

Summers on the Road

The Maine Coast 2001

July 28, 2001

Driving into the sun. Music ringing in my ears.

Hills like a reclining nude. Or perhaps a sculpture by Henry Moore, one of those that sits like a pair of boulders.

Hardly a breeze. The leaves barely moving.

Mallarme in a natural setting. Mountains seen through a Mozart melody. Nature, ever the gracious hostess, makes the artificial feel at home.

The clouds are making me feel the presence of the moon, I can't see what I'm writing, Jennifer's dancing, was, the music has stopped, had, now there's another song, I don't know if I'm going to be able to read this in the morning, the hiss of tires on the roadway, I'm drinking my instant coffee says the singer, no words can say what life is, or was, it's fun to be writing in the dark, darkness is my element,

A moth beating its head against a brightly lit windowpane.

July 28, 2001

(Walking down a long, winding driveway) The night sky, the streaking clouds and muffled moonlight are beyond my comprehension. *(Stop)* I don't know who I am, or what I'm looking at. *(Stop)* The trees are dark matter, an unseen universe, *(sound of tires on the roadway)* exerting a strong pull. I can only feel this way when I'm alone. *(Stop)* I see the car lights flickering through the trees. The car lights fluttering in the dense foliage. *(Stop)* I feel alive, and deeply grateful to have been given this moment. This instant of black trees in the night sky. *(Stop)* A tree in the dark is not just a tree. It's as if the invisible had sunk its roots into the visible world. *(Stop)* I'm looking at my shadow, which is over a hundred feet long. It stretches over the grass, all the way to the trees. *(Sound of a car going by)* When it's over, I will at least have had this moment.

July 30, at night

(With the sound of surf) Oh, this is amazing. I'm on a wild rocky beach. There's a clear sky, and the moon is glittering on the water. *(Stop)* Milking the moment, squeezing out the last few drops. *(Stop)* The moon is beyond words. Lining the clouds with light. *(Stop)* Thank you for this moment. Here. By the ocean. *(Stop)* To come out of nothing, and to have sensations, to come out of total insensitivity, and to feel, to see...this, now... *(Stop)* The clouds are spread thin, like butter on a slice of bread. *(Stop)* And the moon has

no trouble firing them up with light. *(Stop)* An airliner, its red light flashing, slowly crosses the night sky, bound for Europe. *(Stop)* Would I get tired of this, if I could see it every day?

On the beach,

*I love writing in the dark, by moonlight actually If perfection exists on earth,
this is it—*

but the older I get, the more I realize the futility of what I'm doing, trying to express

What did I do to deserve this?

Even the waves seem asleep, I hear them breathing softly in a dream.

July 31, on the beach

Fishing boats, white sails veering in the wind, and the waves softly lapping on the sand. I can feel the sun burning my arms, my forehead, the foaming waters, as they slither over the rocky shore, are like folds of flesh around a clitoris, they are, as the French would say, *le feuilleté* of the ocean—which Stevens calls “the veritable ocean,” meaning much the same thing as *in vino veritas*, there is truth in wine and white surf.

On the docks. A foaming glass of ale.

July 31st, late evening

The tide is very high, and the moon is not to be believed

a beacon is flashing across the bay, the waves, as they retreat, are dragging pebbles after them, and I can hear the most delicious crackling of wet pebbles over the rocks, what a sound! I may never hear the likes of it again, writing in the dark is so exhilarating, I can't be sure I've crossed my t's in the right place, I'm overwhelmed, the beauty of this place is almost too much, it's more than I can feel, it's made me numb, a light is flickering across the bay, oh, the moon is too much, I give up, forty years of writing have left me inarticulate in the face of reality, I can see the lights of Camden, where only a few moments ago we were eating dessert, dark clouds are crossing over the moon, which has the effect of a solar eclipse, oh, now it's getting darker, but my eyes are used to the dark, I look forward to a windy night when the waves coming smashing on the shore, I'm waiting for the moon to come out again, I long to see its light on the waves, but it's a very dense, slow moving cloud cover, and I see a mosquito flying around me, not a good sign, I'm trying to visualize the words, as if I could see them on the page, it helps me to write in the dark, oh, God, I miss the moon, and—I see a faint glow, yes! it's the moon! another brief period of darkness, and it'll be, out of the clouds, I don't understand, why nature is so beautiful, it doesn't make any sense, oh no, it's disappearing again, it's not a mosquito, it's some other kind of fly, thank you, God, for bringing me here, and making me wait for the moon to come out of the clouds

Aug 1, on the beach

The sky is clear tonight, and the moon is almost full, the waves, as they roll back down into the bay, leave the rocks glistening in the moonlight, they make a foaming, hissing sound as they rush up, and a gurgly, rocky sound as they slip back down, dragging pebbles after them

A green light is flashing many miles down the coast,

A family of three has come down the steps to the beach, they're very quiet, just standing in the moonlight, looking at the water, there are thin clouds, and lingering vapor trails of airliners, and a few scattered stars—what is obscuring the stars? a haze of humidity? They're gone, the stars are gone, leaving me alone with the mosquitoes. Nature makes me horny!

I can see even better from up here, the moon on the bay is...moon-on-the-bay perfect!

Aug 2, 2001

The haze makes the islands seem like an apparition, a ship coming out of the fog, and the few boats are like water lilies in a pond—at Giverny! Why is nature beautiful? I asked rhetorically, thinking I knew the answer.

I love these lazy mornings, reading, looking at the ocean. Karen's coming out, she sits beside me, "I would like to go sailing," she says, "that's the one thing I would like to do."

Getting into the car was like taking a sauna bath. The sound of unseen surf, almost as magical (I'm not using the word lightly) as the visible foam, the sound is framed by the trees, defined by the surrounding grass and sky.

I could look at the ocean all day. The sparks of sunlight on the water. I'm squirreling nuts away for the winter.

Marshall's Point,

We've driven to the Lighthouse, to get a clear, unobstructed view of the ocean, which is the color of twilight. There are traces of sunset all across the sky, soft pink clouds, fenced in by vapor trails, the moon is rising over the Atlantic, and gulls are flying out to sea, leaving their cries behind. The patterns of erosion on the rock...are beyond any sculptor's power to conceive. An inner pool of water in the rocks: I can see myself in it. The lingering colors of sunset, rolling themselves out like a carpet on the water. It's rather chilly here by the ocean. I forgot to bring my jacket, but these eroded rocks are not to be believed, there seems to be a mist rising from the ocean, a woman almost loses her balance on the rocks, I can smell her cigarette, a gull flies over the lighthouse, I'm cold, and terribly happy

Aug 2, on the beach

The moon is almost full, My eyes are full of moonlit ocean, and my ears full of surf.

Two chairs were being engulfed by the tide, people had been sitting on them at low tide, and hadn't thought to move them to safety. I did. The moon is slipping behind the clouds, and now, in this thin white negligé, is even more enticing than before. The waves are dragging pebbles down after them, and their "long, melancholy withdrawing roar" inevitably reminds me of Arnold's Dover Beach Oh, the clouds are too much, it's the moon, the moon suffusing them with light, making them almost unreal.

Aug 3, 2001

Morning haze. Sails swelling in the wind.

After breakfast,

"Unfortunately, it's hazy today," says my neighbor, bemoaning the very thing I love, the haze that does things to the offshore islands, making them look like...anything but islands. A white sail accentuates the sea, like a dot on an i. The droning of an unseen airplane. I'm seeing the ocean through a leafy tree, the grey water through green earth.

Sitting in the shade, drinking an ice cold beer. As a boat sways at anchor, the sun flashes on its windows.

August 3rd, 2001

The beach is very dark tonight. The sky is overcast, and I can barely see the waves. I can smell the seaweed. *(Stop)* There's a couple down the beach—with a flashlight. *(Stop)* Every now and then, the flashlight goes on, and I can see a woman's leg. I see her bare thigh, and very little else.

Saturday, Aug 4

I scampered down the rocks to see the surf, huge, jagged rocks, and white foam swirling through the dark seaweed, we're at low tide now, and I can see the high-water mark on the cliffs, and the barnacles drying in the sun. Life is good.

Down by the water, I said to Karen, who was waiting for me at the top of the cliff, the rocks are covered with seaweed.

High Tide Inn, 7 pm

There's a fog coming in from the ocean. It's not very thick, and allows me to see the

beach curving away, to see the trees, the rocks through a haze of whiteness, my pages are curling in the wind, two gulls vanish in the fog, I've got a sore throat, is the car too cold? There's a couple picking stones on the beach, making them skip on the water. I can smell the fog! It's the smell of seaweed and salt water. The trees are something else in the fog, beings from another planet, their leaves a greenish, white haze. I want to absorb the surf, to inject it into my blood, and take it back to New York with me. I want to be able to see it on winter evenings, to hear it in the silence of the night, a surf of the mind, foaming, swirling over green rocks.

August 4, 2001

The chairs are wet and cold, with the fog, and the night, I can hardly see, but I can feel the tiny droplets cooling my face, the waves are coming at me out of a white darkness,

Here, alone, on the beach, I feel alive, the moments

I can't see what I'm writing, I'm not sure where I am in the sentence,

It's a fine drizzle, and it blows past like billowing smoke,

Drops of water are falling from the trees, I can see the fog in the glow of the night light, the way you see raindrops in a car's headlights.

There are no words for a tree in the fog, they are creatures of the mist, they will vanish in the morning light, they are the midges that live only for an hour, you see them in the fading light, the colors of sunset on their wings

Aug 5, 2001

My chair is wet this morning. The fog hasn't lifted yet. The ocean is very still—what I can see of it—I see morning dew on a spider's web, which otherwise would be invisible to me. A foghorn is sounding its warning call, a long, plaintive note, (pathetic fallacy!) and then, suddenly, the rasping cry of a lone crow.

Aug 5, on the beach, after breakfast

I've come down here to get away from the maid's vacuum cleaner. The fog is slowly lifting. A motor driven sailboat, with its sails down—there's no wind—is towing a smaller craft. I can see the rocks under the water. The moisture has heightened every smell. The woods were particularly pungent this morning. I could smell the wet bark. Here, on the beach, life is a luxury. I'm drinking coffee, and preparing to read one of two books, *Walden* or the *Selected Writings of Walter Pater*, art and nature, which of the two will succeed in holding my attention, a bird just flew by, black against the white sky, I can even smell the sand, ahh, this is the life, a morning coffee, and a deserted beach, Thoreau doesn't really work by the ocean, he's too concrete, and can't compete with the ocean on that level, he's too easily drowned out by the surf, I need something more abstract, like Pater, something which complements the ocean, rather than competing with it. That's better. The essay on Wordsworth, suitably abstract, blends in with the soft lapping of the

waves, it's perfect for a lazy day at the beach,

I'm sitting on the lawn, above the beach, and the air is soaked with smells of foliage and grass, I've moved my chair, now I can see the surf, dimly, through the darkness and fog, I can see the white foam, mosquitoes are biting me, but the leaves are moving in the night breeze, are those crickets I hear, or is it just the wind

When I see leaves stirring in the dark, I know I've reached the limit of my understanding

it's a mistake to say even this much, to spring out of nothing, and to see, to hear, sensation is the miracle to end all miracles

Aug 6, 8 am

There's a thick fog over the ocean, and I just had to come here, to soak it up like a sponge, the tide is ebbing, and there's seaweed on the water, a fishing boat chugs slowly by, its lamps lit, now he's vanished in the fog, though I can still hear his motor, the trees are like something in a dream, a dim presence, a whitish, green haze, he's coming back, circling around, the fish must be close to shore, a tiny black fly is buzzing around me, soaking up the warmth of my body, we have become friends, he needs my warmth, and I like his company, he's on my hand now, tickling my skin as he moves about, I blew him gently off, he was about to slip under my jacket, where it's even warmer, I'm reading Thoreau's *Journal*, it's the year 1851, here is what he wrote on Oct 27th, a hundred and fifty years ago: "This morning I wake and find it snowing & the ground covered with snow..."

