! Two-Four-Six-Eight, Kill the pigs and smash the state!".....almost like the Hitler youth in the Sportpalast of Munich or Berlin. Slogan shouting, confronting mass, armed, order enforcing counter ideology, neither listening to the other. And then there is this animal standoff between violence and obscenity on both sides....gretchickickick--uhnngg--! the grabbing, retching, gretching, kicking hurt....uhnngg, moaning, groaning, stomach-clutching, air-gasping collapse. There follows an abyss of deep, dark, silent hate.... fawazz, almost like a viper and there's something irreconcilable in that sound, ever widening, a ripple of rage. The moment is primeval, a junglish hiss without the order or peace of the jungle.

The second resistance poem concerns the Milwaukee 14. Briefly these were fourteen individuals who banded together outside a draft record office in Milwaukee, entered the building, seized the records and burned them with napalm, then surrendered themselves to the police and awaited trial and imprisonment--all of this on the moral conviction that modern warfare (especially in Vietnam) is immoral.

The poem ends with a chant:

flaritza floom  
nakatchooheeeeeee  
rivoslit click

(chant) ooharruu!

The poem in its first line describes flames licking burning draft records skyward....flaritza. The itza is the crackling flame of the flaritza paper burning, floom is the flaming plume ascending, an ancient sacrifice to the forces of life straight out of the Old testament. So you have the "action" of the "14", the flaritza floom. Then the aftermath, the ashy destruction...nakatch, watered-down paper burned beyond recognition....nakatchooheeeeeee...with a background of wailing police sirens as the men stand together in song and prayer. There is a moment of self-surrender and a special kind of authority, a sort of palms-down admission of deliberate, illegal action with an inner defiance and the click is a sterile stainless steel, sterling-silver sort of rubber stamping legalistic action, perhaps like the surrender of Christ to the Roman authorities on Holy Thursday night, as though tab A is placed in slot A. And then, in the end there's a chant.....ooharruu! It involves mental doubt, self-accusation, the man in prison who asks himself, "Did I do the right thing? Was there a better way? Who did I hurt? If I could do it over would I do it again?" And along with this self-torment--the measure of a truly human act--there is a mixture of defiance, despair and unresolved questioning. Perhaps the cry of Christ on the cross--"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me!"--is close to the feeling of this chant because there is no answer to the question. It must work itself out in time, perhaps in the solitude of prison or prayer or death.

In the context of these human documentaries I would like to offer a more religious poem, one that I wrote before Christmas season during Advent, a poem of expectation:

wherazhd kiff  
chicka chicka chicka chicka proll  
stavah koru thu        stid ferazhuk:  
"eleeahoolleeah    sahv.....  
grazhibooleeah    mell.....  
marevaleey."

(chant) RALOOOOH!

This is a poem of wild joy and expectation. The first line captures the theme of a desert wilderness with the wind whispering against a dry, barren tree. It's a thirsty, wandering wind, lonely and arid.....wherazhd kiff, hard like thepatid in the countryside. Then there is a counter theme of locust and honey....chicka chicka chicka chicka proll...rolling, pouring sweetness with the chickachickachickachickachickachicka of the locust, cicada. And so we find John the Baptist in our poem preparing the way. But he is a strange messenger for he is lonely and in doubt.....stavah koruthu. Stah, lean, sinewy, ascetic....vah, ill clothed in ragged lion skin, dirty. Koruthu....with a great weight on his mind forcing his eyes downward....thu. But he pauses stid, and looking out, his vision begins to clear like a focusing light....ferazhuk. And then he sees: Eleeahoolleeah sahv.....the crooked ways shall be straightened, snaking along with an eleeahoolleeah and then a thrusting, bursting, pushing save...sahv. Grazhibooleeah mell...the mountains shall be leveled, the grazh, the bulging boluchito shall be leveled and it's a leveling of sweetness ....mell, rolling mellow. And he says, "Deliverance is at hand.".....marevaleey, reveille, reveal, revel, marvel, marvelous, merrily, marry all compressed into a single intense marevaleey. And then rejoice!.....ralooooh! with hand outstretched and upraised. So we have deliverance and joy in and Advent-Christmas poem.

