

IF YOU'RE WITH ME

-a manuscript-

This is going to be very different.

It might not matter, in fact I already know, ultimately, it won't, not for me and my family, my wife, my children, my selves, not for us it won't matter but it's going to be very different nonetheless.

Let's take a look at what we know, I'm talking certainty here – beyond experience, deeper and further, not like God or Love or Hope or Fear, beyond all that body-mind-emotional vortexy supposition preamble reconnoiter, what we, all of us, well, almost all of us, there are the dumb after all, but who can know about that unless you're one of them? There can be no success in pretending you are deaf or dumb, and even so, who knows? We could cut these "truth-facts" down to three I suppose, I had thought we could start from four basic noble truths and proceed out of them into this very different story of mine, but it may need to be three after all,

I'll list the four and then we'll revise, how's that?

So, a version of the Four Noble (just borrowing that word because it has a certain recognizable ring to it, lends some mysterious historical esoteric gravity to the next word, equally endowed and unknown what the hell...Truths...means) as borrowed paraphrased from the examples of borrowing and plagiarism Samuel Beckett did ingenuously and therefore did not do but rather recreated what came from before him word for word, his words...anyway...for those of you of American education, corporate business or

financially/practically driven we'll write them out orderly-like so you might "pass" something it seems important to you to "pass" by inoculating and categorizing information so that it might be useful to you on your way wherever it is you are planning on hoping to get to rather than have these innumerable bits of truth gradually over long periods of time prickling your flesh thoughts and emotions and in effect or experience "using" you

For your safety and protection from unexpected change growth or development I'll capsulize Mr. Sam Beckett (and billions of years of names before him) so that you might take it or leave it without fear and/or possibly notch it into a larger compendium-
ipedia of facts and figures thoughts and emotions orchestrated toward some illusion of order and control as a stay against more ultimate fear and doubt and overall underlying hunch milieu that indeed, you don't really know what matters or doesn't you yourself or others or causes or values or actions or gods or morals or words or behaviors, not sure about many any of it,

I'm trying to help you out here you see, together-like, a little or very different togetherness-thinking that we might relax a little, with some agreed-upon collective certainties at least a few if not four truthy-like factoids where it might not matter so much if you're rich or poorer or conservative or liberal a believer or not, Russian, African, Jewish, HungoParaguayAmericando and so forth, no, just a Four Spiritual Laws kind of critter Four Nobled Truther Four Points of Fancy Four Fingered Fisherman whatever gets you by, or rather US because we're fashioning these Beckettian Bitesize so we can shove

them in our pockets, up our arses, in others faces or down the drain if they're finally too much to handle in our current placid circumstances or terribly frantic existence or multi-dimensional interwebbed realities or however it is I don't know what it's like, for you...

So, in hopes of a very different thing, that is, not some rambling looping circling chatter babble trying to persuade, convince, gather followers or power or any other false bolster in the world (I've got the fence, the four walls, close core of people, ability to unplug all machines, masks, transference, etc., all to those purposes already) let's have a look at these manageable clear unesoteric non-Secretive verbal items as received or interpreted from Irishman Samuel Beckett via an abyss of tangled lines and wires infinitely deconstructible to no purpose and see where it takes us as a group, a collection, atomic organism, human beings. Granted a LOT is assumed in these multiple choice fragments, a ton of baggage swallowed in stride for candied simplification but still a pill is a pill is a pill

“FOUR” “NOBLE” “TRUTHS”

(3?) “SPIRITUAL” “LAWS”

“FINE” “PRINCIPLES”

“FLEXIBLE” “FOUNDATIONS”

and so on...

no right
wrong

(no necessary order to memorize dear reader)

1. I was born.
2. I will die.
3. I am currently living

Okay those are the three-drop-the-fourth I was talking about earlier after I considered the deaf and dumb of us, I'm still seeking a paraphrase or restatement of the fourth obviously the proverbial self-construct only-knowable-in-relation-to-something-else or different or other term is the "I," but whatever we want to stand in for that letter seems adequate to me, a general "It" or "X" or "John Hancock" or "Mary Addams" or "we," see, we've gotta give a lot in order to get anywhere collectively, especially with languages or images we pack 'em so full of shit, every letter of the alphabet seems to signify something to somebody Sammy just pulled "I" out of the hat or fog or dust and used it there, so get past whatever you're thinking/feeling around the letter "I" and think unit-of-meaning or being or whatever you are reading this page currently (NOW) "Now" works as well, Samuel had the fourth going something like

4. For reasons unknown and apparently unknowable I cannot remain silent

See where I ran into the difficulty of the non-hearing non-vocal of us? Silence is their world, maybe we need "cannot remain gestureless" or "non-expressive" or "in-significant" or some such absence of activity internal or external

inseparable as stairs (up? or down?)

**NO! YES!
(BOTH!?)**

So, this being very different, straightforward and dense not tangled up unraveling endless query-type writing in language or lines or whatever, just these, what seem agreeable factoids certain-like statements to me – you?

1. ? was born.
2. ? will die.
3. ? is currently living
4. ? is unable to not be (that is deed, act, think, breathe, bleed, etc...)

Alright, scrap the fourth, that I think Mr. Beckett tacked on personally to explain why the first three didn't cause him to buckle down and live between 1 and 2. 'Cause he wrote a LOT about the "currently living" (a LOT) and about the "was-borning" and "will-dying"

and we're all pressed for reasons.

