

BERNADETTE MAYER & CLARK COOLIDGE
THE LETTERS, 1982–95

[Letter handwritten]

December sixth [1982]

Dear Clark,

Do you have something you'd like to contribute to UTOPIA? I'm getting it ready to publish + since it's also being indexed!, I need to have everything together as soon as I can. The index is great, in many ways better than the book which is what I'd hoped. So please send me a contribution if you want to make one!

It's 62° on Dec. 6th – strange days, what's it like up there? Is it balmy? Here the air is questionable + so are the human natures of many beings I encounter, but then I'm sure I've been awful too in my time.

I just finished painting the kids' room a shade of Persian blue that's now called hyacinth. It's looking quite perfect tho Wm. Burroughs is quoted in the NY Times today as saying: "the basic flaw in all utopias is to seek victory without battle." (speaking amongst Anthony Hecht + Mario Cuomo!)

Here, parochially, we're just struggling to put the toys away, clean up the discarded orange peels + get the children comfortably to bed in time to have time for ourselves to study the maps, forms + beings, much less all the rest.

I'd love to see you sometime – any chance of that?

Here's some Lake Buel pictures in various forms. Did you see the review of MIDWINTER DAY in the Eagle?

Please write soon——

Love

Bernadette

December 26, 1982

Dear Susan, Celia and Clark,

Many thanks for the wonderful presents! What a pleasure! The children practically raped the package and in no time at all were industriously producing millions of new drawings, after which i managed to retrieve one of the rainbow crayons for my own private pleasure. How're you guys? Havent seen you in so long! I wish we didnt have so many children so it'd be more possible to drop everything and surprise you some winter night. Actually I've got a secret plan to maybe come to visit you, just me and Marie, if that would seem possible to you. though i dont know when i can do it either. now it's the poetry project benefit that involves me. but let me know if you think it's a good idea and i'll try & engineer it. Here everything's ok and we're all fine, having been through two of these rather febrile bouts of unnaturally warm weather so far this winter, then everyone gets slightly sick. on xmas it was foggy and 60 degrees! we walked out, having been at rosemary's house, and it seemed like a steam bath. it's very odd isnt it? what was it like there? Sophia says she's certain the seasons have made a mistake which means, she continues, it will be summer sooner, then she adds "I really dont care mom." Max is big and fat, now weighs 40 lbs at age 2½! I dont know why except for the fact that he cannot stop eating, has two or three breakfasts every day and I've seen him eat five bananas at a shot, but sophia used to eat that way too and she's now a pretty normal-sized person. Max's main problem is that everyone feels obliged to remark to him all the time that he "looks like a girl." It is really only because he doesnt have what they call a boys' haircut but some people even go on to add that xxxx aside from his hair, he's "too cute to be a boy"! what an odd world. I was thinking to solve this problem by always putting a real leather belt on his pants, perhaps he should even wear a tie. Marie's just very grownup now, has excellent social skills and polite table manners and a great love of making conversation x one-to-one. Sophia continues to be the wild child except in kindergarten where she feels very disgruntled that, she says, nothing is learned and the children get out of hand. Of course the schools are always a problem and even though Marie and Sophia have two of the best teachers there, there are constant battles to be fought: the battle against giving the kids candy (sophia's teacher gives out behaviorist m&m's during the rest period to keep the children quiet), the battle against the children being treated like incipient prison rioters in the lunchroom where, until we protested it, the kids were "forbidden" to talk while they ate! & this year we won the battle of, during the xmas show, all the girls being forced to be "wind-up dolls" with all the boys winding them up! **["up" drops into next para]**

I really am very happy this year during the xmas vacation that there is no school to deal with, the morningxs are so much happier for all of us though i'm disappointed to notice i'm exhausted today anyway from benefit mania which is much more difficult for me this year because bob holman and his lover just had a baby who, though she was entirely healthy when she was born, was put in the intensive care part of the hospital because the doctors thought there might be danger of an infection, whatever that means. the poor child had to have her every function monitored even to the extent of the doctors telling her mother that they'd noticed when she nursed her, the baby's heart rate slowed! well no wonder! anyway they are all fine but have been through an ordeal so i've taken over all the last week's work at planning the benefit and in my desperation today hired myself another assistant as there are things to be done like going out and buying buckets full of sand so people can put their cigarettes out. I mean i dont mean to use age as an excuse but i feel my wholehearted

devotion to this school spirit sort of thing that is the poetry project sometimes is just not up to (due to my old age) buying buckets and sand. though actually that's probably alot more fun than listening to the people who call up the poetry project duringx holidays, and i remember from the last two years that many lonely and sometimes crazy people tend to call, just to have somebody to talk to, at this time of year. it's amazing how the phone is often used for that; i myself do it. now i've got obsessed with the subject of sand buckets which i think it is fun to shop for (that sort of thing) in the country, but not in the city – that is my final word on them. Today I engineered and saw the fruition of the ordering and xx delivery of no less than 1200 bottles of Molson's Canadian Beer. So that is what my life is like, well not entirely. The children luckily enjoy spending time at the poetry project which i have equipped with brilliant and numerous magic markers and of course there's lots of paper, plus for the older ones there's a locked yard that they can be in without me, so Lewis and I have been taking turns this week either I take them to work or he takes two of them to the museum or aquarium. i still have a fantasy that kidsx ought to be outdoors all the time but i think that fantasy is mainly about myself. meanwhile the amazing complex personal relationships of life here continue to multiply themselves, mainly as far as i can understand it, because everyone is very upset and worried about money and these horrible concerns have caused alot of people to completely lose their accuracy of perception about other things, most especially poetry and how the amounts of money involved in being paid for readings and other work as a poet are still so miniscule, even with inflation!, as to be unaccountable. Yet i think some friends and acquaintances of ours are very jealous of lewis and me because we do make a living in this city working at poetry, that is if you can call what i do working at poetry. whereas i think if anyone's to be jealous of us, they ought to be jealous because our children are healthy and we've been able to deal with our own personal problems enough at least to "maintain" our love and because we have the perspicacity to make time for ourselves to write. (i guess celia's not going to be too interested in this part of the letter, i've gone off on a tangent, which has as much to do with all of us getting a bit older as it does with what people call economics. It's funny what happens to people's consciousnesses when they have babies, i've never ceased to be amazed by it. peggy recently assured me that though it might seem otherwise, she had never seen a human being truly "changed" by having children, but i think you could safely use the word rearranged maybe. Having a child seems to have turned bob holman into a real person who is now reliable and pleasant to be with & turns out to be very intelligent now that i can know him; on the other hand it's turned harris into one of the ones who's obsessed in the worst manner, in my opinion, about money. I dont know if you've seen the recent issue of THE WORLD but when you do you will see what i mean as he chose to open it with an epigram about money which i think is horrifying in its intent, and also in its context seems somewhat to be the "philosophy" of the poetry project, which of course it isnt. to tell you the truth, though this is embarrassing to say, i often feel like a saint here because i struggle so much to keep real spiritual values clear for myself and even for other people in a way, and also i have to work so hard to do mundane things like be very patient, control my anger, see the other side of the question, and also! xxxxxx turn the other cheek! believe it or not, there is still someone in the world doing that. I remember david rubinfxine, my old psychiatrist, telling me that what was important was to express one's anger but i've still never learned to do that, or only a little bit. Anyway life here is always rather overwhelming, with our schedule and even just the need to feed all of ourselves which i often think could take up all of the time, but lewis and i continue to attempt to continue to

be sane people plus poets & well isnt that a funny idea. I've recently been re-reading plato's Republic and am flabbergasted. Also Larry McMurtry's Cadillac Jack – what did you think of that? I actually read it twice. Oh I wish you were here or we were there, to converse, and I havent even ended the parentheses yet!)

