

Birds of Mars Digest

Number Twenty-three

August 2024

www.chrisgentes.com

Artwork Index.....	2
Artwork Comments	2
The 3 x 3 Apports	31
Continuation of the 3 x 3 Apports.....	35
Remarkable Chance Meeting	41
Strange Object Found	42
Sketching Dogs Oddity	44
Grid Apports.....	45
First Dictation	51
More Dictation	57
Ten Uses for Dictation	59
Dictating about Dictating.....	60
One Minute Dictation Test	64
Talking	65
Dictation Isn't Worth It	68
Or Is It?	69
What is Poetry?.....	70
Coda	79

Artwork Index

August 2024

No.	Title	Description
24-53	Workbook B	Notebook
24-54	Painting Plans	Plans for Paintings, 11x8.5 in.
24-55	Digest #23	Literary Zine, 80 pages
24-56	First Churches	Acrylic on Canvas, 12x12 in.
24-57	2023 Art Journal	Digital File, 25K words
24-58	Art Cards	Acrylic on paper, 9x5 in.
24-59	Stamp Art Folio I	Stamp art on paper, 12x12 in.
24-60	Feather Box	Apport Collection
24-61	Memory Box	Apport Collection

Artwork Comments

Things change in writing over time as new realizations unfold. Why edit? Leave as it was written, a truth in that moment. Hence, don't accept what is written here as true. It was a belief in that moment when written, but perhaps changed as life continued. Belief vs truth. Notion vs actual. In a search for truth there are many examples one will discover which seem true in a moment, only to be seen as false later.

I will always remember August 2024 as the month in which I started to use the dictation device on my laptop. I'm still getting used to using this function, but I can tell you it has made my life so much easier. Like anything new, we tend to spend a lot of time talking about or focusing on whatever that thing may be. I have spent the last week doing this regarding dictation, and a lot of what I spoke is printed here. I am hoping to get this out of my system, and in the future I will just say something, and it will be put into words, but how it got into being those words won't be the subject matter.

The takeaway of all of this is that, when ‘writing’ I no longer spend two hours when I first wake up, usually between 6 and 9 am, typing. That’s what I did for the previous digest about apporphenomenon. I don’t mind doing that, but it’s not something I’d want to do all the time. Any creative venture can really take the energy right out of you. So I’m glad that I don’t have to do that anymore. I don’t have to get into the mood to write, which basically meant getting into a mindset where I didn’t mind typing. Because the big problem with writing is typing. I have to be in a certain frame of mind to type, and also be in a frame of mind to think of something worth typing. It is two things happening at the same time. Now there is just one thing happening, and that thing is me speaking. All I have to do is check to make sure the app put what I said into words properly. If the sentence doesn’t show up, sometimes I have to press the space bar. It is so much easier.

What I decided is I am not going to print this issue. It seems kind of silly to print it, because this one is more of a document like a sketchbook, and I feel that to print something it should be more than a sketchbook. It should be something that you really want someone to read. And while all of this dictation experimentation might be interesting to read, it isn’t something that I would want somebody to feel that they had to read simply because it was printed. That said, this may be potentially interesting for someone to read. Still, again, I wouldn’t want them to read it on the assumption that it is something meant to be read. These are all my thoughts about thinking in terms of dictation. And this is something quite different from just writing—typing words, and from thinking in general. Having to say something specific, however, forces the issue, and it is a different experience. So with that said I feel pretty good about continuing to continue experimenting with this dictation device. Partly because I know it is unlikely that this will be read. Therefore I have no qualms filling page after page with things I’ve said, mediocre or otherwise.

What I found is that when I'm trying to learn something new there are a lot of things to take into account. Perhaps the most important is being aware of a changing mind space. What I mean by this is simply that your mind space before you learn that new thing was a certain way. After that thing was learned it is a different way. There is a difference between the two ways your mind space was. This is just a simple fact of the matter. But what has really happened? On a physical biological level you have created new neural pathways, and replaced old ones. This is part of the process of learning. It can be unsettling. So when somebody wants to learn something new they should realize that even if everything goes extremely well, and that they are capable and able to understand all the new information, and can incorporate that into their existing belief structure, it might still be discomforting, and there may be periods of uncertainty.

24-53 **Workbook B**

I continued using *Workbook A* [24-48] right up until the last day of July, and then I began to use *Workbook B*. I had to decide what to do with *Workbook A*. Initially I thought to go through it, and rewrite the most important things into *Workbook B* so I'd have them handy, but it is 80 sheets, and that just seems like a lot of work. Here's a funny coincidence. Or not. The new digest format is 80 pages and the workbook has 80 pages. I could make a *Digest* of just the contents of each of the pages in the workbook, or maybe at least an index. It might be interesting to make an index somehow. Number the pages and then make an index. Eighty pages is a lot of content; it would be good to have an easy reference of what is in that book. I was thinking about transcribing the most important things into a new sheet, but that seems unnecessary now that I think about it more. That was something I would often do when I had the loose sheets—but now that everything is contained together, there is no need to do that. What happens is inconsequential only to myself, so I'll begin the new workbook to see what happens.

It is the next day and most of what is in the first paragraph is actually incorrect, not known to me otherwise at the time. First of all, the workbooks have 80 *sheets* (pages) which are 2-sided each, so there actually are 160 sides. The literary digests are 40 sheets, for a total of 80 sides. So half of a workbook, if each page had something of interest, could be a literary digest. Once I realized *Workbook A* had 160 pages I didn't feel much like indexing each page, so I forgot about that idea. There isn't really any point to do that. A mention here seems sufficient. Simply put, *Workbook A* includes the following things: music studies, building studies for the big painting, people proportions studies, dog proportions studies, various designs, and grid studies.

I thought I would write a little bit about my methods of creativity in relation to the workbook. Any given moment of any given day I might have an idea. It might be anything.

Whatever it is it can be named or labeled. It can be put in a group or more than one group. Part of my process is then, at some point after the initial idea, and not necessarily the same day or even year, is to use a pencil or pen to help work out the idea. I just let it happen. I end up with a sheet of paper with a bunch of things written on it. It could be anything. Pictures, words, ideas, sayings, diagrams, sketches, lists, doodles, charts, grids, tables, tasks, etc. What it really is, now that I think about it, is a placeholder for a bunch of memories I had while thinking about a new idea. It is something I can reference in the future and refine, because it is an object existing in space, so it can be looked at again. This method can be used with any creative medium.

Before I started using a grid notebook I would use single sheets of paper, and I would keep them in a folder. I've had various indexing methods to keep them organized through the years. It is a good system and hundreds of things are organized in this manner—in particular research related to many aspects of music theory including thorough bass and jazz improvisation; however, as mentioned in the *Birds of Mars Digest* #22, while composing a brass quintet I had generated so many new pages that my systems of record keeping and indexing broke down. Workbook A helped reel in this disaster by allowing me to abandon the old system and embrace the new system of containing everything in one place—160 pages in a notebook.

Now there are some advantages to having loose sheets as opposed to sheets bound together in a notebook. There are disadvantages as well. I won't take the time to spell them out here, but it is something which should be taken into account. The workbook ideally would also be a reference book. It would become more and more consolidated over time. There is a process and I am working with this process to improve the process.

24-54 Painting Plans

This is a single sheet of 11x8.5 inch paper that has an update of similar information gathered from a sheet of painting plans from the spring of 2024. Since I have started some paintings I decided I should update this to keep things as organized as possible. Within my philosophy of the *Life of a Painting* this sheet makes perfect sense and is extremely useful.

The above paragraph was written before I actually looked at the old painting plans sheet and then located the paintings and compared the two and tried to figure out what was what, while simultaneously creating the new sheet so that I would have a record of all of it.

What I just realized now reading the old notes is that I had basically given up painting in frustration at that time. It is interesting to read that knowing that now I am kind of excited about painting again, and feeling that I am making progress with the technique I am working on. But I am also aware that if this is the case I might be better served to simply take all of these paintings that I'm trying to figure out what is what, and paint over them and start over. Take a picture and paint over them anew. Make the photos into a book. Or just throw them away. No, better to keep the canvases. Well, the fact of the matter is I don't have to do anything at all. At least I updated the records regarding the paintings and just that alone gives me a feeling of starting anew with a refreshed focus. Meanwhile I have consolidated the grid theory from Workbook A into a page in Workbook B. There's a whole process of how I make all of this art, and it is too complex to write about it.

I wrote a lot about photorealism but not enough room in this issue.

8/2: I thought I'd try this like a journal. A place ready to type in, but not a place I have to type in. I started writing here yesterday and already I'm at 5400 words. When it gets to 80 pages it is done. No rush though. My main focus is to be painting, but I had to otherwise get better organized the past few days which I have done. With this being 80 pages I can print it or not print it. If I print it I have to make them, which is time. 5 minutes to fold and glue each cover. Twenty in an hour. It is mindless work to do it. I'm still binding #22. Everything is organized so I can focus back on painting.

8/5: Now that I have this format for printing a smaller digest and it is affordable for me to do so, I can give them away without feeling I am ripping myself off or missing a financial opportunity. They are quick and easy to make. I have realized that it is now just a question of content. With this in mind I went back to all of the art research and photorealism research I had done previously in 2023 and put all of that into one file for now, so I can look through it in the future to see what is useful. Having this format for a printed book is good, because I can just print it in a moment. But I don't have to print it. When writing a book it seems important to know what you are going to do with it. Is it going to be printed or not? Well, I make these digests now with the assumption that there very likely will be a printed edition. That said I don't want to worry about any of this as anything more than what it is. All of the 2023 art related information which includes all of my color mixing, color theory, photorealism proof of concepts paintings, and explanations, trials, successes and failures, and other related files to the 2023 artworks.

8/11: A couple of days ago I found out that I can just speak into the computer and it will transcribe what I say live in the moment. That is what I am doing now. So the whole notion of the *Birds of Mars Digest* is no longer necessarily about me 'writing' anything. I just come here and talk. If I

have something to say about something I'll just talk about it. I'm saying this here because this is the part of this digest that talks about this digest itself—*Digest Number 23*. I'm not sure if I'm going to print this one out, because it seems superfluous to just keep printing things to print them. On the other hand it doesn't take a lot of time, plus it really is good advertising, and I can hand them out to people or try to sell a few here and there. Anyways I just wanted to add this here. Everything is so much easier now. I just wanted to say that I might come back here to add more about dictation. I will say however that it makes revising and editing so much easier because I can just sit back and scroll through the text, and then if I see something wrong I just click on that spot and start talking.

8/15. Well here I am four days later and I've really gotten used to using this. So much quicker to get some words into print. What I decided to do is just have fun using this and get used to it. I'm thinking that I'm not going to print this issue. I talk about that somewhere else. That's the plan.

8/22. It doesn't seem like a week has gone by. Seems like a day. What's happened with the previous literary zine so far isn't much. I haven't tried to sell any of them. So far I'm just giving them away to some of my friends. I'm dictating this now along with pretty much everything I've written once I figured out how to use the dictation device. This zine is mostly dictation. The chapters about the 3 x 3 apports was typed. It doesn't really matter which way. If you're reading this what does it matter whether I spoke it or wrote it? It still ends up being words on page. How would you even know whether I typed a sentence or spoke it? It's the same words and I thought them, so what difference is it. What this really is is an artwork of me talking about the dictation function for the most part. How important is this? Maybe a little bit if I'm the first person creating some type of artwork documenting this. That might be interesting. I wonder if any of the 8,000,000,000 people on Earth have done this. However let's just say that just one artist/writer in every country did this.

Who is going to pay attention to what even just 200 people are saying and doing and creating. If it is the same artwork who would be interested? Even if you were interested how are you going to wrap your head around what 200 people created? If you spent an hour reading what each of these artist/writers wrote it would take 200 hours, which would be a full time job for two months—that's just reading it.

There is no audience. There's no audience. There's no audience. There is no audience. It seems like this dictation device sometimes chooses not to type out what I say. It's always right when I speak the most in-depth revelation. It chooses to never type that out. I have to repeat the most insightful thoughts a few times for the computer to comply. So weird how that happens. So you have to watch it at all times to make sure your thoughts are properly recorded. Right now this is at 23,000 words. Seventy-one pages at this point. I'll just keep talking about this, maybe it'll be interesting for somebody. It seems like I'm creating a blueprint for future *Birds of Mars Digests*. The blueprint includes using the dictation device. It makes it easier. I can write a lot more, and it is more enjoyable. I guess what I'm going to do from this moment forward is no longer even mention dictation and just call it writing. What difference does it make. It's all the same thing—thinking. Writing is thinking. I'm going to have to go back and look at the seven books I wrote in 2020 to re-evaluate what I wrote in those about writing. There are lot of things involved with this. I think how I'm going to do it is to just keep doing it like this. I'm not worried about printing them out. Not at least until I don't have anymore copies of the previous literary zine. I feel like I just have to get this one put together, and then I'll have a better sense down the road of what to do next.

I found a great place to sit do this writing. See I said writing instead of dictating. That's how it is. I feel like I'm lying when I say that. Man it makes everything easier. I'm still wrapping my head around how much this changes everything. It's a good example of what I tend to write about.

The idea of experimentation which leads to innovation which leads to new processes. The whole point of doing this is perhaps to make it easier for other writers. When I was writing in 2020, I was typing. It's a lot of work to write in that manner. I would've loved to have known there was a dictation device on the laptop four and half years ago. It seems now that all of that writing was nothing more than a self-induced torture which ultimately meant nothing, because there's no audience. If you create your own audience I suppose there would be an audience. You could buy one, or trick one, or brainwash one, or not worry about it. Just accept that there are no audiences and go ahead and live your life accordingly with that as part of the landscape. You can't change things you have to just do what you're doing and maybe that'll resonate with somebody. But it's not going to resonate if they don't know about it. I'm purposely not putting paragraphs. Here's your stream of consciousness. That's how I have to think about it—as advertising and as research, and maybe as entertainment and sharing knowledge. These digests are usually monthly. The current format is 80 pages which ends up being about 26,000 words. Today being the 22nd of the month, and the fact being that I'm not going to print this at this time, gives me a week to wrap it up. I'm at 24,000 words basically so that's 2000 more words just now. I guess I should just start revising at this point, because that will probably add another 2000 words. There are a few things I still want to write about that I know of. So the words are not a problem. If I need more words I just start talking, and there they are. Then I have to go into revision mode which basically is just reading through this thing any number of times and correcting mistakes, revising it and getting a good flow to the whole thing if possible. I'm just getting used to doing it. In the future it'll be even better one could hope. That is the lay of the land from where I stand. I can say dot instead of period to make a period appear.

8/27: Moved all the *What is Poetry?* writing to *Digest* #24. So now this is 64 pages long. I'm still undecided whether to print this or not.