You might wonder what is faith in this world of senses? Faith is to believe in the harmony of rhythm with only a hint of the melody. It is to surrender to the whole without being sure of its purpose. It's like the cat's cradle that we used to make as children, taking a strand of string and holding it between two hands, then twisting the hands evenly, moving fingers while the string curled in epileptic delirium, then snap! the string is taut and a web-like symmetry appears. There was order, something you could see and touch, but only for the moment since fingers were itching to wrestle the string and out they launched into a sea of chaotic serpentine webwork again unsure of the moment when they would pull back and--a more complicated pattern emerged, but always a pattern. If only the hands would stop and say, "Enough!--this is my faith, let me put it to rest and admire it," But no, there was only a glimpse of order and the rest was uncertainty with the ever-present threat of knots or worse, of broken string. The movement that guided the hands from momentary patterns--that was faith, a living, growing, trusting, desperate faith. So too does the doubting messenger see a vision while dwelling in desert loneliness. There is a promise but he must continue his journey and the vision blends into illusion as his finger-body twists through the desert of despair until he next sees. Then rallooooh!

Sometimes we look on life as a perfect gift that time tarnishes or tatters. We see our early years as filled with innocence and possibility; slowly a path emerges and the other ways are overgrown with brush. Our stumblings call us back to the moments of our first steps and we must, "If only I could do it over!" Why do we pretend that purity is innocence? Why do we equate simplicity with inexperience? Christian Scripture calls us "to become as little children," but the innocence of a child is often ignorant, impulsive and vicious. It seems that true purity and simplicity is found in an old person, one who has endured life with its mottled measures. He sees the signs of new life around him, within him, but he has seen them many times before. Each time they appear there is a moment of freshness, a new hope, but he nods his head and smiles as the great wheel turns. Somewhere there is a stack of papers tied together by an old man's knot. The news tells of a 12-day government, the string tells of a 12-year knot.

Another Epiphany poem:

voofff  
 zakow --- toich!  
 kareeown...flarufff  
 splorshel gike  
 aahlooweeahh ummmmmmmmmmmmm.....mih

The first line connotes a parch-lipped emptiness....voofff, a promiseless void. Suddenly....zakow---toich! a lightning blast pips the earth like a message from Vulcan. There follows.....kareeown....flarufff, a trumpeting herd of wild winds beating a trail....kareeownand bellowing...flarufff their fullness. Then splorshel gike...a hungry ocean gropes mountain crags....gike, like an old woman clawing for a morsel of bread. Then with the whipping action of a conductor's baton there is silence! and..... aahlooweeahh....a hovering shadow enfolds all in hush quiet, not death, but quiet, waiting. Finally a humming begins..... ummmmmmmmm....and becomes a murmur....mmmmmmmm a promise.....mmmmmmmm....and mih.....there is new life.

I think we need more fools in the world, people who wander about with little on their back but the merriment of their clothes and music and a pack of tricks and tales, people who have a keen sense of simple truths like all life is sacred, all living things are brothers and sisters, all power is for service and the powerless are the true masters.

People who are unafraid to proclaim their simple truths in ways that make them vulnerable, who can transform static the theatre of churches, courts, prisons, streets, stores into the living theatre of celebration in a new language. These fools would be buffoons and wits with the edge of prophecy in their actions and words. They would be heirs of Jeremiah, Isaiah, Christ, Buddha, Lenny Bruce and Abby Hoffman. Like new priests they would discern mystery, form community, heal suffering, tell tales, serve the poor, celebrate life and proclaim the Word.

In the spirit of folly I would like to share this poem with you:

yuckey blip blip blip blip blorp udgey  
(chant) wwwhoooo...ooooww crak sniff  
(whisper) ummmmmmmmmmm (pause)  
yuckey blip blip blip blippity pippity ippity oooohhhhhh  
itzity kritzity kritzit pitz aaahhhhh  
(peep!)