Oh, this morning, I see the whole cobweb, every strand outlined with dew, and shaking in the gentle breeze. The trees are even more remarkable than the beach, if there's anything more awesome than a tree at night, it's a tree in the fog, there are several dewy cobwebs, each vacationer has one in front of his door, we are all blessed,

After breakfast,

The fog seems to be thickening, the trees are swimming in it, the drops of dew are getting heavier, the web more visible, as it shakes in the wind, even my hair is wet! I'm in school, I'm sitting at my desk, in Fog 201, taking notes. The fog was so bright (it's pregnant with hidden sunlight) I had to put on my shades,

This morning, we crossed the wet lawn, and walked on purple clovers.

As I came down the steps to the beach, water was dripping down from the branches above, I can feel the sun's heat penetrating the fog, A man in a black sweater is looking for seashells on the beach, he's examining the rocks, bending down to pick up some of them, I hear a motor boat in the fog, but I can't see it, he's gone, the man in the black sweater, I didn't see him go, I don't think I've ever known such peace, what have I done to deserve this?

I stretch my arms, I close my eyes, and still I see the beach, reddened by my eyelids.

These Atlantic rocks, carved by centuries of surf, these jagged rocks, with their flowing manes of seaweed, are so sharp I almost cut my hand when I touched them.

On the beach,

Far to the east, faint echoes of sunset. The light is fading, but there's enough wind to keep the mosquitoes away. To them, this is a hurricane. The Maine Coast is revolving into darkness, as the traveling light show we call sunset moves west, hawking its wares to new spectators, seagulls, black against the darkening sky, cruise the beach, a girl is throwing stones into the ocean, it's getting dark enough to see the lights along the coast, night is falling on the beach like a poem, obscure and impenetrable, I've moved my chair closer to the water, the surf comes almost up to my feet now, I see the glow of a cigarette in the rocks, life has no meaning, no purpose, I'm here for no reason, and that's the wonder of it, existence is an anomaly in the void, a light on the coast, —or to quote Arnold, "a light gleams on the French coast, and is gone"

August 6, 9 in the evening

I hear crickets singing. Crickets by the ocean! (*Stop*) Here on the highway, I hear a different kind of surf, the hiss of tires on asphalt. (*Stop*) The cars go by like waves crashing on the shore.

August 7,

The storm clouds are closing in on us, with flashes of lightning, and blue grey sheets of rain, moving very fast, it should be here in just a minute, I love life

We drove through heavy rain, until we hit a patch of sunshine. The wet road was steaming in the sun.

I had to stop the car. The islands seemed to be floating on clouds of mist. High overhead, shafts of light were radiating out of the clouds, I could see the light coming down like rain. And again, a few miles down the road: a carpet of mist over the water. It was as if the earth was evaporating into the sky.

August 7,

We're walking on seashells, they're all over, it's like walking on gravel, you hear the cracking of the shells under your feet, the sun is firing the clouds, and sending a shaft of gold across the bay, I hear a loon calling, and see, on the page, an after image of the sun, there's a living starfish, says Jennifer, you gotta see them, it's so pretty, she says, the sun is disappearing into the clouds, giving them a golden lining, the rocks are covered with yellow coral, yellow and white barnacles of some sort, the sun is gone, birds are singing, and everywhere, on the water, the reverberating colors of sunset,

High Tide Inn, 10:20 pm

Tonight, I saw something I won't attempt to describe. It was, I guess, a sunset seen through haze. A haze of humidity so dense it was fogging up the windows of the car, it was condensing on the windshield, and I had to turn on the wipers, and then, suddenly, an unearthly vision, a darkening prairie covered with a low, earth-clinging fog, Guy! Karen said, keep your eyes on the road.

The moon does things to the clouds, and to the water

it moves over the water like an oil slick

and its blue light brings every cloud to life, giving them a density, a presence

I'm sorry, Robert Kelly, but words fail me,

The moon is beyond imagining

something like this can only be seen, it can't be imagined

Now I'm sitting on the lawn, above the beach, and my streak of moonlight is framed by black branches, and the surf is only a sound,

Crickets! Here, by the ocean, I'm surrounded with crickets!

Aug 7 8, 2001

I've rolled up my trousers, and I'm soaking my feet in the water. The waves are casting shadows of light on the sandy bottom, there's everything here a man could want, boats at anchor gently rocking, white foam washing over one's feet, and strands of seaweed waving like hair in the wind

On the beach,

Night is falling on the ocean, I see the lighthouse at Owl's Head, this is my last night on the Maine Coast, my last night of surf, and faint lights along the shore, there was a moth on my notebook, and as soon as I noticed him, he flew away, as if he could feel my eyes on him, there's a smell of seaweed, a smell of wet sand in the air, a green light is flashing across the bay, it's some kind of beacon, I can't see what I'm writing any more, I'm looking at a star, and thinking of Keats dying in Rome, my pages are flapping in the wind, I owe my mother a great debt, I owe her this moment, this night on the beach, I see a last, lingering trace of sunset, so dim it's hardly visible, soon I won't be able to see the waves, I'll only hear them, there's no moon tonight, the sky is overcast, I'm standing at the water's edge, if anything could make me believe in God, it's what I'm seeing now, night obscures, and reveals, this is the light of darkness, the infra-red world of night. I see a car's headlights moving across the bay, very distant and very faint,

they don't know I'm here, they don't know I'm looking at them

The Mists of Skye 2002

Leasom Inn,

Why am I so sleepy? I had coffee at dinner. Karen had Wild Sea Bass, I had Turbot, with a chardonnay, and the desserts were out of this world. We drove home through a light mist, with rain on the windshield

July 31, near Wichcombe

Haze on the hills. The ground still wet from rain.

July 31, in Broadway

Walking with her on the wet sidewalk. Our umbrella brushed up against some branches, triggering a sudden shower of raindrops.

Aug 1, 2002

Driving in a white haze of music and rain.

Aug 1st, in Bowness

I love it, it's raining! It's night, and I'm walking down a street in the Lake District. (*Stop*) Yellow lights in the rain-soaked night, one of them turning the wet leaves (*a pause*) into a blaze of yellow. (*Stop*) I feel as if I could go on walking all night.

This is perfectly delightful! I walked through the glistening, rain-soaked streets, walked in the soft night rain, to this roaring English pub, blasting rock music, these people don't give a fuck about Wordsworth, all they care about is the money Wordsworth lovers are willing to spend in their community. But appearances can be deceptive: there might be a poetry lover somewhere in this pub, who's lumping me together with these ale-drinking townspeople, you never know who's sitting next to you, I'm closer, here, to the raw, incomprehensible mystery, I'm just a sponge soaking up liquid sensations, this glass of sherry, the music blowing me away, information overload, wires heating up, and after all this...the silence that never ends. Was I meant to be here, in this pub, was I supposed to drink this sherry, alone, while Karen sleeps—Gold Digger! the flashing pinball machine, the blasting speakers, and foaming mugs of beer, this is Wordsworth country, this is the land of Coleridge and Southey—I wonder if they would recognize it, maybe their taverns were as rowdy as this, the barman's ringing the bell, last call! One last round, and off into the silence of the night.

Aug 2, in Bowness

I'm sitting outside the window ledge, out on the roof where I shouldn't be, and church bells are ringing, ringing festively, as if to celebrate the coronation of a queen,

The light is fading, and the lake is gathering itself to speak. I won't try to describe the mist on the mountains. It hardly seems natural. Of this world. In the trees below, the voice of an Englishwoman, I can't make out what she's saying—who is she? and what has her life been like? and still the church bells, and birds, birds swarming playfully around the inn, and the mist grows more indescribable by the minute, it moves farther beyond the reach of words, and now seagulls coasting on the wind, the ledge is like a block of ice, but I'm determined to sit here until night falls, I'm looking out over these English rooftops, still dark from the rain (I'm sitting on one myself) and the grey waters exuding mist, I'm losing the mountains, though, they're wrapping themselves up in mist, like a sleeper in a warm blanket, the clouds are coming down to earth, the glow of headlights, the hum of car tires on High Street, a slight drizzle is wetting the page, a tiny grey insect landed on the page, and was gone before I had time to write it down, my shoulder hurts, I'm keeping my notebook closed, to keep the pages dry, opening it only when I have something to jot down, like this, the clouds are moving as slowly as the sun when it sets, and the lake is becoming unreal, it's milky white, white in the gathering darkness, I'm going inside, where my pages won't get wet,

Well, that's better, my chair feels almost warm after that icy window ledge, and the lake seems darker now, as if the light in our room was blinding me, my pupils are contracting in this bright light, and the mist, now, on the lake, is night mist, when I went inside, it was as if night had suddenly fallen on the world, the way it does in the tropics, I can barely see the lake, the darkening mystery of it, God, let me take this lake with me, let me pack it in my bags, along with Coleridge's *Notebooks*, and my own, a bird, black in the night, just flew by the window, as if drawn by the light, my ears are full of Schumann, who was quietly going crazy, while creating this rational, orderly world of sound, oh, if only the world was like his music, then perhaps he wouldn't have lost it, wouldn't have slipped away into madness, Schumann, I feel for you, now, as I look out at this vanishing lake, which your music seems to describe perfectly, it seems willing, now, to take the shape of this mist-enveloped shoreline, it's gone, I've lost it, the lake has vanished into night,

Aug 3, in Ambleside

A blonde in jeans and a baggy blue sweater crosses the street, fishes in her purse for her keys, gets into her car—and she's gone, before I could get halfway through this sentence, she was gone, leaving me with Coleridge's *Notebooks*, and a cup of watered-down cappuccino.

Aug 3, on the road to Coniston

I just had to stop. A white swan splashing himself by flapping his wings, another dunking his head into the water, and an angler fishing in the tall reeds, ducks waddling in the pond, leaving a wake behind them, and the sun at play on the water, creating a landscape that Monet could not have resisted,

Aug 3, on the road to Ambleside

When I caught a glimpse of the rushing rapids, I pulled over and took out my notebook, jet screaming overhead, white foam churning, the air still shaking, green branches dipping down into the water, I could spend all day here, writing in my notebook, but duty calls, I'm Karen's tour guide, her chauffeur,

Aug 3, in Keswick

A buttered scone, and steaming Earl Grey tea.

Aug 3, at the Lakeside Theatre

I'm trying to imagine that I'm dead, and all this is happening without me, of all the sensations that are being experienced, right now, all over the world, none of them are mine,

Sheep are grazing on the hillside, and the sun, at this late hour, has a golden tinge,

There are moments which are so overloaded with...what? information? none of which amounts to...moments of nothing, I don't understand, my head is spinning, I'm in a theatre in the Lake District, whatever that means, life is burnt beyond recognition

Spectator, hair turning grey, hobbles by on crutches, looks like a character in the play, his wife, blonde, whispers in his ear,

Drove home in the dark, moths flashing by, white in my headlights

Aug 3, in Scotland

Ahead of me, a woman in a convertible, her hair flying in the wind.

