Letters
To
Jonas
Mid-January Letter to friends

January 19th already! Where did the first 18 days go? And what's left of them? I'll find out some day. Right now I am thinking about the weather.

Why do I always think about the weather and not 9/11 -- like: It was snowing, an hour ago, I even filmed it, on my way to feed Maxi, our cat, Anthology's cat -- but now it's all rain, it's all rain again. And I had hoped for the winter. Can't get rid of my childhood. A fully grown up man, really quite old, when you really consider it -- but still a child, when it comes to snow -- the old Rosebud thing...

Anyway: how are you, my dear distant -- geographically speaking -- friends? My own life has been hectic, as usually, but I still make a break at 11 AM for an espresso corto at Cremcafé, and at 12:30, if Julius, Auguste or any visitor arrives, we go to the Library, a.k.a. Mars Bar, for a "short story." This week it was Louis, from Edinburgh /I should really say -- Louis told me so -- from Edinburgh, with a special stress on the letter "r" --/. Louis carved his name on the wooden counter using my Swiss knife, not far from where Paini carved his.
So how are you doing, there, in Paris, Tokyo, Vienna, Hamburg? Is it raining in Paris? Brigitte, agèse, Pip, Michel, Dominique, Danièle, Jean-Jacques, Peter, Tetsuo, Gozo, Christian? Have some wine, or sake. Relax, relax, do not dwell on 9/11, and do not work too hard, have some fun, and some laziness... la paresse... Because I think of you all, and I have fun despite the fact that my life is full of unpredictable troubles, nuisances, even disasters, and very often I have no idea what's happening at all.

But I think of you all, and the knowing that you are there -- in Tokyo, in Vienna, and yes, in Paris which you, my Parisian friends, may hate or, sort of put down, but which is a city of many of my dreams -- your poets have saved my sanity -- yes, the knowledge that you are there and haven't given up your dreams yet though you have your anxieties & crashes -- yes, you keep me going here and sometimes I even sing -- though last night the song didn't go too well, we went to Sophie's bar, and Julius and Louis had too many Bushmills, too many, for a song, so we ended up playing pool.

Yes, I just looked through the window, and I have to report to you that it's snowing, snowing again. So it's all very promising, very very promising, my friends. A thin snow, a miserable snow, but snow,
Dear Stan:

June 27, 2002

A huge rain storm just passed by. Thundering heavily. Disturbing my cats. Some old music on radio, don't know what but very pleasant. Pleasant when you are cooking something for your supper, like me, some potatoes with sour kraut... That primitive... I just had a crave for it.

Haller calls. Tells in a concerned voice all about your troubles. Ah, that word, chemotherapy...

How many of my friends had to deal with it...

Susan, George, Annette. I have been lucky so far, cross your fingers. I just had some straight radiation stuff -- but even so I walked the streets and I thought I was transparent and everybody could see through me.

Ah, Stan, I wish I could pass to you some of my farmer boy's health. I am drinking right now a glass of Veiliner, Peter's favored Vienna wine, to your health, feeling guilty that I am still here and comparatively in good shape despite some threats that were immediately radiated out -- luckily -- but I want to drink to you this evening -- not that it's of any help to you but somehow the fate has brought us together so I feel we are sort of related one could even say brothers of sorts... so I wish you strength and endurance and faith and humor and trust persistent trust in angels & everything that really matters and free and open and heals & yes, poetry in poetry of being

I am with you, Stan, although I seldom write or call -- my own life last ten years hasn't been bread and honey -- and even that is not the right image: when I was ten, I was by a river, under a bridge, small river -- I was eating a piece of bread my mother had given me, with honey on it, -- it was my graduation day -- Primary School -- and this girl comes and sprays sand on my sandwich... -- I don't know what it means but I have never forgotten it -- it comes back to me at least once a year, this memory: why did she have to do it?

