

Stan Persky / NOTEBOOK ENTRIES

Jan. 1, 1974 Spicer

. . . First dream of the new year: coming up a street (later it is vaguely identifiable as Berkeley — on Telegraph there is a cafe-restaurant, Robbie's, which is where the people who had gone to Berkeley in the 'old days' — right after World War II — still went whenever they were in town — though, now — 1963, I guess — other places were more fashionable among the younger generation of students and the first sprinklings of what would, by 1968, be known as 'street people') I am surprised to see, at the crossing facing me (I look up at the stoplight for the flash of the white man in a black background that means, Walk, Jack Spicer (in his book, *Language*, the grapheme, stoplight, appears).

I'm filled with welling up and warmth of intense love. And the awe of the miraculous. The shock of seeing someone returned from the dead.

I rush across the street. He's glad to see me. I want to embrace him — to bury myself in his hug. Shake hands. He is with another person, unshaven 2-3 day growth of stubble, very close-cropped black hair, pale white flesh as though he'd been in jail for a long time: Jim Alexander. Later, it seems fitting that the ghost-Spicer should appear with one he loved in his life.

Next scene. I'm in a large room, rather barren furnishings. Spicer has left (for a moment). Jim is there. Ronnie Primack appears. George Stanley. Both of them much younger, their flesh less *used* than it now is (e.g., cracked wrinkles around George's eyes). That's the word I often attach to the skin in thinking of aging. I see it as a material that gets used.

I'm sitting on top of a double-bunk. Someone asks if we should call Russell Fitzgerald. Oh no, not him, I say in exaggerated tones. Then the dream turns as I begin asking, in the voice of Spicer, and

in exactly his manner of making others see a thing that appears quite ordinary as something suspicious and with motivation: Just who is this Spicer? I ask several times.

The only thing that happens in the room is that George — who's wearing the kind of sweater I'm now wearing — a v-neck pullover — the type worn by college students in the 50s — wheels with annoyance, — I'm spoiling it, this return — I see him turned at an angle, from the height of my perch.

Each time I question the existence of this Spicer new questions occur to me. Where has he been all these years? Is he an android of some sort? Is he a ghost?

Wake up in the middle of the night. Joyous at Spicer's return and terrified for having seen through the illusion of Spicer's return.

Sat Jan. 5

Here.

[Jan. 10?, Jan. 19?, "33"?, Jan. 27 from "A Mirror Walking Along A Highway"?, Jan. 30]

Feb. 5 Stars

Gerard Malanga interview in *Gay Sunshine*: a gross-out.

Check this classic utterance: "I am not any less of a poet because of my being a star. It's just that most poets and all publishers and anyone connected with poetry won't accept you as a poet if you are a star. That's why I've not been asked by an establishment publishing house to have a book published, and yet my credentials far exceed *all* poets of my generation covering roughly ten years . . . and they would be the first to admit that what I say is true, although more times than not their books don't go past a first printing . . ."

Funny, and surprisingly, I examine this statement and the meanings of it change for me; it has some shimmer. First impulse was just to say: look at that, eeecch. Or a removed, urbane: Beyond the posturings . . . Where the star is such a star he has to tell you he's a star, or at another point (the interview crossed with photographs of Malanga and photos he's taken himself), he quotes verbatim an old admirer's blurb about himself that compares him favorably with the 'genius' of Rimbaud, and after this meticulous rendition, modestly allows it isn't quite so.

Beyond the posturings it's kind of pitiful. But it doesn't go beyond the posturing — as he indeed lets us know — the crucial remark, repeated: "I get such a rush out of being me!"

So, within the posturing, if one isn't disgusted (and finally, I'm not), there's a charm. Some actual shimmer, the old homosexual courage of wearing that frayed cloth with sewed-on sequins, that dimestore paste, and having the guts to play it like jewelry, making it jewelry on the strength of your nerve.

Someone taught him that being slightly outrageous, statements choked with the annoyance of slights you've incurred, and all past peeves combined with a grandiose self-evaluation that is self-conscious of its own continuous faux pas, is a way to be. Skirmishes, catfights within a dying culture.

British coal miners. Click-click. Massive strike vote. Like Malanga's photographs. Begrimed men from the collieries. Ted Heath mock-reasonable pap. Situation narrows. If not a money offer, then a general election. Or is it general strike vs. general election. One photo in *Gay Sunshine* has Malanga, a look of thorough innocence detached from the 'personality' rattling along in the adjacent columns of type, holding in his lap a sketch of himself by Larry Rivers. The message of the photo is that the creature behind the quickie portrait is so much more total than the artifact and yet his transparency — more transparent, more opaque than the drawing's transparency, opacity — makes him available to any and all fantasy. I fall for him.

Last night in the Ambassador. Circles of drunken men cast around the orange terrycloth-topped tables. Yellowish beer. Mostly older than me. This is how they live. Getting sloshed myself. This is how I live.

"I can't go on." I write that on a piece of yellow note-paper, tape it up on the study door, so that it's not a statement, but a drawing. 3 or 4 points of — this can get mechanical, and will, where the question goes unanswered: is it meaningful to live this pain in this particular way if Bri doesn't notice it as a pain lived *for* him. Yes, it's meaningful to live this pain this way.

1-2-3. Battered young transvestite talks to grizzled, wiry man in workclothes, duck hunter's cap, age 45, caricature of tobacco-spitting okie from anti-gay *Deliverance*. Twenty-ish blond youth in

blue rayon skier's jacket with white fluorescent trim — particular bounce in his walk on way to can — flashes. Right in front of me, young man in white shirt, actually a blouse, black baggy pants, exists as a possibility until he draws into conversation older man with white socks from next table over; though he crosscuts memories of two people I've known years apart, his every mannerism and mode of speech (I half overhear; tone of infectious enthusiasm) is curiously alien from the entire culture. I can't locate any source of his style. Rough hustler shadowed in ringlets of tumbling black hair, otherwise ushering young women up the aisle in and out front and back doors of pub, stoops over to unsentimentally kiss slightly smudged tough-looking man of 40 sitting in quartet adjacent.

These illuminated vignettes, etched on smoky glass, cart me home into the dream figures who never quite assume the right spatial relationships before I wake and watch a film of frost steam off the tarpaper roof in the morning sunshine.

"How the hell are ya?" the man at the urinal over says. "Fair," I say. "Are ya married?" (Another micro-proof of the depth of the oppression that he even has to consider that assumption in a gay pub.) Shake my head no. "Are ya in the homosexual life?" Syntax blurs. Shake my head yes. Are ya married there? No. Incomprehensible last sentence lost in his laughter, he half-hugs me, I'm pissing, experience the sudden pleasure (the relief measures the guardedness I go by daily) of how unthreatening this is.