A moth hit my windshield like a stone, leaving a dark smudge. I saw the Scottish countryside through the muddy tracks of an insect.

Aug 3, in the Scottish Highlands

Waves lapping over jagged rocks, just had to write a few words, lost my footing on a loose rock, lost my pen in a crevice, had to get another, was so determined to write something, the sun on the water, the waves on the rocks, I'm experiencing all this through my insistence on writing it down

Roadside pub,

Pool table, pinball machine flashing scores—I must be in Scotland!

Mountain slopes dotted with Scottish pines, a pint of Guinness in the afternoon sun, clouds are the same all over the world, this could be a Manitoba sky, I miss the rain, the dark clouds in the Lake District, the smell of a wood fire, where does it come from, I don't see any smoke,

Pissing in the tall grass, near the jagged rocks, with a haze of insects around my head,

Aug 5, on the Isle of Skye

An amazing canyon, green to the very bottom, exhaling mist, and a sound of rushing water, the sound of foam unseen, there's sheep grazing in the canyon, I said, and gave her my hand, so she could step to the edge, and look down at the sheep.

The mist on the lake, its soft, its furry whiteness is not to be believed, I've never seen the likes of it before

I'm sitting at a picnic table, near the edge of the precipice, trying to get my fill of mountains and mist, blades of grass quivering in the canyon breeze, they don't know I'm here, looking at them,

Helping her down the rocky, mountain path, ready to do anything for her. The crunch of our heels on the stones,

Karen taking pictures of the mist, her dark hair in the bright sun,

Walking on spongy, marshy grass, to the very edge, where the mist is...canyon deep, and mystery thick, as only mist can be,

Aug 5, at Lime Cottage

My head is full of the things I've seen, wild flowers on a mountain slope, yellow and white, a soft cloak of mist over the Sound of Raasay, and the green crags of Quiraing. And now, through the skylight, insects spinning in the sun, like sparks from a fire

Walking over mown hay, the smell of it, in the hot sun,

Monday, Aug 6, on the road to Olgar

The cry of seagulls. White wings over the Sound.

Aug 6, at Cuillen View

Facing us, across the still waters of the Loch, is a cluster of mountains that leaves nothing to the imagination, of mist-softened mountains that refuse to be translated into thought

I asked Tony if the fog is a common feature of the Isle of Skye, and he said it came mostly in the autumn and winter, and said sometimes, where the cold mountain streams emptied into the sea, you could see the water boiling, giving off a dense mist, and I asked him, is the water really boiling, and he said no, —a tiny, Scottish fly is resting its wings, taking a stroll across the page, —but it looks like it's boiling, bubbling, and giving off steam,

Aug 5, on the Bella Jane Cruise

I'm standing on the glistening edge of the rocks, and the swirling water is reaching me through the music, the violins and the water, the two sounds mingling, the one sharpening my perception of the other,

Erosion on the peaks, wisps of white cloud along the face, grass on the rocky slopes, and the mist, the mist on the peaks, beyond words, seaweed lapping up against the rocks,

Tea and biscuits on the chilly, windswept deck, I see the foaming rapids, where I was standing only a few moments ago, I've never seen mists like these, moving nimbly over the rocks, twisting in upon themselves, so quick and agile, responsive to every air current, I don't understand why the earth is so beautiful, is it just me, or the music, I feel as if my whole life had been a preparation for seeing this mountain, I was ready to see it, now, it's only a glimmer, a light flickering in the distance, I had a moment there, as the gulls flew overhead, and our wake was widening behind us, a moment of white spray and children laughing, when I thought I understood, and then it was gone, and I was on a cruise boat, surrounded with chatty, shivering tourists,

Aug 8, somewhere in the Scottish mountains

Sun on white page, wind curling my pages back over my hand, green mountain plunging into the lake, grey waters, and beyond, grey blue mountains, all in all a delightful place to be drinking a cup of coffee,

Aug 8, on the road to Gairloch

I'm standing on a wet rock, magnificent rapids, just the sound is enough, but there's also the sight, the smell of them, the first drops of rain hit the page

Aug 8, on the road to Edinburgh

We drove from Inverness to Perth in the rain, and the mountains were, the mountains, as night fell, masterworks of mist and rain, Scotland was at its misty best, and we've settled down in a parking lot, this is our luxury hotel, with rain trickling down the car windows, a symphony by Schumann, and leaves shivering in the night wind, great accommodations, all we need is room service, the windows are misting up, when the wind shakes the

branches, raindrops fall on the roof of the car,

Aug 11, at the Orange Tree

I had to come out, night is falling on the Yorkshire moors, with a sound of running spring water, and a last glow, a last trace of the sun lingering over the hills, I don't believe it, the road is glistening in the dark, it's wet with rain water, and glistening in what little light we have, I'm not bothering to cross my T's, it's too dark, I'll cross them when I get home, life doesn't get any better than this, I can't believe I'm here, writing in the dark, on an English moor, oh, the air, just the smell of it, the rich, pungent wet leaf smell of it,

August 15, 2002

The streets are still cool. Fresh from the night. (*In the underground*) We have to have sex in London, I said to Karen. We can't go through life with the thought that...ah...we were here, and we didn't have a London orgasm.

Aug 16, outside the Globe Theatre,

I've never seen Shakespeare so well done, or heard such wild applause in a theatre, we kept applauding until our hands hurt, they're still burning, now, as I write this

Aug 16, almost midnight

Now, it's late, late in the day, and in my life, and I'm bloated with whisky and ice water, I hear voices, I can't make out what they're saying, they're fading down the street, voices I'll never hear again, we are inured to the presence of strangers, on crowded London streets, and at airports, we accept...the presence of beings we will never know, yet...nothing is more baffling, I mean, can anybody tell me what we are all doing here, rubbing elbows in the underground, or sharing a flight to New York, what does this proximity, what does this contiguity mean, or rather, why doesn't it mean anything to us, why do we accept each other...as strangers, why do we settle back comfortably into it, the estrangement to each other, why are we satisfied with it, why don't we, inexplicably, start groping each other in the underground and say, who are you, and why did you get on this train,

Aug 17, 2002

Naked in a hotel room. Staring at the wall at 1 am.

Wisconsin Lakes
2003

Aug 3, 2003

Driving through Wisconsin in the rain. A white haze swirling around the cars ahead.

The lengthening shadows of the trees stretching across the road, and in the corner of my eye, coming out of the woods, the flickering light of the sun.

I put on my sunglasses, and looked at the road ahead. Pure existence without meaning, I thought, pure existence without meaning.

Aug 3,

Where am I? Somewhere in Wisconsin, on the edge of a lake, and a moment, and a life on earth, where I've always been, on the edge, burning my throat with whisky, as night falls on Lake St. Germain, shouts, laughter, children running around a fire, I wish I was young again, lights streaking across the lake, Bartok, Bartok dying in New York, trying to finish his *Concerto for Orchestra*, he's with me now, here, by this darkening lake, where the waves lap against the tall reeds, a light flickered faintly across the lake, and was gone, leaving only the steadier lights, porch lights maybe, or maybe the lights of a boat landing, and if I knew what it was all about, now, if I knew, here, now, by the muddy edge of the lake

I saw that, it didn't escape me, I saw them move, the blades of grass, moving, bending gently in the night air, though there is no wind, I caught them in the act, I caught time in the act of passing,

The shadows in the roadway, an insect in the light, fluttering wings, the smell of wet, rain-soaked leaves, they hang limp over the road, heavy with the answer to their own mystery,

Aug 4, 6:30 am

I followed the winding road, my eyes grazing on green pastures. If you were a tree, she said, I'd be a bird.

A deer ran across the road in the rain. Another scampered away at the sound of my car.

Seagulls on Lake Michigan. Their white wings over the blinding waters.

Aug 6, in St. Germain

Sitting in the cool morning air, watching a man smoke a cigarette. Catching a whiff of his tobacco.

Aug 6, at Red Deer Lodge

It's night on the Lake of the Woods. I'm listening to Debussy's piano suite, and the windy

hiss of car tires on the highway, the night surf of unseen cars, I think the mosquitoes have found me, the sole living thing on these rocky cliffs, so I'm on the move, walking down the pebbly path, and there, suddenly, shimmering on the dark surface of the water, are the liquid tongues of moonlight, and the language they speak, glimpsed through black pine branches,

Aug 9, in the evening

I have nothing to say, except that it's 1 am, and I hear crickets singing, and the hiss of car tires on Henderson Highway,

Aug 13, in the afternoon

Under a grey sky, trees bending in the wind. The sound of the leaves. No Trespassing, says the sign on a tree. Private. Keep Out. A dog barks in the distance. Fluffy white seeds drifting on the wind, which protects me from the mosquitoes, why do I love this land, its brown river, and its vast expanse of clouds, I love the perfect flatness of its green fields, the land, flattened by the weight of the glaciers, is like a beautifully sanded piece of wood, a bee is flying from one bright, yellow flower to the other, its weight pulling down both flower and stem, I'm picking pebbles on the side of the road, I turned a stone over, and its crystal facets were glittering in the sun, a fly is buzzing around my head, undeterred by the wind, I'm writing in my own shadow, a grasshopper! he heard the crunch of my heels on the gravel and flew away, the wind in the leaves, the shade of the pine trees, darkening the grass, and the vibrant strings of the cricket's thighs, all of this, everything I see feeds the hungry vacuum of my empty life, the leaves glistening in the sun, I'm squirreling nuts away for the winter, freezing images like steaks,

Aug 15, at the Grand

We're in Minneapolis! I can still see the trucks, I can hear them—Karen helped me to stay awake with a conversation about philosophy, she listened patiently while I formulated several objections to Heidegger's theory of language, philosophy always keeps me awake, it's like drinking a cup of espresso, and now, I'm sitting in an air-conditioned room, and my 468 miles of driving are weighing down on me,

Tanglewood 2004

July 2, 2004

(From the window of a cab) Bright sunshine. Not a cloud in the sky. Leaf shadows skip over my arm, like stones over a lake.

July 2, 2004

Branches swaying to the music of Rachmaninoff.

July 3, just after midnight

OK. Now this is more like it. I'm sitting at a picnic table by the highway, with Bartok's violin concertos to make me feel the night, and cars, unseen drivers behind bright headlights, to give me a sense of time passing, which is all I need to back me up against the inexpressible, there's a full moon over the Berkshires, well, not quite full, or just starting to wane, there's a sliver, a thin crescent still in darkness, surge, the violins surge, the strings quivering with the tragedy of existence, I feel it, now, the agony of the world, the brevity of our night on earth, I'm suddenly aware that I'm sitting here writing, writing under the dim light of our motel sign, fifty years after my father said it was only an idle dream, I'm still at it, dad, still pursuing the idle dream, is that enough of a victory, have I proven you wrong at last, sometimes I think that's what's given me the stamina, the endurance to go on, that I had to prove you wrong, ...