Yes, Stan, I don't know what anything really means, but I know that friendship means a lot to me, and knowing that you are there in Colorado doing what you are doing -- things that have meant so much to me -- ah, forgive me, Stan, that I have been so rare in calling or writing or saying things that I should be saying -- always so busy, always running, always on the way, so rarely having time to stop and take breath -- I don't know why I got into this -- but that's how my life has been -- so forgive me, Stan,

Anyway -- I think you should go out and have a Bushmill or something and no matter what pop up & boost & drown it all and I wish I could be there now with you to keep you company and drink with you -- because Robert he said you feel very low and are able to give on chemotherapy & leave it all to angels -- /A?

whatever happens, whatever is the decision, I am with you this evening -- this rainy thundering and very very hot evening writing you this long letter with a glass of Veiliner next to me which means I am thinking also about Peter and P. Adams besides you -- which means, the present is mitigated -- as Peter would say -- with the past.

We are all still here, separately but together...
11:30 at night this 23rd of December. Tomorrow my birthday.
Message from Stan, on phone. Cancer is "terminal."
That's what they call it.
"They quit, gave up. Cancer too spread. Doctors won't operate."
Message from Fred Camper: Stan broke, no money to pay doctors, hospitals.
Walked to Anthology. Snowing lightly.
Paul Morrissey came. Leg stiff, arthritis... Hopped up & down the stairs, on one leg, in a funny way.

What else is bad?
Eight Palestinians killed... Small type, page sixteen.

Last night we stayed till 1:00, Anthology's Christmas party.
Now it's late. The day gone by. Pip, Julius, Fabiano, drinking at Dempsey's, reviewing the year. Not thinking about the horrors, trying to be positive. But I am very sceptical about it all, the world is so bad, I mean, the people, the whites, the Jews, the Muslims, Africans, Russians -- all bad bad bad.

I am innocent, I said last night. I only hurt some small animals, as a child. But I have asked their forgiveness so many times now, so many times, I've even cried remembering what I did to baby crows, frogs.
I think they have forgiven me.

But tomorrow is my birthday and I should feel more grown up, especially at my age, I should know more about the real ways of this world.
But I don't.

The world passed me by, I missed it, I only heard noise and I saw blood in newspapers and salesmen on TV selling things I have no use for.
I only own two pairs of pants, some shirts, ran out of socks last week.

So where am I? The ultimate failure, according to the statistics and evaluations of real life's authorities in Terra anno 2002 -- just before my birthday, which is tomorrow, and Louise Bourgeois -- Happy B'Day, Joseph, and Chère Louise.

NEXT DAY:
We all had a lot of music and dance and wine at Anthology, and the Indians, the Uta Nation came and blessed the avantgarde, they never did that for Hollywood. And the Bear Boy sang a Uta Nation song in our honor. And the snow was still falling outside.

DAY AFTER:
Coffee with Naimud. More bad news. Robert just moved out of his Bleeker Street place, his leg hurts too much, can not be operated, heart too weak, moved into a room with an elevator, now looking at New York through a twentieth floor window, a great view, he said /supposedly/.
And Dido is very very depressed, she said so on phone, very depressed.

"I know that I am because my little dog recognizes me," said Gertrude Stein, it's on my wall. That much for all the philosophy of Being.

Peter is in Brasil. He hates Christmas in Vienna, the shopping. And P. Adams still doesn't drink. And Annette, had three trips to hospital this year, she just called, is back home, in a wheel chair, broken leg.
"I wish you a better year, only one break, one
trip to the hospital next year, not three," I said.
"No no no," she said, "don't say that..."

NEXT DAY:
The snow melted. I spent three hours chipping ice
from the sidewalk, with Andy and Robert. Broke the
shovel.

My eyes are about to close, it's very late. But I
refuse to sleep. Go to the icebox, get some wine.
Wonder, I wonder where is Agnès, and Brigitte. And all
three Dominiques and three Daniëls.

Reading Gendrars.

The mind is failing. Maybe I should watch TV.
Maybe there is something with Clint Eastwood or
Bruce Willis -- some action, yes, some
action, that's what I need right now --.

