A Plausible 'Entry' for, like, Man

I:

paleolithic man (brain-case, like the present
porpoise's. bigger than modern
man's)

art (morals, tools, 'free', 'traveling', "women"
the so-called 'Venusides

fr 5,000 B.C.: Sumerian to 2500 B.C. a writing language in
(cities possible)

1800 B.C., Indo-Europeans appear (Hittite/ 1350 B.C
& horse approx. 'secular' literature

HOMER, 850 B.C

450, Athens: logos invented (universalism possible

II:

334-323 B.C., Alexander's conquest of the east, and a unity possible
"larger than any that had existed before"; and it lasted almost
1000 years "until destroyed in its turn by the conquests of Islam"
but it was those conquests -- 623 A.D. on --, & not Xty or Rome,
which did it.

Irish scholarship

Mohammed born 570, lived to 632 --
c. 500 - 800 /G
Islam teaching Europe from Cordova
(Averroes) 1100 A.D
fr 732 AD, date Martel turned back Moslems at Tours, one has to see
a 'Europe' -- and new "West" -- arising

771 Charlemagne
790 Irish monks to Iceland
823 Norse, to Dublin
862 Swedes to Novgorod
871 Alfred
981 Eric the Red, to Greenland

-- Charles Olson

5 April 61

Roi:

Just before I left Dillon's last night you and Joel were talking abt the
Burroughs stuff in the last issue of The Bear - that Joel cdmn read it,
etc. Which got me to thinking abt Burroughs and this morning I dug out a
review of The Naked Lunch that I did abt a yr so ago, but which I buried
later, not because I thought it wasn't the right angle to take on it but
because I didn't know if my reasons for putting the book down were valid.
I think maybe it's time we talked abt that book, instead of just taking it
for a "classic" or whatever the fuck you want to call it, what the clowns
call it anyway... well, what the hell is the book? I mean what is so good
about it that we must pay attention to it, which we must...

I didn't like the book, as a Book, because of reasons extra-literary, that's
why the review I did bugged me - the trash about its lack of organization
etc., well, we won't go into that old shit. I don't care if he wrote the
book with a pair of scissors in each hand, etc., etc. Like, he's fooling
us? "And now, ladies and gentlemen, I shall reveal to you that this book
was actually written by my pet bedbug" (fanfare) - like that weary bullshit
about the monkeys winning prizes at the abstract painting exhibits in Bohunk
and so on. No. At least that wd be the literary come on and tho indefens-
able in the year 1961, it holds some water. My bitch against the book is
I'm afraid, a moral one,

Now, is Burroughs showing us the world? And I don't mean the English Class
world, s that our lives can be better stoooo, but is he showing us the Junk
world, nightmare world, not even "as it is", but is there a human agency in-

dvolved in all that jazz? Where is our compassion to go, what figure do we
set up as someone worth it all, there isn't even the rejection of love, like
in let's say, Cubby's Tralala, where the whore has her chance with the Army
officer and doesn't even know what he's talking about, she tears his love
note up looking for a check, etc. Or the Ferdinand (?) in Celine's Journey:
When he gets to New York, well, you write him, and not in horror, but because
he is so pitifully defenseless, hopeless, and is such as a man, a human
being. Or taking it out as far as it will go in my mind: Dostolevski's hero
in Notes From Underground. Now there is alienation to the 3rd power, no
figure in literature has ever been more not with it than this guy, more so
than Benway or Bradley the Buyer, but the point is that something is lost
and gone in him and we know it: I mean we know that he's lost something that humans do/shd have. The Burroughs people come at you like they never had anything to lose; that "undreaming insect world" that he talks about IS the world of The Lunch. And so what? I mean this is sheer horror and I don't know but what it gets to an oversaturated point at which it turns into almost caricature (intended? - no not certainly that word, but what then? - superhumanism, certainly not antihumanism, that doesn't occur in the book), Burroughs, that is, does not have a Swiftian comeon in that he loathes people, he starts from the premise that all these folks ain't really human, they are alienated to the point at which they turn backwards and become - not evil, but just horrors. I think it's Coleridge talking abt Lear and the evil of Cordelia's sisters, talking that the horror is truly that because we expect them to act like human beings at some point and they don't: they are absolutely without any moral values. This the truly horrible. Ok, so does this put Burroughs on that level of making? /? But where the relief? Like, where are the good c:ys? There is Edgar; where Kent?

