

To WE 10/13/2000

...When young, I usually went to bed with verses sounding in my head. I fell asleep and woke up in a state of inspiration. I passed from my day dreaming into my night dreaming and vice versa without any interruption, without the uncomfortable changing-for-dinner feeling. In my sleep, I literally lived in the time and space of my poems. I completed many events of my daytime life this way. There was nothing outside which I was not able to harmonize by my dreaming-through.

As I grew older, poetry, with its funny meticulous conventions, became too narrow for me. But anything I wrote remained poetry for I continued to dream my life through, believing that what I dreamed truly existed. I once wrote something against the Egyptian gods. In the evening there came an awful storm never seen before. Lightning flashed right in front of our window, as if trying to break into our room. I believed that the gods had gotten angry. That night, I had a dream that I was flying right in the middle of the storm, with lightning flashing all around, and that I was able to strike the lightning by the movement of my hands (like those sorceresses in cheap Hollywood movies). And I do not really know what the real achievement of my life would be: that unreal flight or my real job this week...

Recently I went to the library to look through the poetry section, and discovered that I hate poetry on the shelves. So far, I have found only Auden capable of living poetically, that is, consciously cultivating blessed madness. Mostly, the so-called poets merely try to mimic this state, and because this state is the state of the genuine per se, it cannot be mimicked without becoming a caricature. It was especially grotesque in the thick folio by some provincial American professor of English literature who tried to mimic not just poetical madness, but the poetical madness of Ovid, or Byron, and wrote on the mythological passions of some goddesses and gods.

But the pathetic madness of such down-to-the-earth madmen as Allen Ginsberg, who, by the way, has taught at CUNY his "disembodied poetry" for some time, is also no good. It does not actually matter, what an aboriginal of poetry picks up as his "poetically-acknowledged" objects – the garbage cans of the 60s or the garbage goddesses of "the Middle Ages" and "middle years", because the only sense of poetry is the destruction of stereotype and fetish. And poetry cannot operate via the "poetically acknowledged". It can be neither disembodied, nor embodied; it cannot merely oppose the garbage cans to the goddesses.

Auden proved best because of his desperate attempt to acquire the intimate significance of garbage cans and garbage goddesses, but still his poetry is a collage of undigested tokens of culture - from the most unrefined to the most refined. His poetry lacks just one crucial thing, which only Shakespeare has so far in full, i.e., Auden talks in an infinite monologue. And any monologue has the nasty feature of being an infinite regress. I cannot read more than two of his pieces at once. As my friend, Tatiana told me, I am lazy (and this is actually my reason of writing poetry which does not require of me too much), but I hope I am not dumb - while a few times, while reading just one poem, I found myself forgetting what he started with, and where he was in the middle.

Auden is a monologist because only a strong feeling about another person can break one's membrane into the world, while Auden is afraid to feel so strongly (he is not a Shakespeare). Maybe he is right for himself, because a strong feeling, either grief or joy, brings suffering. To suffer or to bite, I found in Auden a lot of toys and dolls with sharp long teeth, and even more of the mechanical toys that move in infinite circles once a master turns a key. I found everything enthusiastically moving around Miniature Mountains with nicely situated porcelain gods, either of the old or the present times. I truly added, with Auden, a scoop of fame to the already famed, so that "being famed", I hope, stuck to my eyes as well, finally transforming Auden himself into a porcelain miniature, not painful and not tiresome. What do you think: could my soup can placed on Auden's play table be bigger than Auden in per-

son? (my 'can' and my 'could'). Whether Auden's cans were made from porcelain or not, I did not find in Auden strong passions - neither despair, nor ecstasy, nor lust, nor anger, nor yearning, which the Sonnets of Shakespeare are full of. I did not find there any one else beside Auden.

All other people - should they appear on the stage of his persona - are so neatly packed in the "enchanted" trumpery of labeled culture that they lose their presence, as if Auden carefully erases them from his memory.

How can Americans forgive to the poet all these banalities and clichés? -- all these "time and fevers burn away beauty", "supernatural sympathy of Venus", "universal life and hope", which I, not being an American do forgive him for just two lines: "soul and body have no bounds", and "from this night not a whisper, not a thought, nor a kiss nor look be lost". But one way or another, Auden still suffers from the universal sin of his poetical time. He places the typical over the individual, proving again that an extreme individualist is forced to substitute imaginary sedative toys for live, tiresome people. The individualistic poet of the 60's differs from the Soviet poet of the 60's only by an insignificant peculiarity. The Soviet poet was "joining" forcedly, as if being raped, while the individualistic poet of the West was "joining" forcefully, as if raping. In both cases, the object of "love" was raped - it was a cold, alienated thing, which had too little with its loud "cultural" names (probably because "it" did not have ears).

That is why Auden is not melodic. But probably my own return to tedious rhymes is just my attempt to last in my landslip of total poetical madness. In my tongue and snow slips, I think Auden did not walk for hours in the woods and along roads with the speed limit of 40 miles per hour, either humming his verses, or opening his mouth without a sound, but humming inside, and forgetting to breathe through his nose, so that in a cold weather, his nose was acquiring a hooting French accent.

By the way, I was told recently that he went to bed every day at a strictly ritualized time. So all the friends of his lovers, and lovers of his friends, should leave the scene of his persona, as soon as the clock showed the fatal hour and the final minute.

Auden kept his pass, his badge of "the poetically acknowledged" the same way as he kept his fatal hour and final minute, and that is why he was entirely given to the crowd, and was always running away from it. Isn't it a paradox, for should he have discovered that September is the month, and Wednesday is the day, when he could go to the bed at another time, and probably another place, he would have been immediately dropped by the crowd, as being too loud. Oh yes, he would have been left alone then, a painful feeling, you know, but he could have become Odin, which means the One.

It is a pity, really, that you can easily decode his W.H. As if even in this, he was not first, while poets are always those who are first.

I am not sure that he seriously believed in his own passionate words that "soul and body have no bounds". And that is why I do not believe the poet Auden.

So aiming at becoming at least a first female Petrarch with a male Laura, I can swear that all American poetry is "disembodied" (like a one-time swimming suit dissolving on your body after the first water, like a condom, or like a word "Venus" in a lullaby by Auden)...

To WE 10/29/2000

...Last time we were arguing about that poem by Auden "Musee des Beaux Arts". I told her that in order to recognize if somebody is a good poet or not, it is enough just to open a book to any page, take any line out of any context and see whether this line

is completely original and beautiful or not. If you had already heard this line somewhere else, or you can take this line and use it in a non-poetical context, for example in the Sunday New York Times, it is not good poetry - like these opening lines of the poem by Auden, which are quite suitable even for Daily News - "About suffering they were never wrong, / The old Masters: how well they understood / Its human position", etc.

Not likewise the line from the song by some rock group "Picnic", saying, "Angels with bare ankles are dancing on the candles". Or the line from another rock group "Aquarium", saying -- "When I am with you, you are my only home"; or the line "My sister, when you had taken my hand, did you know that the sunrise would stand up between us as a wall?"; or the other line -- "We sleep in one bed, at the different sides of the wall"; or the other line - "I lost the connection with the world which does not exist".

The other point of such poetical minimalism is that any line cannot by any chance be replaced by another line, while Auden might have successfully replaced any line in the above-mentioned poem, or added any amount of such structurally and melodically insignificant lines. Not only, as the famous father of "Uncle Vanya" said -- "if I have a gun on the wall in the first act, it should shoot in the second act" -- but also the smell of the shooting, the anxious sound of frightened voices should follow. This means that every image should happen in the context and continuity of the poem. For example, in the song, where the sunrise stands up between two lovers as a wall, the line, which follows, is "the sky is becoming closer / the sky is becoming closer every day".