[handwritten:] Write soon! We miss you. LOVE, + thanks Bernadette et alia

January 4, 1983

Dear Bernadette,

You know how hard it is to write to somebody who's sent you three great big unanswered letters? Embarrassing. But, we all do thank you, and I'll try. Seems it's easier than ever for me now to get completely out of the practice of letter-writing. Mainly I've been trying to get a lot written on a new big work that seems to ask for all my word-time, following the well-known unknown thread to who knows where this time. Strangely I've been writing this one completely in a single notbook(notebook!) rather than my usual pads and loose sheets. Maybe I'm insisting to myself that it be a book! Already. Though I've now got just hundreds of pages of scribbling, "for later" I keep telling myself, I'll sort it all out later and see what I've got. Unusual for me. I wonder what it is. "Secret" Notebooks? Does writing get more secret, meaning: don't let anyone tell you what it is or should be, as we go on? Seems like you've got so much "news", daily events and thoughts, and all I can relate here is that I've been sitting in a room scribbling, writing something that's nowhere near ready to show you yet. Oh well, I can probably dredge up something "current events" if I think back enough...

Mathew had a book party for Paul's two new books (both nearly totally uninteresting to me, tween you & me) featuring local types like Nunnely and David Gianini, plus the Don Byrd family (Marge more speedy-talking than ever) and a surprise in Ed Sanders who's been living in Albany (investigating the phone company!) and got dragged along with the Byrds. Fun to see him again, we seem to meet up about every four years or so. Peter Bertollette (recall him, from Metcalf babyparties?) showed up too, totally drunk and obnoxious, though he's actually fairly sweet but out of it working in mills in Connecticut and drinking with the "boys" and having more babies and getting divorced (not surprisingly). Nothing much happened, no talk memorable to report, no hum literature in the sticks. Paul had just had his knee operated on but seemed standing up okay. Gianini, whose wife we just met and seems much more interesting than himself, kept insisting that I should read Ted Enslin(!) and Cid Corman (who evidently just gave a reading at Bennington). Shore. I often thesedays wonder just what if anything I have to do with all this. I just got a (form) letter from Pushcart Prize telling me that Lyn Hejinian had selected me for the anthology this year, but I found it totally boring and more than a little insulting to find them telling me I should go through all my mag-appearances of 1982 and select out six pages for their consideration, so I threw it away. Fuck them. And I never like that name "Pushcart" anyway.

Oh shit, this is all too boring to believe, or waste your brain on. Guess the best of me brains went into that notebook. We spent newyears eve with the (Geoff) Youngs over at their palatial digs in Egremont; hilltop sprawling old household with great spreading views of Mount Everett, a part of the hills I'm not used to. Looks like they'll keep it for another year, may even move here permanently. Laura likes it, mostly, and her health is better here. Geoof (yeah) is gone a bit manic, has been to Paris and NYC(3 or 4 times) already this Fall, and threatens to drag me on a weekend tour of D.C. & Philly museums in a couple weeks. He doesn't seem to require any quiet time. Funny to have such a bouncy neighbor! Then he gets drunk and asks me strange dumb questions about my book (Mine), like why I had to use "coy" novelistic conventions at all, etc. Huh!?!? I wonder whereof he speaks. It all seems to turn into cornflakes.

I've been reading through lots of Japanese novels: Kobo Abe, Mishima, Kawabata (who's the best so far), and at this rate and direction may finally end up in Lady Murasaki-land (as Phil Whalen has been hectoring me for years). Ever read any of this stuff? Fascinating how they keep such a clear spaced surface while barely beneath there's constantly all this high-wire conflict and kinky eroticism. Kawabata has this one where an old man goes to the House of the Sleeping Beauties where he goes to bed with young girls who've been deeply drugged so they can never wake up no matter what he does or doesn't. He mostly thinks about death and youth. Anyway it's fun not to know where any of this is leading me.

I haven't written any letters in so long that, excepting your letters, I don't know what's going on anywhere. Kind of nice actually. To be the center of what myself am doing fairly entirely and not have to think about others' tangents for a while. Totally contra to your life? I can hear you speaking enviously already but it's just temporary, I mean who can maintain such a centrum for long? And actually I'm sort of lying, I do find myself wondering what everybody's doing far away. Ah, solitude, the only real gift one can give to oneself. Anyway, did I tell you that Larry called and asked me to consider a 10-weeker at Naropa in jan-feb-march 1984? Well, he did that, and I said I'd maybe do it, I mean it would be nice to get away from here during those months for a change, plus I could teach a course in Kafka/Beckett which I would like to immerse in. But of course it depends on money and whether they get enough students, etc. Probably won't know one way or the other till next Fall. The three of us would go, get a house there, might be fun. Actually I expect to hear that Trungpa has died, the school collapsed, and Larry run off to xxx write scripts for Chips.

Can't get up any real interest in "current" writing, all the present wars and theories etc. seem totally boring. And I like to read stuff that takes me far away from "understandable" writing concerns. Fantasizing that I'm about to just up and disappear to somewhere wayback where I seriously smoke myself to death while writing an interminable tome of spiritual ramblings, which is about what I am doing right now anyway. And have lots to drink thewhile. Is this a classic "writer's" burn-out and fade away? I'm sure I don't have a clue. Nothing really seems worth contributing to, solitude the only lamp. Blah, that's somewhat romanticized, no? But still... Geoff told me that Alan Davies went out to SF and gave a lecture to the LangCrew all about how writing is a religious pursuit, can you believe that? No doubt he meant it as a "concept"(!)

Yes, the weather has been oddly mild here too. Tiny snow comes and evaporates the next afternoon (it did it again today). Of course all this prefigures vast snow bangers to come, soon enough no doubt. This is the Hill Mind speaking. But Xmas was a mild Novemberish day of still twigs. My folks came and stayed a week, almost too much, my father's getting forgetful. And I worry increasingly about him driving the car at age eighty. I went down and drove them to Princeton over Thanksgiving and then back to Providence. Probably should have done same to get them up here and back for Xmas too. Old people.