NEXT DAY:
Talk with Stan. "I have accepted it, I am not
worrying about it any more. I am continuing
my work, now, scratching film with my nails &
spit. I have no problems with dying at
all. But it's hard for the children as they watch
me die."

LATER:
We played and danced into the morning at Anthology,
all the lonely souls with no other place
to go New Year's Night. It was really quite amazing
with all those musicians coming from the street
out of the Lower East Side night --
our own Free Music Philharmonic sort of,
we thought. And we all had a great time & at
midnight we all went into the street and danced
and played happily, not minding the cold
at all --.

Yes, life is going on. Forget the utopias:
life is here and now.
I suddenly wonder: where is Harmony tonight, what
crazy fantasies are fluttering around his amazing
head. Sebastian just called from somewhere in
China, somewhere near Burma and Tibet.

"Have you tried any dog meat yet," I asked.
"No," he said, "and I am not sure I will -- You know
how they kill the dogs here, in the markets? In the
bags, with knives, they stab them, in the bags,
you'll never hear a more terrible bloody
cry like that of the dog dying, stabbed, bagged,
helpless, I don't know how I managed to take
it," he said.

NEXT DAY:
Pip came back, visited Stan. In bed all the
time, too weak. "They told me I should self-hypnotize
myself and face the cancer cells and kill them.
Which I did -- I mean, it's no big deal for me
to go into that kind of state --
I've done it all my life, working on my
films. So I faced them, I saw them, the cancer
cells, and I saw they were so beautiful, I couldn't
kill them, no..." said Stan.

Later, Peter calls, from Vienna, just back from
Brazil. They still kill Indians there even now,
the gold diggers do. And then the diggers are killed
by the gold merchants. "I am resigning from the
human race," he said. "I'll do the same,"
I said.

So that's that.
But this doesn't mean I am giving up in what all those
before me, before us, those who were foolish like me
and some of you, of us, believed in and worked hard
to preserve in order that the City
wouldn't be destroyed by gods -- that is, as long
as there is at least one who believes in the not
believable, in short, in
Poetry.

Jan 3, 2003
IM PRAISE OF HEAT

Ah, the summers of New York!
Adrenalin of 95 degrees! 100!
Happy I walk the streets of New World, panicking about the next bill, on top of all the others -- banks, Ft. Lee, and the Fluxus artists of last October, still not paid -- I don't open Jackson MacLow's letters --

ah, I need it all, it drives me mad and keeps me going, these debts and these constant emergencies, threatenings, each worse than the other, since... since winter 1953 on Avenue A, Gallery East -- not far where I met Lilly -- no, I didn't move far away, my friends, not far at all --

and I tell you, you get used to it all and it's just another heat, another day and 95 degrees and then maybe goes up to 100 and everything seems to about to crash or, say, melt, and Robert, even Robert seems to lose his cool -- I wish he'd eat some chocolate, but he's forbidden to do so -- so we write some desperate irrational letters and sit on phones and, I tell you, it's very very hot and we sleep terribly and sweat -- it goes up to 105 and more, maybe 120.

Ah, no end to our summer heat, but that's adrenalin we need to live, it's our way of living, it seems, and if, imagine! suddenly everything would get normal and cool and suddenly no angry calls and threats to turn off electricity and phones, and close the Ft. Lee vault, and Ft. West, three months behind by no in payments -- and what's her name, calling for her $75 from four years ago -- the heat would drop to maybe 70 and we'd look around and listen in disgust:

ah, how normal, disgusting, and how like everybody else's our lives have become, with no threats and no crashes and no emergencies and no crazy women coming to our door about the street lamps with no bulbs because we have no three dollars to buy them --