July 3, almost midnight

The moon was waning, because tonight...well, there's less of it than yesterday, I'm drinking Jack Daniels, hoping to drunkenly find the answer, I've got my search engines, a Beethoven string quartet, Jack Daniels and the hiss of car tires on the 20 West, I have headlights probing the darkness, I'm well under way, but an electric wire, a power cable is cutting the moon in half, and the table is sparkling with dew drops, the nights are cold, here in the Berkshires, a cream white car is parked in front of a motel room, looking like the solid, cream white answer to the mystery of its being there, I'm just doodling, consuming the time that separates me from my death, tonight I saw *Blues for an Alabama Sky*, and now I'm sitting on a wet bench, looking at red taillights fading in the distance, it seems strange that they know where they're going, bewildering that they have a specific destination in mind, or that they won't be surprised when they get there, I'm shivering, time for another slug of Jack, I want my head to spin, oh the lights of a plane slowly crossing the night sky, why are we always going from one place to another, even the moon is on the move, having cleared the power cables, there's a high pitched whine in my ears, like the whirr of distant crickets, Beethoven seems out of place in the Berkshire mountains, a hint of Vienna in a motor hotel, I'm freezing, there's nothing to understand, there's no mystery, only the red glow of a car passing in the night,

July 4th, waking from a nap

The sun, nestled in clouds, leaves a pulsating, green after image when I close my eyes, I've stretched my arms and legs, and the blood is rushing through my veins, it's the next best thing to an orgasm,

This moment fits me perfectly, like tights on a dancer's thighs.

July 4th, at the Mexican restaurant

I've ordered a lime margarita, and I'm enjoying the tortillas and salsa. A bee is working

the flowers. The waiter brings me the margarita. I'm savoring the salt on the rim of the glass.

Hawaii 2004

July 17, 2004

Los Angeles Airport. Heat waves in the distance. The air moving like surf.

9:20 EST, on Flight 161

We're flying over Venice Beach, which is quickly receding in the haze. The green hills are almost grey. I'm reading Rimbaud's *Lettre du Voyant*. The California mountains are...white mist beautiful, they're mountain magical, like a picture of Rimbaud's mind. "*Donc le poète est vraiment voleur de feu.*" Far below us, white, ribbed clouds, like ripples in the sandy bottom of a lake. The clouds, from this altitude, are like land masses, white continents,

July 17, Outrigger Royal Kahana

I'm on the beach in Kahana, and the tide is coming in fast, it's rushing up towards me, threatening to wash right over me, and above me, a sky that's worth the price of the trip, I'm alone on the beach, there are footprints in the wet sand, not mine, this morning I was in New York, now I'm on a beach overrun with foam,

Napili, by the ocean

I'm standing on volcanic rocks, green with sea moss, and on the mountains across the water, I see the dark green shadows of the clouds.

Just this is enough. The sound of swirling water. The sight of glittering bubbles.

On the cliffs of West Maui,

We drove down a rocky road to this mind-altering view of mountains, sky and sea. I can see the coral reefs under the water. Out in the blue channel waters, white sails are bending in the wind.

We're on a high cliff, overlooking other cliffs, with patterns of erosion that are a challenge to language, or perhaps just to my grasp of it, and down below is the white jet of the Blow Hole, a tourist attraction which can't compete with these crumbling cliffs,

and down in the green waters, the coral reefs, like treetops in the rain

3:20 pm,

We're back at the Blow Hole, a strange "geyser" that shoots up from the cliff, when a wave fills the cavern below,—which gives me a moment to enjoy my eroded cliffs, green with algae. The clouds, dark grey now, are grazing the mountain tops, and the point where they meet, where the trees vanish in mist, is beyond words

The silver shimmer of the sun on miles of calm ocean...becomes a field of snow in the distance.

July 18, at the Outrigger

Tonight at the Pacifico, I had a dessert which I can only describe as decadent, that's what I said to Karen as we were eating it, I said, this is really decadent, and now I'm on the beach, with the tide surging towards me, I can't see the lights across the water, only a luminous haze on the horizon, and Bartok, God, his music is vanishing into the night, into a sky so full of stars it reduces me to nothing, a butterfly! suddenly, in the hotel lights, the white wings of a butterfly

From my balcony, at the Outrigger

I've lost the surf, but I still have a portion of the sky, and I've revived the sad, fading violins of Bartok, with a new set of Double AA batteries, that's what I love most about violins, that they capture, in their quivering vibrato (redundancy! it's nature's way) the tragedy of European civilization, giving it a wistful, a lyrical sadness which makes it almost bearable, I'm drinking an ice cold Heineken on a volcanic island, when European (Bartok almost makes it comprehensible, close, but no cigar!) civilization, like sulfuric acid, devours everything it touches, Captain Cook perished, like Custer in the hills of Montana, but he was the first ripple, the first foaming hint of the oncoming tide, here we destroyed the most paradisaical culture, the one oasis on earth, no one intended, no one fully comprehended the size and scope of this cultural annihilation, no one is entirely to blame, but if I had my choice of hate figures, I'd choose the missionaries, the white collared, black robed destroyers of culture, who did so well for themselves, they ended up owning half the land.

Now I'm alone with myself, drunk on a balcony in Maui, with no thoughts to distract me from...what I know is coming, the end of sandy beaches, and Bartok concertos, his violins are quivering, throbbing with Hungarian pain

There's a flicker in the sky, and perhaps, around that flicker, empires surge, crest and fall like white foam

July 19, 2004

On the road to the sea. Branches softly breathing wind.

A woman in white shorts, precariously balanced on a rock over foaming rapids.

The stones speak to me of dark Hawaiian nights, and centuries of wind and rain, they speak in their language of stone. I feel them now, the gods of this volcanic island, as if they were my own.

July 19, on the flight to Hawaii

(Through the loud buzz of the propellers) On one side of me, a vast expanse of grey blue ocean, and on the other, steep cliffs plunging into the sea. *(Stop)* The hills a bright, and the valleys a dark, tropical green. *(Stop)* The vibrating plane is part of the whole experience. *(Stop)* Awesome rocks like teeth jutting out of the water. Like the maw of a savage beast, foaming at the mouth. *(Brushing over the top of the clouds)* We're coming up to the Hawaiian coast. *(Stop)* Again, the red rock cliffs, with a white fringe at their base. *(Stop)* The purple shadows of the cliffs, like those of Grand Canyon. *(Stop)* We're flying by the Valley of the Dead, which the Hawaiians avoided, paddling their canoes around it, in fear of the gods. *(Stop)* What shadows! Dark green crevices winding through the mountains. *(Stop)* We're flying by a large valley where at least 80,000 Hawaiians once lived, and...ah...our pilot says that this is a haunted valley, and that you can sometimes hear the cry of the Hawaiian warriors in the night. *(Stop)* We're leaving the coast and flying inland, above the dark green shadows of the clouds. *(Stop)* The pilot will dip the wing down to give us a view of a four hundred foot waterfall. *(Stop)* There it is, a long, thin stream of white water shooting down from the mountains. *(Stop)* We're flying over the rain forests that surround the volcano. The land vanishing in a haze of sunlight. *(Stop)* Life, as Shelley said, is passing strange and wonderful. *(Stop)* We're flying over the lava beds that surround the volcano, and I can see a cloud of smoke rising from the crater. *(Stop)* Now we're circling the top of the volcano. The crater is shallow, almost like a plateau. Red fissures in the rock. And what looks, from this altitude, like flames shooting out of the cracks. Several columns of smoke are blending into one. *(Stop)* I see people standing on the edge of the crater. *(Stop)* Smoke rising from the lava slopes, as molten rock rolls down the mountain. *(Stop)* This was once a rain forest, and now it's just lava glistening in the sun. *(Stop)* Steam rising on the shore, where the lava flows into the Pacific. *(Stop)* I see the red streaks of lava flowing down into the ocean. *(Stop)* The pilot says that the lava flow wiped out miles of highway and entire communities. *(Stop)* Flying over magnificent cloud formations. The white lava of the sky. *(Stop)* My ears pop much more quickly on this flight, because the cabin isn't pressurized. *(Stop)* We're flying over empty volcanic craters. *(Stop)* On one side, soft grey clouds. On the other, a blinding white. *(Stop)* Far below us, the greenish, white surface of the sea. *(Stop)* The sun is making solar magic with the sea and sky. *(Stop)* Low-lying clouds, like white islands in the ocean. *(Stop)* The sun on the water is vanishing in a gold haze. The haze, says our pilot, is volcanic ash. *(Stop)* My words are just a trace. A haze on the horizon. It's stretching out before me. *Le mystère en pleine lumière.* *(Stop)* I was never any good at understanding. I can only see. *(Stop)* I'm the man who saw, and understood nothing. *(Stop)* It's beyond me. I never had a chance. I never came close. *(Stop)* We're flying into the first hints of sunset. The ocean is turning a whitish orange. *(Stop)* Haze like a field of white snow. *(Stop)* Ahead, beyond the luminous shoal waters, the black coast of Maui. *(Stop)* On one side, a soft evening blue, and a white fringe along the distant cliffs, and on the other, the sacred island of the Hawaiian people, bombed for years by the U.S. Air Force. Our pilot says a very expensive clean-up is under way. Cleaning up the shrapnel and military waste on the island. *(Stop)* The sun on the distant ocean has branded itself on my retina. I hope it leaves a deep scar that never heals.

July 20, just after midnight

I'm drinking a Heineken which is turning to ice. The ice crystals are melting in my mouth. In the darkness beyond my balcony, I can hear the surf pounding on the shore. Oh, I was in the mood for this: Brahms. This is just what I needed, at the end of a smoking volcano, Mexican restaurant day, Brahms, the clear, waterfall purity of his piano notes, let me just sink back into the music and ice crystals,

As a car slips away in the night, tree shadows strangely mount the walls of a hotel,

Brahms even has the palm trees working for him, he's found their swaying branches, he's riding them like surf, to a place where words can never follow, and my pages are swaying with the palm branches, everything is riding on the wind, yes, and over the night ocean, a star that has no idea I'm looking at it,

July 20, in Lahaina

We're having lunch at Cafe O' Lei, a restaurant on stilts, with soft, sea waves breaking under us. The water is clear, I can see sand and rocks on the bottom. Boats are lifting hang gliders into the sky, and surfers are riding a wave to the shore.

Fragments of the sun: sparks of sunlight on the water. The irregularity of natural forms. The unpredictability of them. Like the white rivulets of foam on the rocks: you never know what shape they'll take next.

Filaments of cloud curling in the wind. The subtlety, the white delicacy of these Hawaiian clouds.

The surf, black with seaweed, collapses on the sandy shore. The white spray hits my notebook, and there's a fine drizzle in the wind, as the surf surges over black, volcanic rocks. I could spend days here, weeks even, and I still wouldn't have enough of this green surf, this white foam laden with black seaweed

July 20, on top of Haleakawa Crater

I'm just. . .standing here shivering, wrapped in a bath towel, with an incredible view of the city below. I can't see the ocean, because it's night, but I can guess its outline from the coastal lights. The starry sky is really. . . well, I don't know what to say, (*laughing*) what a sky! And there, with a red tinge, is the crescent moon. (*Stop*) I've never seen the Milky Way look so crisp and sharp. A white haze of stars, almost like a thin cloud. And the flashing lights of an airliner crossing the night sky.

July 21st, 2004

(Driving back to the hotel) In the morning haze, the dim outline of the coast. *(Stop)* The clouds over the ocean, considerably below us, are swimming in light. On one side of the mountain, I'm driving into the sun, and on the other, following the shadow of my car. *(Sound of Bartok's violin concertos playing in the car)* I've stopped the car, to get a better look at this coastline. This pale blue ocean. *(Stop)* Just a coastline in the haze. An image that needs no help from meaning.

On the shore, near Wailea

We've stopped at a Hawaiian church. The grass in the cemetery is strewn with beautiful white and gold blossoms. One petal has a drop of dew on it, perhaps from the morning grass. A tiny black caterpillar is following his antennae over the white petal, oh, he suddenly opened his wings, and flew away. It's a Hawaiian cemetery. The names on the tombstones are Hawaiian. Under the name Kahaleauki, in smaller letters, is the name Cecilia Kikia Poe Poe. Cecilia was born on May 30, 1924, and died on September 7, 1983. She was 17 years old when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, no doubt a memorable day in her life. She was 59 years old when she died. A colorful bird, with a red crest on his head, is strutting his beauty on light branches that bend under his weight.