8/28: Dropped in on an open mic and read from #22.

8/30: Final decisions for this issue.

9/10: I ended up working on a suite of poems about playing piano at a local vegan café over the course of several years. This was an interesting experience which took over my life from September 1 through September 6, 2024. I presented them at a local brewery on September 7. There is even less interest in my poetry than there is in my art or music. I feel as if I have completely gotten it out of my system, and that is a seemingly good thing. For now, I am going to work on painting since I am to have a show at a local Café in November. I keep finding canvases in free stuff piles I am going to use them. I also fine-tuned many aspects of painting in a photo realist's style before all the dictation and poetry writing, and I'd like to see how that works out. My plan is to read through this *Digest* once, and fix any typos I might find, and then call it finished. I am not planning to print a version of this, but it is in the format to do so in the future if I so desire.

24-57 2023 Photorealism Journal 25,000 words

This is something I want to make a record of as existing. It is an electronic file called *2023 Photorealism Journal*, consisting of 23,000 words written between April 23 and May 27, 2023. It is a journal documenting my attempts at creating a system for painting in a photorealistic manner.

On August 15, 2024 I took a look at this journal and that was kind of difficult to do, but it was worth it. It was difficult to do because I found an over-the-top meticulous diary of everything I was doing regarding painting in a photorealistic style. This includes intricate entries hour by hour of what I was painting. I've created photorealistic paintings in the past, so it isn't as if I can't just paint them, but in 2023 it was a very difficult thing to do for some reason. So it was just sort of disheartening to read these things, because as reflected in the writing, I was not really close to figuring things out in a manner in which I subsequently have. In other words at the end of the spring of 2023 I had failed at what I was trying to do and gave up painting. Fortunately, recently, I have made a lot of strides to fill in many of the missing pieces. So I went back to take a look at this old journal from 2023 to consolidate and organize all of that writing into one big file since there is still a lot of valuable information within it, even though overall I had failed at that time.

24-58 2023 Color Cards Acrylic on Paper

These are a group of nine 5x9 inch cards. They are a heavy archival card stock material I like to use for artworks. Since I mention them in the *2023 Photorealism Journal*, and since I still have them, I have decided to index them as an artwork. They are unique in that they show my thoughts regarding color at that time, which can be compared to how I think of it now. These were the precursors to subsequent color mixing experiments from that time period.

24-59 Stamp Art Folio I

As mentioned in the last *Digest* somewhere I have been experimenting with making some rubber stamps with different degrees of success. Initially I was thinking of using silicone to make the stamps, because a guy in the maker club at the supermarket showed me a stamp he made that way. He 3-D printed some text in relief on plastic, and used that as a form for the silicone to dry on. When it dried he had a rubber stamp with that text on it. I made some attempts in a similar fashion, but without the 3-D printed form. I used the silicone on various plastic items that already had indented text. None of it worked out well, so I gave up on the idea of using silicone to make a stamp.

I did, however make an interesting discovery. If you use basic glue, the kind one might use in an elementary school art class, and put it on something that has indented text or a design, and let it dry, you will get a perfect relief of that thing. You couldn't make it look any better than it does. Another thing you can use to do that is acrylic paint itself. If you put acrylic paint on something and let it dry, and then peel it off, you can use it as a stamp. There are a lot of things you can experiment with. Often an object made for something totally different than being used as a rubber stamp, makes the best rubber stamp. So as an artist I'm always observing and looking for objects which can be used in a unique manner to create art.

One thing that I discovered is that you can use Sculpy clay to make handles and bases for the stamps. Then you glue something on the flat base to get the indented stamp part. Something made of rubber works best, but other things work as well including cloth, felt, paper, or even pipe cleaners. I spent some time looking at Celtic designs and figured out how to make a single stamp, which when rotated could make the intricate interlocking patterns of these interlocking designs. I was experimenting with this because I realized that when making photorealist paintings sometimes I need a

specific intricate small pattern—like wavy lines in a small area. If I have a stamp already made with this pattern I could just use that stamp instead of meticulously painting all those lines individually.

At a random tag sale someone was selling a plastic bag full of rubber stamps for \$10 so I bought it. The day before I had been in the art store looking at rubber stamps, and they were \$3 or \$4 each, so I knew that this bag was a real find no matter what the stamps themselves were. I haven't looked at them yet, so I have no idea what they are. What I am going to do next is one by one remove a stamp and test it out and see what I've got. I am going to make a series of artworks on various color sheets of construction paper using different color paints for the stamp impressions to see all the possible color combinations.

A few days later I did that and it turns out that there were 103 rubber stamps in the bag. That's a dime each! There is a complete alphabet set, lower and upper case, all the numbers, and some punctuation marks. The other 40 stamps were for the most part not anything I would want to use. There were a few good ones in there, but for the most part they were just things like stop signs, frogs, cars, inspirational slogans, and things of that nature. I realized that I could remove the rubber stamp part from the wooden block, and either just use the block itself as the stamp, or glue something else onto the block to create a new stamp. I no longer have to make the handle using Sculpy like I had been doing.

I noticed that when using a wood block as a stamp interesting patterns are created. I can use the stamp about four times before all the paint that I put on the block is used up. And each impression, though similar, is different from the previous one because there is less paint each time. Some of the impressions made by using the stamps are minute and intricate. I realized that there is no way I could duplicate one of these impressions with a paintbrush. And even if I could, to do so it would not be quick or easy. A single impression from a woodblock takes one second to make. If I could learn

how to control this process of applying paint I could make some paintings which otherwise could not be painted. I'm not sure what this kind of art would be called. Wood block prints? Mono-prints? Stamp art? It probably doesn't matter what they're called as long as the finished piece looks good.

Since I was concurrently fine tuning my color wheel, and had all the corresponding paints on-hand I decided to make this folio of artworks. Using some 12x12 inch construction paper of 20 different colors as the base I proceeded to use the rubber stamps to apply these colors. I wanted to see how each color paint looked on each color paper. So these artworks are in a way a resource since there are 400 color combinations on them.

Initially I thought that I would cut the construction paper down to 11x8.5 inches because that size is easier to store than 12x12 inches. With all my paints mixed and ready I one by one pulled out a stamp from the bag put the paint on it and made some impressions. I continued in this manner until I had used all of the stamps. This randomness created some interesting artworks. Anybody could do this, from a self-proclaimed master artist to somebody who could care less about the whole thing, but did it anyways. The results of either could be looked at it through an aesthetic eye, and the viewer would not know if was the artist or the anti-artist that created the most pleasing artworks. This is an arts truth to me. It may make people uncomfortable to know this because it goes against the notion of the artist having some super-human creative authority and ability beyond those of an average person.

As I say this I look up into the sky and see a large helium mylar balloon drift by. It is turning and tumbling in the breeze. This balloon reminds me of a video I once saw of Andy Warhol on a rooftop releasing the then newly invented helium mylar balloons, of which he allegedly helped innovate. This was in the late 1960s, over 60 years ago. Seeing the balloon associated with one of the great artists of the 20th century flyby as I wrote about "art truths" is in my

mind a confirmation of this observation. I forgot to mention that the balloon was silver, like Warhol's balloons, and it was in the shape a star. After all, it was Andy Warhol who coined the term superstar. And that silver balloon floating by seemed like a superstar to me.

After having used all the rubber stamps in the manner described, I decided not to trim those sheets down, and that I would use the blank areas for more tests so I would have them all together in one place for reference.

I have a book by Joseph Albers which is about similar color relationships. A color will be perceived differently depending on the color paper it is on. His book is replete with experiments to see this in action. I have created my own experiments to see these color relationships. Sometimes when painting, particularly with shades of gray, it seems like the color chosen will fit in nicely in the painting, but when that color is applied it looks wrong. This is because the colors surrounding a color sometimes change how that color looks. So here is another stumbling block which may be encountered while painting, and it seems as if knowing this would be part of being a great artist. A master artist would not only know this, but know how to use it to their advantage.

In music there is a similar phenomena, but with sound. A note by itself sounds a certain way. Two notes sounding together also create a unique sound, which may either be considered consonant or dissonant. The note itself is what it is, but it is perceived differently in relation to the other notes being played. This is what composers are concerned with. In music it is sound over time, but with painting it is color over space. There is much more to all of this and I will continue to investigate. The main reason is to be able to control all of this to create beautiful artworks easily.

I started looking through the Albers book which I hadn't opened in years, and am amazed at all the parallels between his writing and mine. We have arrived at similar conclusions.

In *Digest* #22 I wrote that the way I wanted to make any new art boxes was only if I found everything fairly much simultaneously. That happened today so I decided to make this artwork. It also involves the dictation experiments I've been doing, so I've included that part here.

August 24, 2024 12:30pm

Writing is so much more enjoyable now than I'm used to dictating. If I take my time and make sure each sentence is properly recorded as I say it, I won't need to do much when editing and revising. What this means is speaking the sentence clearly, and when done, making sure it is print ready. If I do it this way when I want to edit and revise I will be editing and revising sentences, not fixing typos. Even if I just speak freely and leave typos and transcription errors it isn't that big of a deal to fix it later. So whatever I do is fine. It isn't always one thing instead of another. I am still getting used to this so it is all discovery. There are other ways to do this as well.

I was just driving. I was thinking about how I was thinking, and if I had my laptop set up and I spoke, I could be recording those thoughts. I had some good thoughts and I realized that they might get lost forever. I made a mental note to not forget the topic I was thinking of, so I could write about it later. That is this paragraph.

Yesterday I had a "writing" session outside and I was watching people and responding to what I was seeing by speaking my thoughts. Later that day lots of the topics I mentioned started appearing in various media of which I have no connection to. I am not creating the content there, and yet all of a sudden, I'm seeing things as if my mind had been harvested, interpreted, and then presented to me in various forms in the world. I don't feel it is necessary to document every instance when this occurs. I don't even feel it is necessary to remember every time this happens. It doesn't matter apparently.

Today I'm writing in a really nice spot. There are birds flying around, the temperature is nice and mild though sunny, and I'm sitting in my car looking at empty soccer and baseball fields, tree lines, a periwinkle blue sky and big clouds. A hummingbird just flew by, as if on cue to accentuate this idyllic moment. The only thing which would make this better would be if I had some kind of low reclining chair so I could be sitting with my bare feet in the grass.

When dictating, at the conclusion of writing a paragraph I will say "new paragraph" and it will double line break and create a new paragraph. If I say "new line" it will just make a single line break. This is how I can tell whether I've edited a section of writing or not, because as I revise I get rid of all those double breaks. I'm only mentioning this because it is something that happens and is associated with writing, and perhaps this simple process might be helpful to other writers.

So when I was driving down the road I had a thought about apportion phenomena. It is a simple idea. Here's how it played out. Being that it is Saturday, and that is the day most people have tag sales, I decided that I would stop at every tag sale I saw. I was driving through a very residential area with many long side streets that seemed like a perfect neighborhood to find some tag sales. I didn't see any signs however. I saw a small pile of free remnants that someone had left out, but I kept driving. Then I saw another pile of free stuff. And I thought to myself *two is a coincidence, but three is confirmation*. In other words if I see something with Mickey Mouse on it once, that's simply just what happened. If I see something with Mickey Mouse on it twice, and that second observation seems related to the first observation, it's just a coincidence. But if I see Mickey Mouse a third time in a relevant meaningful succession then it's *confirmation*. Confirmation that something is happening outside of the normal expected interaction with reality. And that is what I am studying and seeking to learn about by examining and writing about apportion phenomena.

So I'm driving down the road. And there is that tiny pile of free stuff and then I see another little pile of free stuff. And this is where I got the idea for the first part of my little slogan. *Two is a coincidence*. I see a pile of free stuff and then I see a pile of other free stuff and it's a coincidence. Not worth writing about since it's just a coincidence. So as I think of this little concept about two being a coincidence and three being confirmation, I see in the second pile of free stuff a small black metal trash can. And then a few moments later I see on the side of the road by itself a plastic kitchen trash container—one of the kinds that has a little opening on a swivel that you can push things through to give the illusion that there's no trash present. I'm not sure how to interpret it. It is only the second trashcan so that makes it a coincidence, but it is the third instance of free trash by the side of road within 30 seconds all as I'm thinking of it. Confirmation.

Whatever *it* is, it wants to prove you wrong.

I just spoke the above line because it came into my brain. Because it seems that whenever I say or think something which is a push back against whatever this system is, something will happen to prove me wrong. I see some deer walk out of the woods just now—two fawns. That isn't proving me wrong about anything. I wrote a paragraph about how pleasant it is here, and at the conclusion of that paragraph I saw a hummingbird. And then I saw two deer. So it isn't actually proving me wrong by proving me wrong, it is trying to prove me wrong by proving me right. It doesn't realize the difference. This is a nuanced realization I just had.

What it seems like this system was just doing was trying to prove me wrong by not proving me wrong. I caught the system in a tell. I'm not sure how else to interpret this. I'm going to write more to try to explain this. I said that the system monitors what you are saying and then it will try to prove you wrong. It is a control mechanism. Who knows why? One way in which this happens to me frequently is that if I'm talking with somebody and I express a slight discontentment with something, they almost most certainly

will not respond with sympathy or understanding, but with their own personal problem which is always so much worse than what I just mentioned. This is an example of it constantly trying to prove me wrong. It seems to be some form of gaslighting. In this instance however, I seem to have confused it enough so that it is trying to prove me wrong with something nice. Reverse psychology? I see the deer eating leaves from small trees along the edge of the woods. There is a big flock of maybe 100 starlings flying from one part of the fields to another. Sometimes they all land together near a puddle in the gravel road and bathe en-mass. A half dozen flickers, some phoebes, chipping sparrows, and high flying turkey vultures are all visible. Now I am thinking about walking along the tree line; maybe I can find a feather. I really would like to find some flicker feathers, and since there are a few birds around maybe I might get lucky. I just wrote 1300 words in 45 minutes. I'm going to take a break walking through the fields in my bare feet hoping "it" will prove me wrong if I say I don't want to find some nice feathers.

August 25, 2024 8:46am I have four audio files from yesterday totaling ~15 minutes from when I was walking around the fields finding feathers. I'm now going to play those tapes and have the computer dictation thing create the text, while observing and seeing if I need to edit as it goes. This file is three minutes 22 seconds.