Celia's upstairs wearing out the copy of MEN At Work she asked for and I got her for Xmas, which sounds like an Aussie updated Kinks with a David Byrne quiver on the end. She expressed astonishment when she heard that Ray Davies got married to Chrissie Hynde (do you know any of this Rock-scene gossip? I barely do myself). Yesterday she made a great paper mache "Buddha" for school that actually looks more like an ancient xxxxxx Chinese warrior(!) Maybe she'll flunk! But you won't believe how tall and gorgeous she looks, and we're starting to have

great talks thesedays, even though she's starting to be all involved with clothes(!) Oh, and yeah, your idea to come up with Maria and visit is a great one, please do, anytime, we'd love it! This has been a sort of fill-in-the-gaps letter I guess, but I had to send you something. Sorry I couldn't contribute to Utopia but I just can't get in the mood. I'm sure I'll reread the work when it's published and think it's great and feel sorry I didn't do something for it. But, so it all passes and weaves. Loved your poem in the last UA. And the Lake Buell shots! Wish I had some to send you in exchange. Anyway, more soon.

And LOVE to you all,
Clark

February 6, 1983

Dear Clark,

Gee, I was reluctant to write you back, so's to keep you uninformed! which I think is a fine idea too. Do you read the papers? Sometimes when I lie in bed about to be sleeping, it's not that I have trouble getting to sleep so much as I realize that two thousand minute pieces of human-nature information are invading my precious pre-sleep thoughts. Lately I occasionally take some homeopathic sleeping pills which have something in them (lecithin) which vivifies (that a word?) the memory, and when I take them I begin to have little visions & can forget all the details of the day & then when I wake up I have a most astonishing memory of my dreams – well as you can imagine, this is the kind of “pill” I could become quite addicted to, but don't worry, they don't even sell them anymore. But what was I talking about? oh being informed, or uninformed. I don't know if it's solitude that I crave; in fact I'm sure it's not, but peace and time to think my own thoughts and you may laugh when I say time to order my existence in the way I want it to be, my papers, the place I'm living in + I wanna be able to get enough sleep all the time. Now I know this is too much to expect in any life. Being uninformed about “current events” or even “current” writing is probably very sensible; I often think of this time working at the Poetry Project as a contribution I'm making of public time to work I consider valuable, though not particularly valuable to myself. I may be kidding myself but it sure isn't a question of money cause the amount of time I spend on it could produce, at some other job in this world that exists now, twice as much money as I earn, though I do have the advantages of having no “boss,” etc. Ha ha it's not a company! though somebody could turn it into one! I have ideals about how to work with other people & lately I find myself being told or advised to “act more like the boss”, “be more authoritarian or autocratic”! it's amazing isn't it? David Garcia (who's the Rector of St. Mark's (I'm a Di-rector & Steve Facey is an E-rector))recently told me I “had to” develop an “interest” in power. I can't help but use a lot of quote marks when I tell you these things as I cannot believe the true meanings of the sounds? words? His point seemed to be that deciding who's to read and therexxxby have an audience for their work means possessing power over those people; mine was that there's a point where “power” no longer exists in the light of systematic objectivity and professionalism, though those have never been attributes of anything literary – maybe? Anyway why would I ever care to care for power? I think questions of power make people who are poets feel like they're grownups at last, as if they could finally get to act like corporate executives; but then I suppose women and men have always dealt with power in love. Ah what am I talking about? & why? Tell me more about your secret notebooks or notbooks, SECRET NOTBOOKS! SECRET NOTBOOK. Somebody told me that Lew Welch's wife(?) is the owner of the Liquid Paper company. I myself need a project (not a white-out company) as I'm drifting around still working to some extent on Utopia, but mainly writing millions of poems that seem to drift off the typewriter late at night but they're not enough and I want to structure something larger, I almost feel like I'm not using my whole brain just letting these poems be written wherein I haven't the vaguest idea what I'm doing. I read the whole of Midwinter Day at the Ear Inn recently & that was fun, a real athletic event, 3½ hours, reading to a great attentive audience. somebody referred to the intermission as half-time. Reading the last half of the work I began to get so high I could simultaneously read and meditate about past-present-future & about intentions to write & I began to realize the work was memorized already & could read without the text. Except for trying to write utopia and trying to translate greek & latin this past year, this reading was the most intellectual fun I've had in a long time. Ed Sanders gave a

terrific reading here with all his invented instruments; then a workshop where he talked about perpo & regpo (performance poetry & regular poetry).

I thought it might amuse you that I just got a letter from Lyn Hejinian in which she says that Barry says that Lewis & I published a reviews issue of United Artists before issue #7 in which you, Clark, have “a sort of ‘personal use’ kind of review” that she would like to read. I haven’t the vaguest idea what she’s referring to, but it must be some aspect of “Weathers” since that was in all six of the first U.A.’s. So now, apart from your “coy novelistic conventions” you’re being accused of writing “personal use reviews” though I can’t fathom the meaning of that phrase at all. The “language poets” have been receiving a lot of “press” lately. Ha! I believe this could be categorized as coy personal use! Lewis told me today that Robert Lowell published his first book of poems at age 29 or so & immediately got millions of prizes and acclaim & was a famous poet ever after. I never knew that. Do you ever meditate fame lately? It’s an odd idea that relates a lot more, I’m sure, though I don’t know, to Chrissie Hynde than to me and you. Isn’t fame Lady Di’s affair? Well, Clark, at least you’re smoking and drinking for a good cause; the smoking & drinking I do in the service of the Poe. Proj. I have grave doubts about.

Tomorrow’s Max’s third birthday and today was our first real snowstorm, a gentle one that’s still falling & now that I look out again the flakes are getting bigger so it might be a real one. I hope so. I hope all the kids can stay home from school tomorrow & we can have some fun. I’ve already planned to take the day off to honor myself on Max’s birthday – I now have three children all of whom can finally communicate fully [→: ?] in words! [→: can we?] I’m going to sleep late and then I suppose go out & play in the snow, then make a dinner for Rosemary & Peggy & Grace to celebrate the birthday, we had one today for Lewis’s parents who are now suffering from whatever the repercussions are for them of their daughter’s having split up with her third husband. Amazingly Lewis & I realized she’d been married to one Catholic person, one Jewish person and one Protestant person, if you’ll forgive our analytical bent. Of course the question might be, must a Buddhist be next? I’m being flippant about this because she, Susie, doesn’t seem unhappy at all though Lewis’s parents are rather wildly trying to understand why it is that their children have had so many mates & oddly enough it’s my children & no one else who’s going around asking “where’s John?” (the errant husband who, we’re now told, is a compulsive gambler & lost \$10,000 betting on the football game point spreads last year!). So many things these days, in love and poetry even, seem to be questions of money. It’s almost as if Reagan’s tactic about unemployment is to scare people into taking multiple jobs and earning more than they even need, for fear; & though I know there are people who truly can’t find work, that’s a manipulation too. Z& now all the poets are working for word processing & typesetting places & proofreading places, all having to do with these new machines that exist in the world. Speaking of religion, did you know that Alan Davies is the son of a minister? though I suppose I believe writing is “religious” though I’d never use that word but after all you’re a recluse, and I’ve been one, I mean a hermit, and I act like a savior too sometimes & Lewis often behaves like a Talmudic scholar, not to speak of the Buddhist. Simon Schuchat, on the other hand, seems to be embarking on a career as a diplomat! & warned me the FBI was going to call me up to check on his security clearance! & what am I to say? that Simon has always made me, through his tall masculine warmth, feel very secure?

