

Dec. 31, 0:19 a.m.

Dear Liz,

I love you. That's the way I started the letter of Dec. 27 which follows, too. It's a real downer, though it starts out funny. I will comment on it after you have read it. I love you. Now go and read ...

Dec. 27, 1984
(almost 10 p.m.,
listening to Sweet
Emma's Preservation
Hall Jazz Band from
New Orleans -- I won-
der how your roomie is
doing and whether mine
will be there to disturb
us after I arrive on Jan.
14 at 4:35 p.m. in C-
ville.)

Dear Liz,

I love you; Je t'aime; Ich liebe Dich.. Which, incidentally, is why I despise telephones. I have to (and am) grateful that I can listen to ELIZABETH!!! (and other forms of typographical accentuation -- oh shit, I'm slipping between languages again. Never mind. Where was I? Oh yea. To continue where I left off..) jabbering away happily and at the same time Ma Bell in her ugly-American, 3-D, fiber-optic, techni-color, computer-controlled and hypno-nated apron is standing behind me, covering the fat and flab with the ever-popular just-above-the-knee-length bermuda shorts, the glitter-frame sunglasses and, to top it all off (what a pun), pins thru her head, (to revive the flagging spirits by means of acupuncture), beating me over the head with a sign that says BUT SHE AIN'T HERE, BUB.

I ramble.

More than usual.

Shall control said rambling thru telegram style discourse.

Love you.

Miss you.

Love,

OK, OK, ladies and gentlemen, he's back ... by popular demand ... the one and only ... Ming Toi Goldberg?!? You get the idea -- it's hard living Ma Bell's oxymoron ("Reach out, reach out and touch some one" -- yeah bitch (Ma Bell, not you deary), how you gonna help?) and Ming Toi Goldberg, or Yashinawe Goldberg or Ryuishi Goldberg or all of the above with the last name of Silverstein will be the "hero"(?) of the million-dollar

bestseller ... the smash on the screen and in the bookstores ... the precursor to the first Japanese-Jewish Matel™ action figure ... the only major piece of art to be banned on every continent except New Guinea ... the as-yet unnamed Jens Soering chef-d'oeuvre, cowritten with Myrtle Greenberg-Engels (the psydonymous (!?!)) Elizabeth Haysom; entire concept of co-authorship receiving another set of very large and heavily emphasized !?! -- after all, Myrtle would never forsake her artistic integrity or, more importantly, the trust and concomitant pecuniarily expressed adoration of the millions who learned braille after her 1st bestseller) and starring none other than Ryushi Skamoto, David Bowie, Laura Lavender (Myrtle's cinematic psydonym) and introducing Jeremy Fitzgerald Rubehardt, the highly talented but practically unknown co-star of the Irish production of The Circle's Corner, or Does Lady Di Wear Naughty Underwear?, in which he portrayed, with great skill and artistry, Elmore the tree (a role which he had also played in Waiting for Godot) and Jake the branch (one of Lady Di's more bizarre lovers -- yes, "one" is no contradiction).

The object? Write a 20,000 word sentence.

Elizabeth, meet my letter. Or rather, the style in which I write letters. Nothing in my head. Just a mechanical snail, as predetermined (or not) as anything else in this bowl of spaghetti we meatballs (or are we just the spices in the meatballs? How profound!!!) call a universe -- you've seen those photographs in astronomy, I'm sure -- the ones where they focus on the North Star and open the shutter for a long time so the stars which seem to rotate (or possibly actually do rotate -- it is impossible to prove that the earth is not the center of the universe, though I'll give you odds ...) around it in stripes ... you know, like



only everything that is black ought to be white and vice versa and (a) is the North Star and (b) is where the other star started when one opens the shutter and (c) is where it ended when one closes the shutter and (d) is where it was in between ... you know ... ok, maybe you don't. Anyway, the track of light the stars leave on the photograph look like spaghetti, and at the end of each strand of spaghetti there's a ball, a meatball, and we're the spices on it, you know, real artistic and shit, you know, cosmic vision, man, you know, like ... oh well. How about this? If it's the western sky, it's a spaghetti western? No? OK, have you heard the one about the dead baby with three heads? Well, let me tell you...

Anyway, a mechanical, predetermined (or not) snail, crawling along the paper, leaving a trail of black slime which you, silly thing, think means something. Arf arf. It's part of the universe, baby. Stars, you know? Stars, like in the movies. -- Yeah, that's right, I'm in the movies. -- Yeah, it is kinda exciting. So how ya feel about a couple of drinks back at my place, I have this new jacuzzi... -- Wild, baby, wild. (Leans to friend Jake on the other side and says under his breath) Line works every time, man, every time...

Am I at least keeping you entertained? Are you ok? If you don't want, I won't do it again. Well, I don't want to, like, lean on you too heavy, you know... Is my hand ... you know, do you, like, like it? You don't want me to play with your, you know, breasts? OK, I'll never do it again. I'm sorry.

Excuse me while I step outside of myself and the ludicrous internal bullshit which keeps me from letting this letter consist of anything but the three words I LOVE YOU I LOVE YOU I LOVE YOU ...

Alright, listen -- I'm not trying to avoid something, if you're thinking I'm tossing all this universally predetermined (or not) garbage at you because of that -- I'm being serious now. I love you. I desire you in every way because you are, in every aspect I can imagine, the most desirable part of the bowl and its contents (spaghetti and meatballs -- where would we be without Thomas?). I'm just tossing shit. Excuse the lack of French elegance.

And don't think that because I deny trying to hide something I must be hiding something. I'm not. Promise. Seriously.

OK, I lied.

I meant everything I said above. I do love you. I do love you more than I've loved anybody, and I love you differently than I've loved anybody before (more later). I do find you in every aspect more desirable than I've ever found anybody and that I can imagine anybody or anything to be.

I do not desire you.

And I'm sorry to be this heavy.

And, rather, I do but I won't let myself.

Maybe that isn't it, either.

Now I'm sorry to be so obscure.

Sorry.

Never mind.

Yes, mind.

Shit, I cornered myself. I'm a-gonna have to come out with it

(Don't bother with the accent; it won't help you this time, and neither will your other tricks -- these are your parentheses speaking; trust me, they won't.)

OK, OK, I get the point.

--

(So, out with it, jerk)

Well, ...

(Come on, come on, Elizabeth and I don't have all day.)

I'm trying...problem is, I don't really know where to start because...

(Because what, asshole?)

I don't know what it is, that's why and that's because.

(Well, what do you usually do when you fuck up a beautiful relationship with close-to-perfect girls. You're doing so well, asshole, come on... what was it? Counting just the last five, the 1st three you didn't answer at all when they wrote they loved you, the next one you kept telling you wouldn't believe she loved you because she was so perfect and you weren't until she didn't love you, you whining son of a bitch ... that's it, isn't it? Now, with the most incredible person in the world loving you with every bone in her body...)

[... or pretending so well it doesn't make a difference...]

(...Shut up, no one's supposed to know parentheses have parentheses of their own, and so on in an ever-continuing continuum of continually expanding continuity...where was I? Ah yes,... loving you with every bone in her body...)

{ ... or not ... }
(... ok, ok, or not, you still can't really accept it, can you? Oh, please! as what's-her-fucking-name-the-Jewish-comedienne-bitch says all the time. Next you'll tell me your mommy and daddy don't love you any more...)

Well, he did sit down on the 26th and said, "Either she made up all the stuff she told you about herself or she's such an incredible person that she couldn't possibly love you," you know.

(Quit interrupting, and so what? You think you're the only one who has parents who don't approve of their children in spite of excellent trackrecords on the child's part? Look at Elizabeth, for Christ's sake...)

Yeah, but she's fucking incredible, you, you, ... parentheses, you!

(Oh, I'm so insulted ... I'll call you a comma if you say that again! Geez...)

Anyway, and I'm not. Perfect, that is. I was ranked 5th in a mediocre school with mediocre people -- and that some of the people ahead of me had photographic memories or studied exclusively is no excuse. Jacob was a genius, I'm nothing like that. I produced no decent art, I can't even finish a bad movie, I can't do anything athletic. The only thing people ever see is "potential" -- Allman saw incredible potential for analyzing ... so what! The Jefferson people say incredible potential in me for keeping the American status quo ... so what! Miles Boyd, and now that silly girl Elizabeth, think I've got the great American novel or the next Van Gogh or something inside me... so what! I don't see any of these, I don't see even hints in preliminary results because there are none! It's all "potential" -- that's bullshit! I can't even play guitar right! I just bullshit so people let me play in bands and the fools like it! All I can do is bullshit, which is basically lying, and apparently I lie so naturally and so well by now that I've even got Elizabeth believing I'm worth while, but I'm not, because I can show nothing! I'm even fucked up inside, and really fucked up, too. Look at this I'm writing -- I'm a fucking schizo! They used to lock people like me up or burn me at the stake ... wait that's bullshit again, 'cause they only killed or locked up the ones that were actually dangerous. I'm so hopeless, I qualify as the village idiot at best; or worse, Joe Blow Average, a stout and mediocre follower of a Hitler, or a great appreciator of accepted art -- which is one worse than Salieri in Amadeus because he could at least see revolutionary talent, whereas I have to sit and wrestle with absurdism and abstract art for weeks until I understand it; they aren't even revolutionary, and my only motivation was the grade for a termpaper I had to write and was too dumb to pick an easier topic for ... Shit!!! And if I go and commit to Elizabeth as I want to, as I desire to ... remember earlier...then, after a while she'll realize the pile of fake shit I am and leave me in an even worse mess and I might hurt her, too. Emotionally, you know.

("I don't want to hurt you" -- you really hurt Claudia with that one, remember?)

Yeah, I remember ... don't interrupt ... Anyway that's why I desire but can't take steps to consummate because (a) before I do she'll leave me and I'll be in even more of a pile of shit than if I "just" desire her and (b) "consumating" has a special definition with me which implies lots of successful and continued action, something I have at best "potential" for, and both you (the parentheses) ^{and I} know what bullshit "potential" (sarcastic arf) is. You see? For fuck's sake, I love her, but there's this wall of my bullshit between us that she just doesn't see... I mean, does she realize how mean I can be or am? She said I cared without lust and that's why she loved me ... does she realize that the only reason I didn't lust was because I did not dare to? Does she realize that the only reason I even bother with Christine, as the absolutely prime example representative of almost everyone else, is the possibility, faint though it may be, of sex (or something I want) in the far-distant future? I could care less about Christine, the boring, odious little sniveling bitch. My parents -- God, I despise them, and I let them know it in subtle ways so they can't confront me with it, too. My mother is in deep mental anguish, and do I help her? No! Because it's "all too much" for poor, little, Jens, you shithead you...

(Hey, hey ...)

I meant me, not you, silly parentheses, with the shithead, asshole! "Can't handle it, have problems of my own" -- Christ! I even push her away and am mean to her! I realize I shouldn't but I can't help myself because I'm just intrinsically a worthless little, non-achieving "full of 'potential'" shit!!! I just am. Caring without lust -- shit. It was probably just a perverted impulse to follow "somebody better" like all of us little shithole-Germans. No that's not fair -- this little shithole-German. Back by popular demand, drowning himself and anaesthetizing himself with ludicrous visions of unachievable grandeur ... and love/adoration, I guess... it's the snivelling little shit whose personality-type helped put and keep Hitler and the other greats of inhumanity in power ... Jens Söring. Yeah!!!!!!