The image should not be wasted. It is precious and should be attentively framed; it should linger, and echo in other images.

The image should be walked around, and seen from all sides. The image should gradually show what it does not show in a frontal view; it is you who see its back -

the side which this image does not want to see, and to show (the Bakhtin's metaphor).

The thing should never speak for itself; other things should speak for it; or it should speak through the other things. When many things speak for one thing, this thing is loud enough to be heard.

The image should ripen and fall, heavy, to the ground. Unripe images are unquiet and bitter. They upset stomach.

Not only should the image be stamped in the messages of other images -- it should be woven into the melodic threads of all images in the poem. This means that not only should every image speak, but that every image should sound (you, unfortunately, do not speak Russian). Not only should the images logically, analogically and metaphorically follow each other, but they should merge into one melody, until they become pregnant with each other, and bear each other not only on the level of verbal meaning, but also on the level of sounds. Then the poem as a whole and every line are complete and self-sufficient and meaningful not only by being an aphorism (aphorism containing aphorisms), but by the pure flow of the syllables. The revealed constellations of images and consonances of sounds are that cloth of the poem, that body of a fruit, that death from being shot, that makes you finally decide what you can call *The Waste Land*.

My daughter rebutted that probably this being not original is the originality of Mr. Auden. An interesting point which was the main call for the whole poetical generation of the 60's, but which expired a half century before that, when Mr. Eliot said his "Shantih shantih shantih" at the very end of his compellation-of-quotes in so-called *The Waste Land*, wasting all away by prophetically saying "I can connect nothing to nothing". So I, in my turn, argued back to my daughter that only the first unoriginal poet could be original. I found Eliot much more a hooligan than Auden and Ginsberg -- in the admirable sense of this word, while walking naked where it is not allowed, and kissing the hands of men. Especially this part of *The Waste Land* called *A Game of Chess*, where he starts with exquisite spangles of pure

art, all these "golden Cupidons", "perfumes ... confused and drowned sense in odors", "the nightingale filled all the desert with inviolable voice"; he continues with some Lil paid by her lover to get new teeth, and finishes with the refrained British call-out at pub closing time - "Hurry up please it's time" and with all these rude unrefined unromantic phrases like "nearly died of young George" after taking pills "to bring it off", "... had a hot gammon, / And they asked me in to dinner, to get the beauty of it hot" and "Ta ta. Goonight. Goonight. / Good night, ladies..." Probably, the originality of Auden was done with when he read *The Waste Land* at the age of nineteen. It is said that this had a profound effect on him. Too profound...

So that he spent his entire life reading profound books which all had a profound effect on him...

To EE 5/22/01

...The major difference between Bakhtin's method and so-called Western poetical conventions is that Bakhtin's method is dialogical, while all modern Western poetry is monological. You tend to aggressively discern between the metaphorical and formal aspects of poetry. Nonetheless, there is a point where these two things should coincide. Language is alive only if it is communicative. You write something down only when you feel the urge to say something to somebody – then you understand the importance of your utterance, even if there is nobody near right now to listen to. This means that language is essentially dialogical.

The thing can be known and realized only through the other thing -- through their mutual differences and similarities. You cannot see your own back, and cannot see yourself in your entirety -- only the other person can see your back and see you in your entirety. Only the other person can go around you, see all your sides and com-

plete you -- make you whole. This is a *telos* of poetry -- to help people communicate, to teach people how to communicate -- in such a way that communication preserves its urgency, its importance through time and space.

Monological poetry, written not for a definite listener, does not, cannot, keep this function of language. It is written for itself, in itself, and in this way it arouses less and less interest in poetry, so that 99% of poetry does not have any listeners at all.

Monologues tend to be an infinite regress without a fixed fulcrum -- when consciousness cannot exit itself and see itself from all sides, and get lost in its closed space. It loses the gauges of correlations in the world -- it becomes myopic, it thinks of a water drop as a flood, and does not notice a real flood raging outside its capsule. Such intensity of ego makes it finally blind and even psychotic -- the ego cannot construct rhythms and rhymes of reality anymore, but is carried around by waves of the most primitive impulses of devouring and fear of being devoured. The monological ego in its separation from the world only imagines it creates something, while, in reality, everything "created" is just the most primitive processes which became so automatic and habitual that the ego thinks of them as arising from one's "nature", as being truly one's own -- and moreover, as one's revelations. This is a paradoxical result of a pop-art quality -- one stops seeing the mechanical nature of soup cans and pop-corn, and contemplates a soup can and a pack of pop-corn as a piece of art. And this soup can and this pack of pop-corn takes a central place -- a place that should be designated for another live person, an addressee, an interlocutor.

This, I think, is a basis for free-verse-poetry, which essentially has this pop-art quality. This kind of poetry is a reflection of the chaos within the monological ego, when it cannot remember, cannot sing its own reality, and cannot make anybody else sing and remember. The most I can ever remember of free verse is the separate sentences and phrases, and the whole impression of being flooded by a drop of water in a very closed space, where you cannot breathe to echo with your breaths between

lines.

In being an infinite regress, this kind of poetry is highly repetitious, in a bad sense of this word. You can add an infinite number of lines to it, and take away an infinite number of lines. It does not create a unique continuum from which you can take nothing and add nothing.

Of course, you're right, it is a formal function of poetry to be able to mold language in such a way that it becomes some new form, inaccessible by ordinary language.

But this form is a reflection of a new content of language, accessible only in poetry - to be more dialogical than other forms of language.

The notion of dialogue is enriched by Bakhtin with the notion of polyphony. The world is dialogical itself, and is a hidden language. Polyphony is actually a dialogue which reaches the universal level of communication between people and phenomena. Things and events rhyme and construct unique rhythms. No thing exists separately, or monologically. Things and events sound in choruses, compliment each other, and are visible on the background of each other. That is why Eliot who is very monological and regressive in his *Four Quartets*, and just impressed me as a dilettante, speaking funnily of Heraclitus, is nonetheless, far from being mediocre in his *Waste Land*, which, though written monologically, preserves the dialogism of the world. But does it really?

If you remember, I told you that I call something bad poetry if, after reading it, I can ask my rhetorical "So what?", and you told me that *The Waste Land* has its *telos* -- Eliot wrote it while being depressed. But notwithstanding the fact that his wasted land helped Eliot cope with his depression, I can ask you a very important question - would it help anybody else cope with his or her depression, or will it create a chain reaction of making more and more chaos of wasted and wasting lands? I can connect nothing to nothing, said Eliot in his *Waste Land* wasting it all. Auden who had read *The Waste Land* being 19 years old, considered it the major aesthetic influence

on his poetry. And so connecting nothing to nothing and continuing wasting poetry bit by bit, we finally get to Ginsberg The Great Cock Sucker whose poetry is just a big garbage can.

So Eliot is a great poet only in the way that Hitler is a great historical figure. They are great in themselves, but disastrous for other people. So the purely monological poetry is safe. It is just dead, and is never heard, while the half-monological and half-dialogical poetry is dangerous -- it is a well-constructed mechanism which does not know its *telos*, and is just wasting it all away on its way.

The other Bakhtinian notion complimenting dialogism and polyphony is ambivalence. Ambivalence is dialogism and polyphony on the level of the properties or qualities of things. Things can never be described by only one quality (the point of Heraclitus). The world is a counterpoint not only between things, but also within each thing. Eliot is ambivalent in his *Waste Land* -- that is why he is much more readable than, for example, Hopkins, who reaches out to the polyphony of the world, but is not dialogical enough to attain the polyphony of the qualitative micro-structure of the world.

