

TRAVELLER, CONJUROR, JOURNEYMAN

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CONNECTIONS AND CORRESPONDENCES between writing and painting . . .

The idea diminishes to a dimensionless point in my absolute centre. If I can hold it steady long enough, the feeling which is associated with that point grows and fills a larger area as perfume permeates a room. It is from here that I write — held within that luminous circle, that locus which is at the same time a focusing glass, the surface of a drum.

As long as the tension (at/tention?) is sustained the work continues . . . more or less acute.

What is art anyway? What am I trying to do?

Play, perhaps. Not as opposed to work. But spontaneous involvement which is its own reward; done for the sheer joy of doing it; for the discovery, invention, sensuous pleasure. “Taking a line for a walk”, manipulating sounds, rhythms.

Or transportation. At times I seem to be attempting to copy exactly something which exists in a dimension where worldly senses are inadequate. As if a thing only felt had to be extracted from invisibility and transposed into a seen thing, a heard thing. The struggle is to fit the “made” to the “sensed” in such a way that the whole can occupy a world larger than the one I normally inhabit. This process involves scale. Poem or painting is by-product.

Remembering, re-mem-bering, re-capturing, re-calling, re-collecting . . . words which lead to the very threshold of some thing, some place; veiled by a membrane at times translucent, never yet transparent, through which I long to be absorbed.

Is it I who am forgotten, dismembered, escaped, deaf, uncollected?

Already I have lost yesterday and the day before. My childhood is a series of

isolated vignettes, vivid as hypnagogic visions. Great winds have blown my past away in gusts leaving patches and parts of my history and pre-history. No wonder I want to remember, to follow a thread back. To search for something I already know but have forgotten I know. To listen — not to but for.

I am a two-dimensional being. I live in a sheet of paper. My home has length and breadth and very little thickness. The tines of a fork pushed vertically through the paper appear as four thin silver ellipses. I may, in a moment of insight, realize that it is more than co-incidence that four identical but independent silver rings have entered my world. In a further breakthrough I may glimpse their unity, even sense the entire fork — large, glimmering, extraordinary. Just beyond my sight. Mystifying; marvellous.

My two-dimensional consciousness yearns to catch some overtone which will convey that great resonant silver object.

Expressed another way — I am traveller. I have a destination but no maps. Others perhaps have reached that destination already, still others are on their way. But none has had to go from here before — nor will again. One's route is one's own. One's journey unique. What I will find at the end I can barely guess. What lies on the way is unknown.

How to go? Land, sea or air? What techniques to use? What vehicle?

I truly think I do not write or draw for you or you or you . . . whatever you may argue to the contrary. Attention excludes you. You do not exist. I am conscious only of being “hot” or “cold” in relation to some unseen centre.

Without magic the world is not to be borne. I slightly misquote from Hesse's *Conjectural Biography*. A prisoner, locked in his cell, he paints all the things that have given him pleasure in life — trees, mountains, clouds. In the middle of his canvas he places a small train, its engine already lost in a tunnel. As the prison guards approach to lead Hesse off to still further deprivations, he makes himself small and steps aboard his little train which continues on its way and vanishes. For a while its sooty smoke drifts from the tunnel's mouth, then it slowly blows away and “with it the whole picture and I with the picture.”

Magic, that Great Divide, where everything reverses. Where all laws change. A good writer or painter understands these laws and practices conjuration.

Yes, I would like to be a magician.

DREAM

fish on a hook fish in the sea
bird in a CAGE bird on a TREE
beast in a STALL beast graz inq FREE

THE THREE ARE ONE
THE ONE IS ME

salt in the mine salt refined
water in river & stream water contained
wheat in the field wheat ground

WHEN THE THREE ARE ONE
AND WE THAT ONE

THE BLIND WILL SEE

One longs for an art that would satisfy all the senses — not as in opera or ballet where the separate arts congregate — but a complex intermingling — a consummate More-Than. This is perhaps just another way of saying one longs for the senses themselves to merge in one supra-sense.

Not that there aren't marriages enough between the arts — some inevitably more complete than others. But no *ménage à trois*. Let alone four or five.

Trying to see these categories and their overlaps in terms of writing and painting I start a rough chart:

	WRITING	WRITING/PAINTING	PAINTING	
<i>Aural</i>	<i>Visual</i>	<i>Marriage</i>	<i>Calligraphic</i>	<i>Painterly</i>
Poetry written to be spoken: Chambers' <i>Fire</i> .	Some of Herbert's poems Dylan Thomas' <i>Vision and Prayer</i>	Arabesques Concrete poetry Bill Bissett's "typewriter poems" etc. Illuminated Ms.	Klee Tobey etc.	Monet etc.
Poetry written to be sung: Cohen's <i>Suzanne</i> etc.	e. e. cummings etc.			