(Shit this is heavy...)

You guessed it.

(You realize, of course, that if you let her see this, she'll leave that much faster...)

Yeah, and what's the diff.?

(OK, so let's make it a psychological exercise ... you ever think that the only bullshit, or wall of bullshit, is your inability to love yourself? That you're at least an average, ok guy with some faults? That you can't be expected to shoulder all the world's problems?)

Don't give me your technicolor, prepackaged California self-help excuses. At best, I'll still be mediocre and she'll be a goddess, and there is no excuse for an intrinsic inability to care about (much less love) your own mother, all of Freud's well-meant bullshit about cutting mental umbilical-chords to the contrary.

(So where does that leave the three of us?)

It leaves you in your parentheses, me in the toilet, where I belong, and if Liz reads this, it leaves her free and, hopefully, with some experience to avoid fecal material like me in the future.

(Well, I'm still hopeful. Remember that "test" she was talking about doing at the beginning of next semester? My hope is that it'll help you begin to accept yourself...)

No hope, my purely grammatical alter-ego. First of all, I am a worthless shithole, and even if I only imagined it, I need a heavy-duty psychiatrist to pull me out of this toilet -- this is beyond do-it-yourself therapy. But all that's beside the point. I am a shithole.

(The repetition of the phrase "I am a shithole" seems to resemble a subliminal or posthypnotic suggestion, etc., such as could be activated by some high-stress situation in your past and which you are now perpetuating by repeating it ... all of which suggests it's removable and based on a dubious "real-world" basis...)

So what? Even if all that were true, wouldn't the removal of such a major psychological feature in my mental terrain irreversibly change the way I am and function in a major and unpredictable way? If I don't have my insecurities to goad me, I might lose what little value I have (after all, even shit can be used as fertilizer).

(So you're afraid to change because it might make you different? Even if that means that you could love Elizabeth more fully?)

And what if the only art in me, if there is any, is of the Woody Allen type, based on my insecurities? And what if my "block," my insecurities, produce the behaviour which she loves in me, so that when I remove the insecurities, she won't love me any more? After all, behaviour which can be observed is the only thing she knows of me, be it through actions or language ... see Psychobiology 201!

(You know, there's good evidence that you've been in some sort of contact beyond the level of behaviour which can be observed through the senses ... when you asked where she was a split-second before she walked in and when you both thought of "La Belle Dame Sans Merci.")

That's bullshit, coincidence -- what's next, UFO's?

(So apparently there's no way for you...)

Absolutely none.

(Man, you're fucked.)

You said it.

(Tell Elizabeth; I don't want her further involved with this.)

Yeah, neither do I. It's going to hurt a hell of a lot, though.

(Especially if she doesn't take a hint and continues to hang around a psycho like you...)

Yeah. For her and me.

(You know, that certain "instrument" for a certain "operation" on somebody's relatives?)

Yeah...

(Use it on yourself.)

Maybe.

(But you do love her, don't you?)

Like I've never loved anyone before. There are times when I am anaesthetized by above-mentioned visions of unachievable grandeur and love, and I feel such strength ... the strength to love her forever and ever, like in that silly movie, The Hunger. She's touched parts of me ... I love her with parts of me with which I've never loved before...there's so much depth, it's incredible, so deep...sometimes, if I just think of just her, I feel such peace...it's not at all wild, you know, not in a passing sense, anyway. Christ, I'm sounding like a tenth-grade preppy girl talking about some philosophy she doesn't understand. "Like, deep" -- that's what they used to say about me. What a joke -- fucked up is more like it. Anyway, as usual, once she removes herself because she realizes I'm a pile of shit worse than Engels and Greenberg put together because I add the extra unattractive feature of snivelling self-pity, all that will die. It'll hurt some, a lot, but I'll survive. I hope.

(I don't. Hope that is.)

I understand.

(Goodnight, John-Boy.)

Goodnight Jimmy.

(Goodnight, Pa.)

Ending of that great, classic American TV show, The Waltons

--

Hi.

I'm back.

I do love you. Very, very much.

But do you see?

I'm sorry this was such a downer.

I love you.

Don't do anything out of pity -- please.

Love,



(completed at 1:13 a.m.)

It's me again, the Jens of 3 or 4 days later, lying in his bed (no pun) at 22 minutes past midnight, ghosts dancing all around. I'm going to tell you a few things about that letter you just read.

Practically no "conscious" thought went into it, especially the "downer" half of it. It was straight from my mind or heart or whatever onto the paper, totally without plan, control or revision, as this and all my letter are. Unpredictable, but somewhat interesting. Remember this, this is important.

It follows that I mean every word of it, especially the downer part. I do. Mean all that, that is. However, there's a qualification. It is a side of me. My paranoid, schizophrenic, fearful, sick side. The side described at the end (top of the page) is just as real. It is much less easily verbalized. It might express itself best when I'm eating the fruit in the garden of eden, to use a phrase employed by you in your very 1st letter. Or maybe that's another side, just as real as those two. The side your confronting in these following

pages is the one that takes both the schizoid and the beatific sides and considers them equals. And is somewhat, though not greatly, perplexed.

For I do love you.

By the way, were I to meet your parents, I have the ultimate "weapon." Strange things are happening within me. I'm turning more and more into a Christ-figure (a small imitation, anyway), I think. I believe I would either make them completely lose their wits, get heart-attacks, or they would become lovers (in an agape kind of way) of the rest of the world.

Beside the point. Sorry, Back to what I was jabbering about. I love you immensely, quite possibly immeasurably.

However, experience, at the very least with Claudia, has taught me that I have great talent for fucking up relationships, and I therefore dare not open the floodgates, even if I wished or could. For as hinted in the letter of the 27th, I feel my love for you is a much deeper, in a sense longer love than that cataclysmic ejaculation Claudia evoked in me, leaving both of us in a sticky, white emotional mess.

This mess, by the way, has helped to fertilize our relationship, if I may beat a dead metaphor to a completely bloody pulp. Or stomp some more on the sticky stuff, if you please.

Not only do I have talent for fucking up relationships but I am also limited. I suppose everyone is, but practically speaking I am, of course, referring to a comparative limitedness vis à vis you, my most cherished fellow traveller. Which brings me to that equally limited little Jew, Saul Below.

Yes, I have been buying lots of books, all of them ones you happened to mention in passing as noteworthy -- I hang on your lips in the hope of someday being able to serve at least as an intellectual mirror to your magnificent luminescence.

That was another me, by the way, that last paragraph. To be believed and to be discounted, as this is to be believed and to be discounted. Remember this, too. This, too, is important (in reference to my insignificant self). Right now, take it as sarcasm, though I am quite aware that I will never be as well-read as you are now. No humility, simply fact. Anyway.

Ah yes, Saul. Another Woody Allen, in a way. Taking the general western (Hitler would say Jewish) malaise and making it into art. Below takes Allen even further -- it's deeply self-reflexive (upon this malaise even. The boredom-bit -- magnifique! I've been wrestling with it for 3½ years now, too.) and it's serious. My oh my. No wonder the back-cover says it's "A work of genius," and if you can't trust a back-cover, what can you trust.

Let me, first of all, justify myself. I made the "classical" mistake (I question the validity of calling it a mistake) of identifying myself with various characters, parts of characters, etc. One "should not" do this, of course, for the usual well-known reasons which Below even cites at some point. Art should not be the starting point of intellectual meandering but stand on its own (presumably to be revered, as a by-product). I committed this mistake, nevertheless. I justify myself by the simple fact that I see a few things more clearly and because I am allowed to discuss the author. Since I find Humboldt's Gift highly autobiographical, I find myself investigating the author when I discuss the characters.

Why autobiographical? Below mentions the concept of others being only parts of oneself, as Humboldt is "alive in (Charles) if (Charles) chooses to keep (him) alive", i.e. characters as parts of Below, too. All three have similar backgrounds (European Jews, come to America). Below, like both Charles and Humboldt, flashes us his detailed knowledge of all kinds of great literary figures simply by letting them flash their knowledge in Below's book. After all, we're impressed with Below's "genius," not theirs. Most importantly, they are his supposedly sophisticated but, in my opinion, mostly derivative thought patterns we are admiring in Charles. But then again, what is not derivative? This certainly is. As I argued with myself on the 27th, so are both Humboldt and Charles 2 version of the "American Jewish artist" (and I say this while having read only 305 of 471 pages).

I find myself both attracted and repulsed by this Below-Humboldt-Citrine character (I'll call him HBC). Once again, and here possibly in its purest form, do I find what I (for long) and multitudes of others admire. Camus' absurd man, staring the absurd firmly in the eye -- and staring. And staring. And staring some more.

By page 305 Charles has begun to wake up, in both mine and Below's terminology (and the theosophical Dr.'s, of course.), but in the, in my opinion, unfortunate arms of the theosophists, Rosicrucians, etc. Which, of course, let Charles see his past sleep but keep him at best in a kind of REM-state, that is, neither really awake nor really asleep. I don't see HBC coming out at all. Humboldt certainly did not. Citrine, for all his intricacies, is basically afraid and indecisive at this point (sort of like me), and their mother, their gaia so to speak, Below, has not conquered the problems he sets for Citrine and Humboldt thru his novel, neither thru its form nor thru its function (at this point, the beginnings of a functional resolution would be visible and obviously he has not attacked the interesting formal problems of the literary artist, lagging behind the visual artist by 100 years, also moving towards true abstraction in his medium. As for the identity- entity issue...).

Utterly beside the point, but for me just as important, is of course the fact that I could never become well-read or cultured enough to accomplish the (in my opinion therefore derivative; but Skinner insists it is all reaction to the external, i.e. derivative) mental acrobatics of HBC. Naturally I disapprove of HBC -- I can't achieve their/his ultra-refined neurosis/neuroses. You, darling Elizabeth, quite easily could and are on your very best way towards further refinement. Lest I appear too modest, so am, of course, -- as witnessed by the letter of the 27th (you're right, the connection is not quite clear yet -- it's SRAPON. See later). Suffice it to say that I realize I am very deeply involved with the analysis and concomitant perpetuation of the neurosis turned art, though, of course, not on the sophisticated level of an E.R. Haysom and certainly not of an HBC.

Letters are clumsy; accept, therefore (pretty please with orange-flavored chocolate on top?), that I say this with no malice or whatever toward you, Elizabeth. I am in the moment engaged in Self-Reflexive Analysis and Perpetuation of Neurosis

(from now on to be known simply as SRAPON), as described above -- no art yet, but wait, I'm getting to that. Elizabeth, I love you completely, passionately, wholly. If I repeat this some more, will get out of SRAPON -- love is a form of meditation. And the ultimate "weapon" "against" your parents. My God, how I've got the dinner scene planned out. Unfortunate (for you) result: Dad might leave me all his loot. Don't worry; everything I have, am, or could become is already yours. I mean that, too.