Work of art? Or valid lesson-book? Or even a reference to gauge the junkies that we know against? Balls, nothing happening here. • Sex in the head, Lawrence would have cut him up in little pieces, like he's cutting things out of the phone book or whatever books he's got going for him - and on that score, Christ! Haven't we had enough of Transition and nightwriting and all the rest of that half-assed spawn of JJ who picked up ass-wise on everything from Portrait to the Wake? Like all the terrible shit that Bloom lets go thru his mind, used, USED, mind you, as a valid and workable technique by all the slobys who thought that Joyce like bumped into it, and won't believe you if you try and tell them that this was the MOST explicit putdown of the Bloomian mind, this the mind that encounters OB-JECTS, and lets them flow out the back of the head like shit thru a sieve. Yep, Bloomian thought in The Lunch, we got that. sure, but what again, is the point? That these cock-roaches think like this is no surprise, and to show us that they think like this, so what. When they wig out, and die, or get hung with an OD, it's not the Pequod going down, that went down a long time ago, and though I hope and trust and MUST believe that Lawrence was wrong as hell when he said that all American writing after Moby Dick was post-mortem effects, here we have a book at hand that justifies and proves that observation, and it bugs me. I don't mean either that these cats dying and fucking up is not important as the sinking of the Pequod in the same terms, that is, life for life, etc., but that Burroughs doesn't let you give these cats life. Who the fuck in the whole Naked Lunch is worth saving, I mean can you care abt Hassan O'Leary in any other context but what chills and laughs he can give you?

What the hell is the man up to? Blah, Blah, "an indictment of American society", etc. Whatever the jerks say, no, no, simple, much too simple for me and I won't buy it. It is a rage, a destruction, not of American society, but of the mind of Burroughs himself, he hurls all that hate around like shit from a bucket, and then some goddam stupid sonofabitch stands there and has the idiocy to say to me that this spastic shitflying is an "indictment of American society"; as if we needed it anymore after Moby Dick, The Great Gatsby, The Maximus Poems, Paterson, Pierre, and on and on...

What do we have to be told for? I mean to say does the intensity of the hatred leveled make the "indictment" stronger? You don't need a machine-gun to kill a dying man. You don't need this fierceness to do in our kulch. A question: what, considering time, place, and values, is the fiercer book?
The Red and The Black or Naked Lunch? In REAL terms, the Red and Black makes the Lunch look like petulance, I ain’t gonna play with those dirty coplovers and gunsellers... ok, but what to say after that? Obviously, nothing: grab the honeybucket and start flinging.

I want compassion, I want it, I need it, I ain't gonna buy Hassan, I don't like him, I don't give a damn abt him. OR, I want real hatred directed against real people, who do things that are evil in a world that still has those values (of good and evil), which the world does have, even though we are in our "cycle of decay", and all the rest of the German Romantic Spenglerian horseshit, flow, flow, time is a god, bullshit. You are my friend because you are a good man, no, not corn, you are a good man, the important word here, man. I mean, it makes no difference if I say you are a good roach/you are a bad roach. Who cares whether a roach is good or bad?

OK, just some ideas I wanted to write you while I had them; I must believe in the goodness of Creation or I stop living.

Gil

THE NASAI ***

no rain for twenty months sky too large dust the land is red
I have counted the dead giraffes beside the road hundreds
lions in packs ravaging the herds the few remaining
The Nasai traffic in cattle wanderers from village to village
a network of compounds some abandoned for centuries where the
river has dried or changed its course or the land is no longer
fit for grazing

huts within thorn walls circular hovering above the soil they
dig down for coolness cattle and men equal rights at the hearth
the women sleep with the milk it is very dark small coal fires
smoking through smaller holes cut in the roof beds: piles of hide
walls: mud wattle blood

They assume their full height only under the sun standing like
statues naked under brickcolored cloth thrown over a shoulder
spine between the legs bronze and bone beads some of the women
wear silver hair long braided over the forehead in small tight
bands thick with blood fat dust they look through and beyond
eyes so deep