What's very different about 1-2-3 are that they don't require reasons or justifications, meanings or purposes, just memory and agreement.

Well - ? Are we agreed? 'Cause if we are, then we can just go on. Can't? Go on? Must! Living *is* going on! Wow! And I thought these seemed, as someone(s) said "self-evident"!

My approach, even though radically variant from my past attempts at somehow joining you to me to you and you and you and so forth again thwarted

Honestly, I DO get it – contingency – that with everything all the time changing and going on molecule-to-molecule there is conceivably no "last word" or definitive

statement or suggestion, that all is open to revision at all times, but really, which of you has experience of thought of certainty of a human being thing that 1. was not born 2. will not die 3. is currently living? without unfair metaphysical or philosophical, mythical or poetical obfuscations and loop-the-loops?

Could we just agree to try them out for awhile? I think it might, alright, I *feel* it might make this story very different than all the circularity spiraling dismantling arbitrary sloganizing we seem to repeat again and again with various dictionaries?

What say?

I'm giving it a try, thanks SBS

Sam Beckett
Simplifiers

If you're with me could signify a primary face to the world, with just that, a questionable beginning, *if*. My primary face perhaps, and not that I'm really so used to people against me or abandoning me, I have friends from decades, my parents never exiled, no children yet ran away, and lovers and spouses can't really be blamed. I perceived aloneness and abandonment somewhere along the tracks, perhaps even felt it, so I trail an incessant ribbon that starts with an if regardless of the shouts and whispers of my company.

I haven't got to the bottom of that, but have come to accept that many paths of my human psyche are very well riddled with bottomless pits, the use of language among them. And the feeling of feelings. And constructions called ideas. Even sense perceptions.

But I was born, or I accept that inferential deduction from the overwhelming evidence that I am currently living and the indubitable observable record of Death.

Which has everything to do with the very little of it often has to do with what I say, how I act, think and feel.

All to say, some primal things have everything to do with though machines and their collective informers often instruct me otherwise.

Or the fact of Shakespeare, though he flaunts those facts.

Or Homer or Bakhtin, Pessoa or Bronx.

I bring those fellows in because for some reason I don't expect you to take my word for it. As if I haven't read enough, seen enough, felt thought perceived enough, or been born, living and doomed for death as much as the rest of you. Theoretically, yeah. But listen to your own worries and thoughts and tell me they all sound readable? Worth someone else's time or attention (the value my friend thinks has become the ruling economy and arbiter of what's good/bad in/out high/low, who cares?). Attention.

Theoretically, no matter what I write on these pages, if it holds your attention I'm worth something, or if you hit my site (?), twittle my twitter, fan my space (does it smell all that?) I don't know the lingo, I just want people to face the books.

But there's the catch. If you're with me, I also want to be with you, and that doesn't work out very well if I'm screened or censored, if I can make up my profile at will and change my gender each day. Update update upload. All with this concept

that I'm puzzling bits of language to bring you to the surface but when you get there it's just surface. See that's not fair.

"If you're with me" means I'm hunting reciprocity here, the kind I experienced with Samuel Beckett or William Shakespeare, Fernando Pessoa or Immanuel Kant, whatever names are dropped in this baby are indicators of where I've felt *met*, but you, reader, given my big Ifs aren't going to meet much but doubts and a question mark if I don't "person-up," I'm thinking.

So this is going to be very different.

I'm going for the things I feel certain of, that I commit to telling you that I believe we can share:

The Trinity

The Triumvirate

The Triangle of Truth

X was born. X is currently living. X will die.

How is that for X or Federman, Filbert or Olsen? How is that for you and (if you're with me) how does that coalesce with me?

I'm not arguing that the "currently living" part isn't a rapid pixel-speeded altering of names and shapes, colors and texts and statuses, in fact I might argue that that's exactly what it is, a questionmark of being, a strange squiggle of movement always on a point it can't find between two corners it can't know, perhaps, but then that's still something, no? Some scribble on the ribbon trailing out behind me in the wind or mummifying me in my dark.

It's elementary. If we can't hold the apple and say/think 1, we can't do the math.

You were born. You are currently living (and what a living reading is!) and you will die. I agree, I'm shaking hands or hugging you, I feel I'm suddenly part of a gang or church or linked to hypothetical virtual suggested "friends"

which makes me very uncomfortable.

If you're with me, if I don't trust my own voice is/to be valuable, then your voices are gonna shout it right out. Like your eyes are erasers, "friends." Like you're undoing as I'm knotting, as if that's all there is to occur between us,

even so, that's something, no doubt.

You knot shit up for me and I'll set about unraveling it (how you move, glance, speak, behave) knotting it all the while myself-world's largest ball of twine maybe we should call it "God" or Time," "Fate" or "Meaning" or something. I don't know, but it's something, and it's happening.

We were born. We are currently living. And we will die.

Now I feel like a professor, pastor or politician. Three-point lesson, sermon, speech, all the attention can stand. Is it? Why?

How about a couple more?

My wife and I, yes, I'm married, always thought I would be, then I was, then never thought I would be again, but I am, and that is currently living, like I was writing about above.

So my wife and I, we're a couple, more, we're a kind of two-one oscillation where we work together eat together parent together sleep, sex, play, fight, fear, etc. together and also accomplish all those things and more on our own, even when together, but differently too.