Now here I’ve been very controlled & am on the verge of ending a letter to you after only two pages! That thought renders me speechless, yet it’s still snowing that kind of flying around snow that seems to be going as much up as falling down. It’ll be interesting to see what the city

looks like in the morning & luckily we just replaced all the kids leaky boots with new ones. Now I go to think all my pre-sleep thoughts again, tonight clearer maybe because of the snow?

See you soon.

Love,

Bernadette

February 11, 1983

Dear Bernadette,

This prompt start in answer is part of my new vow not ever to let letters pile up again, and I wonder how long this'll last(?) Anyway, a ploy (what, I wonder, is involved in the transformation from "vow" to "ploy"?), toward aid in remembering what I was talking about that you are now (letter) responding to. All this kind of plan makes for an itchy syntax?

Oh, before I forget it again (meant to ask in last letter), Michael Palmer is editing a "poetics" issue of IO (yeah, I know, but wait a minute!) which should be of some interest since he's doing it (it won't be "Language or else"), and so it occurred to me that I have some things here of yours that might be appropriate. Rememberx "The Obfuscated Poem" page you sent me years ago? Plus those excerpts I made from your Studying Hunger Journals? I think I sent you a copy of those(?) If it's okay with you I'd be willing to type copies and send them to him. Anyway tell me what you think, if you have other things you'd rather send, even if you don't want to send anything. "The Obfuscated Poem" I figure shouldn't be "lost", is of interest and hasn't been published (or has it and I didn't see?). The Studying Journal excerpts you might well consider a plundering of that work, and they are in a way, but since the total work might be "considered unpublishable at present" (as was once said of Visions of Cody!), it might not matter ultimately and the excerpts in the meantime be of interest to somebody. I would attach a comment that they were excerpted by me so you wouldn't have to take the blame. It would be no sweat for me to type these, so maybe I could be some help in this, save time, etc. But, whatever, let me know. I sent him some excerpts from my journals for him to choose from, arrange, etc. Couldn't imagine writing any kind of formal "piece" on this at the moment. Wish I could actually, especially after seeing POETICS JOURNAL with its endless Barryfied time-wastage. Where is the great clear-the-air statement that we need?!?! Or is that itself a stupid concept? All I can seem to do is go on working in the only way I can.

Well, the thing is it's impossible to be "uninformed", though that might seem like a worthy goal, almost a "religious discipline"?, at this point. Most days before dinner I do sit down with Jack Daniels and the Berkshire Eagle, a habit now, and grow amused bored but mostly (with the "big deal" news) angrily frustrated to the extent I wonder if I should quit doing this, what am I doing to myself? It gets to be like regularly reading some critic you know is going to horribly piss you off. Which I still do with Paulene Kael and really must stop it. When she trashed Godard's *Sauve Qui Peut* I actually began to think of ways one might blow up her house in Great Barrington! But reading newspapers has never been any kind of grand design in my life, probably since I early reacted negatively to my father's total addiction to them, pages strewn around the house through the whole week, etc. It always seemed a silly kind of thing to be committed to, and of course I always had other reading I'd much rather do. Otherwise it always seemed a "city habit" I just never picked up (reading the Times with breakfast, etc.). Your "memory pill" seems a far preferable addiction(!)

But, solitude... I dunno if that's quite the word for the state I desire either. Certainly it makes sense concerning the state you hope for in writing, those hours. But any kind of real Saint Jerome number is totally beyond me, somebody else's legend. It sometimes amuses me that I'm thought of so generally as a recluse or hermit since I actually do see a lot of people here. Well, more than I used to even a year ago anyway. But why should poets think it strange at all to protect one's working hours? That's just strange.

And speaking of “other legends”, could it be the Frank O’Hara story of writing in a room full of people has caught on to the extent that that’s the “challenge”? I can’t imagine doing that, though quite often when I’m writing in dreams (not so often) there are other people there. And I remember Guston having dreams of painting in big rooms full of people.

Power, odd concept, especially for poets, no? I agree with you re po proj machinations, or possible ones anyway. Always makes me think of Gregory’s great “standing on a street corner waiting for no one is power” statement to poets. Does no one think this? Or must we also WIELD? Is anyone “taking care of power”? Strange concept these days. And power in making poems goes helplessly through so many transformations that I can never come out of that feeling I DID IT! Or at any rate me alone. I probably “did” (?) but I don’t know exactly how. Which leads back into the great problem of writing “reviews, essays” etc. Yes, I did know that Lowell had immediate public success and it’s always amazed & confounded (& scared) me, made me feel real lucky that didn’t happen to me. It’s bad enough to finally be known for doing anything, so that later people make you take time to think about pasts no longer your direct business. Sometimes I think how great it would be if writings really did “go out into the world” forever! And then it might not be so bad to suddenly run into them again, coming around the corner like somebody you never think about. Actually, that might be horrible too!

My “secret” notebooks are not so secret, now that I seem to be telling about them, but just work in one “place” rather than on the loose sheets pads etc I’ve usually used. I don’t “see” this work whole yet, just somehow know it’s there waiting for me to “take a look of it”, type it, rearrange finally etc. Still haven’t looked back at what I’ve done much yet (ha?), but feel I will soon and see. I suspect it actually is a fairly “hermetic” work and not the “outside” kind of thing I’d xxxxxx thought I would be doing “next”, what I actually want to do more. Hmm, I just realized that “outside” has the old jazz-meaning for me of ultimate free craziness, so what am I telling myself? A term that stuck, I guess. Not so “free”, Clark! But I do wonder a lot now about our being so fragmented, full of multiplicity rather than largeness/wholeness, what is the word? , as if there were a force we can’t avoid. What is that? This has to do, I suspect, very much with what you describe as the desire to “structure something larger”. Me too. And yet I still feel that if I don’t “let” all kinds of things come in while writing I’ll be stuck with a very real emptiness, a “not the whole story” aspect. Peculiar. I’m peculiar? It fascinates me, for example, to learn that Manet always thought he wanted to be a typical secure Bougeois portrait painter but just couldn’t be that. What is specifically locked in that “couldn’t”??? Wherefrom comes the instruction, the impulse, the barrier? Outside or inside, or both, or is it “something else”? (there is no term for) I don’t believe it always comes strictly from the “history of art” (up to one’s time, etc.). What then? Nothing but questions for you (for me) this morning...