The smell of salt water. The smell of the sea.

These volcanic rocks have preserved the moment of their hardening. Their rippled surface tells of wave after wave leaving its mark. Here the ocean, in a hiss of steam, has carved its pounding rhythms into the rock.

Is there anything on earth more beautiful than eddies of foam on a receding wave? It's the simple things I like best. Seaweed in the sun. Coral rocks in the sand. The waves make a sound like thunder when they glut the caverns.

A dead palm branch on the shore. Its leaves yellow and dry.

July 26, on the north coast

Shooting film from the volcanic rocks. The green algae. The white foam.

It was worth it, to mountain goat my way over these black rocks, to this desolate, surf-beaten point, where the rim of my hat is flapping in the wind, will I take these rocks, this green surf back to New York with me, will they stay with me through the winter months, the wind is destroying my notebook, no intellectual absence is possible here, no absorption into thought, the physical world is overwhelming, your senses are glutted, the sun burns the soul right out of you, as Camus once put it, and he knew the sun, being an Algerian.

July 26, on the north coast

(Sound of the wind blowing in the microphone) I'm recording this on tape because it's just too hard to write in my notebook. *(Laughing)* There's too much wind. My pages are flapping like crazy. *(Stop)* The surf is breaking on these rocks, exploding into white foam.

(*Stop*) This coastline belongs on a postcard. Green coral reefs, and the open sky beyond them. (*Stop*) The glitter of broken glass. Testimony of summer nights, to borrow a phrase from Eliot.

9 in the evening, at the Outrigger

I'd like to know what's going down, besides the rain in the drainpipe, I'm totally smashed, and let's not leave Bartok out of the picture, or the clouds that are kindly donating this rain to the cause, I'm hooked on bewilderment, addicted to incomprehension, and I'm getting my share of it tonight, I took off my headset, to hear the rain dripping down from the balconies, I can't even begin to understand why the lights (wake me up if I'm dreaming) are shimmering like an oil slick on the pool water, or why the moon has moved so much since the last time I saw it, now it's right above the hotel, and vanishing into heavy cloud cover, am I going to be able to read this when I get back to New York, the shadow of a tree is undulating on the lawn, and these clouds that cover the moon, well, they're Hawaii, cover the moon beautiful, they're night rain magical, but wait, it's coming out, the moon is coming out of the clouds, a silver light is firing up the clouds, and rain, yes, rain is falling on my arms, don't tell me what I'm doing here, I don't want to know

July 28, at dawn

I drove to the airport in the rain. There was a bright star on the horizon. I couldn't see the ocean, only the lights on the coast. The runways are wet, and there's a red tinge in the northern sky.

July 29, at the Outrigger

I'm savoring an ice cold beer, and listening to an early quartet by Beethoven. At first, I was fascinated with the early mythology of Hawaii, I bonded with the land, with the sea and the sky, but now, I seem to be withdrawing into my shell, like one of those herb and garlic-flavored *escargots* I had at the French restaurant. I'm losing Hawaii, like a radio station getting fainter and more scratchy with every mile. My need to commune with the earth and the sky has been overcome, swamped with the rampant commercialism of these islands. First, we destroy a culture and a way of life. Then the conquerors return to the scene of the crime, as sun loving vacationers, but what they want isn't Hawaii, it's America in a Hawaiian setting, with all the amenities of home, and what I was searching for, the original, the pristine Hawaiian night, the way they experienced the world before we came, has been swept away by a tidal wave—they have them here in Maui—of American tourists wanting an American experience of the world.

July 30, on the road to Hana

I'm inside a cavern at Black Sands Beach, at the edge of the water. The surf rushes into the cavern, breaking over glistening, wet rocks. The mouth of the cave is white with light.

I'm standing on jagged, volcanic rocks, and the surf is sweeping past me, pushing on to the black sands of the beach, and I just had to write a few words—and the experience of writing them, here, in the wind, makes me glad to be alive.

July 30,

Ah, what a spot this is! Black cliffs, raging surf, wow. I've never seen so much white foam in my life. *(Sounds on surf on the tape)* I can smell the ocean. There's a fine drizzle rising from the green rocks. A smell of seaweed and salt water. *(As we were walking back to the car)* There's a light rain drifting down. I can see the drops in the sunlight.

July 30, after dark

Today, on the road to Hana, I saw many—God I'm tired—Hana wonderful sights, like Black Sands Beach, and the Seven Sacred Pools, but the most amazing thing I saw was a sunset on the ocean, the sun was setting over the island of Lanai, setting in an orange haze, which I tried to capture on film, but which I suspect I'll never see again, those colors, that orange haze, how can you film something like that, the island was a dark blue hulk rising out of the ocean, I kept stopping on the side of the road, to shoot a few more seconds of it, and the coastline of Maui, if anything could top that sunset, it was the lights on the coast, the lights in the darkening air, and then the moon rose over this landscape of mountains and sea, the full moon, I'm sitting on the balcony, there's a wind coming in from the ocean, will I remember all of this, will this moment leave an after image like the sun

July 30, at 11:15pm

I'm going to take one last walk on the beach. *(Stop)* A light rain is drifting down, invisible in the dark, and the tide, unexpectedly strong, is chasing me back up the beach. *(Stop)* I can see the lights of the coast on the wet sand. Long, white streaks plunging down into the earth. *(Stop)* This beach is totally deserted. I'm alone with the surf, and the cloudy, night sky. *(Stop)* Dark tufts of seaweed, half sunken in the sand, and white seashells, hardly visible in the darkness. *(Stop)* I can see the island of Lanai in the distance, its dense, dark mass looking like...anything but an island. *(Stop)* Earlier this evening, I saw the sun go down over Lanai. I saw the sun go down in an orange haze that hung over the water, and even while I was filming it, I knew it was hopeless, I knew I couldn't capture the density, the radiance of that orange. *(Stop)* I'm lying back on a pool chair, looking up at the sky, and...ah...where I thought I would see the moon, I still see only a cloudy haze. *(Stop)* When I'm dead, when there is no feeling, no sensation, no cloudy sky over the ocean, will it mean anything at all that I was here, lying back on a pool chair, looking up at the sky. *(Stop)* Some kind of night guard is chasing me away from the pool area, saying, this area is closed for tonight. *(Stop)* And now, I'm in an elevator going up to the 5th Floor. The strangeness of my life never ceases to amaze me. *(Stop)* Now I'm walking down a long balcony, past tightly shut hotel doors. Past dark, silent rooms, where exhausted tourists are dreaming of white foam. *(Stop)* I'm looking down at the parking lot, where...long lines of cars are parked one after the other, silent, cold in the night. *(Stop)* The palm trees are just barely moving in the ocean breeze. Just barely moving in the hotel lights. *(Stop)* Tomorrow, I'll be 40,000 feet above the ocean, eating a rather tasteless, bland airline meal, unable to see the ocean below. *(Stop)* Oh, a couple is walking towards the entrance of the hotel, and the man is walking far ahead of the woman, who's dead on her feet. Vacationing is hard work.

The Blue Ridge Mountains

2004

Sept 5, somewhere in Virginia

Hundreds of miles with the hum of the motor, and the glare of the sun on the pavement. We drove into the sunset. Stopped for dinner. When we came out of the restaurant, it was dark.

The hum of the air conditioner. The silence of the night.

Sept 6, 9 am

Grey morning. Breakfast at the Waffle House. Where are we?

Sept 6, in Blowing Rock

I'm sitting at a table in the Blue Ridge Mountains. Sitting on a rather cold metallic chair. The sky has the look of rain. And Bartok's *Concerto for Orchestra* is doing the rest. I went inside to get my jacket. There was a chill in the air. It's starting to rain. Just a few drops. I may have to move.

Through Bartok's magnificent concerto, I can hear the rain falling on the hood of our car.

We're sitting in the gazebo, where lion heads are spouting water into a fountain. Karen's reading *In the Land of God and Man, a latin woman's journey*. So, I'm going to read Mallarme to the sound of running water.

Late in the evening,

Oooh, that seat is cold. Having made love, I've come outside to write in my notebook, and drink some Jack Daniel's. I hear crickets, cicadas, I hear them through Bartok's concerto, this is night music, music to be heard with leaves etched against the sky, here I'm closer, I have a chance, I'm within reach, something wants to communicate itself to me, but it's very faint and scratchy, maybe if I sit in the gazebo and hear the sound of running water,

ahh, that's better, not just the sound, but the sight of those jets of water, and those lion faces are transformed, by this semi-darkness, into a vision of...they're, what are they, the savage face of God, a Nietzschean, a Zarathustrian God, "blank and pitiless as the sun" I hear tires turning on the gravel, she hasn't completely shut her door, and I can see her moving inside the room, why do parked cars make me feel this way, it only happens at night, why should parked cars seem like an embodiment of the mystery, is it the music, or the fact that they're dark and empty, all these cars were moving, winding their way through the mountains, and now they're motionless, now they're cold and still, six hours ago, these cars were far apart, and now they're all parked together, we came from many different places, all day we were converging on this spot, and we're going to sleep here together, for one night, and scatter in the morning, like a flock of frightened birds, and the fact that

we're all here, sharing this moment, is as meaningless as everything else about life, meaningless and wonderful, I've turned off Bartok, and moved away from the rather loud fountain, so I can hear the crickets, and maybe, as an added bonus, see those leaves etched against the sky, they're brightly lit, green in the black sky,

September 6, in Blowing Rock

I'm going to try to record these crickets. (*Faint sound of crickets chirping*) They're all around me. The summer magic of them.

I've moved away from the lights. Into the darkness. To see the trees in their...in their lush, black stillness. There's something about them. (*Shivering*) It's chilly here in the mountains. (*Stop*) Leaves in a haze of light.

Inside our room,

I've turned out the light, to help Karen get to sleep, and I'm writing in the dim, half-light that comes from our window, hoping that my sensation aids, music and beer—God that man has a genius for capturing the writhing agony of existence, every note is tragic, those are my feeling aids, Bartok and beer, I can still hear the crickets, I can hear them through the open window, through the music, it's a mating call, they rub their legs together like a bow moving over the strings of a violin, he was dying when he wrote this music, he was lying on a hospital bed in New York, grimly determined to finish his masterwork, this music was written in pain, a question is gathering inside me, the table shakes when I write, gathering strength like a hurricane headed for the coast of Florida, and if I knew what the question was, I might have a ready answer for it, a man is walking home alone, he and I may be the only people left awake in this town, branches in the sky, thanks, I needed that, now I'm awake, and Bartok is rushing through my veins, he's going to my head, I'm on a roll, the mystery is within my grasp, I've got you now, you elusive son of a bitch, I've got crickets, and I'm on my second beer, nothing can stop me now,

after writing "nothing can stop me now," I stared out of the window for a whole minute, my mind a blank, there's nobody moving out there, the town is deserted, is everyone as bewildered as I am, is everyone going through life wondering what planet they're on, or whose face they're looking at in the mirror, I've turned off the music, so I can hear the crickets, and the harsh, rasping sound of the cicadas, mental things alone are real, said Blake, and if I was to make that kind of categorical statement, it would be simply this: only nature is beautiful. Only branches in the night sky, and the sound of crickets at my window.