Like she knows things I don't know, feels thinks acts in ways I don't, and I do too, but together, otherwise we wouldn't know the difference (make sense?).

If you're with me, it's like the stairs again, always stairs up and down always both at the same time but maybe with particular usage or need?

I don't know, but maybe you're a couple too, even with only yourselves, and then whether or not you understand the gibberish, well, we've got a couple more between us.

Which I brought up because I'm somehow threatened with people knowing about my wife and my "personal" life, what we do, how we try, where we are, what we think/feel/say and so on so that I figured if I'm wanting you to bring your whole self to the story I'm about to tell (it's very different this time) then these are exactly the kinds of things I have to bring –

that I'm afraid she's not satisfied
that she'll grow bored of our "living"
that she'll find someone better, smarter, more beautiful, stronger, kinder, less
smelly and selfish, more stable, richer, (whatever things a human can be that we think
of as positive + -er)
that she's looking for some faint part of her is

and the like streaming on my living "if" ribbon, regardless of what she does, says,
professes, fears, hopes, wishes, behaves...to the contrary
or that everyone is out to undermine our connection because it feels so good and
gushy and stabilizing and pleasurable, stimulating, productive, difficult
so given the facts (*trivium*) and her beauty talents personality and so on how could
we not be the victims of mercenaries or assassins
we were born. we are living (+marrying/parenting/loving/making... we will die.

If you're with me, and again I can't assume any of you get the couple more or
even have friends or family (probably why Beckett stuck to the single line, but, really,
doesn't the single line require another set of fingers or eyes to be a single line "I"?)

Kind of what I meant, here, trying to meet you, be fair, reciprocate, so I can tell
you the story that's so different, I think, at least from the circular babble *before* when
I first realized I even had streamers attached to me carrying messages somewhere
from my ears hands eyes mouth movements voice thoughts when I thought maybe it
was all make-believe or dream fantasy or nightmare the whole born living death thing

before, if you're with me, you were with me, and I got a little attention and I realized I hadn't created it, or couldn't create it unless I first recognized "I" which it couldn't "re-" anything (-member, -sist, -mark, -ply, - constitute and so on) without having re-moved itself somewhere and that somewhere had to have a there which wouldn't be perceptible without another there and so on

i.e. there's no other reason for gesture or language or thought without what's not it (up-and-down stairs) inconceivable without difference, never would have occurred to me and so on

if you're still with me,

like born (always past-tense)

living (always present)

and dead (always future)

not depending on their grammatical forms or appearance

How I must be a little afraid of the "will die" part because living always feels like a resistance even when I smoke or drink or attempt idiotic climbs on huge rocks, cause it always hurts a little more as I go and my body, *the* body that vehicles me doesn't look like it's living more but like it *has* lived more and I can't seem to make true headway on the world's library or theater or wonders or knowledge and...see, I run out of breath,

maybe you do too, or if not, now you know that about me, so that's something, something we share in common, however you "take it," as they say,

signifying interpretation, untying retying the knots as they're passed along the line,
hand to hand, eye to eye, brain to brain, emotion to emotion however it all gets done,
its doing, and that's living, as I said earlier that I thought.

The story, yes, the story, I set out to tell you true but found it difficult to imagine a
space we might launch into the details from that was translatable, so it all knotted up
on me and then your knots made of my knots were hard to unravel and then I didn't
think that maybe my story was so very different after all and then when I got to
thinking about it more I thought that maybe it was

but mostly I need to know

if you're with me

and I'm not certain how to know that given that living is always present and
unstoppable unlocatable excepting when it's not living any longer

and I can't really pin down the past, even being born, because in some weird
sense it seems "I" wasn't there or was all one undifferentiated thing attached rather
than next to and I've no idea the details of my death out always in the future until it's
done but I won't be there

so the story I so intended to share was the living difference requiring enough
likeness to be recognized

which parts I think are as follows:

I was born.

I am living.

I will die.

It's good to know you
and thanks for your attention.

You're reading mine.

Coupling a Couple

Always aware of her breasts. She works in various stages of undress, for you. Some days, like today, she dresses modestly – long skirt, cottony light zip-up hoodie all gradually being splatted and splotted with plaster as her own dress forms on the armature. She even has shoes on. But her calves and neck are still naked, her ankles, wrists and hands. And her clothing only serves to report on the body they drape over, the distinct and sultry shapes of her elbows and arms, succulent straw of torso and exceedingly pleasing swell of hips and buttocks are crystallized clear, cloth and all.

After all, she is your wife, therapist, artist, woman and mother in no order at all.

More often she is sleeveless in a tank delivering skin, cleavage, tattoos and motion. And light airy skirts swaying above the knees so when she bends or reaches the fullness of her legs direct your line of sight and when she's seated, exhausted...! Another advantage of these are the ribbons of flesh that appear at waistline and pant-hem, seduction, suggestion, for you.

Your mouth precipitates these things, as if everything she did for her work, for her needs, were actually some elaborate private dancing prolonging your life of delayed gratification and behaviorist addiction to ever-superlative satisfactions and pleasure.

Hope you do the same, as your vigor builds through the hours, that the fierceness or tenderness of nightly ravaging incites and sustains her own fleshly wonder. You can't know, in these matters you must trust, hope, believe. These are what is called, finally non-referentials, unverifiable facts, contiguities of experience that require

trillions of non-verbals and paraverbals and extraverbals, self-care, self-discipline, attachment and differentiation. Maturity of the human adult.