I can’t imagine what that thing Lyn mentions might be either. Strange term (“personal use kind of review”), no doubt Barryspeak. All I can think of is that it might be a misreference to that issue of THE WORLD with all those reviews & comments etc. She hasn’t mentioned it to me, in fact in her letters to me so far anyway she has never used such language. Maybe a kind of Barry-role (Barrymore?) she plays sometimes? Whenever I meet her she always seems such a xxxxxxxxxxxx bright friendly jargonless family person that I xxxxxx wonder at (particularly) her PoeticsJournal mode.

Wish I could have heard you read Midwinter Day. Somehow surprised me to hear it took 3½ hours, must be the prose sections that slow it down a

bit? Anyway, it was taped? Wonderful, that kind of high, makes me wish to start reading longworks again! Reading a lot of short poems never can get me on to that extent. Diving into a series of inch-deep ponds...

By the way, have you heard from Berkson lately? It's been long enough here I'm beginng to wonder. Of course I didn't answer him for a couple months back there, so probably now he's making me PAY.

They just said on the radio that today you'll be getting a snow we won't get (for once). Though the sky right now does have that pre-snow light. Maybe we'll stay on the edge. We did get a perfect snow last week, a foot of dry loose fluffy, just like in the stories.

More soon. Love to all,

Clark

**[Postcard of “Antioch, Contra Costa County, California”
postmarked March 11, 1983
typed]**

11:III:83

DEAR Bernadette -- April 17/The Brotherhood Synagogue/28 Gramercy Park South/the
memorial reading for Rose Drachler. Couldn't arrange anything but will send something for the
occasion.//Thanks for trying.//If you or any poets wd like to participate in the program, contact
Rochelle Ratner/737-0486/ or Charles Doria/925-5548.//All best to you and Lewis Clark

March 18, 1983

Dear Clark,

I wrote you a long & long-winded letter a while ago in answer to your last & never sent it, probably because the details & dramas of life here seem to change so quickly from day to day that a big outpouring letter gives me second thoughts a day later. Also I suppose I'm doubtful about how much that is going on would interest you, I'm not even sure how much it interests me. Recently we went to court with our landlord again, for instance, having withheld out of the last 13 months, 11 months rent. It seems very funny to me to really be in court, after Ted & Harris's bullshit of trying to take me to some court of their own, and hilariously Lewis has been asked to be a judge in a poetry contest tomorrow. I'm pretty tired and depressed though xxxxxxx apparently I'm "winning" all my "cases." The landlord battle, which I've chosen to fight, takes alot of time & energy; the other battle, in which I would never fight, consumes energy anyway & is the more depressing of the two, since there's nothing to be learned from it.

Hope you got my message through Bill C. that it is fine to send those works to Michael Palmer. I assume you think 'the obfuscated poem' has some value? Could you send me a copy of that, if it's no trouble? as I cant find it. & thank you for doing it. I think those are terrific choices & would love people to read your excerpts from the Studying Hunger Journals.

I spent a wonderful time on the trains back & forth to Boston studying MINE & making outrageous theoretical notes for a review. On both trips I fell asleep right at Providence! & began adding to the work in my dreams. I hope to actually put the review (wrong word perhaps, I should call it "preconscious notes on mine"!) into sentences & publish it in Andrei's "Exquisite Corpse" – have you seen it? or maybe the newsletter, but I think someone else is reviewing it there. I love to make notes but sort of hate writing "reviews" so I'll do my best & let you see it, sending it along with some questions if I have them, before I do anything else with it.

How did you like the Fairfield Porter show? All too much pleasure for one day, I felt & kept wishing for the chance to go back later, which we didnt have. The combination of the light in his paintings & the combined daylight & spotlights in the museum was confusing to my eyes & although the show was enormous I kept wishing to see the truly complete works, including every sketch & drawing. Seeing that show made me wish to see everything else in the world also & of course know everything, etc. which brings us to the question you mention of where is the great clear-the-air statement that we need. Maybe it's just my present mood, but I think the tendency of poets & maybe of everyone is to get depressed & not be able to perceive everything. I wonder about it all very much, hearing & reading so much poetry as I do now (tho not having read so much, also) and last summer I even tried to write some such "statement" & even xxxxxxx started re-perusing such a text as THE CONTINUITY OF AMERICAN POETRY, which of course was useless. Besides poetry, I also wind up reading thru the poetry project lots of newsletters and magazines and announcements and press releases etc. about poets and poetry and I guess I've been developing the theory that despite the fact that people seem to be struggling to have an opinion about american poetry that is new & everybody's got a different set of ideas or list of who are the great poets, I doubt that any or much of what is said is of any importance at all. Historically I think the american black & spanish poets, especially the second generation spanish poets who grew up speaking two languages, are creating a new kind of poetry, Victor Cruz for instance. &

the tendency toward an international poetry, maybe through people's studies of etymologies (but how to include x Asian languages & Arabic?) has meaning.

Everybody's so fucking eclectic. I can ask ten different poets I respect who they think should read at the Project and I'll get thirty different answers, they never cross over! If the point could be thought of as being to get or re-get a big audience for poetry, lots of readers & hearers, as some people think you can even talk about & plan, well then in my opinion you'd have to change the whole sociological, economic, anthropological etc. ways of being of america – no? When people think of art & entertainment as what it is now, then poets must wind up being in a specialized field like philosophy / [**→ margin, typed:** I was really xx jarred by an article which appeared in the times recently which seemed to say that in Latin american countries, poets and writers were paid attention to, about life and politics, because those countries were so disorganized & highly emotional!] Well as you can see my naive thoughts aren't ready to cohere into any statement at all. Just one more thing though, witness how the language school is suddenly turning into a force of academicism. I'm um xx uh not really surprised but kinda um amused by the oh efficiency of it all like identities as in press releases, a this poet a that poet. When in (one) fact, Charles Bernstein is no longer writing this poetry at all! I sure do wish somebody could explain it all to me, or I could explain it to somebody. Recently Alice gave a reading & it seemed to me so totally parochial I began to wonder. I gave a reading too, this one at a very dinky bar but with a view of the world trade power towers, and I got two different responses: the poems are too flat because they are about things they are not great poems, and, yours are the only poems that bring in everything. So, even if we could sit down and figure out what "needed" to be done, could we do it? would we want to? I don't think people think of you as a recluse so much as they want to have you a little bit, and you won't really let them. I've noticed very profoundly how much people in this so-called community of poets don't want me to have time to write, if you can't put it that way. They get insulted if I don't come to certain readings; even Peggy & Grace get mad at me if I don't leave my house & join them to do things, when nights are the only time I have to write, and they know that. They think it's a sign of lack of independence or something; of course in your case it's a different diagnosis since you're a man. Secretly I think writing gets done, at least the writing of poetry, by some people, no matter how you live your life – going out a lot or not at all. Often when I doubt the writing's importance, I feel that it seems silly for me to covet the time to do it so much (I suppose if one did know everything! one wouldn't have that thought at all!), after all who cares/? I have a new desire to do some drawing & painting, probably as therapy of a sort & to tide me over too or maybe change my style even more radically than ever before -- from words to pictures! ha ha, if only I had some talent for pictures!