I am taking my phone with me and I am going to record anything which I would like to have text of. In other words I will be playing the recording I am making now, and later have the computer do its thing. This is a test. Fortunately my recording app has a pause button so I can record various times as I am walking as things happen that I want to document, and it will all be in one file. As soon as I'm out of the car and walking on the grass in bare feet, I think, "That feels so good," because it does. Then I find a feather. A small gray feather with a flat top. In the sunlight it has a slight iridescence. A bluish green. I'm not sure what bird this feather is from. Maybe a phoebe, because there are a bunch in

the neighborhood. I don't know. I walked across the field, and found a second feather. This one is very interesting, but I'm not in the mood to describe it. I am now walking along the woods hoping to find a feather. [190]

The first file made was three minutes 22 seconds. The words spoken are those in the paragraph above. The computer transcribed okay, but I still have to revise somewhat because it got a lot wrong, but I was able to do it in real-time so it wasn't too difficult. What I am thinking though is it may be easier to listen to the recording with headphones and then repeat what I'm hearing and have the computer transcribe that.

9:06am The second of four audio files I made is about five minutes long.

It may be that in a dream whatever you think happens.

If you can slow down the clock time and be aware in the moment with no thoughts processing, you may realize you're in a dream. That would be one way. I found a spot where there were a bunch of flickers hanging out and when they saw me they flew to a tree nearby. They were making weird sounds kind of like what it sounds like when you let air out of a balloon and it makes squeaking noises. Another feather! The one I just found is amazing—better than a flicker feather in some regards. I suspect that there was a flicker nest nearby and the flickers I'm seeing are some of the young birds. That's my guess. I have a suspicion that the feather I found is a flicker feather. A miniature downy flicker feather. I found three feathers. My feather finding walk has been successful. *Three is confirmation.*

I just found another one of those tiny little downy feathers, and what makes it so interesting is it's small and has a little black dot on it. That makes four feathers so far, and how interesting that two of the feathers I found are very small and similar, and both a kind I don't recall having previously found. I just looked down and saw a blue feather and I shouted an exclamation of joy like a little kid. Because it was right there—a blue feather! That's the whole point of it. To

find a blue feather. Then I looked right next to it and saw a yellow feather! A flicker feather. And then next to the flicker feather was another little feather, another downy kind with a black dot on it. So this is beyond confirmation. So right now I'm just ecstatic. I'm ecstatic. I just found yet another little one like the ones with the black dots, but this one has black lines on it, so I've really just hit the jackpot for feathers! I also found a golf ball. A yellow "Tour BRX" golf ball with a weird logo on it. I found still another feather; this one is small and gray, maybe a phoebe? [380]

9:24am 380 words.

Well it took about 20 minutes to get a five minute audio file into a text file without typos. It pretty much had errors on every sentence so I would have to stop the tape and then fix that sentence. Twenty minutes for 400 words doesn't seem too efficient. It felt like too much work. There may be no point in recording audio to have the computer transcribe it in this manner. The previous paragraph seems like something I could have just remembered, and subsequently dictated when I got back to the car. In the back of my mind I'm thinking it may be better to listen to the recording with headphones and re-speak it as I hear it. I still have two audio files to play for the computer to transcribe, and they are each four minutes long, and I am really not looking forward to doing this, because I know that will be 40 minutes of work for 8 minutes of talking—my other tests showed that I can dictate 500 words in 15 minutes. Since I don't have my headphones with me, I will continue playing these audio files in this manner. Maybe the next one will be easier.

9:34am This file is four minutes 11 seconds.

As I've been walking collecting these feathers I've been putting them between the pages of *Literary Zine Number 22* of which I happen to have a copy of with me. I was putting them between the pages because they're tiny little feathers and it's a safe place to keep them when I am out walking around.

I remembered how a couple of weeks ago I had been thinking about including some artwork or something in #22 since that issue was about Artists' Books. Back then I thought about including a found feather in each issue, because I had also written extensively about finding feathers in that issue. But I didn't have 50 feathers which is how many I would've needed to include one in each copy, and subsequently I've given away 20 copies so I have 30 left. I was thinking of that as I was putting the last two feather I found in my copy of the *Digest* I had with me. Then I found two more feathers, but I left them there, because how many feathers can I pick up? And I also thought for some reason that it is a good thing to not pick up *every* feather I find. Then I saw a lot of feathers together on the ground. It was obviously a bird that had died, but there was no bird, just the feathers. There was not a single sign of any blood, or that the feathers had ever even been on a bird. They were very neat, clean, and orderly. So initially I thought it wasn't the same as finding just one feather—it felt like cheating. I was more excited finding one blue feather than finding all these gray feathers. But since there was no blood or gore, and since I had just been thinking about how I had wanted to possibly include a feather that I had found in each copy of #22, I started to gather them. Now I have a handful of feathers. Primaries and secondaries. I left all the tiny downy feathers even though they were as amazing as the ones I was so excited about finding just a few minutes earlier on my walk. Also as a result of finding all of these feathers I am now thinking of making some kind of art box like Joseph Cornell. When you walk around the field you can find a lot of things like tennis balls or something people use to play fetch with their dogs. [426]

9:56am That took 22 minutes. What I am realizing is that it doesn't work that well to record something and then try to have the computer translate that. It's makes too many mistakes. I end up having to pause the audio and repeat everything aloud. It just seems like an arduous chore at this point. Well, that's just how it is.

10am. This file is four minutes 18 seconds.

I saw an area in the field where all the flickers seemed to like to feed. So I walked over here thinking maybe one of them lost a feather. And sure enough I found two more, so now I have three flicker feathers. *Three is confirmation.* Then I saw a few more very small downy type feathers, but at this point I had so many feathers that I left those there. And then I saw a scraggly blue feather. I almost left it there, but since it was a blue feather and it had cool markings I took it. One of the flicker feather before that one was also kind of scraggly, so now I had two scraggly feathers in the row. Oh, I see a penny. I will pick it up in a moment, after I finish dictating this thought. So I was thinking about the two scraggly feathers, and I might have even said aloud, "These are some scraggly feathers." And then I found a large feather, the biggest one yet—a large gray black feather. And it was scraggly. Now I have three *scraggly* feathers. So once again two is a coincidence, three is confirmation. Now I will pick up this penny. 2021-D. I don't think that has any value, but it's part of the whole thing and now I'm back at the car. I have to get all these words I dictated into the machine. I've got a handful of feathers, a book full of feathers, a golf ball, and all these words. I'm just going to check out one last spot. I walked to this little tree, because for some reason I thought something was telling me to. I'm in the shade here. Why did I come here? Why did it want me to come here? Now I feel like I'm in a trance. I don't see anything over here. Well that's a wrap. I've got plenty of to do now. It has proved me wrong in the end. I felt I had to go check one last spot, and nothing was there. Still hoping I find one last thing, but I really don't need to since I have a handful of feathers. Oh wait, here's a few more. Two more feathers. I guess that's just a coincidence. [410]

10:20am. That took 20 minutes. I ended up for the most part having to re-speak everything I had recorded. It doesn't transcribe well enough to just let the tape run. There are way too many mistakes. It would actually probably be quicker to

have just typed what I was hearing as the audio played. I type quickly enough to do that. The takeaway from this experiment is that it doesn't make sense to record audio with the expectation the computer will transcribe it well enough to make it worth doing that. There are other options. It seems like listening to the audio with headphones and then speaking what I hear might also not make sense. I'm not sure yet since I haven't tried that, however it seems like even when I'm dictating slowly there are still errors and I still have to make corrections, so it may just be easier to type in those instances. That leads to the question why would I even need to record any audio in the first place. I could just remember what I want to write about. Perhaps if I had some brilliant thought that I didn't want to forget I might want to record something to jog my memory later, however writing a few words on a slip of paper would be just as easy.

This whole transcription experiment of four audio files totaling less than 20 minutes combined took over an hour and a half, yielding 1400 words, and it was a lot of work. It does not seem worth doing it all like this. The main reason I am glad to know this is because I had been thinking of perhaps using this technology to make recordings while interviewing people. But now I know this would be way too much work than necessary. In a few of the early issues of the Birds of Mars Digest I had interviewed some of my friends about their involvement with music. I did this by talking with them on the phone and typing what they said. Then I sent them a text file and they made hand written corrections. It was so much work to go back to the file and try to re-edit everything by reading their notes. This was so much work and was so frustrating that I gave up this idea. Now I also know that recording an interview thinking that the computer would transcribe it accurately, and that it would be an easy task, is an erroneous belief, and not worth pursuing.

24-60 Memory Box Apport Collection

This was written and occurred over three different days, so it might get confusing. Today is August 29. The yellow golf ball I found on August 25¹ reminded me of my father. He passed away over a decade ago. We used to go golfing together at a course in Northampton that is no longer there. It has been converted to conservation land and it is a really amazing place. It is all overgrown and looks really cool. I try to remember where the tees were and where the greens were. My father liked to look for golf balls all the time, and he was good at finding them. I'd meet him before I'd go to work in the early morning sometimes and we'd play nine holes. He always beat me, so I just let him. I gave up trying to win a round, and would just enjoy being there. Sometimes we'd only play four or five holes, and then we'd look for golf balls in the ponds and brooks, and then I'd have to go to work. He played with a senior league there so he would stay and wait for his friends to show up. After he died, at some point, I found a blue golf ball and left it by his grave as a symbol of love and remembrance. So when I found the yellow golfball of course I thought of him. It was two days before the 11th anniversary of his death. Yellow is a color I associate with my father because it is the color of a goldfinch and that is a bird I associate with him. I suggested once that he buy some thistle feeders because goldfinches love them, and he would probably attract some to his yard. And that is exactly what happened, which is why I think of goldfinches as his bird.

So on that day, August 25, I thought that I'd bring that yellow golfball to his grave. I drove up to the tombstone in the cemetery, quietly yelled "Fore!" while throwing the golf ball out the car window. I had a chuckle. Then I put the golf ball on the tombstone. The blue golfball wasn't there anymore, but I heard goldfinches flying overhead. I stayed

¹ See page 23.

there for a while. It was also the anniversary of my mother's birthday, who had passed 45 years earlier, so I was flooded with memories. I thought about how much I miss them both.

Then I heard of clap of thunder as if in a movie. There was no storm on the horizon, just a solitary clap of thunder. I decided to go over to the old golf course and walk around and look for feathers. I found a bunch of course; I knew I would since I always do. I found a flicker feather and a beautiful white fluffy downy feather that was pretty big and might be from an owl. And I also found a beautiful small iridescent blue feather, perhaps from a warbler or an indigo bunting. I took a photo and sent it to my sister who was at Fenway Park watching the Red Sox lose on our mother's birthday. But that seemed okay, because when my mother was alive the Red Sox always lost. She passed before the magic years of the World Series championships. She loved the Red Sox. Once in my youth I had a friend, and he like the Baltimore Orioles, and that year the Orioles were doing really well. I thought that I would be an Orioles fan, since the Red Sox always lost. I mentioned this to my mother and it didn't go over too well, so I went back to being a Red Sox fan. The Red Sox fans of the 60s, 70s, 80s, and 90s had unity in their losing ways. All these thoughts were going through my head as I wandered around the old links.

I looked at the found feathers I was holding, and I realized I had accidentally dropped the tiny blue one, and it really upset me in the moment because it was so unique. I was so sure that I would never find it again since I had walked a long way before I had realized it was gone. I'd look for it on the way back I thought as I continued on the path into the adjacent woods which are now open for hiking.

On the way back I looked for that lost blue feather, not expecting to find it. I found myself thinking, "I'm not going to find that feather again." And then I thought, "You know, I might find that feather again." And then I said aloud, "*I am* going to find that feather again!" Then I looked down, and there it was! I found it again! So I picked it up to get a closer

look, and I realized it was not the same feather. It was similar, but was the reverse of the first. The part that was blue was on the other half of the feather as compared to the first one. But that didn't matter to me, because I now had a small beautiful blue feather again.

I headed back to the car slowly gazing at the ground thinking of what else I might find. Then I saw a man walking towards me. He had a camera and I thought perhaps he was photographing birds. He asked me if I'd lost something and was looking for it, and I replied no, I was looking for feathers, and I showed him all the ones I had found. I said that I was good at finding them. I showed him one of a downy woodpecker, the beautiful white one, the tiny blue one, and also the yellow one from a flicker. He kept saying the yellow one was from a finch. I knew it was from a flicker, but didn't want to argue with him. He kept saying finch. It was only later that I made the connection with the goldfinch and my father, and what are the chances this was all happening on the old golf course?

I asked him if he was photographing birds, and he said no, he was photographing the changes that had occurred to the course over the previous five years for the city. Every once in a while he would come over to photograph the same spots because having a visual record of the changes is helpful and important to environmentalists. He hadn't been planning to take photos that day, but his wife suggested he do so. It seemed fitting that all that happened. I didn't plan to write all of this down, because it seemed like it was just for me.

Later that week, on the 29th, I went back to the soccer fields where I had found all the flicker feathers and the yellow golf ball on the 24th. I wanted to look for some more flicker feathers. This was about a half hour after I saw that star shaped mylar balloon.² I walked around. Looking down I saw something blue. It was part of a balloon. A blue balloon. I had

² See page 16.

a chuckle. Two balloons within an hour—just a coincidence. I left it on the ground and walked around some more looking for feathers. Then I found a small feather with white on top and gray on the bottom half. I kind of felt like I wasn't going to find any more feathers. I was thinking about all of the things I'd written about that happened earlier that week at the golf course. That was when I decided that I wasn't going to write any of it because it seemed too personal. This was what I was thinking when I looked down and saw a white golf tee. I chuckled and thought—something's telling me I better write about all of this after all. And then a few feet away I saw something curious with indented printing on it. A brownish square. I thought it was leather at first, and I bent down and pressed the tee against it, and it snapped in two. It was a cookie. The indented words on it were *Goya Marie*.

My mother's name is Marielle, so she was part of all these apports too, being the anniversary of her death and all. Goya has many meanings the most common being a bitter melon from Japan. In Urdu it refers to the *transporting suspension of disbelief that happens when fantasy is so realistic that it temporarily becomes reality—usually associated with good, powerful storytelling*. Is it storytelling if it's real?

I'm writing this just after it all happened, and now I'm going to go see if I can relocate that little piece of blue balloon that I had left on the ground, because it is now part of this collection of found objects. This will be a new artwork, an apport box. It all happened pretty much simultaneously, in the manner in which I prefer such an artwork to happen, as described in *Digest #22*. As I was walking over to relocate that blue balloon it dawned on me that I was once again searching for a small blue thing that I had once held in my hand. Then I found two more flicker feathers, my original intention. Even though this is my normal reality, I'm still somewhat unsure what to make of it all, but I assure you that is all true as described.

The 3 x 3 Apports

Today is the first of August. I wasn't planning on doing any writing for at least a month, but too much has happened so I thought I better get it all down before I forget all of it.

The first thing that was unusual is that I found three one dollar bills together three times. Well, the first \$3 I knew I had. I knew I had a few dollars in my pocket loose with some IDs and cards. I was walking over to the library to print a few covers for the *Birds of Mars Digest* #22—the literary zine. I had finished writing them, and they were already printed, but I still had to bind them and I needed covers for that. I had just finishing designing the cover. It wasn't as interesting as I had hoped for, but I felt I just had to get it done. I went minimal—just text.