Which, put that way, takes the winds right out of the sails.

What if we looked at it another way? As a dancing. Some complex active mating ritual that biologically requires intensive amounts of strength, will and attention to play as our lives elongate. When our lifespans were diminished you could treat these things casually – your libido would flare in adolescence, you'd set your sights, feed the fires, procreate with flammable appetite, heatlamp the offspring to self-sustenance and then burn out. Forever.

But now there's medicine, exercise, preventatives and treatments to keep your body mobile and pains of decay at bay and you've gotta figure out how to fill the time!

So you preen and primp work harder and longer at working harder and longer, at playing (harder and longer), loving, parenting, fixing, mating, thinking, listening, looking, longing, believing, hoping, fearing, whatever it is you do with your time, only increasingly extending the duration.

Perhaps this accounts for the rising percentages of drug use, genetic engineering, medical aesthetic surgeries, entertainment industries, technowebs, virtualities of every conceivable stripe – we have a lot of time to fill, and our attention span hasn't caught up with the increasingly tectonic bodies?

Shoes and shirt are off now – a bra covers the sweet candies of breasts you are always aware of but basically you're at a topless show held back by the cordoned stage of your heavy desk as she shuffles in those perfect feet to and fro and her back and tummy writhe around the plastered pole, for you, as you see it.

Sure working makes her hot and uncomfortable, but can that really account for her innate sexiness? There isn't a woman shape or style you don't find latent or active in her, body so fluid and clear and flexible that no body doesn't slide therein like an ocean holds rivers lakes and rain without appearing obese or formless.

This is exotic. Of no ordinary or norm you'd ever dreamed (at least since college) but never thinking it more than fantasy.

She doesn't even have the parts necessary for reproduction so you know it's not about preserving the species any longer, no heroic warlike metal-proving drive this sweaty rutting your drawn to with her, her, HER!

You find whatever you notice in the tangled jungle of embodied cities are only references to her. Her hair flowing away down the back on the back of someone else's head, her spasming calf on the young bicyclist, the creamy flesh of her buttock on a young child's rosy cheek.

How did this happen? You wonder, you're forced to admit it's all mystery, it hasn't been true in the past, your movement from fullness to beauty to more fullness like bouncing block to bubble up a video game screen,

but here, her, intelligence, dialogue, aesthetic adoration, rapport apparently without end, this you wouldn't believe after disappointment after disappointment after novelty after specialty after peculiarity – now THIS.

She just shot a coy smile. She knows. She knows that wherever her focus lies you can't deny her. Moving in and out of the doorframe, now stooping now straightening now slipping out of sight...

...it's time...

You've been pressuring yourself against a desk drawer, happy your old friend still
responds to your brain responding to your imagination and the senses,

You are always aware of her breasts, and now, again, you need them.

If Ribbons

I mentioned the ribbon of messages.

Take the first time your face warps itself into the emblem of disappointment and like that your young toddler begins to cry, silently.

Or the tone of your compliment directed to your wife provoking jealousy.

These are the ribbons I'm talking about. Confetti-like streamers radiating from bodies, glances, bends of joints, shifts of skin, rippling vocalizations. The nonverbals, extraverbals, social contexts, psychology of the members present.

If I came into the world without a self, an animal, a biological machine with an amazing networking system in my skull, as the languages of gestures and gestures of languages began passing me around, cooing over me, slapping scolding shouting, calling me names, measuring and labeling me, I got one.

If I was born, the world swaddled me in ribbons of *if*.

If he is a boy he will preach play participate in war. If he is effeminate he will music dance poet. If he is large enough he will protect his sister. If brave enough he will love and protect. If smart enough he will know and believe. If good enough he will work hard.

The messages stream out of me, I've only added the question marks.

At certain points you become aware that the collective is reading the messages in languages you do not know or comprehend. Translations and interpretations of your every moment thought expression, baffle and infuriate you.

At a certain point you realize you only read a limited number of languages yourself and are engaging in a hell of a lot of translating and commentary on your own.

Once in a rare while someone's streamers make sense to you. Or many do.

Often my wife or children approach me like a ball of honey that's just emerged through a trashbag full of paper shreddings. I catch myself trying to read everything at once while also listening to their voices and see my hands furiously taping different messages over the ribbons of language I see.

If you are with me we may as well pulp this page and reconstruct it together like a puzzle of hashmarks and secret codes.

If I am good enough you'll keep reading, you'll want to know. If I am smart enough you'll take a line away with you, glue it on, change your life. If I am worth enough you'll "pay" attention.

And so on.

And so on...

We invented therapy to try and help one another out sorting through the literally countless messages attached to us. Sometimes it is easier for me to read yours and you mine than all the contortions of mirrors and light required to untangle and follow our own lives.

Regardless, we encounter, and regardless of the story or voice we struggle between us, the context is infinite. And particular. So many messages only belong where and when they are uttered, yet how adhesive they are! I still remember a busload of teenage track and fielders passing me walking a long road home, shouting at me happily and in greeting only to look up to fifty or more hands giving me the bird,

apparently just for being there,

see, it's stuck right here under my arm, to the back a little, behind those other ones, yeah, right in that wad somewhere.

If you are with me and can imagine all this then you can imagine how incredibly difficult the event or activity of communication must be. What do you pay your attention to? You've only so much, and the other is moving, saying, looking here or there, wrinkling their forehead, shifting their feet and covered with toilet paper rolls

of languages, many of which you've never seen before, and even less laid out in such a way!