HOLLAWALOOOOOPITY!

A clown is juggling four fresh eggs. He's smiling yuckey....as each blip egg goes up....blip blip blip blip....until....blorp....one of them breaks...blorp and oozes all over the floor.....udgey. He's a sad clown now and quietly moans...wwwhoooo.....in pain....ooooww. Then he rubs his nose...crak...and wipes a tear from his eye...snif...and stares at the broken egg in silence, but it's a humming silence .... ummmmmmmmmmmmm. Then he hesitates for a moment and begins to juggle again this time with three eggs....blip blip blip when suddenly one of the eggs begins to bobble with new life....blippity....then it hops....pippity....and dances....ippity. The clown's eyes grow very wide.....oooohhhhhh....as the egg shell rolls and begins to crack open, a first little....itzity...then more....kritzity....then the rocking stops and it opens more.... kritzit...until suddenly it splits into two....pitz!....and the clown's mouth opens wide with wonder.....aaahhhhh.....and a little voice of new life.....peep!.....greet him. All he can do is grin broadly, jump up and down and tumble all over the room with his eyes dancing and his voice shouting joyfully .... HOLLAWALOOOOOPITY...a holler with a wallop doing loops. The clown is God juggling creation in His providence. The egg is Christ dying yet returning as new life. We are the clowns balancing our everyday values and the eggs are being reborn. Everybody is everything.

Speaking of clowns I remember the time the circus came to town. It was an old circus tent and I watched it come to life, in fact I helped make it live by raising the poles and stiffening the canvas, setting up the grandstands and checking out the stakes. It was as if the big top was a giant crazy-quilt dragon tethered to the ground. And like the magic dragon it crept off in the night when the show was over looking for fresh fields of fantasy to feed on.

My last poem will be one of great tenderness. It brings together some of the language patterns of other poems: Dennis' bitteleb arms, the prishy kite, the oooohhhhing of the clown, the old teacher's mirelummmmy smile and the derelict's loving dandelion gaze of sanjera ossypa. There are many levels to it and it ends uncertainly, gently but mysteriously:

smoofa grarurry sapittel warood?

smoofarara larara oomaj volapesh terswep

suffalo jeneffy mirrelummm

murmara smuraly jeraly swish!

The poem is about an old lady, a grandmother, sleeping in her rocking chair...smoofa grarurry, smoofa, a snoring moofa with her nose snorting gently...grarurry, a grey, grizzled, rocking rurry, smoofa grarurry, grandma. And her six-year old granddaughter timidly tiptoes over with a why? question.....a little sapittel with her sleep-breaking rude why?...warood. But grandma doesn't hear her; she is swinging out in wider sweeps of sleepy rocking and snoring....smoofarara larara. And then the child pauses with wide-eyed surprise....oomaj! as she studies the life-etchings of grandma's face, tired and gentle....the softness of a volapesh and the harshness of a terswep. She sees the Depression, the War, an early death, jobs lost, a miscarriage, broken hearts, arguments forgiven but not forgotten along with births, growths, gardens, Sunday afternoon rides, anniversary flowers, a pet canary and embraces. Her face is an arid field, once fertile and now furrowed with memories of service. Perhaps a tear lingers on the edge of a wrinkle, probably a volapesh. Then the child softly strokes grandma's hair.....suffalo jeneffy....and mirrelummm...a smile. The smile is grandma's for suddenly she is carried back to her rock-cradle babyhood and she dreams that her mother is petting her....and she is. The smile is also the child's for suddenly she feels welling up in her the promptings of motherhood, a strange warmness that first enters her life. There is mystery and paradox here, for the child is at this moment the mother, and the grandmother is the baby; all is consecrated by a gentle smile. Then grandma launches out in a sweeping, singing, soothing, smoothing, smiling, swinging, winging, sailing, wish-dream....murmara smuraly jeraly swish. She is beyond recall, dead or reborn, in another world or cycle and life is renewed in the child. Good night! Swish!

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