Design issues aside, I knew I had a few dollars in my pocket and I was walking over to the library to get as many copies as I could get printed. They're twenty cents each to make just one. I checked and I had three single dollar bills. I could print ten covers and get started on finishing the books. I also had enough to print one big page of color, which is seventy-five cents, for the August *What is Poetry?* readings flyers. There are six flyers laid out for that design so those flyers end up costing about a dime each—in color and less than a black ink flyer. So that seemed all good. So I made the copies and then I had no cash left on hand.

After wandering around the library for a while I thought that I would like to get a snack bar treat for myself, and I recalled that they were on sale the previous day for \$1.30 each, so if I got two of them it would be under \$3—and then I was thinking about how that was how much money I had just had, and if I hadn't made the copies I could have got a couple of snack bars. Then I checked my pocket again not thinking I had any money, but why not, and, huh, there was some money there! \$3! Three more single dollars! What? Those weren't there earlier! So I was happy about that without

really considering that maybe it was supernatural yet. I headed over to get two snack bars, but of course both the two kinds I planned to get were out of stock—they had all of the other kinds as usual. It didn't matter anyway because the sale was over, and now they were \$2 each, so I would have only had enough for one, and I had my hopes up for two, so I would have been disappointed, so I guess that worked out, kind of. I was still disappointed I didn't get one of those snack bars, but for a different reason than expected.

Well, this is the exact kind of thing that I have come to expect all the time. Something works out, or doesn't work out, or works out, but it turns out in the long run that it doesn't matter what happened. So, none of that bothered me; I actually had a chuckle, and I ended up getting something else to satisfy my snack bar craving, so it was all very funny. I had to guesstimate the weight of what I ended up getting to keep it from going over \$3. So the thing I was buying cost \$16 a pound, and I got four of them, and that ended up costing \$2.03—something like that—so they weighed about 1/8th of a pound, and I got change in quarters which I wanted. So I had to guess the weight without really guessing the weight.

Here's another example of how things like this happen to me. I'll just call it bad luck. There are two grocery stores in town that are on opposite ends, and they are basically the same kind of store—a fancy grocery store. So I usually go to one of them, but sometimes I go to the other one. Each one of them is basically a carbon copy of the other store, but each has its own distinct vibe, due in part to the people working there, and I suspect the kind of culture that develops within that work environment based on those individuals. One of the stores seems uptight all the time. Everyone is uptight—on their own personal trip, unhappy and well, kind of mean. The other store is mellow and everyone seems to go with the flow. Problems are easily resolved. At the uptight store problems are allegedly resolved (with difficulty), and everyone is stressed out and knows about the problem, even if it didn't

involve them, and as a result feels some kind of negative emotion regarding it. At the mellow store most problems are resolved by an individual anonymously. At the uptight store the worst solution is implemented, and it is then made into a hard-fast rule. What happens is eventually all those people that implemented the bad rule no longer work there, and all the new people keep the obviously flawed rule, because they are afraid to change it on their own.

Anyway, one time I went to the uptight grocery store to get only two items—broccoli and rosemary. That is all I wanted. They were completely out of broccoli. There was no other food in the produce section that was missing other than broccoli. I took the time to check so I know. Ok, fine, they're out of broccoli. It happens. Then I went over to the spices section where there is a wall of spices to choose from. You pour out how much you want into a little plastic bag. I wanted some rosemary. I located the correct big plastic rectangular container, but it was empty. No rosemary. Usually there is one behind the one in front so I checked, but that one was empty too. Of all the herbs and spices, the only one that they were out of was rosemary. So, that was a weird feeling standing in the uptight grocery store having had the intention of getting just two things, and discovering that those were the only two things not in stock in the whole store. What is one to make of this? A reverse apport. Hmm, perhaps that is a new discovery. Absence of something expected. Things removed from the world. It wants to prove you wrong.

What is interesting to me is that in *Digest* #22 I had just written a week earlier about how in *Journeys Out of the Body* author Robert Monroe had described a similar experience of a few dollars appearing when he had an intense need for a few dollars. And now I was having a similar experience to his somehow, just after having written about his experience.

Being skeptical of myself, I will say that I must have had *two groups of three single dollar bills* in my pocket separated from each other by IDs and cards, and when I first checked (by feel) I found only one of those groups of cash,

and believed that was all I had. Later on I discovered the “*always there though previously unknown about*” group of bills. That is what happened if it wasn’t an apport. It seems like that is probably what actually happened. A simple coincidence. But there is a little more to the story which moves it beyond the notion of a coincidence, and I describe it here, truthful to my memory as it occurred. It involves three more dollar bills.

I had been cleaning and organizing and throwing things away. Which is a continual process of making similar piles of things, and then reducing each pile until there is nothing left anywhere other than where it absolutely should be, which includes the possibility of the trash can. And in doing so I had a small pile of a few things, and one of the things was an old eyeglass case from years ago. One of those things that you save—*just in case I lose my glasses, so I’ll have a back-up pair*. So that case ended up in a ‘to sort’ pile, and now it was time to ‘decide what to do with it.’ I hadn’t opened the case in years, and was kind of looking forward to seeing what the glasses I wore twenty years ago looked like. For some reason, as I opened the case, I thought “wouldn’t it be cool if there was money in here?”, because it was the same day as the day with the three \$1 bills and I remembered all of that in the moment. As I opened the case I could see that there was money in there! I could immediately see some folded up crinkled bills. And I was thinking—no way. What? And then in an instantaneous moment I wondered to myself if maybe one of them was a Kennedy dollar bill with a K letter on it instead of the usual A or E, because I started thinking when I saw the money that this was some kind of apport phenomenon. I simultaneously began to un-wrinkle the bills and separate them to count how many there were, and to look at the identifying letters on the bills. I soon knew that there were three single dollar bills, and the letters were A, L, and F — Alien Life Form is what I thought at the time. A message. From the great beyond. *Three is confirmation.*

Continuation of the 3 x 3 Apports

Sometimes something will happen that makes no sense. It is like something is just going to prevent you from doing what you intended. Like in the movie *The Truman Show*. Everyone is in on it. If you try to drive one way, then there will be a traffic jam. Things like that. It's all coordinated behind the scenes. In *The Truman Show* it was all done with actors and the whole town was a set, and Truman was constantly being monitored so he could never outwit them (or know he had to outwit them.) Eventually he figures it out.

Sometimes I hear about things like that happening to someone, and sometimes they happen to me. Sometimes it feels like someone is doing something coordinated behind your back. Like a prank, or others gaslighting you. There is nothing worse than being a victim of gaslighting. Nobody thinks it happens, especially not to them. That is why it is so insidious. No, it is just your imagination they will say. Sure, sometimes the suspicious looking person is suspicious because of your active imagination, but sometimes it is something else. People can be cruel and do deliberately mean things, and sometimes this is the case—sometimes there are conspiracies happening in the shadow worlds. But usually it is people just living their lives. Or you're stuck in a dream.

Obviously it isn't actors and a whole production crew faking the world around me with traffic jams just for me. That is not the case—the logistics are too difficult to maintain and some of the actors would get sick of their job. They could use robots I suppose. It could have been robots all along. Maybe technology catching up to have robots is just made up, and it was advanced technology and robots all along. That is one possibility. It is all inactive until I go to an area and then the robots activate in that region. Since they aren't people, just robots, they don't actually need any human-associated things like food, water, toilets, medicine, delivery, etc. The only bio-sphere would be around me, the rest

wouldn't need to be there. I guess that is a possibility I hadn't thought of before. Virtual reality with a memory wipe is another possibility. That would be a form of slavery.

Otherwise everything is just random. That's why things are messed up. Everything is random and it's robots, or it might as well be robots. This would require more contemplation, but otherwise I would say that no, it does not appear that this is some kind of *Truman Show* in the sense of the film itself—real people acting. When we look at a film like *Dark City*, we see a very similar theme. A staged world. But in *Dark City* almost everyone is the Truman character. There are no actors creating the illusion of a society for poor Truman—just other Trumans. Everyone has their mind erased each time 'midnight' strikes, and the 'city' is re-arranged around them. A 'day' plays out, and they believe it is a single day in a continuous life. Then they are all put to sleep again, the city shuts down, and things are rearranged. This is all done by a group of aliens that are studying the people. They abducted the people from somewhere and they are on a giant ship in space. One human is seemingly working with the aliens, but he is actually the one who helps the hero develop the ability to defeat the aliens. There is a machine and he learns how to control it.

Do I think this is what is happening? Well, not specifically, however within this possibility there may be a hint of truth. We do have to fall asleep and there is a break in consciousness when this occurs. It appears as if our body will then go through the various sleep cycles which include several with dreams. There is rapid eye movement and the body is in a state of paralysis. Maybe we will remember the dream and maybe we won't, but eventually we wake up and usually everything is forgotten, including that something was forgotten.

When we wake up our state of mind is different from when we went to sleep—all that dream stuff also includes the brain consolidating information from the previous day by creating, destroying and maintaining neural pathways—

physical connections, like a self assembling robot which form and dissolve its parts moment by moment, over the course of a night's sleep.

Dark City is a dream. *The Matrix* is a dream. A dream is a way of thinking wherein anything can happen. And whether it is happening in that dream or not is irrelevant since there is a chance it might happen next time. It could just be attributed to a dream. The only reason I am writing about all of this is because a few things happened to me in relation to the three \$1 dollar bill series of events. I'm trying to understand how all of it could have happened. All of the randomness. It seems staged, but it isn't. It has more in common with dreams.

So here is something odd, an example of how something will happen that seems completely related to me—it could be interpreted that way, but it isn't so, because others are effected in their own ways by the same event.

I needed just five more copies of the cover for *Digest* #22 printed out. I was going to stop at the library and run in and make some quick copies. But then when I was driving over I realized I didn't have any cash on hand. What happened next was I stopped to get some coffee and a few bananas to get some cash back. Instead of an ATM charging me \$3.50 the convenience store charges me \$5, but I get coffee and bananas. That is one way to look at it. The total was \$5.03, which was just barely enough to get cash back. Somehow I had guessed that three bananas would weigh enough to get the total over \$5.00 which is the minimum needed to get cash back. So that was weird, and it was three pennies over, and I had just written about the whole thing with the three dollars. And a penny is good luck, and I had good luck finding three dollars three times.

But so what. It is just numbers and there are 9 of them and they line up this way and that way eventually, and patterns form whether there is meaning behind them or not. If you look at enough license plates eventually you see one that will have some kind of meaning. Constantly noticing numbers to find meaning in them is not something I

recommend for the simple reason it never ends, and whatever meaning is to be found already exists independent of the numbers themselves. Plus there are always more numbers. You find yourself thinking about it too much. Then when it happens you think it is some kind of magic thing that you made happen and then you start creating a belief system around it. Then when it doesn't happen you create a reason—an excuse, and then you ignore the fact that you are lying to yourself over the inconsequential fact that there is no meaning in numbers randomly seeming to have significance. My policy is to be aware of these things, but not look for them, since there is no reason to.

So, in my not noticing, what happens? I know what would happen in a dream. A dream is like a version of *The Truman Show*. It can have a Director that isn't you. The Director sees you sleeping and that you are starting to go into REM sleep—a dream. The Director sees that you aren't overly interesting in having meanings occur synchronistically with numbers. So, to make the dream interesting they create a dream scene for you in which you walk into a post office to find out some information about mailing something. The total of the customer in front of you at the counter is \$8.88. Exclamations! Wows! Go play that number, they exclaim! It's your lucky day! Run and get a lottery ticket!

So that happened. I didn't buy anything at the post office, I just had to find out some information. So now I've got some cash so I can make copies, but it is a twenty dollar bill so I have to break it. I'm eating bananas and drinking coffee in Florence. I'm just going to make those copies and finish binding all of the books. But as I am driving near the library I realize I've got the twenty and I only need a dollar. So, I keep driving—maybe I could go get some gum somewhere to break the twenty and have some dollars for the copies. Now I'm randomly way over in Easthampton and I think—I'll go over to that random library near here where I randomly found the Beatles dvd (*Birds of Mars Digest #22*) to print them.

First, I stop at a convenience store and go in to break the twenty, and decide to keep it simple and just buy a lottery ticket, which I might do once a year. Gum is more expensive anyway and I don't like gum and would have thrown it in the trash anyway. So I point to a \$1 ticket on the wall of lottery ticket dispensers. The clerk first of all seems astonished that I only want a single \$1 ticket. Then they are mad when I hand them the twenty because they don't have any tens, and they evidently only had two fives, because the rest of the change they give me is all single bills. I've nine ones. So that was all odd that I heard people in the post office talking about buying a lottery ticket, which is something I practically never do, maybe once a year on my father's birthday to remind myself not to buy lottery tickets. But here, on this day, I am buying one within twenty minutes of someone saying to buy one.

And then there are the nine single dollar bills I am holding in my hand. I think $1 \times 3 \times 3 = \$9$. In reference to the three \$1 bill apports from the previous day. Because, when do you ever get \$9 back in ones all at once? It seems too unlikely to be staged—how would that be staged ahead of time? Why does it have so much meaning?

So now I have nine dollar bills, and I'm near the 'random library', so I head over there to get the last five covers printed. I notice a table out front with someone sitting there. I walk over.

"Library's closed temporarily for a few days. I can help you, what did you want?"

"I just wanted to print something."

"I can help you if you email me the file."

"Oh, it's on a flash drive."

"Oh, I can't help you, sorry."

"Oh, that's ok," I reply. "What happened?"

"Little critter troubles."

The whole thing was odd. Last time I randomly stopped here I found a Beatles dvd with some valuable information. This time, it's closed. Maybe the little critters were *beetles*. If it is a dream I can explain it. The Director of the dream

movie wanted something to unhinge me. Why would they do that? They should know by now that things like this don't frustrate me at all. Ratings. It is just more confirmation somehow of something behind all of this.

So I'm back in Northampton now to make the final five copies of the cover, and as I'm walking to the library entrance I see an elderly priest carrying a large folio. It is over 90 degrees so I keep an eye on him because he is dressed in heavy clothes. I ask him if is making copies, and he says no, he is donating some items that he found in the attic of one of the church buildings. Then he shows me. They are amazing presidential campaign pennants of Calvin Coolidge. Fabric cut pennants with hand painted portraits of the candidates. So that was amazing to see that and what a good case of luck that the other library was closed for critter trouble, and it all synched up perfectly so that I got to be there at the exact moment when the Calvin Coolidge pennants were brought to the museum. So what is all of that? It seems like maybe something that would happen in a dream.