If the question is: how do we know one another? how do we know we're really encountering? how say and listen, listen and say amidst this fluttered vision of your messages my ribbons some we've catalogued ourselves, handwritten, others slapped on by culture, economy, gender, others simply fixed on us by strangers or discomfort, imagination, parents, television, fear? Hell, some of my own messages I can't make out anymore, decode, translate or remember, but they're still there for the entire world like banners or skywriting.

A ring, a wince, a style of dress.

A cliché, a reference, an irony.

Emotions.

Intonation its own river of ribbons.

As you see, if you're with me, I can always get this far – identifying a morass of symbols and stimulants, screen doors of crosshatched lines of type and scrawl and sound, I make out a figure, an object like a shadow in a forest of trees, but what were we saying to each other and who are we gesturing from and toward and all the million hows?

I've grabbed on to this pennant singing "if you are with me" as a flagon to begin.
Holding it out in my laundry of tags hoping you at least catch the squiggly mark at
the tail: ?

Saying Iiiii

He was a son and a father a brother and friend all at once.

He was drawn to the complexity of things – how all these disparate elements even opposites formed wholes.

See from far enough away.

But distancing was a problem.

He had to adapt or pretend a persona in order to examine anything else. Posit his subject to an object. Split his eye from his brain, his brain from his thoughts, sensations.

This he could not do.

But he could pretend to.

His teachers called this “objectivity.” Or “truth-factor,” what a dentist calls “abstraction.” It ain’t natural.

But how else? They taught him. How else count your eggs before they hatch? How else find a total without discerning the parts? How else learn the letters to form the words to make a sentence

Dentist: “Say Iiiiiii”

He used to climb mountains. For the challenge of it, the self-clarification or declaration. The freedom remoteness and risk of the matter. The view. The scale.

He was a professional lifeguard, a swimmer and scuba diver. The weight and breathless pressure of it. The immersion submersion “in it” feel. Challenge and risk of it. Clarification, declaration. The view. The scale.

She painted, figures and ground. Strokes splats lines angles. Layers. They were bright and if dark brightened by motion. She was agile, ex nihilo it seemed. Nothing – matter – something.

Hands, eyes, shoulders, arms. Dip swirl thrust scrape. And a whole lot more. He would have...but she...wow! He thought maybe a touch of...but she...oh!

What was going on here? Were the images compositions runnels and drippings similar to his manipulations of letters and terms? Stretching out an acrylic blue, watering it down, gooeing it up, etching pounding tracing the same as pushing a definition out or back, re-spelling or copulating words to do what they did not expect? But they never did expect, nor did housepaint oils or wax. Something else was going on.

This is why he wrote. The challenge, the clarification, declaration. The pressure the freedom, the scale, the view.

He had studied performed and composed intricate musics. The bends the rests the grammar punctuation and dynamics of it. The leaving and producing of notes like breadcrumbs and inuksuks along the trail. The coding, decoding, dissonance and harmony. There were only so many tones yet they were never exhausted. Even by prodigies! Geniuses!

An alphabet of 26 letters. Made from a possible infinity of lines.

He was a male person, friend, brother, musician, spouse, a climber a father a grandson a son, a cousin a nephew an employee a boss. A singer a sportsman a patient. A hero a failure, student and teacher, reader and read.

He writes for the scale and the view.

Hurt

At 11:02 in the morning, of a Thursday, at the barrier of Summer and Fall, she wrote, “it hurts.”

Well, he asked.

It hurts.

The words, the illness, the aging body.

The tense responsibilities never ceasing, to one’s self, one’s family, one’s world.

It hurts, she said.

She went on working. Making. Chiseling, pounding, building and correcting – a self, a family, a world.

He retreated to a point of flight in darkness. His world, his realm, their safeties.

What is strange – how many the hurts, how much they heal.

A squirrel scratches a branch in scampering descent while wind worries and trembles. These are everyday things, things often unreported. Pains from what has been let go or discarded that still clings to the back of the heel, that drags and drags. That slows and pulls and wears away.

And the lines hooked into the flesh at all points of things gone beyond, grown or flying out of reach still tugging at the skin, the breast, the neck, the shoulders. They rise but we are too heavy to lift with them, our heels dragging.

It hurts, she writes, he hears, her forehead smoothing.

Nimble hands in ache, trembling and soothing the clay.

A sheet comes through the mail – she owes. Another – he owes too. And more and still more, boarding up the cracks of the house. Validating the walls even as they sink and bow.

It hurts that they are wanted but not supported. Sought but required to pay for the attention. So hard at work, such efforts to feel it dwindle what barely sustenance they had.

It hurts, he writes.

Acknowledging every gain, its simultaneity with loss.

The radiance and slight moon when it is night, which always comes.

Somethings have been crowding and gathering behind her skull just above or just between the openings of her eyes, instead of being forced out the ears, nose or mouth, these little burrs pack themselves and cling tighter tighter bundling knots too large for their surroundings, creating pressure, pressure, even burrowing beneath the teeth and

it hurts, she says, he writes

the little ones not so little now swelling big force against the walls slowly bursting them to fragments and emptier airier spaces. The climate is not controlled.

They love, and it hurts.

Without it, they would not know where the parasitic fears mildew and mold.