Where were we? Ah yes, the art that's missing here. Liz, I'm not interested. You said something which scared the shit out of me in bed once. You said you "saw something" in me that was in some form special; "and if it takes you 40 years to come out with it." I got almost the same thing from the only other really intelligent person who looked inside me -- Miles Boyd. I got the art award for it to boot. I produced almost no art in high school that could justify the award. My few sculptures did not even get honorable-mentions in the yearly contests, I didn't do cartoons for the newspaper, and I certainly didn't make a movie -- all the things for which one usually wins art awards. I got it because of my illegibly scribbelled notes and my 3 or 4 page typed manifesto that I handed in at the end of the semester in lieu of the movie -- some 300 to 400 pages it must have been, I still have it. This man was a good friend, certainly one of my best friends in terms of knowing who I am. He also "saw something."

I don't see anything, as I said earlier. Beside the point -- I am virtually blind. However, Humboldt's Gift has turned an inclination into a certainty -- even if I can (I doubt it), I will not create better and better Western-Malaise-Neurotic-Art (WEMANEA, if you will).

Camus says that one must live with the malaise, neurosis, death, etc, and enjoy the physical pleasure since we cannot know anything else -- him and a few billion others.

I am positing that I know better (and am thereby committing, for the umpteenth time, the sin of pride, which will, of course, impede my progress). However, I'm pissed because right now I can see myself in spite of not having all of HBCs (or your) impressive background becoming, in the least, a psychologist, SRAPONing away as a profession, and, at best, another Allen or Below. Or even a real great -- I hesitate to say "Nietzsche" because, as usual, I have no earthly idea what he's really saying. I simply have the ability to spice my discourse with a few "Wille zur Macht"s or a "Zarathustra"-figure. Anyway, I don't want it, this existence of SRAPON, or Maya, etc., in greater or lesser refinement. In case you haven't noticed, Liz, this is more than a letter to you, this is my statement: Camus, you is wrong, bro. And if you is right, then at least, I will be living a more enjoyable lie than you.

And here you come back in again, Liz. I will not become what you might think I might become, I think (do you understand?). Certainly not the next great HBC (or maybe yes, depending on the conclusion of Humboldt's Gift). And quite possibly not someone you can love.

the
of
notes

For what I do see inside me is just that, Liz, that "that which there can be no greater than" as Anselm said. I see it in me and in others. And in those "color experiences" I keep having. But I don't see it clearly, and I want to. This that carries with it some powers. Depending on his mental and emotional flexibility, your father, for example, could quite well die from a confrontation with it, if he is too entrenched in hate and/or SRAPON (same thing in many cases), or he could do something silly like trying to give me all his dough. I'm not overestimating, I think.

"But I was serious about it. I meant to make a strange jump and plunge into the truth. I had had it with most contemporary ways of philosophizing. Once and for all I was going to find out whether there was anything behind the incessant hints of immortality that kept dropping on me. Besides, this was the biggest and most revolutionary thing one could undertake to do, and of the greatest value. Socially, psychologically, politically, the very essence of human institutions was an extract of what we assumed about death." (p.344, Humboldt's Gift)

"Five different epistemologies in an evening. Take your choice. They're all agreeable, and not one is binding or necessary or has true strength or speaks straight to the soul. It was this paper-taking, this passing of highbrow currency that had finally put my back up." (p.378)

And to see and to act on this vision, not to be transfixed by its beauty in this half-sleeping state. (The above passages I inserted after I had finished the book.) My change in attitude (and, therefore, behaviour (subconscious transfer?)) from high school to here (Charlottesville, that is) has been minimal, though (at least to me) noticeable. With this minimal change I have attracted to me the three all-around "best" people it has been my extreme privilege and joy to know and love -- Miles Boyd at Lovett, Claudia over the summer, and now, to top it all (in all categories) off, you. Claudia I "lost" because I SRAPONIZED her, or rather, exhibitionistically SRAPONIZED before her -- as long as I just loved her, however, And this is as yet completely unchannelled, almost totally untrained. Liz, I would very much like to go through life learning how to love more deeply and more. I would like to "teach" if I can (can develop it in myself, and can teach it, that is). Very, very much. I do not know if it is possible. I will find out. And what is not to be forgotten -- I am, at best, quite ordinary, after all. The possibilities for someone real...

What scares me is that along the way I will learn things which, independently of some kind of supra-sensual/"supernatural" love-factor, will be quite dangerous (I am not afraid of the learning but what I'll do with it). I am absolutely convinced that the combination of hypnosis and neurolinguistic programming, for example, now being experimented with is, along with modern subliminal suggestion techniques, one of the most powerful "things" invented by man. Within one hundred years at the very most we

With whom I had a post-Lovett attitude

will see "I-Bombs" instead of "A-" or "H-Bombs" -- ideology bombs. I don't know how they will be delivered or deployed, but they will change what people think instead of what the countryside looks like. Do not think this is bullshit, Elizabeth. I am quite serious, and so are some highly informed other people. (not implying that I am highly informed -- I just have "derivative" (ha, ha) info.). I'm not sure I care whether "they" are on "our" side or "theirs" or if that will make much difference. Crude forms of these "bombs" (bomblets, if you will) are already telling us not to steal in department stores, without anyone knowing about it -- 50% reduction in shoplifting, I think, is the response they are getting. Given time...

I don't know whether I can resist this. I can see myself depriving people of their property quite easily -- your dad, for instance. Even more easily can I see myself depriving many souls (if they exist) of their physical bodies (which might not exist, either) in the course of fulfilling my many, many excessively bizarre sexual fantasies (caused by, I believe, one thirteen year old girl striking me once quite viciously with her riding crop from atop a horse in a German summer camp when I was about to turn ten -- immediately before coming to America, that is. Fascinating SRAPON -- it's so tempting to SRAPONize! I'm doing it now, though I find it excusable here (at least this part)! The ultimate SRAPON would be, of course, to fulfill those fantasies.). Anyway, it's not like this hasn't been done before -- it's been going on for thousands of years.

There you have it: at best, someone who can "spread a little sunshine" (to quote Pippin in a sarcastic fashion) because he's found (relative) peace, either bit by bit or in a major way; at worst, a perverted Hitler with the ultimate Luftwaffe (literally, "air-weapon" -- how appropriate!!!); at the most mediocre, a failed dreamer who wasted limited talent on bullshit. If I didn't feel life had been leading me here all along ... but I'm not sure about that, either.

How does this affect our love? I don't know, that's just it. Right now it's troubled because my SRAPON is ubiquitous and strong and can only be held in check (and even then not completely) by you. Furthermore, next semester I might get "weird" -- 'cause I think I'm going ahead with this. All I know for sure is that I love you. Everything else, I don't know... . And what will probably happen is that you'll tire of me or be disgusted and will create, in the very least (I'm betting on more), great SRAPONistic art, having experienced love. Makes for great literature and sells, too (like Dynasty and Dallas satisfying the public need to find unhappiness amidst the materially well-off, you can do something about rich artists (the old double-whammy) loving unhappily -- my God, what an idea!)

Shit, I don't know.

In the mean time, I love you as totally as I can for right now.

Your

(completed at 2:46 a.m. Dec. 31)

PS: Realize: This is one big SRAPON.
PPS: Following some paragraphs, completely unretouched, as they came into my head in the airplane to Detroit.

Paragraphs from Trip to Detroit -- Not Revised

They paint the bombers the color of the sky, you know. It's to make them invisible. They paint them the color of the sky so that the bombs, which are definitely more something in the way of a matte black, seem, from the ground, to appear out of nowhere, as if God or Santa Claus had just passed overhead, and the little presents were heading just for your chimney and no one else's, and you couldn't wait for the flashing red and gold of the wrapping paper.

My parents were lucky; when they were young, Christmas came many times a week. The inevitable mess left by these Christmases (celebrations (pick one word or other)) was, of course, quite a chore to clean up, and when they were finished with cleaning up, they called it the Wirtschaftswunder, which is a nice name. (Presently they are waiting for the big bang of New Year's (this is carrying it too far, in my opinion))

It was in Baltimore that the heaviness attacked. Like a great, hulking, silent beast it sailed out of the airport tower (, through the air, (optional phrase -- type out both and see which is more aesthetically, i.e. rhythmically + visually more pleasing)) and attached itself gently but firmly to my stomach and duodenum, its droopy (, (optional comma)) yellow eyes looking up at me and reminding me to leave my body, or else.

In Douglas Adams' book The Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy, a rather average-sized whale materializes in the upper stratosphere of some planet or moon, only to plummet to the ground with great speed, leaving nothing but a huge crater and scattered pieces of whale-blubber after kissing the surface. Surprisingly enough, just such a whale landed directly upon the spot on which ----- was sitting and reading his book. Because God liked -----, or maybe just be accident, ----- was spared the horrible death which would undoubtedly have befallen anyone else. He had unwittingly situated himself in such a way that while the rest of the imposing animal was splattering itself on the ground around him, ----- was contained in and protected by the cavity (fissure) of the whale's appendix scar, left years earlier by some unscrupulous and malpracticing veterinarian who had done horrible experiments on the pets of Jews and homosexuals in Nazi concentration camps.

----- was perturbed.

Not because twohundred-and-sixty-four people around him had been crushed to death by living lard or because the crater formed an ugly zit in a pretty landscape, or for any reason you or I could think up. ----- was perturbed because the very veterinarian whose lack of skill had saved -----'s life was just now climbing over a particularly offensive mountain of whale-pulp and coming towards -----.

(----- had been on his way to this now famous physician to have his appendix removed. (this may be carrying it too far))

Obviously to be treated separately; I prefer Vonnegut to Below because, if nothing else, he says what he has to say in less space than Below. I also find him funny.

Jan. 2 0:45 a.m.

Finished Humboldt's Gift. Hm.

It seems I may have spoken too harshly when last I wrote. Of HBC, Charles Citrine certainly seems to have broken away from the HBC-Allen, etc., etc., etc., mold towards the end. Congrats.

I have felt myself at the beginning of his journey, at the level approximately 2 weeks after he checks into the pension for some time now; I started $3\frac{1}{2}$ years ago, as I recall telling you. I am probably more widely and less deeply read and have a total of about 2 or 3 weeks actual practice. I am as preoccupied with myself and "the process" as he is and therefore can't help seeing myself reflected; even in his reluctance to "do art" I see my growing aversion to "normal" film-making (he refuses 2 scripts near the end of the book). and art in general

I have, incidentally, rewritten some of my passages in this letter using his words (see quotes earlier); I don't feel secure enough with myself and you to confront you with what I am in my words (which is a contradiction in terms by the way -- NLP ties in here, as does "wordless thinking" -- ah, Claudia...this makes no sense, does it, darling? I am referring to a sentence in one of her last letters to me. She's a long way off base, but at least she's in the ballpark.) ~~about~~ about the subject of transcendence thru a medium similar to the theosophy presented in Humboldt's Gift. I need to see you when discussing this, and even then I don't know whether I can get to the heart of it. If I can't, we, and especially I, will be in trouble.

Another "incidentally": We should have seen the Cotton Club, that movie we passed up for the College Inn on our last night in Charlottesville. Great music. Why am I writing this now?

Anyway, I don't see how Below could have written Humboldt's Gift if he were as far as Citrine is by the end of the book. It probably doesn't matter. I will read some post-Humboldt's Gift-Below and see -- it would probably be something like Japanese Gardens. I must make a note to myself here: Banzai trees (damn, I can't recall if that's what they're actually called, those miniature trees) are intricate and many-colored; not all art of this type need be raked white pebbles with one black boulder (also see Alan-Watts-Postscript of Jan. 3).