Ah! I like this heat. I think it's reaching one hundred, it's going up, I am all excited -- the rats are leaving the ship -- they think it will sink -- ha, you little rats, you don't know we are the supper rats, Jack knew it! -- and no hurricane no heat will sink us! It's in our blood, the disasters, shipwrecks and supper heats & constant sinkings -- it's our very nature! So let's go to Sophie, Julius, let's have a beer -- later we'll stop at Sax Fish, to see Gloria who just shaved her head & put her hair in a jar of permehdilite, in a Gallery -- Ludlow street, just a door from Gallery East, anno 1953 -- she serves us beer for free, and we'll play pool, maybe --

"'t hits you like a hot hair dryer, this heat," said Paimun. "This is what Peter said,"
he continued, as we were driving
in his jeep through the 110 degrees
of New York evening. "We said "when
the lemmings are marching towards their mass
suicide, the avant-garde stays
in the back,'"
and we laughed. Ah, Peter, we wish you'd be
here with us this evening, and
T. Adorno, and Gozo, Istvan, Giuseppe,
Vermon, and Bojo Jin Ming --

So be calm, be calm, dear friends, be calm
in the very eye of
storm; we do not budge, we enjoy the sweat,
we like the scorching heat, we like
when it hits 110 and
more --

go, go, go, rise up and and up and
up -- we are the junkies of the constant
heat! we are the super rats of
cinema --

go up, heat,
go!

July 1955

A REQUIEM FOR THE XXTH
CENTURY

Millennium ended fifteen minutes
ago,
I watched it all on TV.
Fiji, New Zealand, Tokyo, Moscow,
Paris, etc.
It happened as I was splicing
my film, it fell between the splices,
and, so to speak, between the splices of a film
entitled A I Was Moving Ahead
Occasionally I Saw Brief Glimpses
of Beauty.

Vienna Waltz is playing on radio,
a minute ago was the
Ninth Symphony.

Now I am typing and thinking of
you, my dear friends,
in Tokyo, Paris, Hamburg, Vilnius, Sao
Paulo, Madrid and many other cities
and towns and villages, some of them
nameless.

Ah, Peter and Hermann, I almost forgot
Vienna! That will cost me a bottle of
Veltliner.

The radio guy is yapping now about all the
great events of the century.
But I still have to hear about Apollinaire
and Vallejo and Bunuel and Trakl, Huizobre,
Cocteau, Yessenin, Isidore Isou,
Gertrude Stein, and the donkeys of
Avila, and Julius and Auguste, and my
childhood river Roveja; and Maxi,
Anthology's cat, and the names of all
the women I loved, and anything that
really matters and formed the mind & essence
of my century.
But I don't really care this way or that, because Harry Smith, who still lives at Anthology, he was heard doing research in the Library last night--he told me that everything remains in the stars eternally, and Harry knew it, Agrippa von Nettesheim knew it too, & so knew Giordano Bruno & Giuseppe Zevola & Barbara Rubin & especially, I am sure of that, Storm De Hirsch.

So it's all here now and tomorrow, the poets and things that really matter, like friendship, love, angels, fluttering of butterfly wings in China, and things like that, and I would include the poetry of Jackson McNeely, Bosho and, absolutely, potato pancakes, the kind I make, the kind my mother taught me to make /no onions, please/. I love them.

So I celebrate it all now, late this night, exactly thirty minutes into the Third Millennium, and I drink to you all -- and ah, to Robert Kelly and Tuli Kupferberg too -- as we move ahead... Dear Gozo, it's all a big joke on us, anyway, invented by some Zen lunatic or Taylor Mead.

NEXT DAY
we sat at Dempsey's /we didn't feel like going to the Mars Bar somehow/
Audrius and Auguste, drinking our Irish amber beer. "I saw the morning come," said Auguste, "and it was a very clear & beautiful morning, so it's a good sign for the Millennium."
So we drank to that. Then Auguste said, "Ah, remember how they gave us all that stuff, in madhouse, the Russians, and I used to push it under my tongue and later spit it out."
"I did the same," said Audrius.