Without the growth of love the loss would not be felt.

In a kind of silence accentuated by the noises of labor, they build against it,
construct from debris, in paradoxical safety the scramble at loose ends, sweep crumbs
and fractures, tie up the bones.

How quickly the light wanes, muscle stiffens not in strength but inflammation,
it hurts, they say, and they lie down, using what oil they can squeeze into one
another's joints, and each last match for flame.

The matchbox is not empty, and for that they rejoice
but it hurts, this joy. And earns it from both directions.

Marbles form in his tissue, her body of pebbles and rods. Where moth, dust and
rust...they baptize, they lotion, they spray, some clears, some breaks away. Chars
flake from his lungs. Webbed designs the sheen of her plaster. They love.

It hurts.

Visitors come increasingly *for* rather than *to*. Even the children, hardly befitting
anymore.

If one is in a cage, another wanders the fog.

Where one breaks on through, another is wounded.

It hurts, she says, she smiles the grimace, they kiss.

Their heads press together in sleep – to keep her critters from bursting, to stretch
out his breath. They tripod and are able to stand. To hold up. In the leaning, their
voices, the breath.

Looked at from both directions at once, and more.

They couple, they love,

it hurts, she says, he writes.

Personing-Up

“I...”

“Well, I...I...”

“I thought, I mean, I think that what I have done, er, what I am doing, you know, I mean maybe you don’t, maybe no one cares, no one can see or hear it, I mean, I’m really trying here...to...”

“First of all I was born, I mean that seems indisputable to me, try as I might, I mean, I can come up with lots of explanations, pictures (images), stories official and hearsay (heresy) and so on, but rationales, justifications, validations or proofs re: my birth all end up, for me, at least, I mean, I can’t really believe my reasons for my birth, I don’t need a story, I find it actually impossible to imagine myself unborn, I mean, I became...”

“Which is to say, being here, right now, even if never landing on a point, a still place, that is, always being in some kind of motion, change, development, erosion, asleep or awake, ill or well, I find no reason, no rationale, once again, to demonstrate or prove to anyone, sometimes, I guess, I mean, sometimes I feel it necessary to point out in fact that it seems indubitable and yet feels overwhelmingly overlooked or ignored or even forgotten that indeed I *am* here, somewhere, “here” as in motion amongst other moving things, vibrating breathing trembling along with everything else around me, at this point (*that* point) still, yet, now, I find this to be indefatigable and unvanquishable, this experience, even “reality” I’m unashamed to call it, that I am here, alive, *living*, in fact, *present*, as it were...”

“Sure there are those moments, memories, perceptions where I feel I must assert myself, existence, “I AM HERE!” kind of thing, usually in arguments with my wife or small groups of acquaintances, my house, among my children, you know (maybe you don’t, that’s the point) where body mass, biological operation, etc...don’t even to effect or register in my surroundings, occasionally, I am saying,”

“I seem to have to, need to, okay *choose* to announce myself – pronounce, remind, express in such a way to garner acknowledgment or some collective awareness that indeed, yes, I am existing, am present here, not a blind dumb deaf mechanical function but in fact I am able to, I possess, I am substantially actively present...”

“I mean to say that I have had things done to me, said to me, external things, yes, palpable encounters with a world outside of me I perceive or conjure as people, places, things, “situations” if you will (I do not know if you will) in which, actually consistently and constantly for me in fact, now that I consider it, am telling it here, in which I cognize myself living alongside very many other living things, real actual things, conditions, persons, settings, I also find this to be indubitable, yes influenced externally, yes things have happened I believe, events have occurred, “situations” that is, my living is a co-being, a plural multi-versal type of “reality,” I used to really disapprove of that term, word, concept, dependent on mind or brain activity I guess, would have insisted, I suppose, on “realities” at best, still misleading I would have thought (as if there were a truth-content there, some ethereal unchanging Factoid) much of that has gone by the wayside is what I am saying, I mean to be telling that I “claim” posit certain realities currently occurring in all these uncertain ways, perhaps,

moving WITH- as it were, (no longer within/without distinctive, altogether WITH-) towards...”

“and there, I mean to say, in the “towards,” yes I sense or feel less uncertainty about ends or τέλος as it used to be, I mean to say I believe confidently that I will die, that there is an end to this, that ennui, melancholy, depression, those sort of stuck powerless entrapped feelings do not resonate with what I might be said to *know* – that nothing lasts forever or is ideal (again in that removed airy sense of eternal or sure or esoteric ecstatic “out-of” “outside” experience) that no state is static, I mean, the bornness, the action, the ending, all seem secure to me, I profess them I guess, I suppose and accept them, I tell you this about me, because I believe in this real space, this co-being, this situation of time and place that a white page of paper, my wriggling hand, this language, your ears (internal perhaps) and eyes are real and are happening, are occasional, this is experience, all of it needing to be so, well, I mean, for it to be, that is exist *as* language, as work, the thinking being I am making this it is here and there you are reading it or contemplating if its an image these marks on this lined paper arbitrarily boundaried thing, so matter to matter to matter...”