I apologize for the mental note for myself, but these letters are also to myself. I photocopy all my letters, and especially this one, in anticipation of you pulling a Renata on me, which you won't, by the way; you're much too sensitive and intelligent. You'll probably pull a Durnwald -- dismiss it as bunk. I apologize for my incessant externalizing and referring to Below and his, after all, quite extraordinary novel. I do him an injustice when comparing him to Woody Allen; in this novel he's taken at least $\frac{1}{2}$ a step beyond that (essentially) boring little Jew (does it please you that I let my almost nonexistent anti-Semitism slip out just to please you?).

[A little aside from the Jens who is typing this letter from his notes on Jan. 4. I know that I am harping much too much on the "Oh, me, Oh, my, she's a-gonna leave me" thing. I got your letter on the 3rd, and I was getting paranoid. I am still, but much less so. Look, I will really try to keep it under control, o.k.? I could have edited all that shit out, but somehow I wanted to leave this complete. I love you.]

On the subject of Renata: For me, it is quite another category I fail in, for I know (as she and many other girls have told me) that women look for composites and that, hence, I must fail. Renata looks for security, faithfulness, and commitment; these I am willing and, as a matter of fact, extremely eager to give since, to me these are the only "things" one can ever hope to count on. So I will probably fail elsewhere. Sexually, perhaps; I caught 5 minutes of Dr. Ruth Westheimer on TV alone at home earlier tonight (New Year's Eve -- everyone else was at parties -- no I don't want pity. They were back by 12:00, or 0:00 -- oh boy!). The last caller of the program (and the only one I heard) could not orgasm during intercourse with his wife, though she could. Dr. Ruth asked him whether the equipment was functional during masturbation, and he answered in the affirmative; so far I felt deep empathy for this man. It was just in bed with his girl that things ended "inconclusively," shall we say. Dr. Ruth told him to find himself a sexologist, this was a problem easily corrected. I hope so, because though I probably won't be able to find a sexologist (whatever that is) in C-ville, ...

At this point I am reminded of humourous little Valerie, who made a 45 minute phone call (apparently having phoned Joann in St. Louis first to get my number), asking discreetly "how Elizabeth was doing" and "oh, too bad she can't be with you" and "I like Bruce, but just as a friend, really." She also intimated that Joann was "easy" while she was virtuous (chortle, chortle) and sent me an even more amusing (and direct) card (That should satisfy my mother, who has been bugging me about what I've been typing for the last 6 or 7 hours; it's not a vain statement for posterity, see!!!! It's gossip). Anyway, Valerie certainly tries hard; I feel a little sorry for her -- she can't even hope to compare with you, and she's trying so damn hard in her silly little high-school-America way. If she doesn't quit soon, I will have to talk to her.

All of this as a general indicator of how dismal my vacation is without you -- this is actually the only "interesting" (holy shit! Interesting? This?) tid-bit that has occurred during my entire vacation (even the family fights are just tired, nastier rehashes of the same old family fights). Also, I think I haven't mentioned that the hope for sex is not the only reason I still talk to Christine as I indicated in the letter of the 27th, but I certainly find her an odious little etc. -- I guess habit, the fact that she's your roommate and social graces (read: social pressures) are in this, too. I am not repulsed either -- just completely indifferent.

I'm a little bit tired but I feel a need to write (for the first time in a long time), so forgive me if I ramble (and use too many semicolons and parentheses); I love you and I wish to communicate (did you get the feeble joke?).

To get back to me and Humboldt's Gift (now that you're not around anymore, I am forced to think and discuss dreary old me -- I am as sorry as you are): I know someone like Charles Citrine. His name is Solomon Cohen, and he used to be my dentist in Atlanta. He's great. I walked into his office the last time before I left for Detroit (he's a friend of the family) and he said, "Wow, your aura is really green today! What's the matter?" And

I explained to him my fears of the Jefferson Scholarship corrupting me and turning me into a preppy (or rather UVA corrupting, etc., me). Sol is stunned: He has been reflecting on his life as one of the best-paid dentists in Atlanta at 45 after his 3rd divorce and, stumbling upon mysticism and "Greenpeace"-kind-of-stuff, he can't believe that he wasted all those years, just like Citrine. "If you realize all this at 17, (which is what I was at the time), what a great life you have ahead of you" he says.

I said "yea" and thought what a great guy Sol is (I'm sending him a letter and Humboldt's Gift); after all, he's balding, 5'3", but dates these incredible Jewish girls (I mean incredible!!!!). And every time a new one!!!!). Over the summer I met another mid-life crisis - mysticist and he said something else: Some things come with time, some things you shouldn't rush. -- I feel like I know something of the Maja, of the oblivion world-view (thanks, Charles), of SRAPON (God, how can I come up with something as awful as SRAPON on the spot, just like that? Fuck, I'm twisted.) -- enough to not want it, anyway. On the other hand, I could easily become a great lawyer or something. (I have all the prerequisites), and I could suppress all this stuff and live in suburbia. But if I decide not to head for the three-bedroom-two-car-garage, does it take more than (in my case at most) 3 years (I started "thinking" in 10th grade) and a highly emotional, very intense and total (and I mean total) submersion in the "absurd" (my movie experience) to prepare me for the movement beyond the Maja? Is that enough background with the Maja? They do start early in the Far East but that was long ago and a completely different context. Anyway, when I reach 45 and my biological changes affect my mentality, will I turn Capitalist (a kind of flip?) or will I disappear up the navel I am contemplating or something really fascinating or, worse, nothing?

All of this, incidentally, is what I was referring to when I asked whether you were interested in "learning with me" in bed once. Remember? No? OK, never mind.

Wonderful word, incidentally. Incidentally is a wonderful word, that is. Never mind.

Incidentally, I love you. I wish I had you here, and certainly not just because that would have provided an infinitely more attractive alternative to masturbation, Dr. Ruth's confirmation of any probably SRAPONized (i.e. self-induced by what Joann referred to as my "painfully intricate, like a huge clockwork" mind) sexual dysfunction (why dys?) to the contrary (yes, reread this sentence; it's not even clear to me.).

God, my writing is obscure tonight. Mental retardation was believed to be on of the results of masturbation in the Middle Ages, wasn't it? I wonder ...

"Zabu zabu zabu-zay"

From "Minnie the Moocher," from the Cotton Club sound track (originally Cab Calloway). About a girl who is "into" money. Something I haven't been able to reconcile, by the way -- I worry about money a lot and come up with Cantabile-schemes for making it, quite the contrary to Charles. Yet Meister Eckhardt was a very successful businessman as well as a mystic ... and the "sub-conscious" (or, if theosophy is more pleasing than Freudian psychology, the Angels and Archangels) easily lend themselves to creativity, which, I guess and fervently hope, is a key ingredient in financial success. Shit! (Very appropriate reaction from a

Freudian perspective.) I need to find a way to earn cash in a way that pleases me and doesn't take up much time. I can just see myself joining the foreign service -- nice lifestyle, easy hours, completely frustrating and certain to turn you into the kind of schmuck my father is. Argh! There must be...

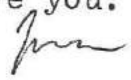
Enough. Change subject.

And I find myself momentarily out of subjects. I have been waiting for your letter with an almost silly desperation. I am growing a little (arf, arf -- little, meaning a little more) paranoid and insecure ... (Of course, what'll you do if and when she shows you she loves you? You refuse to believe her or piss her off in other ways, like continuing to tell her about Valerie or any of the others instead of getting rid of them quietly with style, until she doesn't love you. Then you'll run crying to someone like Valerie or Joann or someone like them who thinks you're a "real neat guy" (actual quote - ugh!) and then you'll have a Renata -- if you're that "lucky!" Asshole!)

No, no, not alter-ego/parentheses time, oh no!

Below is jewish -- I wonder whether Gift means poison in Yiddish as it does in German? I wonder whether this is important (implied no)? Odd choice of words, anyway. In the book it's always referred to as "the legacy", never the gift. HMMMMMMMM. Anyway, Humboldt's Gift wasn't the actual legacy.

Liz, I ramble. Goodnight. I love you.



(completed at 2:09, Jan. 2)

Jan2, 20:13 p.m.

Just had a really big family fight. Dad was kind enough to drag Kai and me into it; the problem is that I don't even know if that's wrong. Everyone is right and everyone is wrong. Christ, there's so much pain and loneliness out there, it's a cliché to say or write it as I just did. And it all adds to the pain and loneliness in here. I've grown up with these people, they are the only constants amongst the algebraic variables of the especially inconstant life of a diplomat's family. I don't love my parents, but I feel vitally attached to them, though I am now able to block their pain and the pain emanating from them entirely. I just pretend it's not happening. I am anaesthetized, and the cutting, I suppose, goes on anyway.

The one I worry about most is my little brother. He gets his "I'm a tough son-of-a-bitch" attitude (resembling Ulick's in Humboldt's Gift) from this emotionally brutal environment (If it were only physical! There might be some release, some action taken sooner!). He's very sensitive, really, and a highly talented artist. Or used to be; protecting himself from the vagaries of family battles has insulated him from his creativity, too. Nowadays he denies he ever was creative.

So is that the answer? Becoming a money-starved capitalist like my brother (anal fixation on money due to contained/suppressed emotions from family-pressures)? Taking the do-it-yourself attitude towards happiness? This is why I don't scream and cry "Rescue me, Elizabeth, reabsorb me into your womb and protect me from the hurt, and I will reabsorb you simultaneously into

my scrotum, swinging you back and forth as I walk". I know you have at least as much pain as I do; I will try to help if you wish me to do so. But it's not enough -- it's not the root of it all. This is why I keep returning to communication, even in my Jefferson essay -- through NLP or ESP or something other than the failed methods used so far, there must be something to say, something to replace pain with "peace and love" (also a cliché. How disgusting, even that has been trivialized, corrupted). Christ, I realize that it will be an incredible job just to make myself (and possibly one other person) happy and at peace, because I sure never felt loved or secure (though my parents tried, I think). Am I just beating my head against a stone wall which won't give? To quote Linda Hunt in The Year of Living Dangerously: "What is to be done?"

The practical thing is, of course, to find peace for and within me, not at all an unreasonable goal -- almost easy. But then what? Buy myself an island and get my kicks from ~~_____~~ *indulging in my excessive bizarre sexual fantasies?* Marrying some completely anaesthetized or inherently unconscious bimbo and spend the rest of my life in some form of suburban purgatory, be it Buckhead-Atlanta, Grosse Pointe-Detroit, the German Foreign Service (just as secure) or some such non-sense? Join the fucking "artistic community" with a neverending series (or a collage) of spaced out artsy-fartsy phonies (thank you, Holden Caulfield) like Yaël Ksander? They're the biggest assholes -- they actually think they've escaped or "see clearly the inherent conflict, etc. of capitalism or the human endeavour (puke, sounds like one of my expressions) in toto." Become a fucking absurdist again? And get into "experiences" with face-painted, "oh wow" types from Liquid Sky so that, according to Camus, we collect as many "interesting" "experiences" (what the fuck does that really mean) as we can before our final experience -- gagging on our own vomit, drowning, whether literally or because of failed kidneys, in our own piss, or sticking little tubes into our arms, direct pipelines carrying bliss from those Middle-Eastern poppy-fields until we just get overwhelmed by all that bliss and beauty ("Aren't we lucky -- if those fools in the suburbs knew that "meaning" and "happiness" depend on quantity and "interest" of "experiences", and that the best experiences are as close as your nearest Peter von Haam" (to whom I have to be grateful for showing me, by his own and others' examples during high school that "getting experienced" (Fuck you, Jimi Hendrix) is not "it" (whatever that may be).). Collecting experience points like in some game show on TV, and after the half-hour is up (paid for by your nearest K-Mart), you disappear from the screen and are never heard of again? And next week we'll be back, same time, same channel, same rules, but different contestants? As usual with no object but to "get experienced" and then to disappear forever?