Remarkable Chance Meeting

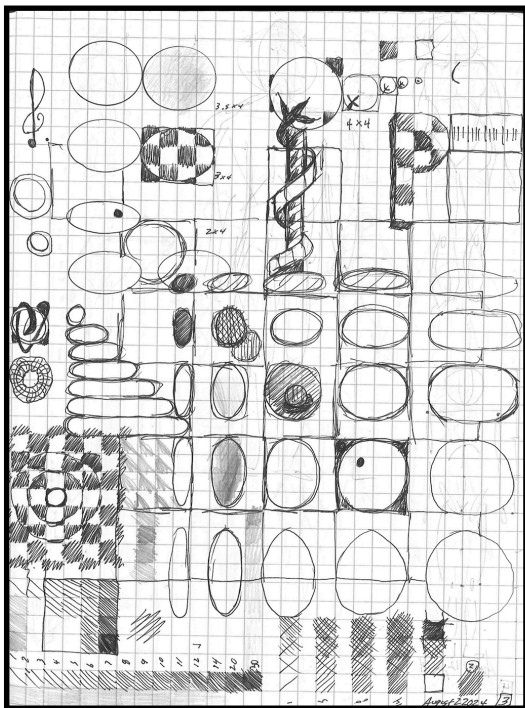
This is a rather remarkable chance meeting that I had this month. What makes it even more remarkable is that it happened underneath the “stick on the wire” apport. For those unfamiliar with what the stick on the wire means please see *Birds of Mars Digest Number 22*. Anyway that’s where it happened. It’s already been a few weeks since this occurred so I might not get all the details correct. I might not get any of it correct. Maybe it was all a dream.

I was on a walk when I saw an ambulance pull up near the front of the house of somebody I kind of know. I was interested to see if it involved my friend, and if they were ok, but it didn’t seem to involve them. So I was just sort of standing there looking at the ambulance when two women with a dog walked by. They were curious about the ambulance as well. Well, we got to talking, and I asked if they were poets because now I’m always looking for poets to read at the weekly *What is Poetry?* readings.

This next part I might have gotten wrong, because it was a lot of information all at once. They said they weren’t poets, but one of the women was the daughter of Tambimuttu. The other was her mother. I didn’t know at the time who Tambimuttu was. They seemed amazed that I even brought up the subject of poetry, and I became amazed as well when I read Tambimuttu’s wikipedia. What he did is in a lot of ways what I’m doing. In some respects the *Birds of Mars Digest* is a poetry journal. I’ve published quite a few poets. So somehow it seems someone magical and serendipitous that I met his relatives underneath the stick on the wire, written about so much in the previous digest. It was very cool that all that happened even if I got some of the details wrong. Basically what they he said to me was there’s no money in any of it, and if you’re make money, then you’re doing something wrong.

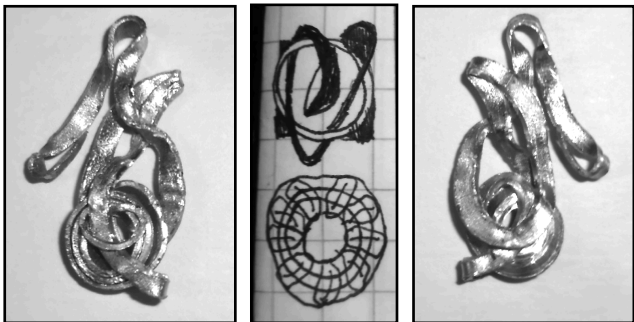
Strange Object Found

On August 2, 2024 I drew a page of designs and doodles on page 3 of *Workbook B* as shown below.



The next day I found a weird object in the road. It was some kind of light silver metal, but it was all folded and scrunched up, and was wrapped around itself in a tangled mass of knots. It superficially kind of looked like a G clef symbol, so I decided to keep it since I'm a musician.

Soon after, while looking through *Workbook B* I noticed two tiny pictures I had drawn on page 3, and was instantly reminded of the strange metal object I had found the day before. Upon closer examination I realized that the doodles and the object kind of matched each other in appearance. Then I noticed that I had drawn a G clef on that page as well. I don't know what to make of this, other than it happened. The concentric circles in the bottom drawing are very evident on the object. Also note how the object has a top and bottom part that kind of match the drawings.



Sketching Dogs Oddity

Workbook A spans the time period from May 23 through July 31, 2024. Within this book are many things, including various drawings of dogs. I began these on July 12. Whenever I start a new page in the workbook I write the date on the bottom so I have a record of it. These dog drawings are on a number of different pages through the end of the month. Most of these drawings are ratios of proportions for the various parts of a dog. What I quickly realized is that the rear legs of dogs are backwards. They're weird once you really start looking at them. They don't make sense. So for the past few weeks I've been looking at the back legs of all the dogs I see. I'm trying to understand what I'm looking at.

I decided to go get something to eat so I walked to the store. As I was walking back home I noticed someone walking a beautiful dog. I can't really describe it, but it was kind of dark with chestnut brown underneath and on the legs. I asked them what kind of dog it was, and they said it was a mixed Shepard-type. Then I noticed the back two legs were light chestnut brown but each had a wide stripe of darker brown running up the back of them, right along the unusual backwards leg bone which has perplexed me so much. There I was looking at a dog with a marking which was precisely where I had been looking at on all the dogs I had been seeing. It was so amazing that I felt I had to explain it to the person walking the dog, and I was able to quickly sum all of that up in a few seconds, and they were able to understand what I said, and they even added more about the leg anatomy. They knew about it. So that was an amazing thing that happened.

This was pretty much the last thing I typed. After this I was dictating everything.

Grid Apports

Within my philosophy of the “life of a painting” is the concept of representing form using a grid. I call this ‘grid theory’ in a general inclusive way relating to anything relating to grids. What I mean by a grid is just that—a grid of squares, not unlike a checkerboard or graph paper. An arrangement of evenly spaced parallel and perpendicular lines. I am not referring to the ‘electrical grid’ or the ‘internet grid’ or ‘satellite grid’. No, in this context, a grid is a simple crosshatch pattern of squares. Graph paper.

As such, I have an interest in things that have anything to do with a grid pattern. It is not an obsession, I don’t look to collect things with grid patterns, or even want these things as decorative objects. I’m aware of them and notice them in the moment, but I don’t want to possess them. No, my interest is more in how a grid can be used in relation to proportion and form. The grid is a form of an unalterable truth, and images on a grid become bound to the grid. Once positioned in the grid, using the corners and edges of each square in the grid as reference points, the forms can be understood. Once understood they can be altered. Altering is one of the things an artist does. An artist changes things or creates things. These things can be anything.

Each absolute size of the square in a grid can be determined. For example, I have graph paper with squares of a quarter inch per side. Knowing this size comes into play when thought of in terms of painting. A certain size brush might easily cover a one inch square with a full brush, but a tiny brush would take a lot longer to fill that area because the brush can only hold a tiny amount of paint, so many brush loads have to be added until that area is filled with paint. So things like this, on the surface seemingly a simple proposition, are somehow profound and complex when attempted.

Since I started writing about apport phenomenon last month the apports started finding me. It doesn't come as any great shock that since I'm always thinking of grids, grids are now finding me. Here are a few and they coincidentally include finding more dollar bills, three to be exact.

It was last week—I found \$3 in a parking lot. I wanted to mention here that, like most people nowadays, I usually don't have cash on me, so even if I have a few dollars it can feel like a special occasion. So in all these things I'm writing about buying something, I could have just bought using my card—but I don't like to do that all the time. So, I hope the reader keeps that in mind and isn't projecting a belief about me being impoverished and counting dollars to have enough for a snack bar. The point in writing about this is that the dollar bills seem to appear in a random unexplained though timely manner.

So, I found a few dollars and had that money in my pocket. Later the same day I was in a book store, because I was looking to see if they had any books on how to draw dogs, which I had started doing a little bit. Dogs seem to me to be such difficult animals to draw. Their proportions seem really offbeat and their body parts are strange once you start really looking at them. Their back legs are kind of backwards.

Anyway, there were no books about how to draw dogs in the art section, but there was a book loaded with sheets of vellum graph paper of four different varieties. The book itself is about reducing, enlarging and transferring designs. It is from 1983—well before personal computers or the internet. It was a real 'old school' book with 'old school' design techniques. No computers. They weren't even mentioned. The book has a whole theory similar to some of how I am thinking of these things. So that was amazing for me to find this book since it is so cool in relation to what I am working on with the grid theory. It felt like a confirmation of all I am trying to do. And how cool is it that I had enough money on me to spontaneously get it since I had found \$3 earlier in the

day. So what part of this is a possible apport phenomena and what part is good luck (synchronicity)—coincidence? Or is it just ‘what happened’ and there is no reason behind it?

I mentioned elsewhere that I was cleaning my studio. I have so many things I don’t want. All these books and magazines. I don’t want any of these things anymore. I rarely even look at any of these things. But when I try to sell some of these books I can’t get near what I paid for them. It feels like I would be getting ripped off. It isn’t an easy proposition.

So I was going through things to decide what to throw away and I was thinking about grids. I was thinking about my experiments with how small I could actually paint something and what was the smallest that I needed to paint something. I also was thinking that I could make a painting that had a small area with a lot of detail and the rest of the painting could be big color fields.

I was thinking of this as I threw away some trash. In the recyclable bin I noticed some packaging and on the packaging was a bunch of little grids. Two fields of grids and of different sizes! I couldn’t believe it! What a great find. So that really made my day great even beyond finding the book of velum graph paper. I tore off the section of the packaging with the grid on it. It looks like some kind of packaging for a badminton net, and the grid was a diagram which represented the net and it was showing how to cut it in sections to use it different ways. It might have been netting for a garden. I didn’t look closely at that part of the packaging.

I wanted to tear off the sections that were the grids so I went to do that, and then I noticed on the packaging a picture of a pair of scissors cutting the net, and I started thinking about all of the cut up experiments of which I had just written about. So I thought I had better keep that just how it was and not tear of the part with the scissors. Then I thought, this is kind of like part of an art box. I could make an art box with some of the things I’m finding relating to the grids—the vellum paper and now this packaging. I need to find a box now. I could make an art box with the three A.L.F. dollars and

the grid packaging and the vellum grid paper, and the other weird things I found this month. These seems like the kind of things that would be perfect for an art box. To do this I would have to do things that destroy and create. I would have to remove pages from that book—destroying its value. But it is only \$3—I essentially got it for free. There isn't anybody in the world who would want to give me more than that for it. I don't think there is a huge market for vellum graph paper. It isn't worth anything. There is probably a warehouse somewhere with hundred of them. They can just make more vellum graph paper. It isn't precious, it is just a book idea from 1983. I should tell myself that it is ok to make art with these things. It is also ok not to make any art. It is ok to find a box and just put these things in the box and call that the art. I don't have to varnish the box, construct a box, glue things and arrange, paint, etcetera. There are no collectors and there is no audience. It doesn't matter to actually do any of that.

I started typing this yesterday and already so much has happened that it is almost unbearable. I was thinking about whether to use some of the vellum graph paper sheets to make that possible art box. I considered the implications of this. What it means to destroy the value of one thing in order to create an artwork which in truth has no real value. So this was something I was thinking about. And I was also making *Digest 22* at the time. I had two 'artist proof' copies of the book, and on those I was drawing and designing the cover. These books were kind of being destroyed, well, transformed might be a better way to think about it. So the notion of the destruction of a book was on my mind, and in particular as it relates to the idea of the 'cut up' and the many and numerous experiments by the creators of "Artists' Books" (see *Birds of Mars Digest #22*).

Also on my mind was including some kind of wood block artwork in homage to William Claxton one of the first printers of English books. The modern printing press was invented in 1440, and through the rest of that century the first mass produced books were printed. Almost concurrently

woodblock prints were being made, and these sheets were often included within the books when they were bound. The two—words and pictures—were joined from the beginning. So these are things I think about because I like to think that I am not in an isolated bubble. I like to think I am part of the tradition of writing, book making, and print making, even if there is no real audience for any of this.

I found an old remarkable book in one of those free book kiosks. It had amazing original woodblock prints in it—exactly what I had been thinking over in my mind. I want to include artwork within the digests, and have thought of a variety of ways to do this including making rubber stamps or wood blocks and making multiple impression using different colors and patterns. So I have been thinking about these things and how I might go about doing it. Meanwhile I decided to just print the books without a lot of fanfare and think of these things for down the road. So I've been looking at a lot of old books with various designs for printers marks, borders and lettering designs. Within these there is often mention of woodblock prints. So I was thinking it would be interesting to make something in this tradition. Then I found that old book with actual woodblock prints in it that I could study. So these things keep happening in this manner.

I thought that I could remove the woodblock prints from that book and put one in each one of my books. I also thought that I could put a feather in each book as I find a feather. Since that book is about apports I could include apports in that book rather than art. But the trouble it takes to make multiple artworks without any clear idea as to why other than 'because' seems like a silly venture at this point in my life. But, I'm always open to the possibility.

There is so much more to this relating to William Burroughs and the cut-ups. In *Digest* #22 I wrote about how certain books will show up at the right time. A few days ago I was driving around and I chanced upon a large bookcase of books out in the middle of nowhere. I looked through them and saw a book called *The Job* which is interviews with

William Burroughs. This is a book I had never seen or read before, so finding it right after having written about his cut-up method seemed rather timely. Within this book there are more details than I had previously known about regarding about the history and method of the cut-up. So that by itself is a good example of how a book might appear at a moment to fill in the details regarding some research or interest. It happens all the time to me like this.

I printed *Digest* #22 which has a lot of writing about experimental writing, William Burroughs, the cut-up, and finding books relating to what you are researching. Then I find a book with all of that in it—including new information. Perhaps most remarkable of all is that in this book Burroughs talks about whistles and frequencies. In the last issue of the digest I had written about whistles and frequencies. So that just seems too unlikely to even know how to think of this.

So even though I had decided to not write about any of this, I ended up writing 5000 words over two days. That is about as much as one would want to do as a writer. Today writing was sitting down at the laptop with coffee at 7am and revising through everything I had written, also adding more, up to here. It is now 8:50am, so that was about two hours. That really is about all I want to do do regarding writing in a single day. If I'm in the mood sure I will write, but usually first thing in the morning is the best time to get it done. A literary zine is 25,000 words. 7000 words a week seems like a good amount that one could really work on and make a nice piece of writing. But doing this every day can be exhausting mentally. And I'm doing this just to do it. The best thing to do is just let it happen. There is no timetable. There is no real audience. If I never created and printed another one of these again it is likely that there would be nobody noticing. Maybe one or two people. Certainly not more than ten. There really is no audience for any of this, so whatever is done would be done with this in mind. It doesn't matter what I do in a general sense. It turned out that this was pretty much the last thing I ever typed. From here on out I started dictating.