Because it is not enough just to try to express the *instress* of the world. I can question the *instress* itself with my rhetorical "So what?" Hopkins' *instress* only seems to be emphatic -- I do not see any other person there except Hopkins and the anonymous *life force* flowing crazily around, from thing to thing, without any particular *telos*. The other persons in Hopkins have the character of newspaper photos -- they are too black and white, like those German nuns-maybe-not-nuns.

Hopkins cannot exit his own impression, he cannot laugh at his own cry, and cry at his own laughter. That is why his last sonnets are called "being written by blood" -- they are called so not because he wrote them with his blood, but because he made his blood the ink. And this is so because of this funny rhetorical question "So what?" Had he addressed anybody, he would be forced to say, like dying Sappho

addressing her daughter Cleis -- do not mourn, we do not mourn in the house of poetry.

I am so categorical about poet Hopkins because passing through a terrible depression myself, which went on for a whole year, I saved myself from committing suicide by starting writing poetry again, by opening myself to other people, by actualizing the live necessity for being dialogical. Poet Hopkins, even if it is cruel to say so, is antipoetical in his last poems; he destroys the very *telos* of poetry -- to survive and to love -- to survive and to love notwithstanding time, space and circumstances.

Ppoetry is not this funny rhyming of words. Poetry is a creating of rhymes and rhythms with other people (again, it is not enough to only express the *instress* of the world -- let coupling spring squirrels do it). And everybody is a poet at least once in his life. Poets differ from other folks because they cultivate in themselves this state of divine madness of exiting themselves and conversing constantly with the world through their beloved or conversing with their beloved through the world.

That is why the poet should first of all work on his technique to achieve the state of love, when you have an urge to say something to some person. Only then should he work on achieving the verbal techniques. I do not feel too much love in Hopkins, Eliot, Auden, Ginsberg, Yeats, Dickinson and Pound.

Love is that counterpoint where the formal and the metaphorical coincide...

To EE 7/26/01

...I wrote in my previous long message that language is essentially dialogical or communicative. Language is born not when the utterance is made, but when it is heard; not when I just express myself in word-sequences, but when somebody is in-

interested in my expressions. And it only happens when the writer is interested in the person to whom he is writing. Only if he tries to move something and somebody, is he moving.

I oppose the credo of modern Western poetry, beginning with Romanticism and especially postmodernism, which believes that we write down something only because of our belief in the inherent, self-containing or self-sufficient, and self-addressed value of the utterance. I believe we speak and we write because we can acquire and confirm the value of the utterance only by directing it to another person -- by acting via language. Language exists only between people, and its meaningfulness and value is born by both the speaker and the listener. Language is a device for influencing people.

From this point of view, language is something more than just utterance -- it is the very grammar of reality, expression via visual and auditory symbols. The poets of free verse believe too much in words. They think, like positivists in American philosophy, that if they say "red", the listener will immediately get the sense datum "red". Nonetheless, the meaning is born by the interrelation of symbols in the utterance, which already hints at dialogism. There can be tacit speaking, when your intention is not told, but shown. When it is shown, it exits its narrow continuum of self-containment, and enters the wider context, which cannot be just ego-syntonic.

The act of showing something to another person can be genuine only if you really intend to act. Why should I tell you about my joy and my woe, or why should you listen to my joy and my woe? These are the main questions for the poet. I can say only to myself directly about what I think or feel -- but I cannot just force upon another person the intensity and concern of my feeling and thinking. I cannot just say to another person, "I feel joy, or grief, or despair, or irony, or ecstasy, or melancholy, or that I think that this is good or this is bad," to make him or her share with me my feelings or my convictions. I cannot proclaim or prove anything in the utterance, but I can show it -- tacit and always to some concrete person, having a very

definite intention. This makes poetry, which is a quintessence of the utterance, minimalist. It cuts off the infinite regress of the uncontrolled and sluttish pseudo-self-expression of free verse poetry with its circular stream of consciousness. The genuine intention requires the necessary condensation of alliteration between the speaker and the listener. And only in this way, the language becomes effective.

For example, there are infinite varieties of despair, depending on to whom you address it. Should you be confined within your despair, alone, without an interlocutor, you would necessarily have only one kind of despair, of your own hue.

Now I want to take a closer look at how the intention happens in the language grammatically. There is an infinite variety of intentional expressions -- promise, threat, praise, scorn, consolation, persuasion, advice, encouragement, request, reassurance, reproach, regret, rebuke, etc. Shakespeare's Sonnets and Sappho can be a perfect guide to them.

Language offers a simple encoding of the intention by the major grammatical structures of utterances. Each utterance is completed by a punctuation mark -- and it expresses respectfully exclamation, question and assertion/negation. The punctuation mark is a link between the speaker and the listener; it marks not the end of utterance, but the purpose of utterance. In philosophy, it is called the propositional attitude, implying the disposition. Without an encoded intention, the utterance becomes just a monotonic piece of indifferent information, which could be written down by symbols and would carry the punctuation between the informational units inside the utterance, but not at the end of the utterance. Punctuation in a purely informational speech is a sheer formality (it is closed and indifferent to the listener all the way through). That is why the utterance which is not just informational, and is intended to move somebody by means of language, is never completely closed, as if the punctuation mark is a link to the next, expected utterance of response.

But look how poor monological poetry is in the variety of intentions. Auden is built

only on the periods and commas. His exclamation marks are so dry and small, that all his poetry is basically just grumbling. Dickinson sounds only in one timbre of the exclamation mark of reproach, regret and aloof excitement, which reminds me the reflected light of the moon -- she does not experience anything directly in the immediate contact with the other person, but passionately speaks with shadows.

I know that I myself am far away from the richness of the dispositional attitudes, from how they are in real life. But I wrote a few poems of encouragement, reproach, request, questioning, promise, praise, and consolation...

To EE 8/11/01

...Probably, I was not clear enough or too verbose, but I myself meant precisely what you expressed in your reply to me, i.e., that (1) the spontaneous language is prior to the written language; (2) the grammar of the written language is determined by the intonation of the spoken language. I analyzed punctuation marks in this way -- as instruments to mark the intonation, or rather, intention of a speaker when he/she writes down the utterance -- punctuation as symbols of exclamation, question and assertion, being the major propositional attitudes. This makes my remarks applicable in societies without writing.

My remarks were very preliminary, but nonetheless, I think that this line of analysis can be continued by analyzing the interrelation of the syntactical units both within the singular sentences, and between groups of sentences. Then it will become clear that any convincing utterance should have polyphonic undertones within the singular sentence. The assertion should bear the question inside itself, and the exclamation, even the most ecstatic, should also bear the assertion inside.

In music -- any major mood should be construed by minor moods, otherwise it will

be only one primitive melody of a lullaby, march, or the African dance around the bonfire. Just so, we should be analyzing the poem not only from the point of view of how it alliterates sounds, but also from the point of view of how and why it distracts the alliteration -- not only its literal consonance, but also its dissonance. Because the final harmony is born of opposites of consonance and dissonance -- not just by rhyme and alliteration as a means of achieving "likeness" between sounds.

Shakespeare is a paragon of such a skill -- he is never too much -- never too much of grief, or of joy, of the bawdy, or the transcendent. This does not mean that he does not express grief and joy, the bawdy and the transcendent to their extreme limits.

He does. But he is able every time to detach himself from what he experiences, and show, at least, with a hint, that every phenomena has two sides -- the good and the bad, the ugly and the beautiful (you know, like in Taoism -- everything which is small is bigger than something; and so at the same time, is small and big, etc.).