The real problem, strictly subjectively of course, is that I can't convince myself that this last bit is not wrong. It makes so much fucking sense, but it feels so wrong! What the hell -- I've camed down some, I've been writing for more than half an hour. Too bad suicide is no option, neither in Camus' nor any metaphysical system. Later.

Love, *Jim*

[Note to myself while typing on the 4th = the obvious = unless you're happy + at peace yourself, you can't help anyone, anyway.]

Jan. 3. 23:49p.m.

Many things happened today, the most important of which I will list now: Your letter arrived; I watched One Flew Over the Kookoo's Nest; my mother had one of her strange reactions ("I don't want to go to an insane asylum, I don't want to go to an insane asylum" repeated several times while crying. OK, maybe not in and of itself strange, but the way she said it ... wow. She's started drinking again the last few days, also. She is tragically unhappy and rather insane. Today, it got too much to bear. Except...); I then read the first 20 pages of Alan Watts' The Book, recommended by a friend in Mexico (Herr Krauss), which has changed my reaction, I think.

Your letter: I love you so frightfully much. I wish I could somehow really show you (I'll get to that in connection with Watts). I'm sitting in front of this page and I am just a bit overwhelmed -- what can I ... and there it starts. For me, the world has changed from an "I" to a "We" ... I think (see later). Let me explain.

First of all, I am dreadfully ashamed because I, unlike you, have mostly been wrestling with myself in these pages whereas all of yours seem to relate everything to us, a kind of all-pervading spirit or something. I'm not finding the words. You know what I mean, I think. And being so frightfully intelligent, you realize I'm doing it here also. Thinking of myself, that is. I have considered not letting you see this stuff at all, but somehow... I don't know, maybe you won't see it. In which case I don't know to whom I'm writing. Or have been for hours and hours almost every night. - To and about myself, to my shame.

About this love bit. You realize that I am not quite well adjusted. Having problems with oneself always makes it difficult to love others, psychology texts tell me. At least this is the case with me. When I talked to you on that Thursday 2 weeks before we left for winter vacation (Dec. 21?), I loved you as a friend with whom I had some kind of mental block. Whether your love freed my love for you or "created" it, I don't know. All I know is that I find myself loving you more and more and more the longer I feel loved by you. I don't even know where I'm taking this paragraph; I just love you. Especially after your letter. You give wonderful letter (ha, ha). Should I be redundant and expand on the "wonderful" as related to the rest of you? I'll spare us the tautologies -- I hope to express my love for you in some kind of appropriate fashion some day. Here again, Alan Watts later.

To your actual letter: The fact that there have been many burglaries in the area opens the possibility for another one with the same general circumstances, only this time the unfortunate owners... By the way, "yes", "voodoo", etc., is possible. In a real sense, we are the victims. I'll explain in person. This summer: My parents are pushing hard for me to go to Europe. Dad even promises to make up the difference on the Scirocco (which he gets to drive while we're there -- not too much to expect, but that restricts me further). There's nothing for me to do there... I know no one except Claudia, if won't go alone, and I know of no one who could go ^{and} with whom I'd like to spend my time.

Except for you, with whom a summer in Europe would be But you don't want to go. That is, I think I could "persuade" (read: emotionally black-mail) you. Of course, I won't. I'm coming to summer school, "your obedient servant" (with a Pakistani accent). Please have the 1st aid kit ready for all the shit I'll catch about this.

So some guy who was in Sophie's Choice visited with your family and you Dad told about your past loves (and probably showed the epilepsy movie)? One word...

Christmas presents ... I ... there must be the perfect gift for you out there somewhere... the things I have thought of so far seem so trivial and trivializing. I am confused. I just want to be with you.

Oh shit. That sound like (bitchy voice) "Since you're the perfect gift for me, I should be the perfect gift for you, so don't expect nothin'". Can't I do anything right? Elizabeth, I will try very hard, but if it's not "worthy" (excuse the word) I won't do it. Which doesn't make sense. I'm mailing this internal-thinking-shit (SRAPON -- barf!) but I won't give you a (relatively) shitty present. Jens...

Pheromones! Pheromones! That's what you meant! I'm sorry, but this is exciting! At 0:36 a.m. on January 4th, I discover that what looks like "feramanes" is pheromones! I'm not making fun of you, I promise; I'm genuinely excited! Your pheromones, emanating from "zee pay-purr, zay eentockseequayte mee, zay duhrryveh mee wy-ehldah!" (bring up the "rive gauche" backdrop, fetch the moustache and the beret and put on some Edith Piaf (puke))

Liz, we need to talk not so much about marriage but you telling your parents about us marrying. What does boya mean? "Jens from nowhere -- a posing child of Hitler" -- I'm too stupid, Elizabeth, I don't understand.

Momentarily, I'm wondering what the hell good semi-stream-of-consciousness-and-in-any-case-disjointed paragraphs like the last one will do. "How Bogus, Man!"

Christine is smarter than I gave her credit for and you are (thank God!!! (I meant that very emphatically)) much less idealistic about me than I thought: "You might become jealous of any success I had." Damn right, to quote J. R. (how appropriate!): Liz, there are two possibilities: Either I will become so jealous that it will break us up (I'm too intelligent, I hope, to let mere material or public success on my part truly satisfy my supposed need to be better than the unknown, greater genius with whom I would be living -- in this respect I'm like Salieri) or I won't care at all. I'm betting on the latter: I love you, I feel loved by you, and I'm moving in this direction philosophically and psychologically, independently of my relationship with you. Your incredible humility and love, suggesting to give up having your art published, leads me to 3 conclusions: you realize that art does not depend on its publication (I haven't); you love me immensely; you will easily digest the fulfillment of the incredibly faint possibility of my getting greater public recognition (or perhaps greater possibility: It is the mediocre art of which I feel capable that generally satisfies.).

The USA: At this time, I feel, for right now, not permanently attached to you; therefore, I cannot promise you that I will quit UVA and follow you to Vienna when you can't take America. For right now, I still have "a life of my own." If and when I start living in terms of "We" instead of "I", not just thinking (see earlier)... Also, to quote John Cougar Mellencamp, philosophically, psychologically, and quite possibly into consciousness in a general sense, I was "born in the USA", to which I must add an emphatic and slightly sarcastic "Uh-Huh." Which implies that I wanna split.

[Hi, it's your typist of a few days later again. I typed for approximately 8 hours yesterday, and 2 hours the day before that, and I will probably have typed another 2 by the time I'm finished. This is silly -- I wish I could just send you the originals, but my writing is so bad, I have to sit here and type 21 pages verbatim from my scrawled hieroglyphics. Sad. Anyway, there was at this point about 4 handwritten (1.5 typed) pages analyzing your (very astute) analysis of my neuroses and your touching "Manifesto." I decided they were cruel (my analyses of your analysis and manifesto, of course), so I decided to leave them out. You will notice, of course, that the continuity of the letter is completely broken -- this is why I did absolutely no editing so far. By the way, those times you see typed at the end and the beginning of each segment are for the handwritten versions, written in bed, usually between 23:00 (p.m.) of one day and 2:00 (a.m.) of the next. So when it says 0:20 to 2:20 on Jan. 4, that still belongs to the "day" of Jan. 3, which just carried over into the fourth (this was an example). Anyway, back to the letter. This will be disjointed...]

Love, *John*

[See ...]

PS: One Flew Over the Kookoo's Nest and my mother seemed to convince me finally that I can't worry and try to help everyone, as I have been trying to decide. But then I read Alan Watts, a great and clear thinker who put me onto paths I had tread before but, sadly, had lost. If I am All then I am my mother and All; I must help. Yet if, in a mythic sense or reality (See LeShan), I am the pained and wishing it so (as Watts and the Vedanta suggest); should I try to help? I am confused, but I've been here before; I can think in this way. All I need is a little time. In the mean time, I'm getting a book of his on love between lovers and how that relates (semi-Frommian, I suppose). And then express that love -- a "new" (??? -- I chuckle, for obvious reasons) kind of art, concentrating on the other side to SRAPON art (why am I still using that silly term?). I will always love you as I love you now, and very probably much, perhaps infinitely much more.

Your *John*

(completed at 2:02 a.m.)

[Excuse the self-indulgent ruminations of the PS, please. But that's silly -- this entire thing is one big self-indulgent rumination -- SRAPON (argh!). I'm sorry. I love you.]

Jan. 8 1984 / 0:32

Bear Liz

Hi, it's me again. I haven't written in some days, I know. After my last letter to you I spent most of 2 days typing all that stuff, then one day writing letters to friends and family, and then there was yesterday, which was rough.

I'm finally beginning to learn that I need to deal with my problems, worries myself. I called you yesterday because I had had an especially lousy day and needed some cheering up and instead I felt a) lonely because I couldn't be with you, b) disgusted because I felt I was dragging you down, c) no better about why I felt badly, d) perplexed by your "you're like Humboldt" remark. Somehow, all I manage to do on occasions like that call is to spread my misery and then not even alleviate it in myself.

I went to bed at my usual hour last night (sorry, out of correction stuff), after the usual furious reading -- I read most of The Red Pavillion that night. I turned off the light and kept thinking what I rationally have to call Weltschmerz-bullshit but at the time really felt: a sense of leprous death, the same as that with which The Red Pavillion ends; a feeling of complete and utter abandonment by not only others but also that essential part of myself whose absence me feel so utterly incomplete, hopeless and purposeless; the strange thought that of the two possible results of seppuku, oblivion or rebirth as someone or something, anyone or anything was better than this torture, possibly self-inflicted torture that I feel my existence to be in all but the most physical sense; finally, an urge to release these black thoughts, most obviously to you in these pages.

[Sorry, my little brother took the typewriter away - it's 10:16 p.m. on the 13th and I've got to finish before I leave for Cville tomorrow!]

I am grateful to my usually negative indecisiveness that I did not do the latter (i.e., release the thoughts). These thoughts will be black but will seem blindingly brilliant compared to last night's.

I have been questioning my existence in these pages, and a good deal beyond these pages, during this vacation, and I have come up with the usual result: Everything is unclear to me, most of all what I should do, on every level - which implies I'm asking the wrong question. But, after all, it is from the metaphysical answers to life's basic questions that one derives one's practical decisions; even if the two are one and the same, they must be identified as such (I can't even do that) and they have to be made on some basis, even if this basis is by definition tenuous or "tenuousness" in itself (I can't figure this out, either). Right now, I'm still "covering all the bases" until I figure out what I really want to do.