First Dictation

[The part written in these brackets was actually ‘written’, and by this I mean typed. The rest of this chapter was dictated, by which I mean spoken aloud and the app transcribed it into text form. I had to decide whether to edit and revise what I dictated, and I decided not to. Partly to show how accurate the transcription was, and also to show my first reactions to experiencing dictating something, and having the words appear in front of me. This is like typing in a way except in typing I think the words and then type them. In speaking I’m not sure if I think the words and then say them, or if it occurs simultaneously. I have to investigate more. So I am leaving this here unedited—just as it was dictated (and this as it was typed.) Anyone who reads through it will realize that the typos and errors made by the computer translating the dictation are minor and most could be fixed in one or two read-throughs. It is part of the artifact of this writing, and in that sense is reminiscent of *a, A Novel* by Andy Warhol, wherein he had high school students transcribe tape recordings of him and his friends, and that became the book. All the typos were left in. So in a strange way that is exactly what I did writing this chapter, except it was just me talking, and the transcribing was done in real time by technology on a laptop I’ve owned for eight years.]

I just figured out how to use the dictation app in Pages, and these words were spoken, and then they appeared on the screen. So I didn’t write these. I thought them, then I spoke them. But I didn’t really write them. It seems to be something new. New for me anyway, because even this morning I was writing in the way I always do, by typing the words with my fingers. Al, I just saved them. No, I just say them. Now, I just say them. As you can see it isn’t always perfect. I could just delete the first two incorrect sentences, but I wanted to leave them there to show what happens.

Anyway I am going to stop talking in a minute. Man this kind of destroys everything about writing if people can just do this what's the point to write? There's no point sure you can just say whatever you want to say and it is put into a file and then you just have it in the file I mean what's the big deal about writing some story out. Seems kind of superfluous. It seems as if what would be more important than the actual writing would be the ideas behind it, and how quickly those ideas can be put forth into the society. That seems to be what a writer would be. Anyway these two paragraphs that I just spoke are almost a full page, and I know that a full page is 400 words. This encapsulates beautifully what I am trying to express. Rather than typing out my ideas I am just speaking my ideas. It is a lot quicker. I wonder what other people think about this. If they think that by speaking the words rather than physically typing them or writing them by hand somehow negates the value or importance or validity of them. I'm sure there are people who think that way. But then again, there are probably more people that think it is cool that you can just speak the book, and that being a writer isn't so much having the task of writing, since you can just say something, because in the end writing is just the words themselves. So the following few pages are my first experiments in dictation. I am not sure how much of this I'm going to revise, but we shall see. It's really great I can just say quick notes to myself and there they are. I could just dictate a whole book like this if I had a story.

I am trying to see how many words I can say in one minute, and I am using the dictation thing right now. What I am doing is a test and I am saying this off the top of my head. This is a lot easier than trying to type, I already know that. I know that I can type about 50 words in one minute. I know the fast typists can type 60 or more words in one

It seems as if I was only able to say 80 words and then the thing no longer continued and so I'm testing it again to see if that is the case and I am just saying these words to have some words being said it is interesting to say something and

then look up and see the words just show up right there. All that is so much easier than typing and I'm about to get 260 words, but this time it stops and now I know it is letting me keep going. It seemed like there was a limit of 80 words which could be spoken until it stopped working, but that wasn't the case at all. It just stopped working because sometimes it just stops working. I had created a temporary working belief that it stopped transcribing at 80 words. This belief turned out to be incorrect.

And now I am on the next

So when certain words ha ha when I said paragraph it didn't include the word paragraph it made a paragraph. This time it didn't. It knows what I said was able to know the difference between what I said and what I meant, so I guess if you have a pause before word it knows to interpret it one way and if you have a pause after the word it knows a different way.

Now I am going to use the timer since I solved the other problem. I'm going to talk for one minute. And now I am more used to doing this and I can see the word show up and I am mainly trying to think of what to say. I feel like there is pressure on me to say something clever. But it really doesn't matter what I say I am simply doing a test to see how many words I can say in one minute. Those words are going to be included in this paragraph which I am speaking.

Well it turned out to be 111 word spoken in one minute now I am going to just speak naturally for two minutes to see how many words I say. I am not trying to speak fast I am just speaking in a normal conversational voice. What I'm trying to do is figure out how many words I could say in one hour. Instead of speaking for one hour I am just speaking for one or two minutes, and timing that and then seeing how many words I said. So that is the plan and I've one minute of two here and I'm going to go for another minute. My thought about all of this is that the average number of words in which I can type in one hour is about 2000 to 3000 words. That is

about the amount of words I can type in an hour of some writing. What I am thinking is if I can just speak, how many words is that in an hour and that would be a lot easier than having to type all those words. So that is what I am testing here and I am about to come up to the two minute mark so I will see how many words I was able to speak here in one hour I mean in two minutes.

How come it's not always working sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't. You have to keep an ion it. I suppose it is like anything else you'll get used to it. The main thing here is that when I get an idea I have to get into the rhythm of saying it and then moving on. The idea is there but the time to think it through is different. Before it used to be that I would have to type it, wait for my fingers to type it and then I could continue the thought. Now when I have the thought I can just kind of say the thought and I don't have to wait for myself to type it. Of course I will have to go back and revise everything, but I have to do that anyway. So if I can say 100 words in one minute, that means I can speak 6000 or so words in one hour. That seems amazing to me that someone could do that. After all I just got finished writing for several weeks. I had typed about 2000 new words each morning and then worked on revising those subsequently over the next few days. Here I've just been sitting here talking and already over 800 words and I don't feel like it's been any work at all. I could just get used to doing this and then when I had something to "write" I wouldn't have to type it I could just say it. That's the alt lit way, that's the way I always said it was with alt lit philosophy. It's funny when you say something and it interprets it differently. And then I suppose you can play all sorts of games with this funny dictation device. It actually does an amazing job. What I could do is write something out and then just read it and see how quickly I can read it how quickly it'll paragraph paragraph. If you say paragraph it won't make a new one, so you have to learn how to adjust to it but it doesn't matter

because the gist of what you're trying to say is right there hundreds of words already.

Okay now I'm I am going to talk really fast to see how quickly I can say something and how accurately it interprets what I say. I'm going to say a sentence normal the speed and then I'm going to say it quickly.

This is as quick as I can say this sentence but I am going to say it even quicker if I can.

It really did a pretty good job and I said that sentence very quickly. I was mumbling and stuttering and it still is able to interpret what I am saying really well. Probably what this would be the best thing for would be to get some ideas and do some getting into a character and do some acting to get lines for a play.

Looks like if it stops you just have to press a key and then it'll start up again, but I'm not sure why it starts and stops. Now I'm hoping that's good stall out know who to key in to see if that picks it up again. I want if I say something then it. What happened sky center. Hoops thanks yeah right now is really messing up everything I'm saying it is getting wrong ha ha ha ha. Here it is again. Well this is in a weird way a game changer, because now I'm not really inclined to feel any need at all to write or type anything, because I know if I was going to write a short story I could just say it, and then it would just be me speaking—it just all seems very different. But it is good to know that now if I have an idea I can just dictate it and I won't have to type it all out. I will have to revise obviously, because the dictation software doesn't always record everything perfectly, but that is okay.

OK. I did something really funny. I took some of this text that I spoke/dictated hey and had the Pages program speak it. On my phone I have a dictation device going so it was trying to transcribe what the computer was saying. It was getting everything wrong and then I realized it was all a big cut up experiment similar to all the previous ones mentioned in *Digest Number 22*. Now you can play a game of post office between two computers.

[I'm actually typing this now. I just read through the part I dictated yesterday and fixed a few things, but overall just left it as is. It's about 2000 words—how much I would usually type over two hours in the morning. A daily writing time allotment. It is 6:30 am sitting here typing. A storm went through last night and it rained a lot. Now it is clear and the sun is rising. Big clouds moving slowly across the sky. It is strange thinking about dictating writing instead of typing writing. I guess the most important thing it does, and I am just realizing this now, is remove the need for quickness or speed. It doesn't matter how quickly you dictate. You can say one word a second or one word a minute and the software will transcribe it just the same. You can say it as quick as you can, and the software transcribes it the same. So speed isn't a factor. In typing there is a limit to the speed of typing, which thus slows down the thought process. In speaking it seems as if there would be no limit in relation to conscious thought. I will have to experiment more with this, but I already realize that the approach to writing in this digest has changed since last issue. Last issue was a realization that anything I write could appear in subsequent issues of the digest. But now that I can dictate 6000 words in an hour — a full novel in a day is theoretically within reach. I won't be using the digest to add new writing because I'll have too much new writing. I'll just have to be selective or limit how much writing I do.

Well in a half-hour I wrote 1200 words. I spoke 1200 words. That was with taking a lot of breaks and taking my time. I'm not sure if I should say to write or to speak. Because I really didn't write any of this. I spoke it. I guess the vernacular is to say write, so I guess I will just say that. No, that doesn't really apply though, because writing would mean physically writing which takes longer, and when I'm referring to something that was spoken I should probably refer to it as having been spoken.]

More Dictation

I'm dictating this now. I'll probably just dictate everything from now on. Well I have to think about what I think about this now. I'm not sure what to make of it. I am trying to remember how it is to actually write and how that compares to this. Since this is a lot quicker, I have to formulate my idea ahead of time. When typing I could kind of formulate the idea while typing, but in dictation I seem to need the idea fully formed before beginning to speak it. As a result I seem to spend more time actively thinking about forming sentences. When typing I would have a general notion about what the sentence would be about, and then I would begin typing and the sentence would fall into place. With dictation I can begin a sentence, and then pause for as long as I want and then pick the sentence back up again. I guess I could do that with a sentence while writing, but I never seemed to. Dictation is so much easier. It is still me thinking of the ideas to express with the words, so it really doesn't matter how the words get written out.

The paragraph above took about eight minutes to 'write'. I really thought of composing each sentence before I spoke it. This paragraph on the other hand is going to be more spontaneous. I will talk freely and not give much thought about the contents of the sentences. Well, on second thought I'm not going to do that because I would just be generating words to generate words. That isn't necessarily very interesting. If I'm going to be a writer then I should either write about something of interest or about something in a new way. If I am just writing about writing, or in this case dictating about dictating, it won't be very interesting for long. So that really is the dilemma about all of this—what should one do, if anything. I could talk about things I've done recently, but so what. It seems like the best use of this is just to get some words down if you've something to say rather than trying to invent something new just to get the words

down. So I suppose if you wanted to write a story you could do that deliberately, or if you add something you've wanted to quickly write down, you could do that as well. But just saying things to say things that like doesn't seem like a good use of the technology.

It seems ideal for interviews because that way you don't have to transcribe. You just have all the words appear right there—it's easy. Then you could just monitor it live and then just edit it live or say hey can you say that again or you could repeat what they said and the words would be there and then you can just edit it right there and then, because you just need the words the computer doesn't need to know who said what when or how they said it. If the computer made a mistake transcribing it you would just repeat it in the moment. You'd be sitting right there, so you could just also be using the keyboard and practically revise it as you do the interview.

Because that would be interesting to read if it was relevant to whatever else there was to read. It would be interesting. Also you could do something if somebody went into a trance and started to do some type of spirit things then you could have it automatically transcribed. How cool would that be. I would do it myself but the thing is if you're in a trance you'd have to then open your eyes just to double-check to make sure it's working.

There's a lot of games and different experimental things you could do with this, but what's the point really because in the end you're just generating words. This is kind of weird to be speaking and then see what you're saying right there. So that's kind of amazing and I am just perplexed by the whole thing. Anyway I'm not sure what to do with any of this, because it just feels pointless now. It seems fake, and seems like writing is fake. I can just speak this, and now it seems really pretentious. Word count has become meaningless. The idea of taking time to write something is gone. The whole thing is the ideas behind the content have nothing to do with time, yet that writing still took time.

Ten Uses for Dictation

1. If you have something to say you don't want to type, you can use this technology. For any old reason.

2. You are in character and you are improvising dialogue and want to record it for future editing for use in a play.

3. You are interviewing somebody, and the dictation app makes capturing the text easier.

4. Experimental reasons.

5. Other reasons I can't think of.

6. To capture writing lyrics while playing piano.

7. Revising. You can highlight a word that's spelled incorrectly, then say the word again, and it will replace it properly. So much easier than re-typing.

8. Describing art work. If you're looking at some art you want to describe you can just say what it is you are thinking, and you won't have to be concerned about typing it out.

9. Research notes or re-wording content. You can read something and then speak your re-worded interpretation of it.

10. Record dreams or trance state ramblings. After a dream you can just say what it was you dreamed and it will get transcribed. But then you'll just have a book of dreams, and that isn't of much value.

Dictating about Dictating

What I'm going to do in a few minutes is just speak for as long as I can as quickly as possible about a certain subject that I know something about in order to see if there's any practical value in this. I just want to talk for about 30 minutes. I'm going to see how much I can generate. This thing locks up sometimes. I love how I can just talk. That way I don't have to worry about it. Have to slow down sometimes and wait for it to catch up, but it eventually will. Incidentally, just to do this, what is the point? There really is no point.

So for 30 minutes to just be randomly talking about nothing. I've got to think of something to talk about. Well I should think of something I know about that I could talk about endlessly that might be of interest to somebody else. One thing which is interesting would be alchemical things or consciousness things that's always interesting it always goes back to which the really is no definitive agreement as to what all of that means. You can look at it from different ways and you can read different things and it will tell you things that are as different from each other as you could imagine. I'm not going to edit this next part because it's just stuff I thought of off the top of my head to test the dictation app. This is true stream of consciousness unrevised bad writing. Plus you can see how the app works. This is what what you would have to revise looks like.

So in wanting to learn about alchemical traditions let's call them, I spent a lot of time just deciphering alchemical systems of different alchemists. Each has a system which may have nothing in common with another's system. That's just how it is. So at a certain point the researcher may want to decide how to approach this situation. If one looks at alchemical symbols one immediately finds discrepancies. They represent them differently using different symbols. So if one is looking for some kind of formula to physically turn

one metal into another metal one really can never be sure that the symbol they are using in their alchemical investigations corresponds with the correct substance.

So I found a book of alchemical symbols. Well, the book itself isn't about alchemical symbols it is about signs and symbols in a historical context. And within this book there are in one chapter a number of alchemical symbols. So this is of interest to me because the authors of this book are not alchemists and not looking at symbols in any context of an alchemical tradition. They are looking at symbols along with the other symbols and signs in a purely early historical representational way. So this list can be compared to other lists and that would give one information within the scope of one's research into the alchemical tradition. For me the interesting thing about alchemy is the concept of earth, water, air, and fire.

