

THOUGHTS / SKETCHES

JOURNAL: after Pierre's paintings

kept thinking how at 36

— more aware
of the moment — heavier,
in the calm fear of death, less abandoned in sex — can drink
more, yet am careful. both: out there
& in here.

I'll be the last to go, but I'm travelling (this, is the difference —
in wanting to see more, or go so deep into sleep I need
less: eat lots of food. I've craved a smoke for years,
but quit to see what it was. this is a slow note to David Phillips
in gumboots & our jokes: this wish for the clear moment, nameless
and which guides, as speech & shifting gears, drinking beers into
the hamburger stands — a good life —

★

South America is upon us. we drive up the coast. it seems
the days are numbered —

★

heavy air, gray — winter Sechelt, dark Sunshine Coast, how
now thru trees, the lots are filled with tipped over cars, Euclids
in front yards. junk. home at last. the garbage everywhere:

yet not one human being in sight.

think of limbo again. the wages of sin, pretty high. we'll
die all right — stretched out & conscious, will wish to speak to no one
sad & miserable. this occurs in a dream. what the poets knew,
as preparation for the last image of a tree.

★

you will not know this, having your own world. standing
on some ferry slip, cold & whipped by wind — waiting as we
do, the human mind poking here & there for possibilities. to
get a coffee is an act, toss quarters against the wall. what
is this but a constant . . . most everything is taken
away. cheap versions of the old. lined up for video
games

tanks & guns, quarters & fun. I think ahead
to the afternoon. I think behind — *the paintings*, another
thing to fall into — movements of colour & something
other.



OOGA BOOGA (for John Harris & Bill Little)

— Ooga booga, is yr answer
in the dark,

in dim light beneath
the wooden chainsawed heads of beaver, moose. Ooga booga, the
rug is torn —

a man with lumps of mud on his boots
stands a-top the table, pokes at the light,
and takes advice from a crowd. how to fix the light.
with a jackknife, with some tape. put the mind
to work but keep the feet in mud. Ooga booga

Ooga booga

there must be an answer. what war, or what has devastated us who now
sit in the Croft. these drunk ones play beautiful pool. those drunker
cannot move. Speak! Speak! Ooga booga.

— move the medicine to yr lips.

the world is mad, yet we started out, thinking otherwise and lose
ourselves in talks of politics, problems with the *rational* mind

Ooga booga

keep it dark or darker. do not
fix the light.

A FEW THOUGHTS

marking the students' scrawl — lists of
books they've compiled

I'm at a desk — want
to write a poem, afraid I feel nothing — or have felt
nothing for days.

 this burden not to care — not
the clarity of the war where they rout you out — up
against a wall to be shot . . . for this thinking
that goes nowhere (as it should

★

this is to forget, some part of the mind where the
bibliography is
 — better an image than a list of books

★

(somewhere Ken Belford swats a blackfly and looks out
over the mountains and sees his heart turn to stone and
come alive again

 — this could be a horrible life but for
our unjustified faith, all the worse to know
even the tricks of that.

 tree and rock and the woman
breathing,
 these long years, the blessing to have
a wife

★

I'm not afraid of the depression — these hearts have had
practice and thus

to know the world is vast.

— a campfire teaches, the sweet apple —
our senses alive:

so what do we do for days, in the daze
and this world of suspicion,
where the pencil is of no use

★

computer screens make me dizzy — a bit sick
to my stomach,

the lists of books out
of order

is my punishment
& for each cheque I get, they seem to say *you should*
be afraid

★

John Harris looks out over his life with a major
faith,

two clear acres in his mind; his is a large
mind

& they fear him

★

treat this as a journey,

a mistake to think
of winning anything — the hope of the lottery

treat this like an opening & a blessing

that the language seems free/

may show us where
to go

THOUGHTS IN FALL

how we wish
sense,

as to cut the beautiful tree for wood, and to take
a break for hot tea after hard work. the fire
is on

& I see trees smelled them
all day

— the wind whip chill around Connaught hill —

no pulp in the air

★

memory sweet & short: yet we
agonize

some task, demand, that leaves us
un-prepared,

thus a fear & disbelief
though it is a source, itself of beauty
or what makes us so:

★

in the imagined
landscape,

I see a world. we are gathered
and almost as in this world, tethered
(which is not to exclude pain & death

we believe the sounds in our heads — the songs &
momentarily these emotions, real — that draw
us off.

& each day, a multiplicity — small
city of thought

★

we have reached here happy & alive (forces, ones
we have lent ourselves to, diminished — or
we make them,
shape them into another more reasonable
thing.

this is a human trust, to give each
a frontier — a landscape of body &
language,
(sweetness of our offering

—

of the flowers dumped over the hill — many are left
& alive

I've wandered, not always
lost
in this temptation to exist.

in one sense, have gone nowhere, over
a hill in the imagination:

but it is to love & bear it
as in a child's absence, your
own absence from what you know. the knowledge
of the father's inevitable
death

(mother's wheezing cough
from cigarettes —

★

the natural elements will be seen
as new

★

— my age a necessary accumulation:
Dickenson's slant of light —
Blake's beams
of love.