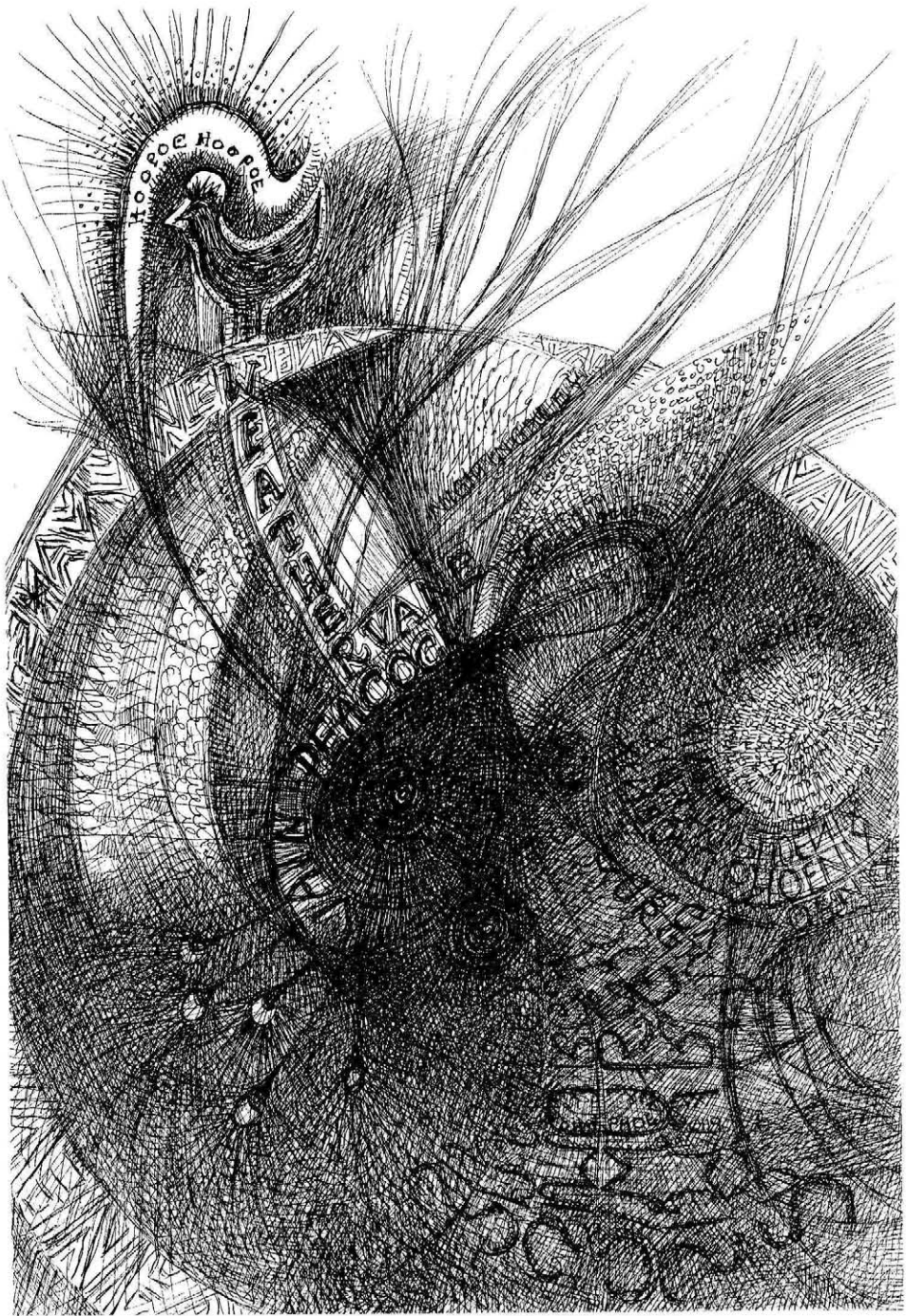
I get only so far when I stop. Too many ideas rush at me. The categories shift and merge in such a way that I am at times unable to distinguish even between the visual and the aural. John Chambers' recording of his poem *Fire* brings me up short. This is an aural poem. It relies for its effect on long silences between words — the silences as significant as the words themselves. If one wants to reproduce this poem on paper one can use the conventions of musical transcription or one can space the words on the page that the poem becomes . . . visual. What is time to the ear becomes space to the eye.

"In not being two everything is the same."

Moving through the category "Marriage" to "Calligraphic" and "Painterly" one must come at length to pure colour. No form at all. And moving from "Marriage" through "Visual" and "Aural" one must finally arrive at pure sound — no words at all.

The notes of the scale: the colours of the rainbow.

"A Father said to his double-seeing son: 'Son, you see two instead of one.' 'How can that be?' the boy replied. 'If I were, there would seem to be *four* moons up there in place of two'." (Hakim Sanai of Ghazna)



If writing and painting correspond at the primary level as I believe they do, how and where do they differ?

With a poem I am given a phrase. Often when I least expect it. When my *mind* is on something else. And my hands busy. Yet it must be caught at once, for it comes like a boomerang riding a magical arc and continuing its forward path it will vanish unless intercepted. And that phrase contains the poem as a seed contains the plant.

It is also the bridge to another world where the components of the poem lie hidden like the parts of a dismembered statue in an archaeological site. They need to be sought and found and painstakingly put together again. And it is the search that matters. When the final piece slips into place the finished poem seems no more important than the image in a completed jig-saw puzzle. Worth little more than a passing glance.

Painting or drawing the process is entirely different. I start from no where. I am given no thing. The picture, born at pen-point, grows out of the sensuous pleasure of nib, lead or brush moving across a surface. It has its own senses this activity: varieties of tactile experience, rhythms. Beating little drums strumming taut strings. And sometimes there is the curious impression of a guiding hand — as if I am hanging on to the opposite end of some giant pen which is moving masterfully and hugely in some absolute elsewhere, and my small drawing, lesser in every way, is nevertheless related — a crabbed inaccurate approximation.

Yet in all essential particulars writing and painting are interchangeable. They are alternate roads to silence.