Shakespeare's ultimate achievement in the *Sonnets*, in my view, lies in the expression of his ambivalence towards both his youth and his mistress. The boy and the lady are both bad and good, ugly and beautiful, sinful and fair. In the same sonnet, he calls his mistress dark, and says that her "darkness" is fair to him. But there are sonnets in which he has one strong idea and feeling, and which are not recognized as being ambivalent. These sonnets are especially good for demonstrating what I want to say. They show that even the sonnets, expressing one dominant feeling, need ambivalence of intonation/intention to be convincing -- for example, the famous Sonnet #129.

Over the summer I read a book by some Winny called "The master - mistress". He analyzes this sonnet as a non-compromising attack on lust. Nonetheless, in the very two last lines of the sonnet, Shakespeare writes: "All this the world well knows, yet none knows well / To shun the heaven that leads men to this hell". So indeed, even if lust is "a waste of shame", "the expense of spirit", even if it is "perjured, murderous, bloody, full of blame, savage, extreme, rude, cruel, not to trust", etc. and etc., it

is the heaven, which men cannot shun -- the heaven that leads men to its hell.

I said in my previous message, that all monological poets are very monotonous. Only Hopkins tried to express some variations in the intonations of the very reality. But if we apply the method I offer to analyzing his wholesome pieces of *instress* -- each one separately -- he will appear to be very monotonous anyway. I do not see in Hopkins the hell in the heaven, and the heaven in the hell, like in Shakespeare. He does not carry the richness of intonation, i.e., intention, into the syntactical units within a singular poem. Speaking in terms of music -- he does not create a counterpoint.

You could ask: why should he? I can answer: if he could have done this, he would not have had the depression, which was just his inability to exit this or that *instress*, to detach himself from his immediate experiences and to laugh at what had forced him to cry and to cry at what had forced him to laugh.

This again stresses that poetry is a means for healing your soul and healing the souls of others. Like Freudianism which is healing by making the patient speak of his hidden and half-conscious intentions. But in comparison with Freudianism, good poetry leaves a beautiful product which can always continue healing souls.

By the way, I came to the firm conviction recently that any depression is just egoism, and indirectly a consequence of wrong views in the society. The industrial society promotes the generic, a scheme, a standard, a template, the monotony, the monologue, which subconsciously expresses the generic as its own exclusive "revelation". But people and every other phenomena are unique -- a world consisting only of unique things and unique moments. And this society forces people to cut their Gogh ears off over and over again -- it forces people to be isolated links in a chain, to be egoistic in their expression of the generic.

Actually, to become the most generic, a person should be absolutely isolated from

the unique continuums of the true reality, and be satisfied with the most primitive templates of experience (American television is a very good means for cultivating this). Trying to resist, I start my every day by visualizing all people whom I knew and know closely. It gives me a vast panorama of intentions and intonations, as in the 4th symphony by Tchaikovsky. After that, if I felt before any distress or anxiety, I do not feel them any more.

You ask me how my views on language can be applied to internal, self-directed language. I have recently begun to practice the Buddhist meditation every day. It aims at achieving the free control of the mental process with its spontaneous visualizations. By the way, one of the tasks is to destroy the limited boundaries of the ego -- I was told to visualize myself as an 18 years old naked Tibetan beauty with the exotic attributes of a goddess -- in my size, the size of a house, a hill, the earth, the solar system, the whole universe, until I would coincide with the infinite light, and then again of my size, a size of a book, a size of a seed.

At first, I found the exercises very relaxing and quieting -- it is a conscious practice in schizophrenia, when you force yourself to double, but if schizophrenia gives uncontrolled relief by the unconscious doubling, these exercises give you the controlled relief -- in the ability to constantly watch and rule yourself from outside. So what I want to say in connection with internal, self-directed language, is, first of all, that any inner discourse needs ego and alter-ego, or "doubling" in a dialogue with oneself, in order to remain human. A monologue needs a communication with oneself. It is a preliminary form of a dialogue.

I was doing these exercises in their traditional form for a while, until I realized that they lose their impact on me. My own self-created meditation of visualizing all people whom I know, works better (actually, I realized that I know very few people).

The point was that the Buddhist meditations were interesting only to myself, and I realized that if I am doing something which is interesting only to myself, it fails to be interesting to me very soon, and instead of relief, brings torture.

My conclusion is that internal speech is just a projection of the external speech, or, in other words, I vote for the Aristotelian "man is a social animal". Solitude and sociability are two opposites, and they are meaningless and destructible without one another.

Sometimes I look at the Latinos, who have just arrived from Salvador or Nicaragua, who are poor, ignorant, humiliated by the whites, and very often I am amazed by the wholesome pride and spontaneous serenity of these people, even of those who are ill-favored. Finally, I came to think that their primitive society preserves some unique continuums, while Western society does not (it preserved only unique individuals who suffocate in the generic templates of pseudo-continuums). These people live in big families, communities and clans with their thousand-year culture, which is primitive but dialogical nonetheless. Look at the primitives of music -- folk music first of all -- it emphatically shows that music, as poetry, is intonational because it is intentional. Folk songs are always written for a unique occasion, and performed on that occasion. It is never self-directed -- it is a joyful wedding song, or a sad burial song; it is a song which people sing sitting at the celebration table, or a song which people dance to. And the intonation/intention is always stressed by the syntax of gestures and poses. This is a language of the very reality, emphasized by the people who concentrate energy vectors around, as Kandinsky believed.

When I was a kid, in the summer time, I visited my grandparents living in middle Russia, in the Urals. My grandfather and I went one day to gather wild strawberries. He was riding his bicycle, with me sitting behind him -- down the road between infinite humps of low ancient mountains. We passed by some narrow-eyed and yellow-skinned native. He was slowly walking down the road and singing very loud. He did not stop or lower his voice when we were passing him by.

He was free and happy in his amalgamation with these camel mountains, with strawberries hiding in the infinite humps together with stars hiding in the infinite

cloudy humps of the daylight sky. It was indeed a monologue -- I believe, in a free-verse (he sang in his native language), put to the minimalist music like that one of Penderecki. But this monologue was significant for him only because he had air to pronounce it: and just the amazing feeling of having this air in the throat, here and now, made his throat vibrate and spill his spells.

Also I believe that if this song of his was successful, he will remember it, and repeat. And on occasion, traveling with some other yellow-skinned and narrow-eyed guy, he will share this spell with him, and in this way the poet will be born.

What do you think -- did Hopkins really want to share with anybody his late, "bloody" sonnets? Or was he getting more and more psychically sick, and this was his schizophrenic "doubling" -- an attempt to throw away his alter-ego with its most painful experiences of loneliness and despair? He was evidently unsuccessful in doing this because an ego cannot do this without another person or persons, so that a schizophrenic constantly mistakes his ego for the alter-ego which he wanted to throw away, and grows more and more gloomy. By the way, Winny tries to prove that Shakespeare was this kind of a "split" or "doubled" personality.

I myself am afraid to write just for myself. I have written poetry since the age of 13, and so have some experience in writing rhymes. And I can tell you that my only successful poems before were poems written to a concrete person and with the definite and not ego-syntonic intention. So that now I write only such poems and always hand them to the person whom they were written to. I have a few muses. All of them accept my poems. I am very lucky.

This kind of poetry made me look at people differently. Now I value it a lot when I find a person willing to have a poem from me, and who, on the other hand, inspires me to write to him or her. And this kind of poetry is gradually changing me. Every time I want to write something that impresses me by its inherent beauty, I think about whether it would be interesting also to another person. And to make me

really believe that it would be -- I should get some person involved in some continuum shared with me. To make my poems definite, concrete, unique, I should first find a definite, concrete, unique -- this and the only one -- person to listen to me.

Please see below are my recent poetical givings to my muses...

To EE 8/20/01

...I wanted to add some afterthought to what I have written in my previous message. I believe that now there should be a change in the paradigm of vision -- from the Newtonian / Cartesian model to the model which was sketched by Einstein.