Incidentally, this brings up an interesting side-light for you (I am, at least sometimes, aware of this) - These pages are mostly selfish reflections upon

myself by myself. Showing them to you is really not important, though I expect the results will be important to me - and the usual ones (this is not fair, actually - I've shown stuff like this to only 4 people: Jake Kirkaid, a mild-mannered religion teacher at Lovett, in The Penultimate Question (a paper of mine); Miles Boyd in my movie notes; Claudia Heinze in some letters (the last ones); and now you. Jake got a reasonably clear distillation of 11th grade, adolescent bull-shit; Miles got an incredible mess of my ideas as they connect to Bogart, Eno, and the Chattahoochee; Claudia got some through the heavily distorting filter of my emotions gone wild - completely. Only the last one rejected me, and understandably so. However, your cases are similar not only ^{but} also because of the much more intensely personal nature of my communication with the two of you. Therefore, the "usual" results will only probably be...).

At least, anything I do is selfish in the sense that somehow it connects with this need for peace and meaning for me - maybe even the "caring w/o lust" part with you. "She looks like she has her shit together, maybe I can find something there" - but then again, maybe not. My relationship w/ you has been very simple and non-rational (from my side). ~~which~~ All of which, added to the inherent insecurity of a soul in search of its place (or possibly an intelligence (if limited) without a soul) makes it even harder to believe you when you say you love me.

because of your relationships with me

On top of all this inconclusive introspection my parents pulled me into the living room today (yesterday), pinned me in a corner, and attacked me about what I wanted to do with myself. Mostly about my having been a "weirdo" (their term) at Lovett, and in their opinion possibly understandably so because I was more intelligent, and now, finding myself surrounded by equally intelligent Echols Scholars at UVA, trying to become a "weirdo" even there, this time by unjustifiable means (i.e. the pink high-tops I've been joking around about - their only example, by the way). And how I was not doing the things expected of me as a Jefferson Scholar, i.e. meeting future business partners and being conservative all the time, having supposedly given up my private life because of the scholarship. Their attack was fierce, and I fought them back bravely, winning on every point (why so militaristic, Jens? The situation seemed to be). But I had to leave immediately after those gruelingly intense 45 minutes because I felt drained and, as silly as it sounds, raped - I had to justify mostly instinctive behavior and thought patterns of mine in terms they could understand (i.e., how my "weirdness" was an asset for future business-partners; how I was making connections), and I had to do so for what seemed an eternity in a

brutal environment w/ people I did not wish to discuss myself with and who could not possibly understand me if I did (as proved, for example, by their attitude towards the conversation and me - "I know how to handle you - I provoke you until you open yourself, I know you better than anyone" - I feed you easy lines + lies to satisfy you and get you off my back, mother. You know me in some ways, but of this, for example, you have not an inkling, and if you did, you would not approve. I see my future not exclusively in economic terms, and it is this very economic security, or its lack, that has kept you tied to a man you, at best, cannot stand for over 10 years come until your mother dies! And if you won't understand, we will know my John-Buch-Society/Adolf-Hitler-Fan-Club father won't. He can't even get lies out of me. Today (i.e. on the 6th - see note on dates) we were together for 45 minutes in the car - maybe 4 sentences between us, about how he couldn't stand the modern jazz I liked. And then he tries reconciliation: "Well I do like it if it's played right." Not right, father, different! And you don't even listen to the jazz, you like because you keep sacrificing yourself for your family, making sure everything is perfect for us and making our life miserable at best!).

My great fear is that once again I will have this apocalyptic, organic confrontation with myself and then ease back into living with my messed-up self as I trudge through life's daily hassles with my eyes at my feet, too busy looking for rocks to see my own wings and take flight. If I only knew those wings existed! But would that really make a difference?

Anyway, some 3 hrs. after that confrontation w/ my parents I phoned you and discovered finally that I, at least, cannot find comfort with others, at least not in this way. I felt no better, felt I had troubled an Elizabeth who would otherwise have still been in a bubbly mood over Yugoslavia, and, finally, even felt rebuffed by her, though in a very minor way (Humboldt reminded me a lot of my friend Jacob, who I see as something of a genius, but not admirably so - He's very talented in science and especially math, and though he cannot trade in Humboldt's absurdly logical fashion, he has the same forcefully and ubiquitously expressed "strong opinions" as Humboldt. Sort of like Kahlua; a rather inefficient liquor (doesn't even get you drunk "right"), only to be taken in small doses, but lots of fun nevertheless - Not what I'd hoped for, but upon reflection, better than flat-grey mediocrity. For a man (sorry, a child) who knows as little of himself as I do and has no earthly (or heavenly) idea what he wants from himself or others, this

remarks of yours should have been a compliment out; that it was not taken as such amplifies the selfishness and ad's conceit. Wonderful person to have a "real" romance with.).

So that's me:

Still lost, raped, not able to find comfort in others, and frantically fearful of sinking into the anaesthetizing morass of daily life that takes one to the "answer" over 68 long years and delivers it in the form of ... life! Little plants and animals, turning my dead body into the humus, the fertilizer which will allow countless others to lead equally painful lives, and so on and on and on and on, mocking me in its unimaginable immensity and power, laughing loudly, "Meaning? For you, insignificant wretch? You are merely an inefficient drop of Kahlua, a tiny experiment whose miniscule importance lies in its usefulness for feeding larger and more elaborate experiments, until that final, 200 proof ambrosia is arrived at!" But why? If someone could only tell me who'll drink it, or why, I'd be happy! Because even though I was, until recently, sure that there was no final deliverance, no meaning-giving Judgement Day, I am so, so ... completely manchored that I can't even rule that out any more!

And as I write this I realize that I am not that hysterical, that I realize the impossibility of knowing as fully as I can, that, in many ways, I have accepted it and realize that the above questions are the wrong ones. - Which still leaves me asking: Should I become a lawyer or an artist (for example, and assuming I have the talent for the latter, which is another major question in itself)? And how can I find a sense of peace, even a small peace, a truce with the universe, and is it this large or small peace or that monstrous pain that I should be the subject for my art, or aren't they the same thing from different angles?

I use "Zen-speak" though I do not understand.

I am beginning to see why Hemingway liked wars - they take your mind off shit like this - Indulging in the purely physical ... leads to my ~~excessively~~ excessively bizarre sexual fantasies. And on that utterly ~~and~~ and maybe appropriately sordid note I am

Noone's
Tong

(though I do love you - but, truthfully, I have doubted this, as all else, also.)

Jan. 9 / 0:37 a.m.

Dear Liz,

What an extraordinary, ordinary day, what a wonderful experience, what a strange, wonderful life! Let me tell you:

Today I had a lazy day. I got up late, breakfasted for a long time, played guitar for a long time, lifted weights for a long time, read just a little bit, ate, talked, ate some more, watched some TV, and then read just a little bit more. And of all the things I did, the reading, especially the second time, was the most important.

Except that all things are. Important, that is. And not.

I'll tell you about the reading: The first time I was reading Alan Watts' The Book again. I was rediscovering things I'd read years and years ago, though I could not remember where; right now I think I may not have ever read them so much as known them. ~~That~~ The whole Tao bit, its simple beauty -- I felt I was back in that part of my mind where I belonged. I was happy, the room was warm, the chair was comfortable... -- it was grand; relaxed, easy, sleepy peace. Didn't get a lot of feeding done. Didn't have to.

And tonight...well, tonight is when I write what might become the turning point of these letters. I might not write letters after this one, as a matter of fact. We'll see. But before the writing came the reading. The Tao of Pooh by Benjamin Hoff. Alone on the proverbial island, this would be my choice of the book to take.

I'm done with it now (a book a night...). And feel happy. I'll quote some stuff that relates to these letters:

"The Confusionist, Desiccated Scholar is one who studies Knowledge for the sake of Knowledge, and who keeps what he learns to himself or to his own small group...rather than working for the enlightenment of others." (p.25)

"How can you go very far,
If you don't know who you are?" (p. 58)

"If you're in tune with The Way Things Work, then they work the way they need to, no matter what you may think about it at the time. Later on, you can look back and say, "Oh, now I understand. That had to happen so that those could happen, and those had to happen in order for this to happen...." Then you realize that even if you'd tried to make it all turn out perfectly, you couldn't have done better, and if you'd really tried, you would have made a mess of the whole thing." (p.80)

"While the clean mind listens to a bird singing, the Stuffed-Full-Of-Knowledge-And-Cleverness mind wonders what kind of bird is singing."

"Lao-tse: 'To attain knowledge, add things every day. To attain wisdom, remove things every ~~day~~ day.'"

Yes, yes, I know: platitudes, simple thoughts. That's what I like about them, and to really do something with them is not that easy.

They speak to me, to what I've been doing with my life so far, you know?

The first quote: I mention just that in some of my earlier letters, about wanting to learn and, if I can and may, teach (in quotes).

The second quote: My problem is that I don't know who I am (see previous letter(s)). I am learning, I hope.

The third quote: The most recent public BIG THING in my life was getting the scholarship -- in just this way. I paid absolutely no attention to it -- I just did and expected nothing. The most recent private BIG THING was being loved and loving you. Ditto.

The fourth quote: My "color experiences" are just ~~kix~~ like this -- I suddenly wake up and life in its magnificent brilliance shows itself to me and quietly overwhelms me. Maybe not "overwhelms" -- a kind of "suffuses," "passes through." It's not a word-thing. Love.

The final quote: Why are you going to summer school? I know why I'm going -- you. The alternative is a lonely, dreary summer in Detroit and, for about two weeks, in Europe (not having anyone to go with over there -- after all, the process, whose main feature is your presence, is most important). But maybe "lonely, ~~xxxx~~ dreary" isn't fair. In its own, quiet way it will be a very exciting, fulfilling summer. But what the heck? For as long as my way is your way, I would rather be with you (I'm getting terms confused slightly here, though I know what I mean.).

Why bother with summer school? I would like to spend 3 months completely unbound by any time schedules (i.e., not in a Bisy ~~Fix~~ Backson manner) with My Great Love, instead of spending 2½ months in an environment only slightly less ~~rekiment~~ reglimented than normal school time and a ½ month without you. As a matter of fact, the more I think about it, a summer to myself in my room in Detroit is almost preferable. Europe's "color experiences" will be more direct than C-ville's because they will be freer and Detroit will be more conducive to introspection and learning (or forgetting).

A mosquito of paranoia just bit me: I love you. This is not intended as blackmail and is not to be taken as such. Ramblings, like all of this b.s..

Spend this summer in Europe with me. This coming semester the two of us (if you still love me and wish to do this with me) will learn much together, applying it as we go; let us go to Europe with this, living full in in this in all senses ~~akkk~~ all the time, experiencing the on infinite and infinitely varied "color experience", soaking up life's haphazard beauty in a haphazard way. Let us.

This is silly. Listen to the Beatles' "Two of Us." If you don't think you want to go with me while reading this, you will soon. This is the thing to do.

But if the situation changes, as it most certainly will, it might no longer be the thing to do. And as it changes I'll adjust with the circumstances.