LA'S: death to steal another man's honeycomb
depth to marry beneath the class
all cattle belong rightfully to the Masai
given them by God on a string from heaven
(The Kikuyu tried to cut the string, steal the
cattle for themselves; but all cattle is
the Masai's, and after fierce and bloody
battle they regained their rightful gift)
death to those who steal the Masai's cattle
dead to those who prevent the Masai from
accumulating their herds
The Masai have freedom of passage across all lands
all Africa feared them

and now the women are barren the herds decimated by the drought
the young men weak strange women from rival tribes taken as wives
to keep the race alive the God has forsaken the mountains and
returned to his first home in another land

truck caravans transporting whole villages to stone houses set on
cement floors DUELLING children in uniforms singing God Save
the Queen their cattle taken from them and put into experimental
farms high fences over the open land no more the young men bred
on blood and milk raw meat slaughtered in the hills the women
given aprons and taught how to cook brooms and chimneys barter
no longer the means of exchange white midwives

in two generations they have dwindled to less than half their
former number in twenty months the herds which were numberless
are dead a few thousand sick listless head remaining almost
worthless to sell in the town markets skins too thin to tan

by colonial mandate the future lies in prefabricated houses
supermarkets and omnibuses history recorded in small blue
circulars a few pamphlets postcards and guided tours

we must shield them from nature because the children are
becoming fragile educate them to the uses of tractors and
other such implements of constructive modern farming each
will have his plot of land and a nice stucco beehive nice
tinned milk and canned vegetables they can work on the roads
we will teach the children how to read English the parents
how to count send out meteorologists animal husbandrists
anthropologists secretaries and uniformed assistants

somewhere nature has gotten lost in the shuffle

"...Our crystalline Arcadia
is ended, our last refuge shattered,
soon we shall seem interesting
because the landscape is disgusting
and we are rapidly becoming human."

Peter Hartman
25/VI/61
"... First, that in quhatsumever ye put in verse, ye put in na wordis ather metri causi or yit for filling furth the number of the fete, but that they be all sa necessare as ye sould be constraynit to use thame, in cace ye were speiking the same purpose in prose. And thairfore that your wordis appeare to haue cum out willingly, and by nature, and not to haue bene throwin out constrainedly, be compulsioune."

--James VI - Reulis and Cautelis to be observit and eschewit in Scottis Poesie.

LETTER TO THE BEAR. RE: ROME

The passage of time encourages the historian to play ad lib with the blocks of data at his disposal, would seem to allow him to order them at his own instance (not their insistence) into whatever systematic general pattern presses most urgently on his awareness.

We who hear about things accept (time is so short here) the systems with the data; irrelevance is canonized.

From the assassination of Julius to the collapse of 'effective' government in the last in the 4th-5th C is a stretch of years at least twice that of any perceptible history of the American state, at least 10 times that of any of the Socialist states whose polities so exercise us. To tolerate Gibbon's 'decline' or Mommsen's flat that the Roman state was, after Caesar, a mechanical & lifeless thing, is to accept once more the white supremacist gimmick of rating the purity & validity of republics by the absence of miscegenation (& the abstract symbolist thereof, 'debased' coinage) therein. "Decline" will thus expose its meaning as: to develop, to be possessed of qualities, possible gestures of freedom & responsibility, lacking in that original contract invented by historians for every state.

From all the real data at hand (remembering that imperial history is commonly written by such as hate the emperor) it's hard to avoid the conclusion that the empire was as vastly superior to the republic as the present American society is superior (by God, look at the facts!) to the pristine & pure community of Salem. (I mean in a way, too, that what's 'wrong' with Ausonius is right with Olson, a measure of a man's own strength being part of it, not simply thus it is smack smack. His efforts will wash the sea. Or keep digging in the system of thought you inherit long enough & you'll turn up the fact it's built upon or hides --- a river NOT its straight sheen on a summer's day.)

The least important fact about the Roman Empire is that it fell, i.e., isn't here now under its former name. Closed for alterations as often as it likes, it reopens under new management & does not importantly change. I'm not talking about cycles. This is a continuity. Blues & Greens in the circus, black & white on the corner, we schematize by color because we are not interested in politics but in wilful allegiances. Alabama is not Dacia; the barbarian is internalized, cannot in that sense 'come'. What are those socalled Negroes doing?
There was no Emperor worthy of record; the emperor now is shadowy, with overtones of evil if you look long enough. Look it in the teeth & say Prove it! The Emperor responds, 'We are here. The lot of us make the empire. Whenever the republic (clean white churches, snow, maple syrup, sleighs, the poets hidden, disguised as schoolmaster & divines, poetry tolerated as masturbation is tolerated, laws against it too hard to enforce) is overrun by a mob of niggers the Empire is open for business again, poets can come down from the trees & cut from under the rocks.