There is no lawfulness in nature -- there are only tendencies which change when the world changes. The laws of nature, which function now, inevitably will be different in time -- so, strictly speaking, they are not laws at all. Each point in the universe can be a lawful viewpoint or fulcrum for a unique vision of the entire world, dependent exclusively on the particular locus of this point. This was first posited by Taoism in the East, and in the West, by Hellenistic Hermeticism and the Renaissance philosophy, especially by Nicolas of Cusa.

This has a significant bearing on poetry as well, while this has nothing to do with the egocentrism of free-verse poetry -- but has everything to do with dialogical poetry.

If there are no laws of nature, there cannot be the general or the universal notions in our views of the world (Hegel called this "abstract universal"). A group of people cannot posit some dogma and proclaim it a universally true generalization. One can only build for himself, from his unique standpoint, the links -- from the smallest to the biggest -- which will widen his horizon of vision to the most, existentially generalized, vision of the world ("concrete universal" in Hegelian terms, though I do not agree with him, because he objectified it too much).

There cannot be any true or lawful cliché which can be significantly used by some group of people for individual expression. Any generic symbol is cliché, and is false and destructive. You will say that we are actually done with symbolic poetry. It is over. But I will reply to you that when the egocentric free-verse poet is using common language words in the uncritical way of ordinary life -- it is the same subconscious use of cliché of the mass society, the old symbolism gone pop.

Auden, for example, was uncritically using every kind of cliché he could lay his hands on (the Venus' "slope" in his "Lay your sleeping head, my love", etc.). His distinction from Yeats is only in the fact that Yeats tried, for some time, to honestly create his own private mythology, while Auden's poetry was parasitical on any, half-dissolved in the mass consciousness, tokens of the half-dead culture, which got frozen between the group and the individual.

Auden's poetry is more bookish than that of Yeats, even if he is seemingly more spontaneous than Yeats in using a metaphor, because Yeats, at least, lived in his unique world, which was, nonetheless, very woodenly rigid to being blindly obstinate. Auden reminds me of an eternal school boy who keeps an admiration for the old and ugly stuff, which was taken literally out of the garbage, cleaned up and painted anew, and put into the shiny window of the antique store in Uptown (I worked for a while as an artist in the Restoration shop on the 5th Ave.). For example, he, as Wilde, admires Neoplatonism, while Plotinus is a really nasty guy, who spoiled Christianity, so that it became a catholic theatre of the two-worldly paradigm of the heavenly unachievable Aphrodite and the earthly achievable but harlot Aphrodite, with a human soul born as a result of the Fall.

But Ginsberg is a more striking example of a mass society cliché. I was not able to read his long poems, but I still remember one of his love poems, which goes approximately like this: he describes how his male lover kisses his lips, then descends to his nipples, then to his groin, and penis. The main idea was that he, Ginsberg, a great cock-sucker (as he calls himself) was very excited. And that is all. I believe, in

this so-called "disembodied" poem, he ecstatically celebrated the bare quality of lacking anything whatsoever in cultural symbols, or, rather, lacking anything whatsoever in culture. Nonetheless, the "penis", "nipples" and "lips" are all clichés or symbols of the common language, while "cocks" and "cock-suckers" are clichés or symbols -- but not of the "high" culture -- of the mass x-rated culture. And in the direct uncritical use of these clichés, Ginsberg is more "symbolist", in the bad sense of this world, than the so-called symbolists, whom he, I believe, despised.

The cultural interest of his poetry was a temporal special case of mass society when it was working out the more monolithic "generalized" template of vision. Ginsberg was inspired by the novelty of homoeroticism, drug-abuse and psychotic degradation of a boy from a good family lost in the jungles of New York -- his seemingly voluntary use of language was indeed "the language" or "the symbols" of some group of aboriginals living in some villages in the Big Apple. And his disembodied poetry was a slang of communion within a congregation, it was an act of embodiment or transubstantiation forced by the nomination. Moreover, his poetry was an act of consumption by the mass society of these aboriginal villages, so that now his crusade is not actual and interesting anymore -- either homoeroticism as such, or drug hangovers, or free unsafe sex.

By the way, the most primitive cultures are the most symbolic, and the "cultural" symbolism of the Western modern society was arousing in the epochs of economic, political and cultural transitions, when the old views were discredited and so "primitive" while the new views were still infant and primitive as well, so that Yeats was actually believing in literally shamanistic stuff.

The mass culture, which destroys the unique continuums of the individual, makes his consciousness the most primitive, and Ginsberg reminds me of a naked illiterate Barbarian who is able to refer to the world only by the act of the simple ostension. The composition of his poems is the infinite regress of his consciousness circling around cock-sucking while Ginsberg is chaotically going around and pointing his

dirty cock-sucking finger at innocent things.

Sorry for the bile.

My point is actually not cynical at all. I insist on the virginal innocence of things and the urge of the world to be newly born with every pronounced word. I want to achieve the intimate connection with these given things and these given unique people, I want to perform acts of love and become impregnated in the way that I will always know who is the father of my poetic child...

To EE 9/11/01

...I remember that in the first of these messages that I actually did not reply to when I was writing to you, you are concerned whether I consider language to be an objective phenomenon (a social machine) or the subjective phenomenon (inner speech). I think that language is the constant struggle between the social machine of coding and a unique individual.

But I do not consider the social machine of language as being something "outside" the individual. As I tried to formulate before: I do not consider the subconsciousness or any spontaneous inner speech to be more free than the socially stipulated external speech. Vice versa, I consider that the subconsciousness and especially the unconscious is much more machinelike than consciousness. It would be very hard to break through some mode of "experiencing" things, if this mode became automatic. Automatism means that an individual cannot be conscious of it -- one does not realize what one is doing. This has an important implication for language -- in the automatic modes of inner speech, one cannot separate what is "his own" from what is alien in his inner speech -- the borders between the inner and the outer speech are erased. And the ego "thinks" of the most banal cliché, forced upon him

by the outer "socio-dictated" speech, as his own revelations, discoveries and achievements arising from within his inner speech – or, in other words, he thinks automatically of his most intimate experiences in terms of cliché.

At the same time, as I stressed before, I consider that "uniqueness" of an individual is born in the social interaction, which should preserve the intimacy and virginity of relationships. Only the constant objectification of the inner speech and comparison within the cultural structures of language, grants an ability of the discernment between what is culturally not yours and what is culturally only yours. Only the involvement in culture can guarantee the individuation (only when you know that there is something outside, you can realize your differences from others).

You ask whether the Ural singer was expressing his inner monologue or, vice versa, some "cultural construct". In the context of what I said, I believe that he perceived the idiosyncratic beauty of his world in the continuum of his small regional culture. And, probably, as his wife adds something "only hers" to the ancient recipe of *cumis* (the sour goat milk, the native "drink" of the Urals), so did he add his own and only his overtones to the local pattern of expression. My point of the globally dialogical poetry was that the poet can and must drink and eat the blood and flesh of different and multiple cultures -- to be able to create something completely new instead of infinite forgetful repetitions.

Hence, language can be both an instrument of encoding (a machine) and an instrument of decoding (anti-automatic individuation) -- like in the Hegelian triad (thesis, antithesis, synthesis). It should oppose the existing routines of expression by negatives (Ginsberg reached only this stage), and then create a new positive in the union of the opposites. And what I tried to express regarding Ginsberg is that the opposites of social involvement and social opposition are two opposites that do not exist one without another, and each one is the concealed form of the other, so that Ginsberg's nihilism of the 60's was just another form of the social integration and conformism. Only when you are above both opposites, can you be free enough to be

infinite in your formal and content symbols (while the conformism and opposition have only the limited scale of expression).