This, then, this collection of letters, with the enclosed ~~xxxx~~ Tao of Pooh forming its conclusion and its beginning, is my Christmas gift to you, possibly with all the attached heavy symbolism obliquely peeking around the corner (birth imagery, etc. -- take it away, literary genius). These letters are as close to being what I was becoming during this vacation as anything not directly me could

be. By now you will know better who and what I am on some levels, and do not forget that though, to use Reagan's phrase, I've "turned the corner" (maybe), the old stuff is still with me; you will, therefore, have formed an opinion of what you want to do with it and with me.

Forgive my silly solemn mood -- I'm just in this kind of solemn-happy mood, and I am acutely aware of the risk to our relationship my showing this stuff to you is. However, I have decided it's worth the risk because I feel at this moment very optimistic and happy about my future, with or without you (And I realize that most of this stuff is more likely to lead to a "without" than a "with").

Why I feel a need to show it to you, I don't know -- I suppose it's like old men taking out their false teeth and showing off their ugly mouths after one has admired those pearly whites. I'm just going to do it.

And I am extending 2 invitations (or supplications, as the case may be):

a) Join me in exploring "this stuff" further and

b) Come to Europe with me this summer. Please.

If both are successful, the first will be more important and the second more exciting. *But all is important. And not.*

And let "book-learnin'" be what it is: A part of life, but not a preponderant part. As both of us ~~xi~~ intellectually understand (and, as far as I can tell, both don't know), the really important stuff doesn't come in books anyway, and for what does you have time. This hasn't time. Not for me, anyway.

One day, I hope to be able to say that I earnestly love all as much ~~a~~ as I love you now, or, more incredibly, as I will love you then. If that's the point. I'll see, I'm sure.

Your

Jane

(completed at 2:15)

Jan. 10 / 1:02 a.m.

Dear Liz,

It's cold; I'm scared. Why is it always night when I write?

I just got through reading 2 excellent articles on WWII and its ending, and their anticipated celebration ~~on~~ on the 8th of May in the German magazine Der Spiegel (the articles, not the celebrations). The world-view of the Bankers and Lawyers, the entrepreneurs, the "tough guys," the Realpolitiker of every description, literal and metaphorical -- in short, of almost everyone around -- driven to its most bitter, its absolute conclusion. Hitler killing millions; Stalin killing millions before and after him; Roosevelt and Churchill killing millions by ordering them to relocate from territories transferred to Russia and by the use of the atom bomb -- an unneeded second time, at the very least. The conclusion one of the articles draws (and mine for some time now): Every man is a potential "war criminal."

Elizabeth, I find this thought so overwhelmingly horrible, it's hard to describe -- and I haven't even lived through stuff like that.

Before that I read about General Stroessner's 30 year rule of terror, like the Nazis only longer and more effective, being a Bavarian himself who somehow found his way to Paraguay -- Elizabeth, this is real; it's happened, it's happening, it will happen again and again, and we are doing it every time we cheer Charles Bronson in the movies or Bernard Goetz in real life when they blow away the punks with the knives, even if it's only for a second, quietly, inside. I've felt this, I'm feeling it now inside me, this need to plant one's foot in somebody's face, to always ~~crush~~ (thank you, Orwell, for that metaphor you borrowed). And the only explanation I have for it is that in everybody's past there is some sort of girl with a riding crop, some initial stimulus that releases the reflex to strike back, to end the pain by destroying what is causing it -- a hopeless enterprise, for not only does the reflex unleash more pain in general and particularly in one's own direction, but, as far as I can tell, life is inherently injurious at some point. In some way, something will make us strike back, for if we do not, we will die: And though through death we may simply realize our constant though (when we are manifested as individuals) sometimes hidden connection to some cosmic life force, even Watts will tell you that the initial, personal reaction of the individual manifestation of such a life force is to insure it's own individual survival when threatened, when in pain -- to pull that gun, as Goetz did, and blow the motherfuckers away. This ~~is~~ is the big horror, the taste you have in your mouth when you wake up in the morning: The taste of death, of your ubiquitous enemy's blood that you drank in your sleep and that you drink every night. Civilization whether in the form of mouthwash or taboos will try to remove that taste of and/or for blood, but when we wake up every morning, it is there. And it is real. There are cemeteries full of them.

But, on the other hand, I do feel horror at this thought -- why? It indicates one of 2 things to me: a) I have not accepted my true nature and am under society's influence in the form of a taboo or b) There is that other side that Watts speaks of, that deep-seated recognition that I am not only my brother's keeper, I am my brother, and everyone and everything else, including and maybe especially those I gun down, in some form or another. I have not explored the side of me that wishes to crush to any real extent -- I have yet to kill, possibly the ultimate act of crushing, with the possible exception of sex, which, all of Freud's detractors to the contrary, I feel is somehow centrally connected with this death side, even if only because it perpetuates physical existence (and least sometimes) and, hence, the pain. Yet ever since ~~by~~ buying my first two books on hypnosis (which were also my best books on Hypnosis/Meditation in general that I bought and never really applied) and stealing (in North Carolina way back in the second Camp Seagull summer, summer of 10th grade (?)) that slightly dry but rather good philosophical treatise of Joseph C. Pearce, Exploring the Crack in the Cosmic Egg (dumb title, I know -- doubtlessly one of your publisher-friend's creations (ha, ha)), I feel I have been standing in front of a door in some huge wall, which, I suspect, is a wall of closed but unlocked doors of which I have now seen several -- and I keep feeling, maybe hoping (I can't tell the difference any more, if there ever was one) that I will be released, absolved of this side.

I feel I have been standing in front of these doors for at least $3\frac{1}{2}$ years, either staring at the door, cracking it open to take a peek through drugs and meditation/hypnosis, or turning away from it completely, as in some of these letters.

I don't know, it seems as if most people never find this wall or when they do, turn around and walk back to their apartments and check if the gun in the bedside drawer is loaded. I feel I've been standing here too long -- it's time to move, but I'm deadly afraid.

For what will happen to me when I cross that threshold, I do not know. Even if I take a Taoistic attitude (basically don't worry, don't think, do what feels right), I know I'll just walk straight through; my only options are ones which imply concerted (i.e. tense) action -- either ~~am~~ walking away or walking through. But what I really only know is the death side (see my Appendix to ~~these~~ these letters, ~~and~~ an excerpt from my "Ideas" notebook). I've felt that, in ~~xxx~~ its many forms, inside me. It's what I can believe to be real.

The possibility is that the emotion of horror at my own cruelty which, along with minor or secondary stuff like Alan Watts, OK meditation experiences and "color experiences" suggest that there's this other side, is ~~it~~ simply that -- a possibility, not real (?), a delusion (?) and if I let go and follow it, I'm simply pulling blinders further and further over my eyes and leaving me more and more to those who feel about me as Goetz did about those blacks (?). If only there ~~were~~ were some miracle -- but as Christ says in the Bible, you're supposed to believe without them (there's so much good shit in the Bible, but almost noone can approach it because they've been indoctrinated with the various churches' b.s.. I might be able to do it -- I don't know jack-shit (oh, I love America) about it). Anyway, miracles, what do I want? The best demonstrations that the Way of the Tao ~~is~~ right are, in recent chronological order, the scholarship, Claudia, and you -- three cases where just being me and letting circumstances and the world worry about themselves led to four years of free living and an excellent, though "death world-view" (and not even that if I put in some effort) education, a great girl whom I "lost" because I started SRAPONizing in the "death world-view" again (where the fuck did SRAPONizing come from all of a sudden? I thought that stupid term was gone!) and, now, ELIZABETH -- still happening (cross your fingers) and beyond description. Them's miracles, Jens. So why am I not moving? ~~Why~~ Why am I running scared? Why not ree-lax?

I know why. I realize that my last secret refuge, psychobiology, is not a refuge -- those fools will never know if they approach it that way. Art is something I may or may not be able to do, and even being a godd artist doesn't assure me my daily Wheaties. And like it or not, I, as well as Alan Watts, realize that the "death world view" is part of life as long as I remain an individual manifestation of the cosmic-life-force-thingee. I need to find a way of crushing I like or, much better, find a way to celebrate and live the other side of me and support my physical being as a by-product and ~~am~~ have that support be constant. Which I've got for the next 4 years (or $3\frac{1}{2}$ now). But what then? The Taoistic thing to do (coinciding, as it does in many places, with absurdism/existentialism) -- not worry about the futre, live for the present.

You know, if architecture could support me, I'd do that, but the job situation there will remain rathr hopeless -- you know, if I could ~~remain~~ find some monastery which wouldn't push their interpretation on me too hard, I could really go for that, for being a monk.

I'm dead serious. This has been swimming around in the back of my head for some time -- I could really handle that. Work some (only a little) in the fields and if I have a bad crop, let the church support me -- really cool. But eventually boring? I need a lifetime of what I will do this summer -- bumming around where the winds take me, the banishment of the future letting me see the brillianse of the present, all the while secure that I've got the cash to cover whatever I get into at any time, without having to worry about getting it. And that for a life time? (Do I really want that?) Everyone's dreamed it -- we lived it as children. But now that mom and pop are gone, will a world of people who have learned to concentrate on their "crushing" side take care of me? They have with the scholarship, but won't they want what every good crusher wants -- results, sooner or later?

I'm thinking of myself again. Meditation and hypnosis stills these inner rivers that spew garbage, and the Way of the Tao is to still them all the time, to walk in silence and hear the beauty. Can I, should I, must I, or perhaps more appropriately, can't I, shouldn't I, mustn't I do this? And how to reconcile it with the carnal, crushing side? I must read some more Watts et. al.. If I can't do it next semester, I feel I must stay in Detroit or find some retreat, some place where I can do this -- but why keep putting it off? I've been putting it off for years, literally! "The thousand mile journey starts with one step" -- does that first step take this much effort? Go, move Jens. Why aren't you moving? Move!

Jan. 13 / 0"31

Dear Liz,

This will be my last letter to you in this series; it will be odd, not a great, flourishing ending to this odd collection of schizophrenic ramblings.

It needs to start with the words I LOVE YOU and hence it has already failed.

I have much, much to say to you, but that is what it boils down to: I love you. Do ~~you~~ you want to know something strange? There is a possibility that I just now meant it more than I've meant it before.

Let me tell you.

This vacation has been really awful for me. That doesn't begin to ~~capture~~ capture it, but maybe you can understand -- just horrendous. I am glad to leave and this is very painful for me.

My last ties to my father are broken. He is worse than he used to be and he is losing his last redeeming quality, his precision in technical matters. He knows nothing about me, we have nothing to talk about, he trusts noone, is loved by noone, yet thinks he is loved... he actually thinks his wife and younger son love him, the poor fool (he's finally realized he has no relationship with me but still thinks we had one. We did not, not for ages.). I pity him immensely. He has nothing, and you know what? A part of him knows it. He will die soon. It's on his face. He looks about ready to have a heart attack.

My mother had one of her saner days today (i.e. yesterday, but belonging to "today" -- see date notes), which means she was the loving, wonderful person who married my father because she loved

him and saw he needed help. This special person only sometimes comes out nowadays, she is nearly but not quite broken. At other times she is a suicidal drunkard (she has attempted once that I know of) -- and she realizes that she is waiting mainly for one death (her mother's, which will get her the pitiful sum that poor, lonely, wicked person who is my grandmother has not been able to willfully waste (rather than letting her daughter have it -- she's got (she must have) around a million left, but when my mother called to ask her to live with her and give her some money to divorce my father, she refused to help.)). And if not her mother's death, her husband's. A death-centered existence for years now.