Being is licit. Hold tight to that. Coins can be debased because whatever strength there is is elsewhere, part of a man's heart & his actions, like 'purity'. As our vision of Jesus is indistinguishable from the ferment of sinister syrians in Rome, he having come into the Empire 'when the whole world was at peace', the republic evaporates, ulcerates out in the suburbs; the City is the Empire.

A deep breath then. Poets out in the open? The shadowy aimlessness of the poet's motive the driving force of everything that moves? Which is close to the real burden of our responsibility.

6.2.61

--Robert Kelly

AN ARGUMENT. (In response to Trobar §2 and Kelly's Notes on the Poetry of the Deep Image)

An insistence on the need for 'deep image' seems to me unnecessary because all real poetry must always contain deep images. When the deep image is consciously sought, the unconscious of the literate modern poet seems to throw to the surface images which pass for deep because they are not strictly bound by rational reconceptions and because they resemble in a vague atmospheric way a whole body of other images made familiar to us in a half-century's literature. But are they really so deep? I at least do not find in them the deep satisfaction, the nourishment, the material for inner development, that I find in the truly archetypal images in fairytales, folktales and myths, or in the deep images of poets of the past who were not deliberately aiming for depth but rather for clarity and fidelity to their experience.

Many of the poems for which it is claimed that they are a new poetry of the deep image have a certain quality of impersonality; not the austere impersonality of archaic sculpture (for instance) but an impersonality that seems to arise from the poets sharing a conception of what is poem-stuff and what is not - a literary conception akin to what was once believed about 'poetic diction'. It is from a level of the unconscious very close to the surface that these images seem to have arisen; a level at which memories of other poems are stored, so that too often there is about them the triviality of second-hand impressions, even of clichés. While I may experience certain sensations while reading such poems, I am left at the end of them with only the vaguest feelings, and five minutes later it is hard to remember anything about them.
The attempt to write only on a certain level causes these poets to ignore whole areas of their lives. That gives strength to the poems of Creeley and Duncan, poets so different from each other but clearly head and shoulders above most of their contemporaries? Surely it is 1) their sense of form (especially Creeley) 2) their sense of musical structure (internal harmonics) (especially Duncan) and 3) the fact that their poems arise directly from their actual experiences, the happenings of their lives, and not of one chosen level of their lives but any level. Points 1) and 2) condition point 3) so that their poems are never mere quivering pieces of autobiographical raw material. Duncan and Creeley understand the use of the objective correlative. They each have a coordinating intelligence which correlates impressions. Manoeuvre and melopoeia are subsumed in logopoeia. But what makes their poems convincing is not only their craftsmanship but that sense one gets from them that these poets do not induce 'poetic' experiences, and that in any of their poems the objective and the subjective as they experience them exist (as in all our lives they do) in dynamic interplay.

Another result of an exclusive concentration on the deep image is a neglect of form. Kelly's propositions on the rhythm of the movement of images, the rhythm of breath and line, the counterpointing of these images, the acoustics of spaces, etc., don't seem to be manifested in many of the poems he prints. Fernea's the flaw in his thesis - (with parts of which I feel myself in agreement) - lies mainly in these two sentences: "Plucking things from the street or from the unconscious is comparable to the digging of ore", and "Supplying the image in its fullest force is thus partially a function of language". On the one hand he overestimates the value of this deliberate digging into the unconscious, and on the other he underestimates the function of language by assigning it thus a differentiated function as if the poem could if need be exist without it. Poems are made with words. All poets should reread Pound's 'A.R.C. of Reading' and some of his essays at least once a year. Indeed, it would be most useful if someone with a press would produce wall-cards bearing key sentences from these works so that poets could hang them about their rooms as 'God Bless Our Home' is hung in country kitchens. The poems of the deep image seekers are apt to remain prima materia, liquid protoplasm. And academic poems are completely static, petrified. But poems can, and I believe should, become definite bodies, as protoplasm becomes a living and solid creature, and move as such a creature will move in its living.

Kelly says that 'only in the native linguistic patterns can the deep image communicate at full strength'. But in shutting themselves within a convention, the deep image as they conceive it being regarded as the sole poetic image, these poets lose touch with those patterns and write in a literary idiom.