Also in your last message, you are concerned with my referring to science, which you say is general, meaning that (a) it always conforms to the views accepted by the entire society; and (b) aims at formulating regularity in the form of laws and rules, confirmed by mechanical observation and experiment. But what I was talking about was not empirical sciences per se, but the archetypes or paradigms of consciousness (I was talking not about sciences, but rather about the philosophy of science). I stressed that now we finally come to the point when uniqueness (particularity, viewed before as chaos) and pattern (universality or generality, viewed before as some lawfulness or design in nature) should be viewed not as inter-expelling opposites, but as two sides of the same phenomenon. Laws of nature change themselves, and so every "law" or "the universal" is the particular itself.

It has an immediate bearing on poetry, or, in other words, positivism of the post-industrial society is imprinted in each niche of culture. The same things you said about positivist science can be said about the free-verse monological poetry: (a) it always conforms to the views accepted by the entire society; and (b) it aims at formulating regularity in the form of laws and rules, confirmed by mechanical observation and experiment. We just need to reformulate these propositions. The first proposition will change to (a) it always expresses the social machine of expression accepted by the entire society or by some group of the society on such a level of automatism that it considers the most banal cliché to be its "individualistic" achievements. The second proposition will change to (b) it aims at direct expression of the empirical experience sensed individualistically, positing that the instinctual impulses of the ego are its true individuation.

Freudianism showed that everybody is coded by complexes (Freud) and archetypes (Jung) of the society. But for Freudians, the way of liberation was, strangely, just the realization of the fact that this is so. The most dialogical level, achieved by the

monological poetry of the free-verse, is the skill of overlaying "templates" (Freudian or other) over direct sensual experience. In opposition to this "makeovers" of the social machine of language, I believe, as I said, that instincts of the unconscious and the templates of direct sense-data are machines themselves -- small copies of the huge social machine of expression. I vote for creating one's own continuums where things and people have dialogue between each other, and argue for their meanings. To be listened to, poetry should listen, and only after that -- speak. If Freud would have listened to the world, he would not see Oedipus everywhere around.

To WK 5/7/02

...Please consider my afterthoughts as an attachment to our meeting. And what I will formulate below can go for my *ars poetica*.

I do not accept free verse poetry for the same reasons Pound has rejected the conventional, or as you call it now -- antiquarian -- poetry of the metronome rhythm and ordered rhyme. He and I do not accept poetry which is not justified formally. But finally, I do not accept Pound's formal justification for free verse poetry, because I believe it to be just a historical turnabout -- the unilateral negation, a pathetic desire to go barefoot, where one can go only in shoes. And indeed his rejection of rhyme is laughable -- rhyme is just one kind of alliteration. Regarding rhythm -- I can ask him why, for god's sake, he has this but not that rhythmical orderliness in his free verse. And if there is no orderliness, then why, for the devil's sake, is there no orderliness whatsoever there? What does it say to me when there is no orderliness? If it does not say to me anything, or in other words, if it does not signify anything, then it is insignificant, and does not exist in the realm of poetry -- there is then nothing to talk about, and so, hence, indeed and therefore, there is no poetry there. Just the bare act of saying. But why should I be engaged with the say-

ing by Pound rather than with the saying by Puond, or Pund, or Pond?

That is why when it comes to free poetry, I want to close my door, and when it becomes too noisy, I want to yell as I yell at my neighbors, Pounds and Ponds, to shut the hell up their music.

This sluttish incontinence of free verse poetry is the reason for the disgust that the general public holds now toward poetry in general, and the reason of why poetry survives only in rock and bard music.

Pound, Williams and Eliot did their best to make poetry anti-art, non-skill and non-communicative. As if they took a virgin and just made a prostitute out of her or him, so that anyone could use her or him buying a condom at Barnes and Noble.

I do not see any formal achievements here. Is it an achievement that Williams describes in plain English how he twists his naked ass in front of the mirror, when some persons, his wife, nanny for his children -- my gosh, who cares! -- are sleeping -- who cares again?! Or is there any formal achievement when Marianne Moore makes poetry as if constructing "registers" or "lists" and, finally, to remain "reticent"... Or is there any formal achievement in the celebrated Eliot's *Waste Land* wasting it all away in the scraps of stolen citations, and manipulating with mannequins inside the artificially constructed "social boxes"? Some of postmoderns still preserve alliteration, but mainly their poetry is mechanical in its insignificance of saying. What are they saying -- to whom -- why?

In free verse poetry, the incontinence and indifference of the form is just the reflection of poetry becoming monological -- as you said yourself at the talk you gave last year. The listener is not wanted! And hence any saying to oneself becomes just the stream of consciousness, without a beginning and an end -- an infinite regress, or circling around the immediate urgencies of ego. Or, at best, it is just a cocktail party chat. Or kindergarten kid pointing a dirty finger at toys. Do they really need

to say what they say?

That is why I stick to the antiquarian mold. Because I just do not see any significant reason for destroying it. By the way, a lot of Americans crave antiques -- to such a degree, that fine artists of postmodernism simulate the appearance of canvas surface being old, literally crumpling all away. But I have other reasons too. I make my poetry look as simple, sometimes seemingly, as possible -- to be as similar to a song as possible, because this is a guarantee of its being remembered. Rather like, you know, those motifs from Rossini or Mozart, which you cannot help whistling to yourself.

I even insist on dividing my poem into 3 strophe, or quatrains, because one's mind to remember would have to do it anyway. This is, by the way, one of the reasons why Shakespeare's sonnets are so memorable and lovable. The simplicity of the external form makes a fine counterpoint to the complicated syntactical and semantic structure (the inner form) -- like the 4th symphony of Tchaikovsky, built on the primitive Russian folk-song about some birch standing on the meadow, and which repeats melodically the same line "some birch is standing on the meadow" all over and over again (but both by bass and treble – in polyphony).

I try to create a new syntactical structure and alliteration for my every poem. My poems have pretty sophisticated alliteration as well. The simple layout of my poems allows for the syntactical structure to be clear enough. Free verse poetry mostly imitates conversational speech, and this is considered to be enough for being modern in "sensitivity and ear", but conversations can be of infinite variety in tone and intention, while free verse poetry is always and only the conversation with oneself or monologue and so only "fakes" free live speech, which in reality is never aimed at oneself, but at another person, with monologue being a preparation and conservation of the verbal association with another human being. That is why tonal variety of free verse poetry is confined to the tonal variety of a monologue, which is indeed

just a pale reflection or a shadow of real conversations with other people.

Hence my secret of weirdly beautiful lines and very beautiful metaphors (your words) is that I write dialogical poetry -- I never write for myself. Everything I write I write to a given, unique person, and I always hand my poem to this person. (I did not get the impression that the chosen one got bored from monotony). This actually narrows the content of my poems -- to one stable feeling about this person, but you can reprimand Shakespeare or Petrarch for the same thing. But can you really? -- can you reprimand undereducated Petrarch for being tonally and musically monotonous, if the only thing that poor Petrarch did was to express his most intimate feelings one stanza after another? And can you say to him that he can just say it all in one poem, giving it some colorful title? That is why, actually, I do not give my poems titles -- a title locks a poem in some closed continuum, it makes it stay beyond and over the live person, whom I write to. Would you give titles to your intimate letters?

Now I would like to explain to you why I do not get "specific". I told you I have written poetry since the age of 13, and really have some experience doing this.

When I was young, I was writing very socially tuned poetry -- I was creating social portraits and social scenes. For example, describing how, very early in the morning, on the empty streets of a working class neighborhood, I met a drunk guy who that night, lost his eye in a fight. He was led by his senile mother through the morning dusk -- by his hand, as if he was no longer a grown up big and jagged man, but again, a small boy. / His other hand was covering his bleeding empty eye hole. / His mother was sobbing almost without making any sound, in despair which became almost automatic, and so on... But I will not write this kind of poetry again, ever.