This was a conversation absolutely not like in I Ron Tadeusz by Adam Mickiewicz, but I thought it summed up for me the Twentieth Century, I mean, the one that people are talking about & celebrating, not mine.

Ah, how many pills, injections did your body take, dear Auguste, how many injections were forced upon you, it's amazing you still play music and sing and paint and are alive.

EARLIER that day
we sat around the Round Table, at Anthology. We waited for Masha, but she called in, was sick. She had planned to bring some Russian herring & cabbage & stuff.
So we had some wine instead.
How come, we wondered, with all the haloballoo, T2K and everything, how come there was no mention of the person responsible for it all! So we drank to Jesus Christ. Auguste drank red Rhone wine, I drank cheap Vino Verde because I am all in Spain, these days, I think I am half Spanish.

Ah, my friends!
We all had some great times occasionally. Red, blue, and yellow & orange times. Not everything was that black, you have to admit.
We all saw some glimpses of beauty & happiness as we moved ahead, even in stagnation,
as we moved ahead through the horrors of the Twentieth Century -- did you see picture of the mother carrying a child, in Sarajevo, or was it in some other bloody place, blood running over the child's face, the picture was in color. Ah, ah, what a way to begin life! Twentieth Century, I hope it will never come back, not even in bad dreams, I hope it will be swallowed by some deep hole and spat out into Dante's circle number Nine.

Scars are on our bodies, minds, souls too, some of us do not always sleep well all night -- I don't -- sometimes we still jump up, not knowing why, as horrors linger.

But I embrace you, the new Millennium, full of hope, fool's hops, trusting, still believing in miracles, Santa Teresa de Avila & St.Francis, little birds & bugs & I cried for the broken trees of Versailles, I still believe in all things unimportant & useless for my contemporaries as I move ahead, as we all do, all alone in our essential, binding loneliness, still believing in Paradise, very very invisible but transparently shining and inevitable.

It's late at night. I can not sleep. It's three in the morning. I keep writing. What else can I do. What else can I do. What else can I do.
Dear agnis:

The young people were young, their happiness was totally and openly happy and their beauty was beautiful & exhilaratingly innocent and contagious as only innocence can be.

I looked, I listened, I saw & it was so freeing and so totally somewhere else and so far from what's on TV and newspapers, the world of the mature & the grown-ups...

and as I contemplated it all like this pushing casually through the crowd I saw you, agnes -- unmistakably you -- who else could be so relaxed, so totally, and so totally there -- so totally yourself & so totally in it all at the same time -- an image of transparency and relaxation and happiness -- Ah, you manage to become so totally part of no matter what it is, completely and totally with what is now, this moment, embracing it, moving with it with no effort, lightly and amazingly, lightly and amazingly --

like I've seen same in some old Chinese drawings, same radiance & lightness & happiness, the poetry of life in the faces, postures & lines of poets and drunks and geishas & haiku geniuses who all had transcended -- like you -- the pain and absurdity of Real Life --

I thought so as I was walking home through a mild drizzle along the late January Broome street -- thinking -- and happy.

Now I am typing this, and I have a glass of Cahors, still full -- Arab drums on radio & a Persian flute --

"it has a magic in it," says the musician and then he plays -- and then he plays -- And it's all very amazing, dear agnes, it's all very amazing, everything, I mean, everything --

Feb. 7, 2005

Oberhausen Letter
May 3, 1995:

Ah, Friends!
Late night. The jetlag got me, finally. I do not know where I am...

The radio babbles something about Schoenberg. "He was so weak writing his Illness Piece he hardly knew what he wrote..."

Ah, Schoenberg!...
Istvan is still dancing, his jacket in the corner, his white striped Hungarian shirt flapping.

Yes, we saw the sun rise. Angela came, we drank the bottle of Takaji Istvan had brought from Budapest. It was late, and the morning was coming over the empty streets of the Ruhr town.