LISTEN

listen to music everyday, today
feel depressed, closed in (a weight
the music won't lift

the world, not Tarn's
beautiful contradictions,
but *contradictions*: all that which goes against
human sense — the old sensitive clichés
of trees crushed & ground out, this air
to take 10 years off a useful life, nerves
wracked,

that you are kept from your work
by work

long / day wind: Nov 20/80
someday the willow out front
will snap

& come to ground

brittle & old

THIS MORNING

this morning, happy — but I'm
older, almost calmer
to see the orange air
light the hall.

it is not always this way, our old senses
say otherwise
yet yield to the inexplicable

★

image: (a man walks out of
the bush
holding a purple flower

★

my daughter with her brother
on the way to a sitter

— imagine

how we've tried to call love & recognize
its moment — pushed to it,
held to it when all else is a
heartless wasteland

is it not some human spirit at work
for me to see the orange light, to know this
as clear purpose —

CABIN

June 81

not miserable

but a sense of the end of things

— the baby wakes

singing —



THOUGHTS DRIVING

onward up the road, it is you again driving some 10
year path — looking past the hospital for
signs of life, but never think of investing in say, Tacos —

it is the elusive sought. you know the truck handles well
& you are high up.

of this friend, you think, I love him — & a happiness
that work is done — that the air,
the light,

meets & enters the eye



I REALLY REALLY THINK SO for Sid Marty

birds eat the seeds
the snow recedes. in the shade, it may never
leave,

or the boat is there forever.

but I thought, I must get back to chopping wood,
the trees & some sense of the sea — (the rural prairie —

here it's the depression. no pretense of good clothes
& hairdos. boots scrape the dust & do a drunken
dance in the cabaret — hell is typical: yet
you barely believe the story over a screwdriver — her two
boys dead 1 month (now she's back at work

you cared, carry yourself around for days. there is
good company, yet one or two will hate you, see
you as their idea.

spring/sing check out the tire
deals,

a moment of connection with less synaptical
activity, or see the living vision of the bum along the
ditch his bucket full of bottles, while the managers think they're
safe — how else give orders drive proud those rabbits.

(a sick life with many pleasures — a right life

yet there is the point you must pretend versus meaninglessness —
that there is correct human activity — the comma splice
unequal to El Salvador: question, what do we know. the
boys & girls are fresh in their flesh. you love their smiles — it
seems they are what you want them to be. untaught, they seem
to know,

the ones in accidents — in your
midst.

THOUGHT TO JOY

I almost
know how to live. your breasts I've loved, never
lost in politics or hate or spite — that you've
been yourself when I am no one.
time for a love poem. old fashioned, how I'll goddamned
well hold you & love those aspects you'll never
know.

A LETTER for Steve Stack

ease of light/
or how the whole world
would seem to be
yours. to look at
it
askance
with a faith the boat will never sink
AHOY
— I could see you swimming & making it —
as it is here, to have a good heart — to see
yourself
always
within & of the swirl.



POETRY EMBARKS US ON A SEA after George Stanley

on land, we change oil
take attendance & forget to dance

institutions, a stormy sea. the managers meet early to
decide your fate. we sleep in the poem — act with acts
of faith. girls & boys in the hall make sense. our laughter
a consequence of

those out to get us. days on the computer
terminal is no way to live. give us pencils & clear heart
loss, an aversion to versions.

poetry embarks us, as a friend will test you, to make sure
your love is worth it, adds up . . . is a sea, of crossed correct
wires.

clear north. first snow — the
mind is clear

November 16 — notice the wood go
(the fire — cedar snap/birch

thought earlier of England — France, places
I've never been. here,

the first snow

elsewhere — the job I won't go to —
better to watch my son carry wood & wield the wheel
barrow he gets more wood with

chop away, make
a big fire.



SELF STUDY for Peter Byl

— over these coffees — the darkness
(as the 50s fat kid in the postcard — holding
out 2 dead fish

— a long time
ago, fire would warm your heart. now, a
version of the penitentiary

jobs

for a 30¢ stamp they'll turn you in — or know some
inner point of your own honesty, truth — & throw
beauty away for

cognitive complexities



COMPOSING

composing in the dark
till light & connections with the bird
outside —

fiorinal dulls a pain, pushes
the mind a little
out of itself — not this constant
din of *the decision*.

the bird sings & I love the
gray air he sings in, thru the paper
curtain —

later there will be meetings with humans, each
with a version, a story: the advice, *legal*

(does the air trap the bird. is it a cry I
hear, a warning — or simply joy at dawn.

has this become me? this naked flesh awake
in a bed, the throbbing gum, the double dose
of fiorinal, aspergum

my own fear begins
to defeat me & from this, I must lift
myself up

be the clear invisible
bird.