If you know that early poem by Williams, where he describes a working class woman, with her head bare, who takes a nail out of her shoe. Here we get "achievements" of postmodernism -- he does not say, he just shows, in detail, oh yeah, soup cans, condoms, Pepsi Cola and Monroe grim. I heard somebody wondering, in a

ing, in a spirit of Freudianism, whether a nail designates a penis. But does it?

Maybe, it is a nail of crucifixion... We would never know, because this woman of Williams does not have a recognizable face -- she does not have a personality, she does not have an intimate story. This nail does not signify anything personal in her life beyond either (1) routine social cliché of futurists, or (2) just a pretty insignificant occasion in her life when her smelly foot got pricked by the rotten shoe nail. So no signification -- no significance. You can successfully place this woman into Nike advertising.

I got hurt by writing a poetical advertising to a Nike customer about Nike nails. I am afraid of having sex with plastic and vibrating nails, and or being crucified in Nike sneakers.

I write to somebody, and I create beauty for this somebody. These are the only two aims of poetry that I accept. If the poetry says something vitally important just to some, one person, there is a guarantee that it will say something to someone in the future. But one cannot write poetry just to write "postmodern" free verse to some statistical "postmodern" reader (you said once, poetry should be fashionable...).

This, pardon me, reminds me of masturbation while staring at the page of Playboy magazine. But you yourself called this kind of poetry the masturbational side of culture.

Another point of mine is how to remain very intimate and at the same time not disclosive, but I am quite a success in this, as you say. The reason is simple -- I just do not want to disclose too much. I want twilight when having sex. Probably, it is fun to have sex in the office of one's young communist organization in the Philosophy Department, with the bright office lights showing up every crap around, as I did once, but it cannot last.

The other side of being not too disclosive is that it is just elementary continence and neatness. I do not want to force on strangers too much of my sweat and saliva.

And one can be really rewarded for this -- because it is much easier to relate to this kind of poetry, which remains half-veiled, than to poetry like that one of Morrell or Lowell, I always mess them up -- that one who was gay. He writes about his house-keeper -- for god's sake, who cares?! and about his grocery -- get out of here!

Being half-disclosive, or being extremely universal in being extremely intimate, is one reason that Shakespeare's Sonnets are so popular.

A poem is a sign, a symbol and it should be unique in its symbolization. I never write about something that really happened -- in the three-dimensional space, while I always write about the intimate happening in my feeling. I make the world speak for myself. When things speak for you, you have a chance of being heard...

To EE May 2002

...Thank you for your words of encouragement. I completely agree with you on the point that the form should be justified. And that "irony is impossible to avoid in reading conventional poetry" -- if its form is not justified. But I would like to add that free verse has already become enough and even too traditional, that one can also say about it: "Irony is impossible to avoid in reading free verse poetry," if its form is not justified...

To CC Spring 2004

...You said that every epoch has its primary genre, and now it is fictional prose. It seems to me that contemporary poetry is not just internalized prose, but has gotten

devoured by the dominant genre of prose. There is no such thing as free verse poetry as soon as "free verse" gets confined in its conventionality or its own quasi-dogmatic formalism. You said you are interested in what would come next...

I am Russian (though now I hesitate in my self-attribution), and so come from a completely different cultural context than the contemporary poetry of America. I wrote a thesis on Bakhtin a long while ago, and recently applied his ideas to aesthetics. I completely share his conviction that, in its modern form, poetry lost its impact on inter-personal relations and culture in general. That is why I never write to the anonymous recipient -- I always write to a specific addressee and hand a piece to him/her. I have written poetry for some 25 or so years, and have finally realized that the very same feeling about some event or person, when expressed to different people, sounds and get expressed differently. So in a sense, my revolution in poetry consists in returning to the source -- to the oral culture, with its immediate necessity and true (not meta) application to real life. This was, as I believe, the gist of the Bakhtin's idea of a dialogue. And then, if poetry can do this -- realize the dialogue, and realize it to a higher degree than a novel, to more immediacy, vitality, and necessity of a speech-act, and hence more meaningfulness -- then, Bakhtin was indeed wrong, and poetry can survive in its competition with the fictional prose...

To CC Spring 2004

....I do not feel myself being congenial to contemporary American poetry, while I have definitely departed from the paradigmatic Russian poetry. Russian poetry has been developing under oppressive political-social-and-cultural conditions for the last two centuries, being totalitarian either of the Russian Orthodox or Communist or Oligarchic type, and this caused its elaborated Aesopian poetics. Nothing truly essential for the life of a human could and can be said in Russian poetry in the straight colloquial way of American poetry. That is why Russian poetry is not just

essentially metaphorical -- in its exemplars, it is of the quality of an aphorism, which one does not say but pronounces as if on a death bed.

American imagism was precursed by Russian acmeism of Mandelstam, Akhmatova and Tsvetaeva; and Russian acmeism was a step toward transrealism rather than pop-art which became a logical consequence of Pound's imagism. To show rather than to say bears quite a different meaning in the context of Russian poetics. Even the Americanized Brodsky -- who was a poetical conformist number one -- was not able to overstep this Russian quality of iconic vision, which in acmeism acquired the unique singularity of every symbol. His holding on to the rhymed versification is a consequence of this rhymed vision, not vice versa.

Pop-art just shows an angular vision of an ego opposed to the world and other egos. Contrary to this, transrealism of any kind does not know both spatial and temporal limitations, as well as historical: Ovid is a transrealist planting seeds of everything in everything, as Moscow is a third Rome. The transrealist does not imagine a personal separation from the world which is created and recreated by a personified creator. Transrealism, in its spherical vision of everything through everything, is essentially transpersonal, rather than ego-syntonic. Surrealism is just a tiny part of this transreal global substitution and displacement of epithets. The entire world, the polyphony of metahistory, the oecumenical chorus --the infinite number of things, people, events and phenomena -- are engaged in expressing this specific intent of a poet. Only if many things, one after another, or in a chorus, sing your theme, have you a chance of being heard.

And this has an important implication -- if every poet has this access -- to say anything through anything, then in this universal communion, what matters is every unique moment of it. It appears to be meaningless to claim and proclaim your proprietary rights to the world, if it belongs to you anyway by your right of a creator. It is more important to really possess. And not just this piece of land and real estate, this soup can, and this photograph of Marilyn Monroe, this slang, and this

huah-word of a khaki-youth. It is important to spell the cosmos your own way -- the way that cannot be in principle spilled out by any prose, and especially a newspaper report. Only when a soup can will be placed into the universal context focused in a personally charged, vitally important continuum of this specific individual, only then a soup can has a right to the poet's vision.

It is crucial that it is not pop-art, but this universal vision of the world which forces a poet to become as particular in his saying as his strength of personality admits -- to become unique in the unique moments of his unique encounters with unique people and events. The whole drive of pop-art looks funny in this view. What is the point of dragging into the oil and pigment or the grammar and syntax the real dirty hair, or the crumbs of pop-corn, a condom, or a nauseous Campbell Soup can? Why this soup can and not the other one? Why pop-corn and not oat cereal? Why does Ginsberg in one of his poems just say how he lowers his lips down to nipples and then, penis of his lover, if the same thing, straight in the same very words, can be said by the drunk truck driver, though the lover would rather be female.

It is funny but I feel that when I approach American poetics I start losing my ability of this conjuring -- transmuting things at a will to fit them into a poem.