“Yes, I am setting down here what I mean to be bringing to you, that I am certain I became and am being and will no longer be at an uncertain point that is certain to occur, and that often in the way of things always all being in motion, changing, ambiguous, multivalent, layered and so on, how we (if I may say so, speak in a collective manner here, either way) that we don’t seem to have many certainties we can tell one another, which, you understand, I believe we’re in control of so little in this enormous co-creating co-living co-changing co-affecting living we do, I strongly

believe although everything ever-so-uncertain still the how, the unknown, that is the way(s) effervescent, shadowy, inscrutable ways we move from that boring through living to deadness or naught, that *how* of it is imminently what there is to share, contingent, insecure, doubtful and rife with imagination, emotion, fraying neurons and the like, but interesting, terrifically interesting, horrifying, frightening, yes, those too, but stimulating, very stimulating to try to pass back and forth between us, like ties or ropes you know (perhaps not) as in substantial matter we can believe in, not the stories or perceptions, opinions, emotions, no not those metamorphosing alterable rapidly elements but the vehicles, mediums for such transmissions, such, I mean, so that we might have real, that is, our bodies among us, our minds and senses, that these might be useful you see, might be actual or substantive, might be structural, touchable, hearable, testable, smellable things between us, like in a museum or our own home, the doors the children our spouses partners animals food that we might, I'm speaking for myself here, have physical, yes, scientific physics, tangible deducible realities passing between and around us to hold to smell to sleep with hear vocalize look at, monument-like, photograph-like in boxes or frames, pulped tree stuff with ink marks on it, a greasy slice of pizza, sexing another body the sweat tug sound of it..."

"For all that, I'm saying, I, well, I thought, you know (no, really you don't, how could you) you'd have to know my how or have some access, suggestion, reference point, actual physical palpable, record, voice, image, image tangible, you could would be as certain as can be was concocted made fabricated by another one of your same sort, another born-living-dying creature in the swarm of our days, this grand situation of languages activities sleepings breathings kissings cryings anxieties laughings

grievings happinesses that verifies, validates this our these uncertain situations, I guess, you know? (not yet I suppose, I'd have to hear back from you on something or in something that might stay for awhile that I can carry that can't be turned off that doesn't depend on) I mean to say I'd have to tell you or show you my how of living and give it to you some way adequate to the how, the levels the knowns and unknowns the vicissitudes and accidents the population and environments, the reality(ies) of it all, without you thinking it was just some show some trick of light some hypothesis some filtered idea or message or program or..."

"I can get lost in the enormity, I find it difficult to conjure the confidence anything can get through and be gotten through can convey here to there physically like walking like travel on the ground or in a vehicle to a really different place not a virtual foreignness in the same room, how to get my here to you're here, all my theres to you're here and yours back again kind of thing I can easily doubt that my living how and this very process of recording it physically with my hands this language my murmuring mouth a pen some pages of paper I cut the plastic, real plastic off of and sorted out on a real wooden desk and scribbled all these, I suppose, commonly known terms, available vocabularies, in cursive I am hoping is neat enough to be read again, comprehended, over time understood..."

"effort, time, space, thought, rest, renewal, exhaustion..."

"I think, I mean, what I am actually doing, trying to do here is to find a kind of ground, yes, like the ground we need for real movement, around our house, to the restroom, out our doors, to the market, into bed, at school, for a rocking chair to work, a real ground, physical that is, embodied, with form you can hit, squeeze, bend, sit on,

walk over, drop, hug, I am attempting to achieve a ground for us to share, an experience, a situation, an event where we might cohabit, meet, live, together...”

“I mean to be personing-up in the old “man-up” sense (except women perhaps did it more often?) of stepping forward, out, toward, bringing this human how into commerce with other human hows...a few certainties as blocks we can use with more and more (as many as would like) to build, change, rearrange, construct cohabit codestruct and a whole lot of hope without contradicting the future uncertain certainty...”

“I address, I invite, I call out, I need...you”

What Counts for Connection

The one child, among many, playing in the fountain, who stopped a moment.
Water dancing all about, hands hanging to its sides, you with your book cross-legged
on the bench, it staring at you. You noticed, gazed back, smiled just a little. As did
the child.

That sentence by Pessoa. Or emotion in Walser. A parable by Kafka.

Music pouring out of an upper story window in a distinctly foreign street.

A deep wide night in the midst of troubles, in which the stars were reproducing,
swelling and the blackness was woolen. You rose to sink there.

Asleep, naked and warm, with her or him.

The seed that took, the tender white-green vine that sprouted. That morning.

Your mother's look of pleading in her illness or grief. What flooded.

The compliment you received.

A once that felt honest. A moment.

Amid the thud crack and crumplings as sideswiped by the large dark semi's grill,
the relinquished cloud of you lying into the passenger seat.

Tears in the middle of nothing.

The letters you open that are neither advertisements or bills.

Smell of grade schools, libraries, stone churches, manure.

Observing spiders and squirrels.

Veins in the hands of your great aunt _____.

When they gave you water.

The nurse that was kind.

The debt cancelled.

They were surprised to see you (gladly).

Just then, after protracted searching eye contact, yearning and expressive, when
he or she said "yes."

Successfully buried in snow. And more falling, fat and wet.

What Mark Kozelek does.

The toy, the plumbing, the car, truly fixed. For now.

The gift card.

That day, so full and furious, that year, that month. You needed to vent, unload, release. Someone heard.

His/her face in that scene, this movie.

A duckling struggling to keep up.

Sorrow, and the tones of the cello.

They won.

She came.

A free order of fries.

Tracing: Reshaping the Puzzle

Or so it would appear, framed by a sort of body, a skin, permeable but definite,
perceived.

The cubing we are prone to.