We did have a giant snowstorm, I guess it was right after you wrote me, very beautiful with thunder and lightning lighting up the sodium-vapor skies to a pinkish-purple & snow all night, I kept wishing for more & more, but it wasn't enough for my sense of drama & change in this city though we got a chance to play in it, make snowmen & try out our old sled. Now it's pouring & promises to pour for three days & there's been so little sun here in the last weeks I'm beginning to think it's November in the Berkshires. I actually saw Bill B. a few days before I got your letter, he was here for a Frank O'Hara thing at Storrs, Conn. & he'd been before that at Bolinas's version of the Millay colony writing millions of works & not writing any letters at all. I only saw him for a few hours & he seemed good, not smoking, and confused.

Everyone here is ok, Lewis had another bad back attack but found a new acupuncturist & is recovered (he was given not only acupuncture but a pile of tea that looked like the entire jungle had been ravaged for various barks, fungi & unidentifiable large chunks of things, that had to be boiled down for an hour to make one cup; then to drink it was masochistic, a real witches brew), Marie is intellectually inspired & actually does facotirals [→: factorials] (do you remember what they are?) in her spare time & often she uses my calculator! The schools are bad though and Sophia is having a hard time in kindergarten, she wishes to do more, resents being one of 25 kids with only one teacher & craves & begs for more excitement both in school & at home. For both Marie & Sophia, the teachers seem to have this weird puritanical streak which means they dont give praise, they keep saying things to me like, oh she's doing much better (then I say, what was the matter with herx in the first place!). Max remains the most satisfied & happy person in our group, though he bites & fights now & laughs deridingly at our scoldings & says he hates everything.

[handwritten:] + we all send LOVE, Bernadette

[Letter handwritten]

September 21 1983

Dear Clark,

It's strange to be back here, I keep expecting momentous monumental vital etc. conversations to take place + they dont, maybe I should make them be! I dont know why I expect this but I find, since returning, that what I most often feel is a weird kind of disappointment, not in New York City certainly (from which I doubt I've ever expected overmuch) nor even in people particularly, but something else, impossible obviously to explain, perhaps it's that feeling older because of all the deaths makes me expect more + greater things (stuff?), maybe just of my own self, as Max would put it. Every experience I've had since returning, if not outright nervewracking, has been strangely disappointing in this way (have I discovered a new neurosis!)

Anyway we're here + without no typewriters at all! Atavistic, eh? two at the shop, both dying ones. Am trying to secretly + a bit manipulatively induce Lewis's parents to bless him with a truly useful birthday present this year. If I say it outright they might balk; I have to make them think of it! Meanwhile Ray gave me the most spectacular pair of bright yellow shoes which have cheered me up alot in my resumed life on this island. It rains torrentially tonight (full moon?) after two days of oppressive heat, a taste of this summer's city. Last night George opened a shop on 5th st where he will try to sell his beautiful objects, – an opening! It was a mostly pleasant + also tense occasion.

Max is going to nursery school + loving it – they make excellent lunches. This leaves Lewis free for 6 hours a day to write! I am jealous! After so few days of this so far, Lewis has already finished first draft of his book, done endless other work + cooks all the dinners! He's a happy person. And I no longer have to bring my poetry project work home, so can have my nights free. I've read the proofs of UTOPIA + am writing a little more of it + will be able to publish it, given the \$ (we are \$2,000 in debt!) perhaps by January. It's not bad either, at least it has its moments as a book, it's a good try. I need a good cry! Everyone does, maybe. Ted's absence is too much of a presence here. Here I am answering the phones again at the church + people seem to feel they need to know "what he died of!" Then people give me this sort of half-witted sympathy in the form of "too bad Ted died while he was fighting with you!" + I think to myself, well it was he who died! Alice is having a hard time + resorted to a psychiatrist tho it's hard for me to know how she really is since she wont speak to me so I keep in touch thru Anne who I think exaggerates bad things. Truly though, as we all know, mourning is not something our "society" makes possible + odd that in this situation, where Alice + I could probably be of help to each other, she still refuses to let [that happen.] **[words in brackets are written on the bottom right corner of the page]** It's sad to me + is not helped by the absurd ways human beings like Harris are behaving (I'm told he feels it's his "duty," since Ted's death, to "keep our fight alive"). I try not to let these things affect me but it's impossible. I myself will begin various "therapies" next week, to "cure" myself of what are, I believe, completely normal feelings, yet I cant go on without what they call help. So, I'm gonna go + get some! Help! A funny word. Help to live in this world, or figure out how in this world I can life with, if not happiness, at least getting my work done. My problem is I've never really believed in that oft stated priority. So the acupuncturist will re-balance me + free me from phobias + then I'll be free to see the therapist who'll attempt to give me what they call self-confidence or something like that – I'll get an ego! When what I really need is an assistant!

+ I've a question: is this dismal lack of excitement + sense of going nowhere in writing in general just me, or a function of age, or a function of the times, or what? I don't have faith in the writing at all! I remember the Catholic issue of some priest or nun or devoted person having momentarily "lost their faith," it's like the same thing (if you'll forgive me – ha ha!).

Please tell me why are we doing it, + what specifically I should do next. I mean it. I am worried. You know my work – give me some advice. (I seem to need advice all around!).

UTOPIA was a distinct outgrowth ("growth?") of living back in NY + this work [**→ below:** (UTOPIA)] is really like a death to my work overall (not to be so dramatic, sorry). I don't foresee the future as just sitting around writing poems at all. Yet I don't understand what needs to be done either by myself (lost instinct) or "for" some reason or the world. Perhaps it's the absence of a kind of sexuality that's making me feel this way. Or a more "grownup" understanding of the whole of things (it'd be more "upbeat" if I'd go take some courses in astrophysics, I think).

Well I guess I'll take one right now by trying again to have a "problem-solving dream"; I doubt I've ever sought for one so hard!