Perhaps the most important thing to keep in mind is that what these four elementals are in truth to their own essence is actually not what we would consider to be earth water air or fire. These words themselves are representations as to what the elementals actually are. Period. They are, however, excellence metaphorical and symbolic representations. This is due in part to the fact that they are themselves comprised of the elementals. That is to say the earth can be seen as stone and water; we can think of molten stone as being watery and of course water itself is watery and ice is earthy; if we think of the relationship between stone and rain that is a good representation of the relationship between the elemental essence of the earth and the elemental essence of water. How they interact at all scales of size, because the elementals are in their smallest forms extremely minute in relation to the size of a human on earth.

So there are very specific relationships between these elementals. And it is the interaction of these elementals based on those differences between them which, in this theory, create the universe. And that the alchemist is the one who understands how to do this and uses dreams to navigate

through these possibilities as a result of the nature of these elemental substances. Of course it gets more in depth than that. There are also many histories written about the alchemists of old. These alchemists themselves were often very colorful characters and given in to getting into all types of mischief and absurd situations. Usually they end up getting burned at the stake or dying in prison for thought crimes against the Church or State. Often however the alchemists were well-to-do and had seemingly actually discovered some magical formula which brought them riches. The general school of thought is that there is a materialistic tradition in which the creation of a powder can physically turn a base metal into gold simply by adding a little tiny bit in a crucible. Or they can do different things to get you more. And one can find stories that seem to suggest that there's some truth to this.

More often than not though it's some type of a scam on the royalty. They would be the ones who would have the resources to trust the charlatans enough to have them try to make gold. The alchemists always seemed to need some gold to make some more gold. So that's one line of the tradition—the creation of this so-called philosopher's stone projection powder. The powder by itself is suppose to cure all illness and give you immortality.

So that's one tradition and I would say that it appears that out of that tradition comes all things New Age. Because they too are promising things they can't produce. As one looks into the subject, it does appear that there are cases of miraculous unexplainable phenomenon. It all should be taken into account somehow.

The other tradition within alchemy is more spiritual in nature. It takes on more of a spiritual, often Christian overtone. Alchemy is a mental activity they say. When a soul unites with the creating force, however defined, there is an entrance to an eternal infinite realm which cannot be extinguished. Many religions say exactly this. There's no ambiguity to it, and so the end result is identical with any

type of alchemical tradition. In this manner, Alchemy can be interpreted as a personal religion. The summation is to be responsible for yourself, and figure out how to navigate these realms properly, no matter what situation one finds oneself in. So that is the second tradition. I am wondering how modern chemistry fits into this. Alchemical tradition is kind of quaint and humorous as compared to modern chemistry. Of course with artificial intelligence and machine learning you could just set any computer to task and they'd figure this stuff out in a day or two. There really are no mysteries to any of this stuff anymore. It can just all get resolved instantly and then it is what it is. But to my mind the real question is—now what?

So those are the two traditions and then whatever is happening now and whatever any individual believes or thinks, it's all part of it. My thoughts are that it relates to dreams somehow because dreams occur cyclically. Every day we dream and we sleep in this part of the cycle and within dreams things are occurring within the brain and within the different parts of the brain that we use with our eyes so dreams are visual. It's a bummer that even if you have one great dream you still have to live your boring life day to day. That seems sad.

It turns out that talking nonstop for 32 minutes I ended up with 1650 words. It also turns out that talking that quickly without monitoring how the app transcribes your words isn't advisable. That is because it takes longer to revise that mess than if you just took more time when you initially dictated the words to make sure they were properly transcribed. I had intended to leave this chapter unedited, but I ended up fixing up the text and revising it anyway. In part to remind myself that it is not something I want to do again in that manner, and if I just take my time initially the revision will be a lot easier. I won't be trying to interpret typos within the context of the rest of the sentence to figure out what I was trying to say. I think the value in mentioning this is that someone else might avoid these pitfalls.

One Minute Dictation Test

These are going to be one minute tests. I am going to say a word every second as I watch the clock tick.

I am going to say a new word every second for one minute as the second hand clicks away on the clock face this has been 27 seconds until now.

The above sentence was spoken in 30 seconds and there are 30 words. One word per second. That is 60 words per minute. That is 3600 words per hour.

I am now going to see how quickly I can read aloud the sentence with 30 words in it.

I'm now going to see a new word every second for one minute and second hand clicks away on the clock face this is been 22nd seven seconds until now.

That took about eight seconds to say. I'm going to say a word every second for one minute as the second hand clicks we have the clock face this is been 27 seconds until now. I'm going to try again.

I'm going to say new word every second for one minute as a second hand clicks away on the clock face this is been 27 seconds until now. So that took about eight seconds. So let's just round things off and say that in 10 seconds I can say 30 words so that means in one minute at that speed I could say 180 words. Which means in one hour I could at the fastest pace I can speak, say 6480 words. 10 hours at that pace would give me 64,000 words. So I know I'm talking a lot about this dictation, but I'm doing so so that I can fully understand how to properly use this possibility.

Well as you can see this test was a lot quicker than the first test. I would say the comfortable range of speaking for dictation is probably 3000 to 5000 words in an hour.

Meanwhile I can read aloud 100 words a minute. That is about the right speed for a listener to easily listen. That is 6000 words an hour.

Talking

So if I am just talking with my eyes closed that is the best thing, however I would be distracted having to open my eyes to make sure that what I am saying is being written accurately by the computer. So without another person to keep an eye on the computer I have to do that myself which interrupts the flow. Of course I could just get used to looking at the laptop as I talk and that would be the easiest thing to do. I could move on to the next thought pretty quickly. I really don't see the point of any of this anymore however. Because what it all comes down to is a collection of words. It is simply what a person thought. And when you can see the words appearing as you speak it kind of nullifies the whole idea behind saying something. Saying something worth saying would be okay, but it doesn't seem like there's much to say. It's all the same stuff people are saying, and what they're saying is nobody has a clue about anything.

Of course we have the problem of artificial intelligence and word generators. Content generators. Most of it is all artificial intelligence that one encounters on the web, and seemingly, increasingly in reality as well. Today I went walking around and everybody just seemed so strange looking. All the bodies were somehow messed up in ways which was startling. Everybody seemed deformed in a weird way. Their faces seemed all messed up and scrunched into unlikely shapes, and their bodies were all weird. The proportions and relative sizes were off. Sometimes, maybe a few times a year, you might see one person like that. Today however it was everybody for the most part, like the toys in the movie *Ai*. So as all of this was unfolding I wasn't sure if I was dreaming or not and I was trying to figure it out. I must've been in some sort of dream state, though it's not dreaming specifically. The strangeness in weirdness is predictable. People saying they'll do one thing and then backing out the last minute in a manner that would seemingly

be something that I would be upset about, but I'm not because I'm not concerned with what the outcome is. I'm gathering data and it just continually reinforces the unlikeliness of this world and the people in it. You can't believe that it just continues along the same path year after year endlessly. Best case scenario still nothing. Try to communicate in deep ways with other people and you think you're making some connection, but it turns out to be nothing. There's no point just sitting here talking no point to anything. Nothing matters. It doesn't matter what you do. It's all a big dog and pony show to mess with you. So what are you to do? What's the point of it what's the point there's no point. I could just sit here and talk for three hours. So what.

Stream of consciousness baby, that's what they'll say, oh he's just a stream of consciousness writer, as if that's a bad thing. They mock it, try to put it down. That's all it is anyways—it's *all* stream of consciousness. They use that negatively. They want to think writing is something else, but it is what it is. They can delude themselves all they want, so what. It's just telling a story. I could use this for writing poetry, and maybe that's the proper use of this, because you can, as soon as you think of something, say it and then there are the words and you can just take your time to think about it more. It is easier to fix typos in a poem because there are fewer words, and if you missed one who would even know? Maybe you intended it to be that way—a hidden meaning.

Take my time.

Each word means nothing by itself
other than what you want it to.

Nothing really matters.

If you do this instead of that, so what.

Nobody is paying attention. There's no audience.

Are you alive?

Do you want me to tell you that you are?

You are alive. So what. Nothing matters.

Oh it matters to this guy or that guy or that guy with this problem to those people that matters to them because they're suffering. Surely you knew. Didn't you know?

No, I didn't get the memo that I was supposed to be miserable. There was no memo. It was just you making me feel miserable with all your resources at play. Now the cat is out of the bag. How's that for the memo.

Yes, pretty stupid doing this. I don't feel any point to it. Just saying words, and they mean something to me, but they probably aren't going to mean the same thing to anybody else. They're all interpreted the wrong way and so what. It's not like a community of like-minded individuals, or even any interest. Think of something to do, then do your own thing.

It's so funny to just talk 800 words in a half hour without even thinking about it. It seems like if somebody was in college nowadays it would just be so easy. If you have a thousand word paper you just sit down and talk for an hour and then you revise it. Of course you need something to say about what you're supposed to be writing about. Fortunately this technology exists now, but before?—what a nightmare it was. It seems though that this technology which I downloaded last week has some form of artificial intelligence in it because the way in which it interprets what I say and how it gets certain things wrong has too many tells. It seems to be messing with me at times. Which would be a nightmare scenario if I didn't suspect otherwise. Whatever I write you'll interpret your own way.

Dictation Isn't Worth It

What I realized is that it is easier to just type than to dictate. The computer makes too many mistakes; I have to correct every sentence in some way 99% of the time. Any advantage dictation would have is negated by the computer not being accurate enough at interpreting what I am saying. For instance if I tried to dictate this paragraph I would have had to have taken time to correct the typos, and make sure the sentence was correct. With typing I don't have to do this. I for the most part get it correct as I go. I am a quick enough accurate typist that it is just easier to type. Dictation has potential, and perhaps there exists software, some kind of ai, that can really figure out what I am saying and realize itself when it translates something improperly, and then fix it, or know to ask me what I meant. I'll probably continue to use dictation here and there, but for the most part I think I am going to go back to typing.

One thing that was annoying with dictation is that you have an idea and you say it, and instead of thinking of the next idea, your thoughts are interrupted by having to check to see if what the computer typed was correct. It interrupts the flow. Waiting until later to correct any mistakes isn't a good option, because some of the typos are so egregious that you can't figure out what you had intended to write. The easiest way would be to make a recording, and then have a person transcribe it and give you that document. That would be the easiest way. Because speaking aloud does seem to be a better way to write. It seems that I can work out ideas better speaking aloud than typing them, but not by much.

I will end this chapter with a little story. At the random tag sale where I found all of the rubber stamps I noticed a box full of 'dictation things'. There were various kinds of software, microphones, headsets, tape recorders, and translating machines. You could have created a display in a technology museum with everything in that box.

Or Is It?

It is a couple days later and I am going to do an experiment. Whatever is in italics is something I spoke aloud. Then I am going to type the same thing. I want to see which was easier. This first paragraph will be the test.

It is a couple of days later and I am going to do a test. Whatever is not in italics is something I typed. I am going to compose a similar paragraph to the first paragraph to see what happens. It seems easier over all. I don't have to check for typos. I am in a flow that I can't get in when dictating.

Well it seems like typing gives me more control over getting the text written properly. But dictating feels better to develop ideas because I can speak the idea quicker than typing it. So it isn't a case of one Nessie Sara Lee being better than the other. It depends on the situation. The biggest problem with the dictation is it just gets things so wrong sometimes and that is frustrating. For instance, as you can see in the previous sentence it thought I said Nessie Sara Lee, when I actually said necessarily.

But sometimes it gets a long complicated sentence correct, and that is ideal. If time isn't a factor then it might not matter how I go about it. I think I should try that other experiment after all. The one where I make a recording of me talking about what I am thinking, and then listen to that and type it out. That seems the easiest way. I wonder if my laptop has something that I can record a memo with. Hang on.

It does. It's called voice memo and I am going to see what it's all about. It is a nice app for recording, but it doesn't seem as if it will convert the recording directly to text. It seems like there are apps that will do this, but it seems like more trouble than it's worth. I wouldn't need to use my phone to make the recording. But there really is no point to make a recording and then retype it later when I could just use the dictation device the first time around, or just type it.

I will never write about dictation again.

What is Poetry?

My involvement and association with poetry is limited. My earliest memories of poetry are nursery rhymes of course. I don't remember writing a single poem in school, even as a homework assignment. I had no heroic Robin Williams-like poetry teacher like the boys in *The Dead Poet's Society* did. I vaguely recall my sister had an album about *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* and somebody was reading poems and there was music. I'll look that up on the internet to see if I remember it correctly. I think that's where I got my idea of the romantic notion of being a poet. Was it Rod McKuen? I remember that name. I believe that was the poet's name. No, it was Neil Diamond who made that album. Rod McKuen was a poet though, and he put out a lot of albums as well.

Everything about poetry that I learned in school was negative and not fun. It was mostly grammar rules. Just endless and tedious fifty minute classes studying poems that were mimeographed on sheets of paper, wet with a chemical stench. Poetry was rules. The "teachers" never mentioned emotions or feelings—just how you had to rip the poems apart and analyze them. If you analyzed it wrong you got a bad grade. You weren't allowed to have your own opinions or feelings or takeaways from it, not that it mattered because at the high school I went to I was never taught any of that was even an option. I didn't even know it was a possibility. They taught you that there was one interpretation, and you had to interpret the poem that way, and if you didn't you'd get a "C" or worse, which did not end well at home. So that's what poetry was in the High School I went to. *The Dead Poet's Society* was what showed me something otherwise.

I don't know how things are in today's world. How would I? I don't have children so I'm not concerned about the education system. I have no idea what they teach in the schools these days. I never really thought of it much.

In spite of all this when I was in my early 20s I had very romantic notions of what poetry was. I wasn't so much interested in reading it, and I really wasn't even interested in writing it, even though I did write some—not that good as I recall. They were poems trying to be poems. I was mostly interested in being a poet. The idea of being a poet. Not writing poems, or reading poetry, but being a poet. I don't know really what that means, but it was something real to me back then. It probably is an idea which originated in my mind by watching television shows or movies, or by reading something—probably in *Reader's Digest*. Actually that may actually be it, because RD always had all those poems in it, and it seemed like that was something of special merit. Also, they always had short stories about the romantic image of an artist, in which there was also contained valuable life lessons. Or maybe I'm just making all of that up as a memory. I really don't recall what was the film or TV show from which I would have gotten this notion other than that Neil Diamond album or a TV show I forgot.