Ah, Friends! Christoph, the giant coal shafts against the sky, and the young green trees full of Spring green, slowly gaining over the factory grounds, the rusting pipes and towers -- museum now of the Western Civilization, Industrial Revolution,

and the river clearing itself from its bad dreams -- "we get our fish from this river," said Jose C., as we looked at the river Ruhr.
Ah, said Istvan, the people, let's eat
where the people eat --
so we found this little tavern, echt

Ruhr Deutscher, and we had local beer
and then tried some koernchen, "You have
to try this, you have," said our new
echt Ruhr Deutsch friends. And we drank it
and it was good for our stomachs --
last night we didn't do so well, no -- we needed
it badly now.

Yumi was dancing, madly as ever, I think
the wine finally got her --
sh, beautiful, mad Yumi! And Takashi,
happy and roundfaced, with his
video camera, in the midst of it
all -- "Ah, Warhol was not really
a Hungarian -- he was a Rutenian," said
Istvan, "a Lithuanian
subordinate..." "No wonder," said I,
"I too do not know where
I come from, and I do not want to think
of it this night,
the Spring is just breaking out,
just look at the trees!"

It was three in the morning. We walked
long, Istvan searching for a beer --
Chappie didn't come back, he was up there in
the tourists' tower where there is a lot
of loud music, bad food and teenage
girls with boyfriends --.

We felt very miserable, we had chili and
white wine, and now we were sick and our
stomachs were suffering.
"Ah," said Istvan, "it was a bad mistake,
we should have had a beer instead,
not wine..." The streets were
empty. Even Falstaff's closed.

And Nekes, no,
he's not going to see us, he said --
the alchemist at work! -- So what's new
in the world, I haven't read any papers
for three days.

Mad Erdely's walking through the
empty streets of Budapest, frames
fluttering --
the Deep convulses and repeats its dream
again and again
in a cosmic nervous breakdown --.

Ah, where am I this late night,
in the Lufthansa clouds, drinking my
Krombacher Pils,
thinking about all of you, my
friends,
Angela, so graceful and so totally
relaxed in the very eye of the storm,
and mad Istvan, and mad Yumi, and mad Jack
Smith dancing happily in the wire
junk of New Jersey dump, and the Little
Girl waves and winks
and the mouse eats the cheese and the girl
lies naked and the train enters the
station. Ken picks up Amazol and carries
to bed as camera keeps running, then
stops. The radio is still
on.
"Everything a man does he does it for
his ideal woman," the radioman says,
said Balanchine.

Said Balanchine.
And the night is late. The jetlag
is getting me, finally and
certainly. I am holding, I am still
holding, but the night will
win, my dear Friends.
Dear Gozo, Tetsuo, Friends:

I sit here, this night, my table all messed up, visite cards, and scraps of paper from my sweaty pockets -- gokuraku -- satoyama -- shiawase -- karaoke -- hachigatsu no tabibito -- and I am remembering it all, and I am drunk with it, again, and I wish I would be there, with you now, and we'd lift our glasses and say kampai, i sveikata! with all the gods of the old Japan and old Lithuania lifting their glasses with us -- kampai! to friendship, i sveikata! to poetry, to our little films, our little, regional songs, words --

the tea supper breakfast room in Ginzan is like in the old days. Ah, it's good to be here like this, said Gozo. Good for us and for those who have never been here, like this, tasting the old and the eternal and the ceremony of being together. The two women, never I would have never expected -- they were plain and simple and down to earth -- but they danced like nameless anonymous goddesses

their humble perfection and heart open to us, to the occasion -- and I thought about my own childhood village, and the simplicity of the rural, disappearing regional life and I wanted to dance with them --

and in the morning we were served eggs boiled in hot springs -- but I told Tetsuo, I will keep out, no hot springs for me, keeping my father's tradition -- he always found an excuse -- a lost cow, or other such emergency -- to skip another sauna, our Friday evening tradition .... I am a good son of my father... although secretly I craved, I wished I could be part of it, in Ginzan... Ah, we are weak, sometimes, and it's good to be weak, sometimes... Forgive me, my friends...