Because the transreal vision is not ordinary, colloquial, common-language, it requires its own compositional mode. It is rightfully claimed by some in the philosophy of language that the compositionality of language is semantically charged. If one fails to appreciate the compositional mode of a linguistic unit, he/she fails to understand its meaning. It is not enough to claim that language can be reduced to translatability, meaning that auditory signals just get translated into the semantic units in the brain.

It appears that in the spirit of deconstructivism, American poetry decomposed the compositional mode of poetical units, or at least, made them primitive -- it left only the artificial division of lines into something remotely reminding one of a versed

rhythmical poetry. It is precisely pop-art -- one takes some thing -- a can, a coat, pop-corn, Pepsi-Cola bottle, a face, a newspaper sentence, etc. -- and places it within some limited art space. In order to force anybody to have this as an artifact, the artist/poet needs to buy off this limited space, to place a sign: "A Gallery", or a title: "Collected Poems". He needs to label every piece as: A Bottle #5; or a poem on such a page, or under such a title. He needs many people, who like living in a stuffed space, to write an explanation why this bottle or this newspaper sentence is not a bottle or a newspaper sentence but indeed an artifact. But is it enough for making poetry to take a Kenneth Koch fishing manual, publishable in a Fishing Daily, and just split its lines into the angularly looking text? Is it enough for making love just to rehearse with your lover, in a kitchen tone and subway language, the manual for making love? Would it be a cruel joke if one would not just rehearse this manual instead of making love, but would rehearse it making some of the movements of making love instead of really making love and claiming that it is all that it takes?

I do not really know that I can call it grotesque -- probably, the pop-art quality of American poetry is just a cartoon...

That is why when Ginsberg claimed to see the world in its entirety, while Dickinson, in his words, just contemplated her garden, what he really saw was the entire world disappearing in the hat of a pop-art magician. Because when he placed all commonalities, all these cocks and cock-suckers, weed and weed-smokers -- all as it is into his privileged space of a Howl Gallery -- and labeled these objects "art", he just denied these objects their place in the real world via giving them some non-existent place on a neat Random-house-or-what-ever shelf under a fluorescent lamp -- the space which is way-too small and inadequate to host these things. To do this -- to take the world and move it into the 12 lines of an Akhmatova verse, or into a few inches of an El Greco piece, one would have to be a Biblical prophet, not a pop-art magician. And to be a Biblical prophet, one should have a real agenda -- something which is urgent for him to say, vital, necessary, immediate in this specific place, time and circumstance of his own Noah's Ark...

To CC Spring 2004

...Did you have time to take a look at my Leonardo paper? What do you think about it? I think that it gives an interesting example of introverted or inverted perception. Here is a painting of a certain woman with an animal on her lap, but because you look through a very strong conceptual lens, what you see is much more, and perceptually something completely different, even opposite. This is what I meant when I said that those lines in the Eliot's poem *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* about lonely men in windows do not designate perception, or that the hero of the poem did not really see the lonely men in the windows. It is not only that the poem gives a clear indication of "I saw it all infinite number of times", and hence anything in this poem tends to be a generalized, "collective" or "collected" image -- a representation of introspection, rather than just a sense perception (an impression), which is always unique and time/space/circumstance specified. He walked these streets too many times to remember a unique moment, and that is why he cannot start in this specific unique moment of a present speech-act. Had Eliot described it in the cognitive mode of perception, like Bishop in her *At the Fishhouses*, he would have said: I saw a man in this window, a woman in another one, and nobody in the third -- or one person in one window (the friend of my father), two in another one, etc... He would see that one window has these fake Y-shaped cracks like in Yale, and another window is illuminated with a candle light, and the third one has a piano music, thrown out with accords to the street and mixing with yellow fog. Is it very surprising that he saw only lonely men, and only this kind of lonely men? Or that he remembers that he saw only lonely men, and only this kind of them? The whole business reminds me of Magritte -- silhouettes of people cut out of one's mind with the conceptual scissors -- intrascapes, rather than landscapes. This poem shows nicely that the perceptual quality of postmoderns is deceptive (and self-deceptive). One cannot just take a picture with a camera without transforming a

fact into an opinion (Richard Avedon's words)... To say "I see red" would not necessarily mean that one sees red. And to say "I see" would not necessarily mean that one "sees" rather than not.

Hence Bishop in her *Fishhouses* starts with particulars, but finishes her poem with likening a particular (*water*) to the universal (*knowledge*). You sounded as if this ending is a kind of break-through. But in James Schuyler, almost every poem starts with tedious counting the particulars, and then at the very end, the poem suddenly represents a sudden generalization, a few lines pretending to the significance of a proverb or an aphorism, like: "Laugh and / the world laughs with you." / Die, and you die alone"; or: "Give my love to, oh, anybody". And the shock of the ending is created precisely by the abrupt and unsuspected nature of morals, which is attached to the rest of the poem the same way a fortune cookie is attached to a dinner at a Chinese eatery. You can give away your fortune cookie with a light heart -- to your kid, or your partner...

That is why, notwithstanding the sweetness of a cookie, the casual, colloquial tone of Schuyler turns out to have a machine-like, frightening quality. Poetry functions as a machine, a camera which for a moment opens a lens and exposes a film to the immediate chaos of things outside. Then it closes as suddenly as it opened and a label gets attached to the image -- this label does not influence the poem structurally or functionally. The cookies -- the only significant lines in a poem -- do not transcend the level of cliché, because they are easily detachable from the poem itself and can be easily shifted around from poem to poem. They present you a *revelation* in the same way a fortune cookie presents to you a *revelation* -- giving you only an illusion of a saying which is intimately significant for the given situation. The machine, the camera is not really concerned, cannot be concerned with the cookies of meanings.

But the camera of Bishop, or Eliot, or Schuyler is not really concerned with all these preambles to the cookie as well: all these lines and lines counting, describing and simply mentioning particulars -- all these fishhouses and madhouses, fishermen and

madmen – all the food in a Chinese Buffet (“eat as much as you can”). All these infinite but-ends and coffee-spoons... Yes, postmoderns are really good at showing the alienated, insignificant, horrifying, in its routine, nature of the world given away only to sense datum. That is why the perceptual quality of postmoderns is in reality the inability or maybe unwillingness to see, to see a unique moment. The so called perceptual poems can be cut into pieces and lines that can be shifted around from poem to poem the same way the fortune cookie of an alienated meaning dropped here and there can be shifted from poem to poem. Contrary to this proclaimed perceptual truth-making of the postmodern poetry, vision is conceptual. You should know what you see in front of you, in order to see it. That is why meanings are contextual (and hence spontaneously metaphorical) – fishhouses and madhouses can bear different meanings depending on the intentional intonation of a poet addressing the specific addressee in a specific time and place and circumstance. Thus a fishhouse can be at the specific moment of life seen as a madhouse, and a madhouse can be seen as a fishhouse... To claim that the significance of poetry can be born by the literal showing of the insignificance of life can have fatal consequences for the meaningfulness of poetry.

For the poet who is stuck with fortune cookies, things remain in-themselves, they do not bear any meaningful relation to the poet. He is an outsider, a patient, homeless anywhere in the world (his “film” is hidden in the camera to preserve its artificial sensitivity to light). It is not really that the world and people in the world are so cruel that they do not want to host the poet (Schuyler lived on his friends’ money almost his entire life). But the fortune cookie poet builds up on his own the walls of the mental institute around himself. He is a voluntary exile in himself: lost in himself to such a degree that he becomes for himself an unknown-in-principle thing-in-itself. To break through this indifferent pleura of things-in-themselves, he needs a drug – mental illness in the form of poetry – to stimulate himself for living... A depression for Eliot, a mental institute for Schuyler, and maybe Plath... Probably, Plato was right when he claimed that there are two kinds of madness – a right one, which includes poetical madness, and a wrong one...