I believe that the truly deep image comes when it is not pursued. The primary requisite is that the poet have something to say - he should be driven not by the desire to create poems but the need to create them. And the more that which he has to say relates to his whole self - his dreaming self, his domestic self, his demon-ridden self, his cheerful self, his battle-tempered self, his practical self, his social and his most secret selves, the whole gamut - the more value his poem will have to the reader. (and if the poet does not care whether his poem has meaning for anyone besides himself he has no business putting it into circulation.) All one deny the deep image to Iomer, Dante, and Shakespeare. It is when the whole man is engaged in the poem that poetry has its full power. I am not speaking of statement but of implication - full statement being humanly
impossible. And I am the last person to deny the reality of the worlds of
dream and vision - I believe that as Jung has said, 'everything that acts
is actual'. But these worlds are parts of a whole, and the soul in its
growing finds its illustrations, counterparts, obstacles, and doorways
in all the parts.

One word more - is it necessary to 'restore a poetry of desperation'?
If a poet is desperate he will write desperate poems - or perhaps he will
write poems of a ferocious gayety. But one cannot set out deliberately
to restore a poetry of desperation. Where did this poetry formerly exist,
by the way? Oh, in many times and places, no doubt - but spontaneously
and of necessity.

-- Denise Levertov

Blabbermouth

Hello. O I was just telling Hap when you
came in that an uncle of mine was down here
a week ago today and said we ought to go
over Cuba with 1200 jets. What you think
that would do, eh?

Which uncle was that?
Uncle Ike. We should go over Cuba with 1200
jets. So I said, are we such gods? As long
as Battista was in Cuba just a playground
with boys running around with guitars but
when Castro got hold right away the up-and-
at-come American Press scrambled down there
and started asking questions every day about
free elections and so forth. So things went
from bad to worse. Then we got to talking
about society being wasteful, we're going
all ways to Sunday, the disc-jockeys 24 hours
all the time on the radio, and the newspapers
eating up the woods and forests. He said he
was only glad we had it to waste, that's all,
and I said, what are we, gods? So I said it
again. You see, once it's a joke, but a thou-
sand times it's not funny. And then, Kennedy
such a good Catholic, shooting the moon
instead of going after the population problem,
and even the sun.

Did you ever read the Tempest? It was on the
radio last night.

--Larry Singer

or Anon.
Walter Kerr has called the American Shakespeare Festival in Stratford Conn. "a cultural Howard Johnson's". He is wrong. This summer is venison at Four Seasons.

As You Like It directed by Word Baker
Macbeth directed by Jack Landau

Generally brilliant cast (Kim Hunter, Jessica Tandy, Hiram Sherman, Donald Harron, Pat Hingle)

As You Like It -- A green carpet covers most of the stage, the proscenium arch and the cyclorama great grey potato chips designed by Ter-Arutubian--platforms etc. by Robert O'Hearn.

Word Baker I think has never set foot in the theatre before doing Fantassticks and As You Like It. Both productions are children, And as alive. Costumes are "method" (chosen by the actors) Great diversity of styles--country club, traditional shepherd, circus Barker, English country gentlemen, etc. adds richness and dimension--(This might seem offensive to many, but it works--nothing else matters)

The scenery is changed by the cast--Flowers, trees etc. At one point as piece of light blue china silk is pulled from down to up stage and a bench is placed over it and suddenly it is a stream--(Nearly wet my pants over this) Celia later sticks her toe in it and wades.

It all is magical--every line is clear, energy is high, it shimmers and bubbles and who ever saw Shakespeare before?

Macbeth exciting but not in the same way. Pat Hingle is terribly mis-cast. Like a short odor cook (Bill Fletcher says plumber) Jessica Tandy as his Lady Macbeth is unbelievable--controled, articulate, beautiful, in-spired. (The Sleepwalking scene) (Every Scene)

The witches look like gnarled moving trees--much fog machines and a trap. (I'm a sucker for that sort of thing) Much blood too, and the battles at the end. Again clarity and precision, places where goosebumps come and to be afraid and to nearly cry--that is the only theatre that interests me, but then maybe I'm a slob.

-- Fred Herko

***NOTICES***

Olympia Press is doing a Monthly Review. Send mss. to Thacher / 50 Central Park West / New York City.

Michael McClure's BOOK OF TORTURE (Grove) is out. So is Diane Di Prima's DINNERS & NIGHTMARES (Corinth).

There'll be a benefit reading for the Bear, July 14th at the AG Gallery, 925 Mad Ave (74th St.). LeRoi Jones, Joel Oppenheimer, Barbara Guest & A B Spellman will read. Contribution $1.50. Time - 8 p.m.