then we all walked through the night, and Tokyo was all light and Big Business & Paris & we all crowded into a midnight bar and the cabalero told good dirty jokes and we drank a lot of asahi-2 and good sake, ah, good sake of Yamagata, good like its poets & there was Yoshio & Kuro, all very happy, yes, yes, gokuraku,
sokuraku, little fragments of paradise --
I saw Tetsuo's tired face, he kept
it bravely straight -- but we all challenged
our nightly endurance, and Gozo said, yes,
it's time, it's time -- but we pretended not to hear,
and had another round of mmmm Yoshio's sake --
and then we walked out.

Ah, the nights of this far island, the dark wall
of the imperial palace, stones, trees,
TV voices late into the night talking about the
coup d'état, Lithuania, and New World Order,
and I, tired, my face in the pillow, the
real fading into unreal, the faces
of 800 Buddhas drinking sake with the
pantheist gods of Lithuania -- & a bouquet of
light blue flowers on the night table --
it's late: I sleep and I dream --

Here I am, only a few days later,
I am not sure where I am --
during the day I am in New York -- I see ow-yat
Appache crossing the room, Sebastian by the
flowers, Oona went out, Hollis deep in a book --
yes, I am here -- this crowded table, the paper
mess -- but my nights, my dreams
are still in Obihoro, and Yamagata, and Ginzan
and Tokyo -- In my dreams, every night since I
came back I have been with you, again --
Gozo, and mmmmmmmmmmm Tetsuo, and Kuro, and Chieko, and
Suzuki, and Sato, and Utako, the patient Utako,
the eye of Ulysses -- and yes, the black haired Gypsy
poet of Yamagata... who read our hands and told me I
was dead once in my life, and we were
all nymphomaniacs, dear Gozó, Tetsuo... -- and than
we sang karaoke -- yes, I remember now, all of you,
with names and without names -- Kumashiro,
breathing eternity into the debris of our
civilization -- yes, the rains
falling over the greenery of Obihoro
hills and deep ravines, gorges & bridges & we, walking
all wet and stepping into the puddles, and

all those flowers and all those bottles of
asahi-Z and all the good friends & dragonflies,
the souls of ancestors, a typhoon and
a coup d'état and a hurricane in Cape Cod -- and then
we visited the 800 Buddhas and they freed
Lithuania -- Buddhas with faces aged by time & wind
& rains but none of their political strength lost! --
I heard the tiny bells ring -- because that's how
it works -- & we walked down the steep bank down
to the waterfalls, with all the vegetables & all,

ah, Yamagata, the angry disillusioned Farmer Poet --
I'll be waiting for your native dialect
poems, yes, the soul, the invisible language,
& we talked about regionalism, potatoes, and the
beauty of the local, and small & the disappearing
countryside & the sad governmental policies,
and the water was icy cold
as I stood deep in it, remembering my
childhood,
and this girl, in Tokyo, and she gives me this tiny flowered sweet handkerchief — I was sweating profusely, and only she noticed it — I still have it — and Kazuko, yes, and Takanashi, more drunk & far out in his regular daily mind than ever on sake, and Gozo, so far out, very far out somewhere, in the gods' territories, but always so close, and in charge, so to speak — amazing Gozo — and ah, La Jete is still there, we had some sake, and some beer, Kuro, Utako — actually, civilization hasn't yet progressed /or regressed/ that far, there are still some tiny beautiful regional islands, fragments of Paradise, gokuraku, gokuraku — Chiako, the good teacher! —

little islands where we can sit in silence — figuratively speaking — and look deep into ourselves and all the way to the other side — together & in friendship —