Sept. 7, 12:45 am

I sped through the night, following the red lights ahead of me. I sped through the night, talking about philosophy with Karen, in an attempt to keep myself awake.

Sept. 7, 5 am

I'm writing in my sleep, this is all a dream

Twilight in Alaska 2005

July 27, at Newark Airport

Noon. I have a panoramic glimpse of the New Jersey Turnpike, grey in the heat and haze. A Continental jet has just landed, to the relief of its passengers. We're sitting under an air conditioning vent, with the cool air cascading over us like a waterfall.

July 27, on the flight to Anchorage

I see ice streaking down a mountain, or is that the white foam of a waterfall? These black mountains, striped with ice and snow, are simply stunning, and their rolling peaks, seen from the air, look like a white web, there's so much wilderness in the world, virgin lake and forest, and...where are they? where are my black mountains, I don't believe it, they're all white, this is incredible, a whole mountain range buried under ice and snow, it's better than Grand Canyon, you can see the ice flowing down like a river, the sun dazzling on one face, dark grey on the other, the mountains are casting long shadows over the snow, ice flows like a river, only more slowly, but from this altitude, you can see the lines of flow, and the way the flow curves around a mountain, winding through the valleys like a river, the sun is going down to the right of us, very strange, since we're heading north, why is this cold, inhuman place so beautiful, it's an almost supernatural beauty, as if it wasn't part of nature at all, if only Rousseau could have seen this, he was a lover of mountains, there's less ice now, only the white streaks I saw at first, we're coming down from the heights, I don't know what I've seen, to tell myself that they were mountains covered with ice and snow hardly seems adequate, because the altitude transformed them into something else, something almost unearthly, it may take me a long time to absorb what I just saw, I don't know what those white peaks will become in my mind, we're coming down to land in Anchorage, flying over a last mountain range, mountains buried in snow, my God, that snow must be deep, now I'm losing the mountains, as we head into the dense cloud cover, one last glimpse of white mountains, my ears just popped, the sun still hasn't set yet, it's still firing up the clouds ahead, we're coming down into clouds almost as beautiful as the mountains, I see parallel lines on the ground, a divided highway, very bumpy ride, we're in the clouds, visibility nil, I've seen so much white today, I've lost my writing table, but gained a vast expanse of woods and lakes, complete with a rainbow! and white mist streaking from the wing, suddenly the land is flat, flat as a tabletop, and very green, such a perfect rainbow, the brightest, most intense arc of color I've ever seen, but it's moving along with the plane, perhaps caused by the porthole windows, we're crossing a body of brown water, the waves sharp and clear, and I can see the buildings of Anchorage, we've landed, plane shaking, black mountains in the distance, it's been raining here, the runways are wet, the engines are raising a white haze of water in the air, like a car driving in the rain,

July 28, in the afternoon

I'm going for a walk by the water. Going for a walk in the rain. *(Stop)* The tide is out, and there's a long stretch of muddy shallows leading up to the water. White seagulls skimming along the edge of the water. *(Stop)* Unfortunately, there's a man back there working a buzz saw, which I'm sure he feels is a very useful activity. At least from his perspective. *(Stop)* Flowering weeds. The petals a light yellow, and the inner heart of the flower, a rich gold. *(Stop)* Cracked mud, darkened by rain. Yellow leaves on the sidewalk. Does autumn start early in Alaska?

July 28, at the Copper Whale

We walked down to the water. I showed her the muddy shallows. We watched the jets coasting down from blue, darkening to purple clouds. As we were walking back up the hill, a black and yellow passenger train—there goes another jet, its landing lights flashing—lumbered down the tracks, we saw the dark windows, but couldn't see the passengers.

I went for Sibelius, he seemed just right for Alaska, being from a northern country, he captures the savage beauty of the darkening sky, and the pine trees, the seagulls, it's all in his music, which kindly consents to take the form of everything I see, the wooden railing is still wet, waterlogged from a day of rain, a white truck roared past, the driver looked at me, his mind on something else, the clouds take the shape of the wind, keeping a trace of its passage long after it's gone, I'm writing in the last lingering light of day, I'm writing in an Alaskan twilight, it's 11 in the evening, I have at least two hours of light left, I have two hours to understand this sky, and this muddy shoreline, I've been watching the lights of an airliner, its long, slow turn towards the airport, I feel the first drops of rain, the page is getting wet, I live for moments like this, just let me write in a notebook, and I'm perfectly happy, with Sibelius ringing in my ears, only when I'm close to nature do I feel really alive, an insect! two insects, I'm not sure what they are, but they're the first insects I've seen in Alaska, where the cold doesn't favor their existence,

July 28, in Anchorage

A musk ox who had no idea he would be standing in a museum, mounted and stuffed, with smiling tourists around him, posing for a picture.

July 29, at the Heritage Center

We're on the "kayak & canoe tour," a guided tour, narrated by a teenage girl. She's a redhead, and her hair is tied up in a pony tail. This is her summer job. In the fall, when the tourist season is over, she'll go back to school.

In the glassy pond, the trees are pointing down at the sky, and water spiders are figure skating in perfect circles.

I can smell yesterday's rain. A pungent odor of moss and fern.

July 30, in the morning

The windshield is filling up with fine drops of rain. One sweep of the wipers, and the trees are suddenly clear again.

July 30, at Christiansen Lake

Writing in the rain. Tall reeds in the shallows. A seaplane moored to a dock. It's drifting slightly in the wind. And in front of me, much taller than I am, purple flower weeds, bending in that same wind. I feel the raindrops on my skin, icy pin pricks,

I was driving in the rain, and thinking how I ate her pussy on a mountain. Her bare thighs were hanging out of the car, and I was kneeling on the ground, savoring the wet oyster of her flesh. We were high above the ocean, and she was drifting on waves of pleasure, her head rolling like seaweed in the surf.

Glistening patches of water on the road. Branches hit by lightning. A grey haze of rain in the distance.

The sun deck is deserted. The tables are wet from the rain.

Hegel says that art is more beautiful than nature. But no artist could ever equal....what I saw today. The mountains bristling with pine trees. The patterns of erosion in the rock. "It beggars description," said Shakespeare, and that's what nature does, that's the only thing you can say about the mountain mist: it beggars description.

I'm walking in a twilight that began hours ago, and will last for some time yet, walking toward mountains streaked with ice and snow, carried along by Sibelius, to the edge of a muddy brown puddle that turns the world on its head, I see smoke rising from a chimney across the road, and a mosquito flying around me, headlights on the highway, the sound of a car ripping through the evening air, Sibelius momentarily overwhelmed, but getting the upper hand again, as the car fades away, I've found some rushing rapids, I hear them through the symphony, it's called Carlo Creek, it was the end of a movement, a good time for an intermission, I wanted to hear the foaming rapids, I'm walking down the rocky shore of the creek, there's a pink glow in the clouds, echoed by softer tones of pink in other clouds, it's not a chimney, it's a camp fire, people are sitting around the fire, only a few feet from the rushing rapids, now that's living, and I think they're passing a joint to each other, or am I imagining things, anyway, they're smoking something, and two cars are coming from opposite directions, I'm caught in a crossfire of headlights, oh, the pink is more intense now, the sun is definitely setting behind those mountains,

My God, it's still light out, I thought it might get dark earlier in the mountains, but it's midnight, and I'm still an hour or two away from nightfall,

I left my beer out on the porch, to make sure it was cold. The trees are darkening, and mist is rising out of the ground, as if the earth was exhaling the day's warmth.

At last! It's dark, and the mountains, the trees....are beyond the range of language, I hear a car going by on the highway, no, no, I don't believe it, it's still light out, my eyes are

getting used to the dark, it's one in the morning, and dusk is lingering on, when does night finally fall in this country? Just before dawn. I hear the foaming rapids, I can't see them, but the sound is enough, and the mountains, well, they were always out of reach, I never had a chance with them, the inexpressible is reclaiming all the ground it had lost during the day, and now even my notebook, even my writing hand have passed over into it, I live for moments like this, I don't care what happens tomorrow, death will just have to wait in line, along with all the other ailments. As Bob Hope once said, "Every dog has his day, but the nights are mine."

July 31, 2005

Why is erosion beautiful on a mountain, but not on a human face?

Those purple flowers are called fireweed. They turn bright orange when they peak, and then, so they say, winter is only 6 weeks away. They're the first thing to grow after a forest fire, and that's why I saw them on Mount St. Helens, a couple of years after the mountain erupted. All the trees were leveled, incinerated by the blast, it was like the surface of a dead planet, and the only color, the only sign of life was the purple flowers sprouting between the blackened roots.

July 31, near Denali

I'm having an Arrogant Bastard Ale, which is 7.2% alcohol.

In the Roughrider Cabins,

Only kidding, but they deserve the name, we have no bathroom—but the pizza was Alaska mountain perfect, it was frozen tundra wonderful, and just outside our door is the most delightful mountain stream, I'm high on Arrogant Bastard Ale, and I have a pine tree lightly jabbing the sky, like a boxer testing his opponent's defenses, and tonight, I'm going to bed early, I won't try to outlast the twilight, for the first time in my life, I'm going to go to bed when it's still light outside! I came down from the mountains with a ravenous appetite, and wolfed down four slices of pizza, drowning them in red peppers and grated cheese, and now, outside my window, I see the beginnings—no, it's 11 o'clock—the midway point of the longest twilight I've ever known, my head is spinning, and I feel so log cabin, so mountain lake alive, I'm out there, with the caribou, and the golden eagles, please tell me this will never end, tell me I won't have to go back to the sweltering streets, and the suffocating subway, there's a glimmer of pink in the sky, blue clouds with a pink lining, there are no trees quite like Alaska pine trees, they stand alone, they don't blend with the surrounding forest, they're like an isolated fist clenched at the sky. As soon as I can work up the courage, I'm going to venture out into that....freezer they call an Alaska evening, I'm going to stand by those mountain rapids, and think the thoughts that are given to me, as a gift, I'm going to take what comes, oh, I see mosquitoes out there, hungrily butting their heads against my window—do I really want to go out there?

So here I am, in the twilight that is sure to outlast me, in spite of my many advantages, I have two sweaters under my jacket, and a bottle of Jack Daniel's, I'm ready to last the night, I've gone way out on the rocks, rushing rapids all around me, do I dare leap to the next bunch of rocks, if I miss, I'm going to get the coldest bath of my life, and maybe lose

my notebook—I did it, so here I am, high and dry, in the middle of the rapids, and the mountains are darkening, and I love life, I'm surrounded with dark cabins, I can't believe all these people are asleep, I don't know what I'm doing here, but I know this, my blood is racing and I feel alive, there's white water all around me, and I hope tomorrow never comes, if time has to end, then let it end now,

I'm walking in an Arctic sunset, the frozen light can hardly move, like a fly numb with cold in the morning, oh, wow, a major event, the red taillights of a car tore down the highway, and momentarily overwhelmed the sound of the rapids, there are people in that car, human lives I'll never live, and why should that seem strange, they'll never know I was standing here, by a mountain stream, writing these words, I'm not getting any closer to the secret, why are they in that car, and why am I here, by the rushing—like my life—rapids, it seems to be getting darker, but I've learned not to be lured by false hopes, night will never fall, with its heightened sense of mystery, and dawn will finally rescue the last glimmers of twilight,

A moth, I won't hurt you, if you let me get a good night's sleep. He's delighted to be in the warmth of our cabin. Make yourself at home, my friend, I'm drinking a Heineken, and I'm bubbling with good cheer, oh, it's getting dark out there, but I won't be fooled by hints of darkness, I know it's still light, I'm not going out again at one in the morning, looking for the inspiration of night, once bitten, twice shy, I know it'll never get dark, I'm a lover of night who's given up hope of ever finding darkness,

Aug. 2, on Santa Claus Lane, in a town called North Pole

Icy morning rain. The smell of gas at the pumps.