My brother is nearly buried. He's got one nostril above the muck. A very special person, years and years of time, lots of love and absolutely no family (not this one, anyway) might create the faint possibility that he can become happy.

And me. Elizabeth, so much and so little of me is in these ~~ix~~ pages.

You see, when I left for college I was still in shock from Claudia and, hence, never dealt with ~~ix~~ leaving my family, who they were, who I was, an integral part of a family which to an incredibly large extent has shaped me.

My father said today that I am at the age where I deny my background -- as usual, 180° wrong, Dad, I'm at the age where I confront it fully, and in these pages, as they will be all my life, they've been a huge, overwhelming presence. A very, very troubling presence.

And what has gotten me through this vacation is ... me. A (particularly ~~troubled~~? Hardly.) troubled and pained part of this troubled and pained family. And one who...feels himself loved. By you. And loves you fiercely. And gets his strength from that love.

I am sorry, as usual. This, too, this constant "I'm sorry" comes from my background, in particular a father who always found fault and has been punishing us all (our family) with his choleric outbursts to such an extent that "pre-emptive guilt reflexes" (my own word creation) occur constantly. No excuse, I know.

What I'm sorry about is that I have not discussed you or your problems, which are undoubtedly bigger than mine. My own confusion, your absence, my pitiful weaknesses...they all (realizing full well that "they all" means "I") let me be selfish. Forgive me, please.

This and my fear of what your reaction to all this disgusting gibberish will be has mad me question whether I want to let you see this. As of this writing, I still have not decided.

Originally, I had planned out very sophisticated ways of basically shifting the decision to you, so that, in case you said "Ickee poo," I could say "But you wanted to!" -- until I recognized these schemes for what they were (in the car today). I will decide. I ~~will~~ will carry the responsibility myself. I owe that to you and also to myself.

This thinking about how you'll react -- it's been on my mind a lot. I don't know how you'll react -- you said once when I told you how I'd done something like this to Claudia, who had reacted with an "Ickee poo", that a revelation of innards would make you love me even more ~~if you didn't already love me~~ (or make you fall in love with me if you didn't already love me. I suppose that at the time you already

loved me -- I don't know). I just don't know how you'll react. I think about you a lot. But whereas Claudia's was (retrospectively) decidedly a negative influence (much of what I had to go through during this vacation her "presence" (unwittingly, I admit) delayed), you have been that, that, ... I don't know what to call you ... that ELIZABETH who was there to prop me up as I was just about to go under, to give ~~inix~~ in in some form or another ... you know. It's not a word-thing.

And today I think I fell in love with you again. Not that I fell out -- a kind of cumulative thing.

Know why? Got your letter today.

For some reason I really disliked it.

Yeah, I know. Weird (not, by the way, something that I categorize myself as, as you seem to imply at one point. Also, Salierè, though he may not be spelled Salieri, was never Cellerri. Lastly, don't worry, you are. Don't trust me, but as far as I can tell, which isn't much as I just admitted, you are.). Look, I knew right away and I know now that your intentions were the very best ~~andx andxh~~ and that you said many true things. It ~~wax~~ was all wonderful. I just didn't like it.

And, as usual, while I'm writing I ~~figura~~ figure shit out. Like now. Like all these letters.

Maybe it was the part where you said something about admiring me "mildly," destroying the very foundation of a myth which I had come to believe from what you said and did in C-ville. Thinking that you loved me madly was very (I can't emphasize this enough) disconcerting for my subconscious insecurity complexes and illogical for my conscious mind, which recognized me as a fuck-up, limited kind of a guy -- yet it was also immensely flattering and made me (sort of) happy. Part of me could secretly hope that maybe there was something in me which you, but not I, could see, which was somehow worth something (why are so many words denoting quality connected with money in English?). My uncomfortable throne, my thorny crown -- they've been removed. Yeah, I feel a bit better, but it's kind of like surviving a crash unscathed in which the brand-new Porsche ~~was~~ bought got totalled... sorry, bad simile. Know what I mean though?

Kind of the same thing with suggesting I'd called you up to tell you "it was over," and that you could set your love aside and still be friends. The unrestrainable, wild aspect -- gone with the suggestion of my love leaving or your love being controllable. The spotlight, blinding and somewhat embarrassing, has disappeared, and I'm just sort of sitting there, having drifted back to earth, free fall just a past illusion. So there's no longer the danger of crashing into the ground -- but now what? In a very real sense, walk over and pick up the parachute -- a pedestrian experience.

I couldn't play the somewhat reluctant lover in the face of overwhelming passion anymore (bring up the fiddles). That's what it boiled down to, I guess. I wanted to be overwhelmed, worn out by your love, covered with kisses until I could no longer refuse and returned them, a life-long (well, 18-year) deficit in love made up, a romantic dream of a lonely looney (sorry I'm getting sappy here -- I meant it all until "lonely looney" when I just had to laugh out loud).

As always when illusions are shattered, I felt rebuffed -- hence my dislike of your letter. However, it had 2 results: First of all, I feel I can more easily show you all this shit; Secondly, I think

I'm ready to "go and give it my all", as strange as that is. I'm back in the underdog position in which I feel comfortable so to speak. I'm trying to "get" ~~something~~ something (your love) which, by all rights, I shouldn't (because I'm a fucked-up schizo). And I now recognize how truly silly and stupid this bullshit I spew about "if you still love me" and "if you ever loved me" and "you won't love me for long" really is.

Don't worry, I'm not going to act more strangely than usual. I just feel ... well, more weight, more responsibility has shifted to me. Before, I felt I was kind of carried along by a glorious raging river and now I feel it's "time to do some paddlin', boy," in mostly an emotional sense. Kind of more reciprocal, if you know what I mean.

Cause I don't.

All of this sounds like a big crock of bullshit to me.

Then again its' 2:25 -- another cold night spent in bed with pen, paper and you.

My Great Love.

These letters...shit. I don't know. Without a doubt I've written them all, and the things in them (whether in form or in content) are doubtlessly still parts of me. Which is why I'm reluctant to show them to you -- they're parts, and the uncomfortable ones, too. They're me and they're not -- but how will you be able to tell the difference if I can hardly, and only sometimes?

What can I say but that, if and whenever you see this, I did not bar anything and that I was addressing you while letting whatever was there come out. And, most importantly, I love you. Forever and ever. It's not a word-thing.

Your
John

PS: We're going to decide together whether you'll read these letters -- I'm going to read from "Kind of more reciprocal..." to the end, and then we'll see. These are, after all, our letters, whether you will see them or not.

PPS: Whatever that test you ~~were~~ were talking about is, let's have it.

Appendix = Entry from my infrequently kept "Ideas" notebook

Sep. 7 - I've run into a major problem.

I've been thinking about how CVA and Amie Hall celebrate the bitterness of life, the always-becoming-and-never-being, and give it the beauty of musty old dark libraries, when shit turns into what Germans call humus, rich earth. Bittersweet. Enjoying Woody Allen's and one's own schizophrenia and raising it to an art form. Not only does the temptation exist to become a worshipper of "this" in the form of a college prof. or an artist but also the uncertainty of whether this is "o.k." in a physical sense while knowing one could enjoy it and, hence, not come to the "beyond-always-becoming-to-the-being." The problem is that I am no longer sure it exists. The MLP guys, Bandler & Grinder, imply that it does not.

since they deny that hypnosis is something essentially different from consciousness. My psychobiology course seems to support this position. All I have is:

(a) the knowledge that hypnosis/meditation can quiet the inner dialogue [what exactly is this - how does it connect to the "always-being"?

(b) a very intense experience with the absurd ["always-being"] which was much more intense than my meditation experiences.

(c) the incredible, deep wish for total communication, for Nietzsche's Ewigkeit [poems]

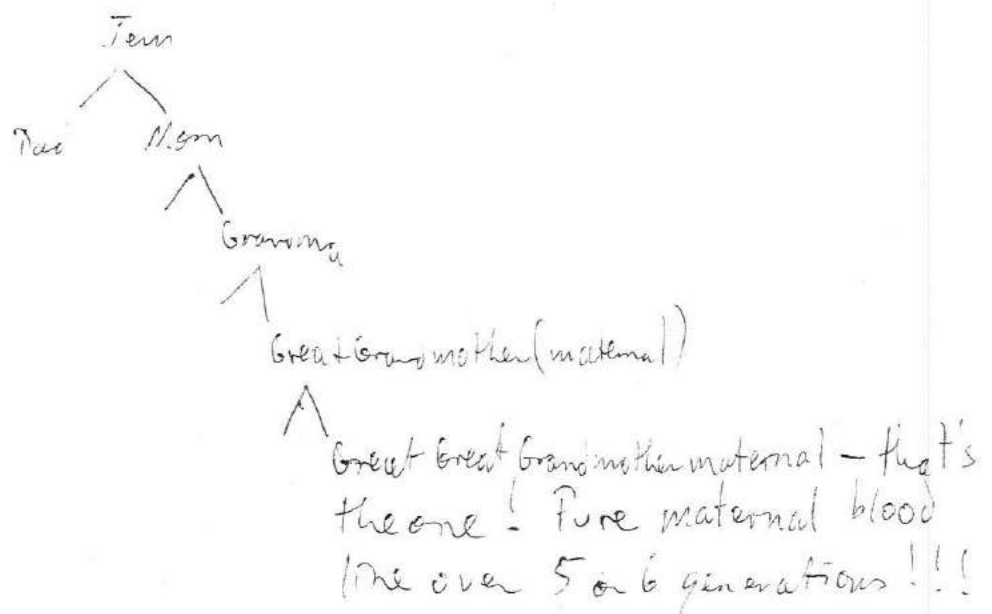
(d) uncertainty over whether the "always-being" is something that can be attained [what is it? The abyss opens, and... nothing (Nietzsche) - is that it? Camus says - so, if I remember. But why is there a schizoid

Woody Allen attitude as well
as a Buddhist, peaceful attitude
which, by the way, resembles
"the guys" attitude in the Stranger,
maybe? Referring to the
"always being" as something is an
artful formulation] or whether it
is imaginary and a placebo
pacifier. Could the line be
so thin that Camus' total
rejection of any reverence for
the permanence of the absurd,
if that's the same as the Buddhism's Tao,
is necessary because even the
majority of buddhists can't
manage to keep this reverence
or whatever from becoming
a pacifier, a blindfold? And
what about communication
through the Tao (Camus never tried
it through the absurd)? Did the
monks ever communicate or
was it self-reflexive? Was it real?
If yes, can I do it and why is

it done so little in the West?
Does the fact that "the answers"
aren't readily available indicate
that they don't exist or that I'm
looking in the wrong places?
Why is this situation analogous
to my guitar - playing (I'd do
it if there were sheet music
for it but figuring it out step
for step is "too big of a pain
in the ass")? I need help.



Appendix = Proof of my royal
ancestry, given to me by
my grandmother - relation to
me (the noble Schwöons (I think - pronounced
shv can, North German for "Swan" or "Schwan (in German)")):
(in English)



By the way, apparently they did end up a little better than poor robber-barons, though by how much...