So we can recognize, cut out, stuff inside.

Preferably pencil.

No doubt sometimes scissors are used. Permanent markers.

Pieces aren't cut to fit. You'll need tools like memory and forgetting and all sorts
of fabrication.

Don't fear. Too much.

It's a good thing about words, language, they layer the page, re-de-cribe. Fit to
the moment, or fit the moment thus.

Go ahead, cry. Saturate the paper thin. It can fall apart.

Go ahead.

There once was a beetle. Rounded, dark and surprisingly tenacious and strong for
its size.

Still, soft inside.

Like an algorithm or punch card. Trailways. Limited.

Ratchet down.

If you're with me, still, we can make some pictures. Grab the crayons and box of photos in your mind.

Start from the inside, pretend there is no frame.

Mark.

Then, again, if you want. And again.

What you are filling is time. This way.

He told me how it was for him. How he thinks it is. How that feels. What he deduced, what he planned, maybe hoped. Maybe. He was a friend.

The beetle scurries along. Some blades undercut and tip him over, apparently so flexible but all with their own designs.

She gives up.

There *is* always song.

I like that there – what were you thinking of or feeling? Or not thinking of? Not-feeling? It all goes into the picture, of course.

Like conversation, what you don't say.

Don't think in a square. Or, I guess, do if you must, if that's how you see it.

A box, a container.

Not sure our frames are built for it. It spills out, pours in.

A child's hand might save the beetle, might squeeze it too hard.

Where do you suppose the glisten comes from? Raindrops, tears, sun. But not any of them, only all.

So many without-which-nothings. Maybe all of it are.

Pied Piper of Alphabets

Wizard of dreams and fairy tales, where this leads, Pied Piper of Alphabet. The sort of twisting and trembling, shaking and tumult the earth must do to get itself out. Out there. Here.

By their grimaces and death masks we recognize those wrenched so in the discovering the squeezing forth. Wringing the individual rag. Waste is waste.

Kaleidoscopic confusion, this way and that world and self turn in order for oscillate observations, colors shapes and colluded window mirror.

I follow the action, to the same dismal ends.

Lamas of letters, and scribes of script, all falling upon the Piper of Alphabets, mage of marks, spiraled looping sign. The crest and inscription, memorial and sometimes shield.

How does saturation and the wringing not repeat, result? Water the flowers or quench the thirst. Each returning always again for more and different? By the time the globe erupts it is now.

This would be the story of that, still told by the Pied Piper of abecedaries.
Clambering colliding behind the tonal impulse. Wandering and woven scratchings in
a dusty lot. Covered over, revealed, tread upon again.

Just to get the lava out of the core.

Pull the suck of clay to tablet.

Mining for coal or what's richer.

Boring a void.

Are all cataclysms known as disasters, even upon reform?

To speak plainly, in the effort to get the inside out, it tends to look ridiculous to
wear.

If you are with me and this is the mode of operation – to extrude and designate,
shuffle and piece together, what makes of all the hands and miles and miles of land?

It is upheaval, a sound of sickness I suppose, this density of telling in an unbroken
line, fragmented as it is. The nearer the core the more molten, shifting. Untouchable.
The ashen path.

A serpentine seduction from the start? Tugging at the coil, hand over hand, letter
after letter, never to find that first scratch on stone, originary marble of mettle?

My words are butter, viscous and coagulate by turns, I slip, I stumble after the
unseen, waterless waves of the Piper I do not even believe in.

What the effort? What the slog and swerving slide?

When did I catch the current and where do I hope it will go?

I think I know.

Maybe it begins as a wondering, a wandering. Those first molted legs, a table for
a brain, and the other, not the loom but what feeds it. Beetle struggling in the brush.

Where will it take us?

And it does, but the spinning never stops because everything's made of thread.

Once the neuron-muscle-joint incline.

It tumbles over a leaf.

And then more is added and more so that it cannot be undone.

The whirring, the ticking, the occasional clatter of the shuttle. Things cohere,
another line. It takes time to see a pattern, and even then, a pattern of what? Some
larger pattern, but then what? And so on.

The beetle crosses water, barely. It glistens.

There is a need for it, it's true and it seems, but too much or not at all!

You have to wonder (or maybe not but do anyway), one end passes through
begins to wear tear fade while the others stitch together. Who could need this blanket,
this cloak, and wherefore all these ribbons? Don't know, have to wonder, beetle takes
a long time scuttling across.

We came, we saw, but no one conquers, not one. Not even the cockroach. You
have to wonder.

And who invented the loom? Collaborative construct ceaselessly generative,
endlessly shushing and clacking. Pied Piper where do you lead us? Why did we
make you from this fabric we wander along? And what remains when we dry on our
backs? Or molt again?

I so wanted this to be different, a weave of other worlds, and they too are there,
this thread I trundle on.

The kids are home from school, scampering up the porch.

Does the beetle feel the crush and spurt?

The tattered edge wound back around and fed again to the machine? And yet it's
not, not the same.

That was a brave little beetle, threw himself from his proverbial crib, made it
through some weeds and over the downspout! Followed the rug and its myriad trails
up onto a porchy plateau to see what he saw, and never saw it coming!

I was born. I am living. I will die.

Same story, never the same,

feeding the loom,

following threads,

crossing the Is and curving the Us

like I was saying

if you're with me...

The Remains

Always come after

but never arrive

so there will be