Write soon,

Love to you + Susan + Celia,
Bernadette

[“I” key is vertically misaligned on BM’s typewriter; all upper and lowercase “i’s” appear above the baseline throughout this letter]

December 3, 1983

Dear Clark,

I havent heard from you in years it seems. I guess you are either Kafka or Beckett by now almost – or perhaps another? I miss you though I read your xxx crystal text every night, I am doing the slow almost biblical type of reading and as always with your writing it has a fascinating effect on my dreams – affect? Maybe my sense of time is just stunned as there are so many elements (balls?) to every day, but can it only be the beginning of December yet will it already by 1884 in a month? & why does my typewriter now elevate ever “I”? I would guess this is the end of a kind of school of writing and, in an unrelated message, the last issue of United Artists is on its way to you, we will no more – absence of \$, broken machines, enough! But I have more questions for you, when are you going to Boulder? and when will you be back? and do you want to read at the poetry project this year? and how are you? Here we are growing more mature every day, only joking. Here we are struggling against running dog capitalism, only partly joking. What are we doing here? Well we actually went to a dinner party last night, that’s always new yorkish sounding. At Rackstraw Downes house which is full of the most amazing paintings of intricate city vistas in ultimate realism so astonishing as to make me quiver, painted from bridges in the Bronx over highway complexes. We work like beavers all the time on poetry and home, often wondering how it came to be that we bit off such a busy life and making gigantic life plans for “after the poetry project” which I often think of as a return to dreams, in the literal sense. I now see a psychiatrist and wonder at the intricacies of that whole thing as much as at those of Rackstraw’s paintings, both so necessary or just present in this particular world. How great I think it would’ve been to have been a pacifistic Zuni about 300 years ago despite whatever the problems were like, say, head lice which my children brought home from their school recently setting off the most time-consuming sequence of events and series of precautions I think I have ever been a part of, or rather, the director of. I work at producing utopia but it goes slowly, I having grave doubts, little money, many new ideas, and the typesetter being in a similar boat. Lewis works at his novel and his other novel will appear in this world in two weeks. People behave stupidly, including ourselves and since we are in contact with so many of them this is often another element or ball. Gee, I dont knowwhat to say next. I almost went on with a further essay on people, I seem to be given to generalities tonight. Now the I is

getting lighter besides being elevated up. There's too much to tell, translating into the desire to natter on about nothing at all. Speaking of nattering I finally heard from Bill B. in the midst of his legal problems which he doesn't want anybody to know anything about so of course every second person I see asks me if I know since they do (he doesn't want his mother to find out). He sounds good though but confused and I guess you got a copy of start over. Anne & Reed have been having a hard time because Ambroses' xxxxx asthma is getting worse & he had to actually go to a hospital, yet astonishingly Reed now feels like he likes being in New York while they're both considering leaving because of this, yet Reed is leaving to go on a 3-month Buddhist retreat soon! Michael Brownstein has taken over the Fagin apartment or chair and seems as feisty as Larry and Tom Veitch is going to come here from Vermont to read, he's working on an antique automobile magazine in Bennington which I guess you already know. I can't go on with this "news", I keep writing bad political poems, boy is that a weird form or it's not a form at all, Kit Robinson and Ernesto Cardenal gave interesting readings. We've joined the Y and now can go swimming all the time and at certain times en famille, it is most wonderful, it was my birthday present to Lewis who I felt needed to rise of his chair from time to time where he sits and works all day and night in a posture that no man could expect to continuously rise from, at least without some interruption. There are so many things I want to read and as of June I do believe I will have a chance to read them all – make me a booklist! make me a list of advices too, poetry advices! I need direction from your chance at thought. Have you read Kawabata's beauty and sadness, I believe you might've said you were reading his books, have you read this thing in the New Yorker about the Freud quarrel? While sick recently I read a novel by George Kennedy, now I'm sure you could never say that. Have you read Ron Loewensohn's magnetic field(s)? Marie Max and Sophia are entering some amazing sexual sphere, they do talk dirty but that is not so new, but now they like to touch tongues and engage in sexual play of other sorts that I'm not sure if there's anything to do about, I would guess not. They're fine & seem to want to demand to be entertained (that is taken around to museums, zoos etc) more and more; happily we know a juggler who is also a cab driver (& poet). Lewis the novelist just entered the room and asked, what would be the fabric of the dress you would wear in very hot weather! I cannot tell you how many questions of this sort I've had to answer in the last year! Happily I enjoy answering questions almost as much as I love to talk on the phone (I know you can't concur) yet I feel it is grounds for divorce to marry, should we be married, a poet and wind up living with a person who writes novels. Plus, this weekend,

the children took all my pens, I not caring since I'd lost my good pen, so I kindly motherlyly said well you can have my pens if you return them to me and now they are not only stolen but lost! as one would've guessed, so when you see my signature at the end of this letter written in ballpoint, do not be personally insulted, it is only a form of fate. On my calendar for tomorrow I have written: breakfast with Anne, GET PENS, January poster to printer, etc., wont bore you with the rest. I guess I havent talked with you since all the memorial readings took place, good god, how difficult that was. Edwin's was very beautiful with a veritable pas de deux ending it by two dancers from the NYC ballet, the reading for Ted was blatantly gigantic, democratic, endless and full of an audience that preferred to drink and reminisce in the back room rather than listen. Some hated it; others loved it; I was relieved when it was over. At least if you've died you dont have to attend these things, much less get involved in organizing them. I cant tell you how many people stood up and began: I first met Ted in 19-- ..., then Tim Milk got up and lit a Chesterfield and harrumphed alot and said: I first met Tim Milk In 19--, and proceeded to do a rather scary Ted-imitation, Tim having been a student of his. The reading raised \$1800 to support Alice and Edmund and Anselm and she also just got some ppreviously unheard of grant from CCLm and has some other donated money so she is free of those worries for some time. Alice still refuses to speak to me, I still dont know why, but Peggy tells me that she's ok, has forsworn pills and drink for a time at least & recently went to buffalo to read, her first time doing anything like that since ted died and it went well for her. Lewis and I are looking for jobs or else we're looking for no jobs. I keep being invited to read in various strange parts of the country and have to turn them down and wonder if those invitations will happen next year again when I need them, though I dont really want to travel around reading at all, I just want to stay home and think for a while and I need to decompress or what is the word be debriefed? from hearing and reading so much poetry by 20th century americans & what I cannot figure out is why should that be a bad thing, not that I should use words like should or bad, but its enough to drive you nuts. I sliced and cooked two quinces tonight to make quince (like apple) sauce and after they were cooked Max said he wantedto touch them so he did and he said, they feel sweet. Marie is nearsighted and has to wear glasses now and now she is enjoying that state of seeing what she hasnt been able to see before. Suddenly it's midnight here, and there too!

LOVE,

Bernadette

december 9, 1983

Dear Bernadette,

The Fall flew past and I've been in a muddle. No letters, precious little writing. Realizing now I did a championship number on myself about this course I'll teach. Figured I'd have all Fall to prepare x so cleared the desk for that, told myself I'd start no new writing project, then found I really couldn't concentrate on reading the book etc so far in advance of actually standing up to teach. A foul! Began muddling & muttering around, reading "other", slamming away at the drums in basement, generally avoiding and feeling guilty of superprocrastination. Feel like I cut myself off from everything & body via this xxxxxxxxxx nonsense. So, don't ask for advice! I'm the last one...

Anyway meant to send you the enclosed since the summer. Might be somewhat cheering? Fun anyway to write off recent talk, see what comes up the next day in the written word. Actually I think it's hysterical, even laughed here retyping it months later. Laughter on the edge of deep subjects? Wonder what type of a collaboration, say, we might get to if we arranged to talk regularly interposed with days of writing it all up and out. Maybe we should actually try that practice next summer when (if?) you're up hereabouts?