Aug. 2, on the road

In the pine forest. A seagull far from the sea.

Dinner in the Yukon. The smell of a wood fire.

It's starting to rain in Beaver Creek, and the night air is full of tree smells, it reeks of moss and fern,

In the bar of the Westmark Inn,

I'm drinking a Heineken, which I paid for with American money, there's a fan spinning on the ceiling, and on a shelf, prominently displayed, are golden baseball trophies, no doubt won by some local team, I asked the bartender whose trophies they were, and she said, they're ours, the Westmark Softball Team, so there they are, a whole shelf of softball trophies, their gold glittering in the bar lights, it seems to be getting dark outside, but that's just the Yukon twilight, you're not fooling me, I know it's light out there! northern twilights last till sunrise, the natives hunger for darkness, like city people hunger for silence, they're drunk with light, and long for the sleep that only night can bring,

Aug. 3, on the road to Haines

Wind. Foam on a green lake.

Pine trees growing in the crevices of a mountain. Where the water comes rushing down from the icy peak.

Hints of a desert climate in the Yukon. Salt flats. Desert ecology. I got out of the car, walked on the white, salt-like surface, which seemed to be some organic life form, and crumbled under my feet.

Driving through a rain cloud, with the windshield wipers beating fast. A northern hare scampered across the road.

Aug 3, at the Captain's Choice Motel,

I'm out on the porch, with a view of the green waters of Portage Cove. The mountains are wrapped in sheets of rain. Earlier, there was a white ferryboat in the Cove. It disappeared in the mist. It's a chilly day, and the raindrops on the oily, white railing are coagulating into the most amazing islands and peninsulas of water. There's a marina with boats at anchor, behind a sheltering sea wall. Across the Cove, a cloud is tangled in the treetops. And water drips down from the roof.

Haines, 9:30 pm

The rain keeps falling, and the Cove is lost in mist. A fine drizzle is wetting the pages of my notebook. A white ferryboat, like an iceberg in the fog, is heading out to sea, or to Juneau.

August 3rd, in Haines, on the balcony of my motel

The sound, the smell of rain in the evening. *(Stop)* Portage Cove is like a postcard of itself. There's a rocky beach, totally deserted, thanks to the rain. Scattered lights along the shore, and across the Cove is a mountain that I can only guess at, a darker shade of white than the mist. *(Stop)* Silhouetted against the sky. A spider clinging to his windblown web. *(Stop)* Rain makes me feel alive. I'm soaking it up like a sponge. *(Stop)* A red neon sign in the distance, and leaves bending in a gentle hint of wind. *(Stop)* I wouldn't mind spending a few days here. I could walk on the rocky beach. Maybe take one of the motel chairs along, and sit by the water, writing in my notebook. *(Stop)* Hey, what do you know, it's dark! At last. I guess it's because we're considerably south of Anchorage here, and it gets dark earlier. I can hardly see the waters of Portage Cove. *(Stop)* The sound of car tires on the shore. A jeep turns into the motel courtyard, its fog lights beaming. *(Stop)* The rain's coming down a bit harder now. *(Stop)* The rocky beach has vanished in darkness. And the motel lights are glistening on the wet cement.

Aug. 5, on the Fjordland Express

On the shore islands. Dark and misty. The Alaskan rain forest.

Aug. 5, in Haines

In a dry riverbed. Half sunken in mud. White driftwood.

Aug. 7, at Stoney Creek

I hear the creek, but it's dark, and I don't know where it is, I'm following the sound, I feel cobwebs on my face, I'm getting closer, feeling my way along, my senses alive to every sound, and the moment just hits me like a branch,

This is great, there's a bench overlooking the creek, and so far, the mosquitoes haven't found me, the air smells of moist, shady woods, this is the purest, most nature rich air I've had the privilege of breathing in years, I see and hear the water foaming under a fallen tree, sight, sound and smell, it's all coming together in my mind, to give me night in the woods, the danger—Alaska is full of bears—and mystery of it, I think the mosquitoes have found me, I don't hear them yet, but I'm starting to itch all over,

Aug. 8, 2005

We're at the airport in Anchorage—hours early. I'm treating myself to a Key Lime Martini. We blundered our way to the Barnes & Noble on Northern Lights Blvd, and Karen bought me the *Complete Poems* of D. H. Lawrence, the day's drive has left me with a thirst for poetry and ice water, vans—a very popular vehicle in Alaska—are stopping in front of the terminal, and unloading baggage, it's 11:30 and the skies are darkening, we might catch the last glimmers of sunset, I can see myself in the windows, writing in my notebook, my white shirt and my bloated stomach, we're in a long, slow line for the Security Checkpoint, I'm going to put my keys, my loose change, anything metallic in the tray—I knew I'd set off the metal detectors! I'd forgotten about my recorder, and the machine was crackling and beeping, ...

August 8,

We're off the ground, and leaving Anchorage. I don't see anything. (*Stop*) I'm really stretching my neck, and looking back, I can just make out the lights of Anchorage in the night. (*Stop*) We're turning now, and I can see the city much better, just a carpet of light, like the night sky turned upside down. (*Stop*) The lights of Anchorage are slowly receding in the night, and I don't think I'll ever see them again. (*Stop*) Oh, we must have turned, because now I can see the city without twisting my neck around. Intersecting lines of light. The buildings like dark matter. Like the blackness of space between the stars. (*Stop*) There's a halo of light around the city. A luminous haze hanging over Anchorage. (*Stop*) There's a red streak on the horizon. A last, darkening glimmer of sunset over the Pacific. (*Stop*) We're flying above the clouds now, though I can barely see them in the growing darkness. There's a pulsating flash. A red glow on the wing. (*Stop*) Down below, I can see the lights of small towns in southern Alaska. Perhaps Juneau. (*Stop*) I'm drinking a bloody mary, and looking out at the fading colors of dusk.

Later in the night,

I can still see the lights of distant towns, though I can't see what I'm writing, nobody seems interested in the movie, they're all going to sleep, we're flying over the ice fields, but I can't see them, the ground is black, there's the red glow on the horizon, now I've lost the ground, the lights of Alaskan towns, now all I have is dark, almost imperceptible clouds, I can see myself much better than the clouds, my white shirt hung out to dry over the ocean, I'm nibbling on salted nuts, a major event on this night flight, I'm losing that last glow of sunset, it'll be dawn soon, dawn over the Pacific, here, in the land of the midnight sun, dawn follows closely upon sunset, you can still see the red glow of the sunset, and it's dawn, everybody's asleep, it's just us chickens here, us roosters waiting for the dawn, and those lights I see, they're moving along with the plane, they're reflections of the lights in the plane, but projected out into the black night,

I can see Vancouver Island, a dark mass far below us, unless we're flying over the Queen Charlotte Islands, home of the Haida Indians, sculptors of those magnificent black argillite carvings, I can see the ground quite clearly now, there are some fjords with the water a lighter color than the land, because it's reflecting more light, and there's the red glow of sunrise, I slept for about an hour, then disturbed my sleeping neighbor, and went to take a leak in the vibrating toilet, I'm not sure what I'm looking at, it looks like an ice field, it just has that frozen look, and the sky is a bright orange, there are no lights below, just black forests, those are snowy peaks, I can make them out now, what a sight this would be by day, it's getting lighter now, and I can see the ice fields, the valleys are rivers of ice, it's the first light of dawn, the mountain peaks are like islands in a sea of ice, and at times, the ice is like white foam, like rushing rapids, and the sky is a burning orange, but you know, those ice fields could be clouds, it's just the way they're trailing off, like wisps of smoke, the lights of an airliner whisked by under us, heading in the opposite direction, and those are definitely fjords, no clouds could be shaped like that, and I see the lights of a coastal town, they're all asleep down there, dreaming of stranger, more satisfying lives, and soon they'll wake, the sunrise, at least the part of it I can see, is over 50 miles long, a bright, narrow strip of orange, very intense, the B. C. coast is bubbling over with islands, we've begun our descent, and the orange sky is echoed on the water below us, but it's a very faint echo, I can see the wake of a ship on the dark waters, and now, I'm getting a much better look at what seemed to be ice fields, they're really clouds, very close to the ground, and a white haze hanging over distant mountains, why is the world so beautiful, some things are....you wouldn't believe them if you weren't looking right at them, they're beyond belief, but not beyond sight, they've turned the lights on in the plane, and woken the sleeping passengers with the announcement that we're about to land, the pressure in my ears is fantastic, and now that we're coming down, the sunrise is disappearing behind black, no, blue mountains, they're a hazy blue, almost white, it's like the surface of a frozen planet, the sun! the red ball of the sun has finally risen over the mountains, it's rising over a white world of clouds and haze, giving it a red tinge,

Wyoming

2006

July 19, 2006

At last, Bear Lake! We've been winding our way through the mountains, hoping to catch a glimpse of Bear Lake, and here it is, softly lapping against the rocks. I'm sitting on a jagged boulder, still hot from the sun, which has disappeared behind the clouds, storms clouds, a dark, rain soaked grey, saw a lightning bolt hit a hazy, blue mountain, saw it only for a fraction of a second, like a shooting star, the mountains of Utah are, like the rest of nature, indescribable, and the play of light on the water is pure Monet, it's Sisley at his best,

Sky blue mountains. Valleys white with mist.

July 19, in Jackson

We stumbled upon our lodge, by sheer luck, a delightful place, with log cabins, picnic tables, and the pounding rhythms of a rock concert across the highway. In the mountains, the white gold glimmer of sunset. Traveling always makes me feel young. Tiny midges are biting me, and I'm in such a good mood, I'm glad to be of service to them. I hope they enjoy their meal.

Voices in the dark, leaves etched against the sky, I don't understand, I never did, darkness needs no help from anyone, or anything, and where I'm going, no words will ever find me, the night is alive with sounds, it's not just the leaves, the black hole of night foliage, from which no thought can escape, it's the leaves against the sky, it's what the sky does to the leaves, or the leaves to the sky, I'm not making any progress, I've been looking at them for years, and I'm still in the dark,

July 20, 2006

Tall grass bending in the wind. Pine needles alive with light.

July 20, at the Grainery

Karen's hair is glowing in the sun, it has a reddish tinge, I had to get it on film, and she was smiling at me, as I shot film of her hair glowing in the wind, the moment is going to my head, like a chilled Sonoma white, with moisture condensing on the glass,

The sun is about to set, shafts of light are shooting down from the mountains, what a treat, it's shining in my eyes, leaving a green after image on the page

It's gone, the sun, only a spark is left, only a yellow haze, and dark clouds lined with light,

A white vapor trail, like a comet's tail, stretching across the sky,

July 20, 2005

Lights in the night. Half glimpsed thoughts. A wide, starry sky, and the leaves, dark, brooding masses of foliage. *(Stop)* I've spent a lifetime, night after traveling night, trying to understand. Why do they *look* that way, the leaves, now, in the night, etched against the sky? *(Stop)* At least I'll have had this. Even if no one ever reads any of it, I'll have had the sheer pleasure of recording these words. *(Stop)* A human silhouette, black, suddenly, for a moment, in a brightly lit doorway. *(Stop)* The roar of an engine, as a car speeds away. Why are we always so...isolated, so unable...to see behind each other's headlights? *(Stop)* And the stars, if I came anywhere near them, would vaporize me. I would instantly turn into gas. Into burning, incandescent gas. *(Stop)* My head is arched back, looking up at the sky. Thousands of stars, some bright, and some...so dim I can hardly see them. *(Stop)* Suddenly I'm thinking of every insect in the world. Now. Living its only life. Its brief existence on earth. Now. Right now. They're alive. And I'm one of them.