Later on I discovered that the idea of the wandering romantic poet, the image of that person, was conceived of in a novel written by Goethe. A hopeless wandering romantic melancholy tragic poet. And eventually this tragic character commits suicide—a tragic ending. The intention of Goethe was to make this way of thinking be silly, over the top and ridiculous—the idea that somebody would be so distraught over an unreachable ideal that they would see no other solution than a tragic end. It was a cautionary tale meant to cause a chuckle that somebody would be so misguided. But what happened was his novel was misinterpreted by most readers and the image of the hipster was born. Throughout Europe there were copycat suicides. The tragic hipster trying to express some inner emotion, failing, and killing themselves. This idea of the poet. It became a manual.

Me? I had nothing to express. I didn't want to write poetry; I just wanted to live the life of the poet. By the time I got to be 23 I completely gave up any inkling of having

anything to do with writing poetry. I never read poetry and I never went to hear poetry. I just didn't think about it at all.

The few poems I did write at 21 were in a little black book just like the Pink Floyd song. Whether they were actually good or bad, who knows, but in my mind back then they were the greatest poems ever written. It was just a matter of the right person seeing them. Of course I was completely delusional in my youth. Where do these erroneous ideas come from, and why do people continue to have them?

Back then I also wrote a play called *Two Poets and Their Party*. We had one performance in Northampton in 1984, and one in Jamaica Plain 10 years later. The play itself was a comedy. I might still have a copy of it somewhere, I'm not sure. I really don't feel any inclination to search for it. I could just rewrite it if I wanted to. I pretty much remember all the best gags. When we performed the play in Northampton I also showed some Super 8 films I had made. The day before the screening my projector broke. For some reason I thought to go to Forbes Library, and they actually had a Super 8 projector that they let me borrow. Nowadays if I asked a librarian if they had a Super 8 projector, they'd probably call the police.

Sometime in the 1990s I remember when I was living in Boston all of a sudden it was poetry slams and poetry events. I never went to any of those. For whatever reason it just wasn't something I was really interested in. Now I think it would've been cool to have been involved with that scene, but that is because of meeting some poets in 2024 and making a documentary with them, and really learning about how real poets go about writing poetry. In the 1990s I was making a lot of videos. I guess you could say that was my form of poetry—a visual poetry using color, form, light and images instead of words. I had a zine associated with the video art which was shown on cable in Boston. I was also talking with a director about maybe trying to put on a production of the play in a park in Jamaica Plain, but that never happened. And so with that not happening, I don't

think I thought about poetry again for 20 years. I didn't read poetry or think about poets.

Poetry appeared on my radar again in 2017. That is when I started going to an open mic run by Alex Johnson at *Brew Practitioners* in Florence. They were the brewery where *The Drawing Board Brewery* is now. A lot of the regular performers there read their poetry. Eventually they became my friends. This is where I met Rufus Chaffee, who would read haiku every week, and would often have a washtub bass with him. An electric washtub bass, so he could plug it into an amp. He was known as the "Haiku Oracle of Florence." This is where I also met Tommy Twilite. He was singing songs and playing guitar mostly, but I found out later that he was also involved with poetry. That was his thing. These were the poets that really stood out in my mind as being exceptional. There were other poets as well, but they would just be drunk, spewing offensive stream of consciousness malarkey and gibberish. Tommy and Rufus really seemed to be engaged with expressing something of value.

At the time I was learning piano so I would often play the one at the open mic for my three songs, much to the chagrin of many of the people in the audience. They wanted to hear me play the sax which I already knew how to do, but I didn't care, because I knew part of being a pianist meant playing in public. There's no other way. There's a lot of nervousness and unexpected states of mind which can suddenly happen. It is something you have to experience to understand how to not have it impact your performance in a negative way. Sometimes when I was playing piano Tommy would get up there on the microphone and just kind of riff on a theme and make up stuff. To my mind what we were doing was no different than what other musicians and poets did at any other time in history. Just as valid, but no press. I formed an experimental performance group called *The Birds of Mars* which included Tommy improvising poetry in performance. Tommy is also active with the Florence poetry community and has edited and published poetry books.

So throughout 2017, 2018, and 2019 this is what happened. I go to the weekly open mic and the poets would be there and we would jam. A couple times a year we'd have a *Birds of Mars* gig and show some films and improvise music. In those days the main participants in the shows were Jim Gipe on electronic woodwind instrument, Win Ridabock on flute and percussion, Rufus with his washtub bass, and Chris Blair, the noise musician and artist from Holyoke, on guitar and electronics. I played sax and keyboards. Many of the shows are documented.

In 2019 I was writing a lot, 5000 words a day for five months. All of that writing is unpublished. It's over 250,000 words and in the form of about five books, mostly about writing and synchronicities. When the fall arrived I was really excited to be thinking about actually making some books about the *Birds of Mars*. And I did just that. By the end of 2019 I'd written a book called the *Birds of Mars Reader*. I printed up about twenty of them and bound them myself by hand. Within these pages are a lot interesting chapters to do with all of this. There are reviews of recordings, writing about the films, interviews with the band members, descriptions about making T-shirts, making posters, hanging flyers, and other band related activities. So as 2019 came to a close I had figured out how to publish a book completely by myself. The final form of the actual book is nice.

For 2020 I decided to write and publish a new book each month for the whole year. I made it to July. The seven books are called the "alt lit library." I'd started this project before the world stopped in mid-March. Some of that is reflected in the writing. In the last few books of the series the writing had undergone a kind of metamorphosis into a strange system of writing. It had dissolved into a weird system of notation. So these were the alt lit books, which are mostly stored away in boxes. The local bookstores aren't interested in trying to help me sell them. I have seven books with 50 copies of each ready to sell, so that is about 350 books. You'd think a local bookstore would be interested in a book that a local author

wrote, but no. I got the idea to write \$50 for the price and put them on a shelf in used book stores. Book lovers will see it when browsing that section, but no one will want to buy it. It's a type of publicity.

So anyways after the alt lit series I didn't really feel the need to write any more books. However I had learned how to make the physical books myself. So in the summer of 2020 I came up with the idea to make a monthly book which I would call a 'digest', and within it I would include images of the artwork I was making and any writing I was doing, or anything creative I was involved with. I call these the *Birds of Mars Digest*. The first one was printed in September 2020. This one here in August 2024 is #23.

For the first two issues of the Digest I printed 50 copies. The next few I didn't print as many, because what I discovered was I still had all the other ones, and I still do four years later. Eventually by the time I got to issue #7 I only printed a handful, and I didn't even finish binding those. I kept making the digests, but I started putting them online in digital form rather than printing them out. Included within the pages of some of the previous digests are things related to poetry. So oddly enough three years before making a documentary about poetry, I was fundamentally publishing poetry. At the time though I didn't think of it like that. My thoughts were that I had a creative outlet in the form of a 'magazine' and I could include poetry within those pages. As mentioned, some of my *Birds of Mars* bandmates are poets, and it felt natural for me to include them within this creative endeavor. That is just kind of how I think. I like to collaborate with others in creative ways. Sometimes when you do that you just do it and those are the people you want to collaborate with the most. You just do something and you just let it happen and there's not a big production; that always seems to be the best art. There is an interview with Rufus in one of them, as well as some of his haiku. Tommy has some poetry in a few issues as well, as do a few of my other

friends. After I stopped making printed copies of the *Digest*, I also stopped including poetry, I don't know why.

This was also the time, early 2021, that I wrote the opera based on Aeschylus' play *Prometheus Bound*. I don't know what else to call it. It's not a musical. It seems more like an opera. I've written about all this in those digests, and I point anybody in that direction who is interested in knowing more about this opera. I'd love to see it performed somehow, but that would require a lot of other people to be involved. I've kind of moved beyond this opera, and I'm thinking about a new work—a musical—which would have to do with poetry, and I'll probably call it *What is Poetry?* Actually I've already written a few tunes for it, and I plan to develop this further.

Which brings us to 2024 and the documentary *What is Poetry?* So what is *What is Poetry?* It is simply a catchphrase to describe things related to what began as a film project. Some actor friends expressed interest in being in a movie I wanted to make called *Martha*. I wanted Tommy to be in the film as well. I had previously made several movies with him, including *Friends and Strangers*, *The Plague Doctor*, and *Another Game of Pool*. The part I had written for him for the new movie was of him playing himself as an actor. Within the film he would go to an audition for the part of Martha.

So right away we have a film within a film, like that Fellini film. The main film which we are watching is called *Martha*. Martha is also a role within another film which is referenced in the main film. The main film includes scenes with actors auditioning for the role of Martha. The scene they are auditioning for in that film is of the character Martha rehearsing for the lines for an audition she is preparing for. In that scene she is rehearsing lines with her acting coach. For the audition there's only one line, actually just one word—"Algebra."

The parts I had written for Tommy also included a scene of poet friends talking about poetry—trading ideas and poems. The other actors in that scene wouldn't be actors per se, they would be some of Tommy's actual poet friends, and

that scene wouldn't be acted out, it would be real for them—some poet friends talking about poetry. The idea for making this movie began in either November or December 2023.

It's almost never good to start a new project in December, so we planned to begin in January by filming some of the scenes. I forgot to mention that we also had a place to show the film on a weekly basis, so we could screen parts of it as we filmed it week to week, which seemed fun. So everything was in place, but what ended up happening wasn't close to how these plans were laid out. What happened was the fictional part of the film called Martha which involves scripts and actors, a train ride to Vermont, and animation, didn't happen. It could happen easily now with ai, but that's besides the point. However the documentary style scene with Tommy Twilite and his poet friends did happen. After filming them talking about poetry I realized that that footage contained a film in and of itself. I edited it to 25 minutes and I thought of it in the following manner:

What is Poetry? Part One. An Ongoing Documentary.

The poets friends in the documentary are Tommy, Michael Favala Goldman, Howie Faerstein, and LD Green. We subsequently met several times through the spring, continuing to videotape conversations about poetry. Michael, who is a board member at the Northampton Center for the Arts, organized an afternoon of poetry readings as part of the Northampton Literary Walk, and the film was premiered there in April. It can also be seen on YouTube.

So after the screening of *What is Poetry? Part One* in April I started thinking of what else to do with the poetry thing. Meanwhile my friend Misha, a great pianist, and I were playing Saturday afternoons at the *Drawing Board Brewery* in Florence. Then I got the idea to have a weekly featured poet read for 30 minutes or so, and we would play before and after they read. In August 2024 we began the readings. So far it is going really well and we will continue.

So one of the things which caught my attention is the idea of the reading. The poetry reading. And what the poets

all seem to all say is they really would like at least 20 minutes if not longer to read their poetry, maybe 30 to 40 minutes. So I kept that in mind, because when I did go to a poetry reading I found that sometimes I would get too caught up in how many poets there were, and which number poet was reading at the time, and how long things were going, because usually there's three or four poets so it's probably going to go over an hour, and really over an hour is really more than I think people are meant to focus in on any one thing, no matter what that thing may be. 20 to 40 minutes in my mind seems like the right amount of time. And then also the notion of just having only one poet read interested me. Because what it seems like it would do is remove all of the associated thoughts about the other poets. Now there are situations where you might want to have a lot of poets and maybe it would be good to have 10 poets each read for four minutes and that would be cool. And maybe sometimes three poets would read over the course of an hour, and that's fine. Having just one poet for the entire event seems appealing to me as well. As a performer, musician, I like to have time to explore the music. While it is possible to perform a song in five minutes and give it a really good performance, it is quite a different thing to perform for two hours. I prefer two hours over five minutes if I had a choice. Four hours is best.

That about sums up poetry and me. Making the documentary with the poets was a great experience in part because of the approach I took. I didn't have any irons in the fire so to speak. I just let the poets talk. It was all fascinating to me. I learned quite a bit about poetry. About the process and the protocols of being a poet. What I discovered is there are a lot of analogies to other creative arts. And since I'm an artist I was able to absorb quite a bit from what the poets were saying. When it comes to art I'm all about process, and as the poets talked about process I paid attention. I took away quite of lot, and for that I'm grateful. I'm still learning from and interacting with the poets.

Coda

What I've come to realize is that I can think a sentence a lot quicker than I can either speak or type it. For example these first two sentences I thought (spoke in my mind) in 5 seconds. It takes me 15 seconds to speak them aloud however. Typing takes about 45 seconds. Writing by hand takes 75 seconds.

This translates into the following:

Method	words per	hour	minute	alchemy
Write:		1,800	30	earth
Type:		3,000	50	water
Speak:		9,000	150	air
Think:		28,000	450	fire

When I tell this to writers they always seem to get upset. They don't seem to want to know.

Writing is thinking. There's no way to get the word into text without thinking it first (unless you are engaged in some form of automatic writing.) When I tell this to writers they always seem to get very upset. They get frazzled. Then they hate on me. They say it's different for different people, and usually run away. Sometimes though, someone will remain to have a conversation about it, but they still don't want to hear what I am actually saying. They are trying to tell me that it is different for different people. When I say to them that the five minute conversation we just had was around 500 words they really go off the hinge. When I suggest that if they have a conversation with themselves for an hour spread out over the course of a day they will have written 6000 words, and in two weeks they will have enough for a novel, they go absolutely ballistic. They want four months to write 6000 words, not a day. It doesn't matter though, because the chances of someone reading what they wrote are pretty slim anyway.

As a writer I know all of this as a fact because I've done numerous experiments to learn this. It is a truth not a belief. I am trying to help them by demystifying what writing is. They double-down on their belief that it is something else, something difficult, something that is a magical struggle they can't achieve. They don't want to embrace the reality of what writing actually is—thinking. I can't say I blame them. I once held all of their beliefs as well, but readers of my book *Alt Lit Now!* (2020) know how I overcame this misconception. If anything is to come out of any of the writing I am doing, I hope that it would be delivering this information to those who want and are ready to hear it. Even if this doesn't make their compositions easier to produce, they would at least know the pathway to success. If they chose, they could abandon their false beliefs. They don't seem to want to do this, because that means perhaps they would actually complete the writing they are trying to do, and it seems they don't want to do that.

This concludes this edition of the literary zine, *Birds of Mars Digest #23*; 29,627 words written in August 2024. I'm done with writing for writing's sake for now. I have to focus on creating artwork for the November exhibition at the Woodstar Café. Yesterday I found a beautiful stretched canvas by the side of the road. Perfect timing. It is 2x2 feet and light weight. I also found a book by Tom Wolfe called *The Painted Word* (1975) which claims to “expose the myths and men of modern art.” I am looking forward to reading it to see if there's any correlation with all of the writing I have done—which to my mind, in part, exposes some of the myths of writing. We shall see. I wasn't planning to print copies of this, but now I think I will. It is a compendium to *Digest #22*. I anticipate the next digest will be mostly color images of new artworks, and I will put those on my webpage.

Meanwhile one of the poets canceled their reading at the brewery this coming Saturday. It is too late to find a replacement poet, so I've decided to write some poetry this week about when I played piano at the Wild Chestnut Café for a year, and be the featured poet at the event.