Amazing, now, waking up from this dream, how far from each other, but how close —

yes, the invisible strings of Joseph Cornell! — this is not a dream, no, this is still very real and is continuing — Yes, continuing, as I said on Utako's tape, to Gozo, as we were speeding across the suburban landscape, the train carrying us into the future with every detail of past ten days sharp and vivid & eternally stuck in my very being — changing, modifying me, challenging — ah, my friends, can you hear the sound of the wheels — as we move ahead — can you hear me, Penelope — yes, yes, Gozo, sayonara, Friends, sayonara — not a good-bye! — as we continue — as we continue, alone, alone, but together —

September 4, 1991
MY PARIS FRIENDS:

Quarter to eleven PM.
On the radio: a funny piece by Sousa,
Le Capitaine.
Outside: raining.
Just came back from Anthology.
Poured a big glass of Corvo for myself,
Sicilian wine -- I will go there some day,
it's one of my dreams.
Alone in the house. Sebastian went out
to see a movie.

Where am I, my friends?
Same place, I guess... Went through some
radiation. I was full of it I thought I was
transparent. And I thought I was
perfect! I still think I am...
Ah, the fragility of flesh.

Didn't go to Kassel, too broke.
And I am very worried about $32,000 I'll have
to pay for Sebastian's Cambridge/England/tuition.
And my radiation bills.
My cat Rumble is looking at me a little bit
worried thinking about his food cans...

Anyway, I had to cut down on wine
because my bank account is on zero, which is
a bad story, my friends --
I don't mean the bank: I mean the wine...
Discovered fava beans. Very good. And, as
George/Maciusas/ would say: cheap... I also
discovered -- thanks to Dominique/Mogues/ --
Michel Deguy, Jacques Réda and Philippe
Jacottet.
Rediscovered: Cavafy, Vallejo and Vogelweide.

Now it's raining very badly. I can hear it
beating on the window.
On the radio: Ute Lampert/ singing
cabaret songs.
Now she's talking about Nick Cave.
I have to get her CD, "Punishing Kiss."

She is very good. I have to get it. Never
heard of her. Ah, how many good things
we miss. Like I miss you, now, my Paris
Friends!

I am a little bit lost. Doing too many
things at once. Everybody wants something from
me. And I haven't learned to say no. And they all
think I am a millionaire in disguise...
But my stomach has shrunk from living on
sausage, goat cheese, garlic & wine.
I hope I won't end up like that guy in
Diary of a Country Priest. I was always
afraid of that.

New York is very hot. But subdued. Streets
emptier. But the bars
are packed. I don't know where they get the
money. I guess, from sales of bad art.
Somebody told me I should have gone to work
on Wall street.

What else is new? My table is cluttered with
old newspapers.
"In the Pouring Rain, England's Goal Draught Ends"
"Warmth Transforms Alaska"
"Le vote d'une France qui doute"
"Explosion des Pessimus"
"Pain Remains"

Ah, music. Why didn't I become a musician...
This evening at Anthology I went down to the
basement, Auguste and Dalius were playing.
But they were pretty drunk on vodka and I didn't
feel like vodka tonight, so I left.
I bet they are still playing. Just for
themselves. Dalius on drums, Auguste on his
Charlie Parker sax.
It's 12:30 AM now.
On the radio: a madrigal, very happy one.

I hope it won't be so hot tomorrow.
All this sweat. The rain didn't help much.

So this is a little letter about myself.
Nothing very important.
But I felt I had to write to you all.
I need my dose of connectedness -- I need
my dose of Paris -- even if it's only in my mind,
yes, Paris and all of you, my friends, you are
my Paris & you are on my mind now, this
late evening as I am typing this
letter. Otherwise, probably, there is a great
possibility that I would, yes, probably I'd
cry, by myself, this evening -- by myself --
it's too complicated to explain why,
but that's why I wrote this letter. Not to
cry.

Ah, Cawafy, I could have had a drink of
wine, good Greek wine, with you, this
evening. Ah, Vogelweide, ah, Wallajo, ah,
all my Paris friends! I lift my glass of
Sicilian wine to you,
my friends!

July 8, 2002
All work is printed as it was sent by Jonas, typed from his Olympia Deluxe typewriter at his home in New York.