July 22, 2006

In the distance. At the foot of the mountains. Jackson Lake in the morning light.

At Jenny Lake,

This place is called Hidden Falls. Pure, white chaos. Nature at her absolute best. Imagination, in the presence of these falls, would be an impertinence, this cascading foam empties your mind, you can't think, you can only see, a fly landed on my hand, but only for a moment, it was gone before I could write a single word, I'm always behind, trying to catch up to the moment,

The smell of pine needles. The smell of white spray.

July 22, at Signal Mountain Lodge

We've just sat down to dinner, with a truly dazzling streak of sunlight on the lake, softened by the screen shades, and this golden streak is punctuated by black, silhouetted boats at anchor.

The sun is dipping down behind the mountains, and my dazzling streak is growing more dim by the minute, it's gone, leaving only a pale yellow shimmer, now there's only a spark of sun left, the mountains are getting darker, wrapped in a yellow haze,

July 22, at Colter Bay

I'm sitting alone, in the silence of our room, drinking myself to sleep, and everything is out of focus, I'm losing my grip on reality, I know I'm in a cabin, in the Grand Teton Mountains, but my head is spinning, and nothing makes sense any more, why am I sitting in front of this door, retrograding into total incomprehension, because that's what it is, regression, I'm regressing to an infantile stage of incomprehension, I'm a newborn baby, I don't understand anything, I don't know what I'm doing here, in a lakeside cabin, drinking myself to sleep, I only know one thing, my mommy is young and beautiful, and she can do anything, I have nothing to fear, *maman* will protect me, and her brown hair is red in the

sun, and she reads me the Lone Ranger comics, it's winter in Montreal, and the steps are white with snow, I can smell the fish frying in the pan, it's April 1944, and I see the Germans, I see them in the black numbers of the calendar, the armies marching on the wall,

July 25, at Lake Yellowstone

In the morning. On a car window. A blinding flash of light.

Long shadows stretch across the road. Dark pockets of cold air. A lingering trace of night.

July 26, 2006

Last night, after dark, there was a mist rising from the lake. (*With Gershwin playing in the car*) We're winding our way through the mountains of Montana, carrying two flies we picked up back in Wyoming. (*Stop*) Grassy fields. Dotted with boulders, left behind by the glaciers. (*Stop*) Strange landscape. It's like drifting on a sea of rock. (*Stop*) We've stopped by a little lake, with shimmering waters. (*Stop*) Yellow flowers bending in the mountain wind. (*In pain*) Oh, I scraped my shin on the car door! (*Stop*) A horde of ants on the sidewalk, eating....I don't know what. Karen thinks it's a piece of bread. (*Stop*) Driving into the sun. Mountains hazy in the distance. (*Stop*) This is the 45th parallel. We're exactly halfway between the equator and the north pole.

July 27, at the Lake Lodge

I've had a shower, and I'm drinking a Sierra Nevada. That's how I wind down, that's my end of the day ritual. Ahh, that beer is good! And Beethoven isn't doing any harm either. I've been listening to the same string quartet every night. It relaxes me, as I mull over my memories of Idaho. Today, we drove to Mesa Falls, which had been highly recommended by the woman who went rafting on the river, her face toasted by the sun, and she was right, Mesa Falls was water at its foaming best, water drunk with its own power, and on the face of a cliff, green life forms were thriving on the white spray from the falls. Then we had dinner at the Riverfront Restaurant. Karen and I had identical meals: salad, almond trout, and cherry pie for dessert. But the highlight of the meal was the view of the river, which was breaking the sun's light into a thousand fragments, I can still see them, the river is still sparkling, like an after image, and the trout came with a baked potato, an Idaho potato, with melted butter and sour cream, and I may never forget that moment, when I was savoring my baked potato, and feasting my eyes on the river, a tiny fly is confusedly wandering over my hand, I blew him away, but he likes me, a moment later, I saw him struggling through the hairs on my arm, he's gone now, blown away a second time, I've opened another bottle of Pale Ale, I'm one bottle closer to sleep, one string quartet closer to my death, this moment was in my future, this Sierra Nevada moment, and now it's here, bitter and cold in my mouth, are these moments like empty milk cartons in a plastic bag, the refuse of a pleasure hungry life, leaving only a rancid odor behind?

July 29, 2006

Northern Utah. Driving through the remains of a forest fire.

July 29, at dusk

I'm sitting outside, in the cooling mountain air, with a lingering glow of sunset, and as if that wasn't enough, I'm listening to a symphony by Sibelius, and his music feels right at home in the desert mountains of Utah, there's the bright crescent of the moon, I was born under a new moon, now it's slipping behind a cloud, —what I thought was a skunk walking along the road turned out to be only a black plastic bag inflated by the wind, I'm happy, here, now, in the cooling air, I'm happy writing in my notebook, it's worth it, now, at this moment, to be alive, with Sibelius ringing in my ears, it's worth the price of the trip, with its sweaty, its suffocating moments on subway platforms, just to be here, in the fading light, with the first few stars beginning to appear, I can see my shadow on the road, Olivia, in one of her best aphorisms, says that life is a vacation from death, where is she now, what is she doing, now, at this moment, is she bathing in her clawfoot tub, —in front of me is something I've never been able to understand: a tree in the wind, music is more readily comprehensible than a tree in the night sky, music is an ideal order of sounds, and the tree is raw sensation, leaves moving in the dark, entirely other, beyond what is seen by day, everything seems to lose its identity in the night, including me, when the sun goes down, I don't know who I am, or what century I'm in,

July 30, at Flaming Gorge

“Why are plants green?” Karen asked, as we drove down the mountain, and I said, improvising an answer, “because they reflect only the wavelength for green, and absorb all the other colors. Green is the only color they reject, the only one they have no use for. Plants are hungry for light, they devour everything but green, that's their excrement, we see only the light rejected by the objects of the world, this is what we see, a world of rejected light, we feed on the garbage of the world, like maggots, or seagulls eating refuse,

July 30, at Red Canyon Lodge

As I opened the car door, there was a cricket on my arm. Or at least, I think it was a cricket. It was a large, black insect. I shook my arm, and it fell to the ground.

July 30, at Flaming Gorge

The pungent smell of wet grass. (*Stop*) The dock wet and glistening in the fading light. (*Stop*) It's almost dark. Birds are skipping like stones over the water.

July 30, in the evening,

I'm sitting on the porch of our lakeside cabin, well, what do you know, deer are grazing among the cabins, alert to every sound, and across the lake is the red glow of sunset, a hummingbird hovered in front of me, looking me over, his wings buzzing like a bee's, and then flew away, a light rain is falling, I can't see it, but I hear its soft, damp patter on the leaves and grass, its sharper needlepoint on the roof of our cabin, just to be sitting here, in the fading light, just to hear the rain, is worth the price of admission, which is death, the

end of evening rain, and red canyon sunsets, the price is blank nothingness, mommy! mommy! I'm not tired! screams the child, who feels exactly as I do, that it's too early to go to bed,

I went for a walk in the dark, I couldn't see a thing, I kept stumbling over rocks, but it was worth every black moment of it, and now I'm sitting on the front porch, with a swarm of insects drawn by the porch light, I don't want to go to sleep, like the child that was screaming, mommy, mommy, I'm not tired, just give me mountain lakes after dark, and the sound of my shoes crunching in the gravel, I'm not tired of living yet, I'm not tired of standing in line at the airport, I'm not tired of loading the suitcases into the car, not yet, every moment is a trip in the mountains, every moment is a waterfall, a torrent of white foam,

July 30, after dark

It's late, Karen is asleep, I've had a shower, and I'm drinking an ice cold beer, I'm a creature of habit, beer, music, and midnight thoughts, my mind comes to life at night, like Dracula's, I seize on the moment, drunk with the taste of its blood, I'm not sure what symphony this is, or what effect it's having on me, I've entered the Twilight Zone, with Rod Serling as my only guide, anything can happen, I'm part of the wildlife, my ears cocked to every sound, I can hear the slightest twig break, nothing escapes me, not even the sound of my own breathing, I'm ahead of the game, why, I'm so alert, so alive to every sound, I'm already dead and mounted on the wall, my antlers casting shadows in the leaping firelight, I don't exist, it's a billion years after this moment, a mere second of cosmic time, it's gone, the symphony, the taste of cold beer, the sensation of writing words in a notebook, gone, moments are made out of the remains of other moments, my body is made of atoms that were once drifting in space, I'm the condensation of interstellar dust, dew on the morning grass, gone, an instant of sunlight, fish jumping in the lake, a high pitched whine, which for me is the sound of silence, the shrill mosquito of time whining in my ear, carpe diem, this is the rosebud I'm picking, the Wild Berry Cobbler I had for dessert, this moment is a mouthful of wild berries, caution in the wind, red cliffs, infused with the colors of night, ice tea, silence, the shrill mosquito of silence, you swing at him in the dark, but he's cagy, he waits for you to go to sleep, you won't feel his bite, or better still, his slow, subcutaneous sucking will become part of your dream

Aug 1, 2006

Just barely. In a haze of rain. The white mountains of Utah.

Tanglewood II

2006

Aug. 12, at the end of a long drive

So here I am, after much confusion, and an epic struggle to find the Taconic Parkway, in a

very expensive motel where the toilets won't flush, and the cable shows look like they're being performed in a blizzard, here I am with an ice cold beer, and the poems of Blaise Cendrars. It's almost one, and the only sound is the hum of the air conditioner. This is my evening prayer. For me, this is vespers. When I'm on the road, I can't get to sleep without writing a few words, or reading a bit of poetry. I'm drinking a Smirnoff Ice, generously laced with vodka. A drink that should inspire *Russian* thoughts, visions of snowy landscapes, and tea steaming on the samovar, but unfortunately, Smirnoff is distilled and bottled in Stamford, Connecticut—but wait, all is not lost, the company was founded by Pierre Smirnoff, purveyor to the Imperial Russian Court, from 1886 to 1917. It would appear that Pierre Smirnoff's highly profitable purveying was rudely interrupted by the Russian Revolution. Unfortunately, Lenin and the Bolsheviks put an end to Smirnoff's lucrative career—the Russians drink vodka like water, perhaps because the two drinks look exactly alike, so that one can easily be mistaken for the other, what else can a man do at 1:30 in the morning, when the cable shows look like a blizzard in Vermont, I have no choice but to entertain myself, but really, I love Russian literature, and Russian reality, did you ever wonder why their skin is so white, because anything darker would be easier to spot against a white background of snow, a Russian's face is white for the same reason that a polar bear is white, isn't evolution wonderful, let's face it, the symphonies of Beethoven, the tragedies of Shakespeare are a product of evolution, the material world has transformed itself into the paintings of Van Gogh, and the poems of Stanley Nelson, we're flowers bending in the wind, dusty, wild flowers growing along the roadway, for no reason whatsoever, there's dried blood on my hand, I must have cut myself, we're strange mineral deposits, glistening in the sun, the white rocks of Mammoth Hot Springs, we're the sun on the water, a blinding flash, leaving only a fading after image