Semi-exhausted this morning after Joel Lewis kept me up all hours last night on the phone talking about obscure jazznames. I could even hear him unwrapping food and eating it in the background as I drank glass after glass of water and smoked too many cigarettes. Which is worse? Joel's the most contact I've had with "the scene" all Fall, except for Geoffrey who I've actually seen less of than usual since he seems to have been in New York (or somewhere) more than here. He & I did make a quick dart into Boston, he wanting to hear Frank Stella's first Harvard lecture, so we got to see a brief flash of Bill & Beverley. Bill seemed warm & distracted as ever. And I actually got, ta ta TA!, a LETTER from him yesterday. I'm so amazed I'm actually nervous about answering. Nothing from the Other Bill, though I hear ridiculous & dire rumours about his xxxx "pot bust". Is true? Nonunderstandable. He did send a copy of his little book, which seems more readable in that format somehow(?)

What I MOST meant to do was thank you(!!!) for the wonderful in all ways piece on MINE (which I finally got to read!!). I feel like going all overboard and calling it the absolute BEST piece ever on my work, which it no doubt actually is. Better than that, it helps me go on with the work, which is the best thing one might say about such a thing. And now, as I said above, I haven't had any work to be going on with! (own fault though)

So, have finally, the last week or so, gotten down to reading Kafka & Beckett texts and feeling relief that I now know I will have plenty to talk about there. Geoffrey called and told me Don't worry you'll spew like a volcano, and I've been trying to believe that (he's helpful). Realized that what I'm pushing myself into is what I really believe I should do: get up there and spontaneously talk off these texts that themselves should be instant and interesting (put up or shut up?), otherwise why (should I) do such a thing at all? Like, I don't wanna be a big grey English professor or something, presuming I in any way could do such a thing. Hope I'll draw at least one student who'll talk back at me. I can see myself in thundering empty rooms...

I got a strengthening shot in the Change The World Dept. from a letter Lyn wrote me on the Russian Connection. Seems

she sent various recent American work xx (including my RESEARCH) to Russian friend & translator over there who got up a big reading of our stuff in the Dostoevsky Museum in Leningrad. Evidently it all ended up in a big shouting match, no doubt under watchful KGB eyes. There's a further plot to publish the work in some samizdat anthology, something they could be jailed for even owning(!) Gives one an amazing feeling, no? She even sent me my name as it appears in Russian, a thrill in itself to look at, all I could recognize was that it starts with K's. Almost makes one envious (if I can say that at all unnaively) to think of the intensity of language produced from fighting all the resistance there. Something we can only dream of here where "everything is possible" so finally nothing has much effect. Anyway, to feel oneself part (small) of that struggle... Sure beats writing to your congressman anyway.

Got an invite the other day to some big poet-in-residence thing at XXXXX UCLA Clayton Eshleman (of all people) is setting up for Spring of 1985. It's three days only, 500 bucks plus expenses, and they pair you with one other poet. They've asked people like xxxxx Michael Palmer & Ron & Lyn, but I see myself linked with somebody named "Lauren Shakely". Who?? I don't even know if that's male or female. Guess I'll do it anyway, if only to get a free look again at weird L.A. wilds. All you have to do give a reading, see students, and go to a reception or something. No doubt actually another dull exchange of suburban verbs.

Oh, I did manage to get together x my book for Messerli and sent it. Then got a contract I've got immediate problems with so wrote back my feelings and no doubt we'll have to haggle awhile, though he says he'll be able to have galleys for me in February. Weird clauses (probably more appropriate to novelists or factbook writers?) like "option on your next book" which spun me into a funk about just what could be considered my "next" book. Anyway I've already give THE CRYSTAL TEXT to Geoffrey who says he'll do it though that might take years. Also Messerli wants to keep rights to xxxxx design the book, and after viewing the cover of that Fiction Anthology with horror (plus recalling all Lewis's miseries with the Rackstraw Downes drawing), I have real worries on that score. I mean, I'd be willing to compromise somehow, but I don't want to be fenced off from having any say at all how the thing will look. Also (re our conversation last summer) I told him I wanted written assurance re the maximum time needed for publication, after which rights revert to me, etc. Haven't heard his response to all this yet.

Larry calls regularly from Boulder. He's being very helpful actually in setting us up outthere, conscious of our transition worries. Tells us we have a 3 bedroom townhouse somewhere way west on Pearl St, up above the town with view etc. Sounds ok. With furniture a Dutch psychologist & wife are leaving to go on retreat. Our biggest worries are concerned with leaving this house empty in winter months, time of leaks etc. So far haven't been able to find anyone to actually live here while we're away, which would be the best easement of mind. Probably have to rely finally on a neighbor to come in & check daily. Also we're planning to drive out so we'll have use of car out there, which sounds a little insane I know, given the string of big snowstorms passing through Rockies & Plains of late. Larry described one recent storm that dumped 2½ feet on Boulder. He said it was "nice" though but then admitted he hadn't been out in it(!) Anyway, hoping we get a large enough weather break across the plains.

So. Sorry again for the gap. Think of you all the time. Will send you our Boulder address as soon as Larry gives it to us. Too bad you couldn't come live in our house while we're off!

All Love to All,
Clark

[handwritten:] We leave For Boulder
right after Jan. 1st.

[Left margin, p 2, typed:] Have you heard anything recent from George Tysh? I haven't in months. Presume that thing is still on?? I've even forgotten exactly when I'm supposed to go. Sometime in Feb?

December 30, 1983

Dear Bernadette,

We're in such a muddle here, being ready to go but having to wait a few more days before actually walking out and closing the door. Feel like ghosts in our own house! Anyway, wanted to make sure I sent you our Boulder address. Guess our letters crossed? Actually I'm further muddled by not being able to remember just who I sent our new address to and who I didn't(?) Which, as Kerouac might say, adds to up the disastrous and impenetrable pyramid of WHOM. This may be the most scattered letter of all time! Geoffrey called the other night (wednesday?) and said he'd just talked to you and that you might call me later, but you didn't and then I remembered that it was wednesday, the readings etc. You wanted to ask me again about a St Marks reading in April or May? Well, Geoffrey seems to want to read with me, and so, if you want to think of scheduling such a duo it's okay. He and I had a good time reading together in Toronto and so why not. Let me know. Then I had a call from George Tysh the otherday, him telling me about FURTHER horrible financial/political screwups out there, so my date has been moved from Feb to June and may not even happen then, he'll let me know, etc. But, he also said that Bill Berkson has been making noises about not being able to make his "date" with you(!) in mid-April (izzit?) and if that eventuates (what language!) could I make it then. I have no idea at the moment if the preceding sentence makes any sense(?) George said he'd call Bill immediately, actually I got the feeling he was trying to prod me into making some big gossip revelation about Bill's "troubles" (which he seemed to have caught some vague scent of anyway), but I remembered how Bill doesn't want "anybody" to know about such things (he really doesn't want his mother to know?) so kept my trap shut and just told him to ask Bill. Then I wrote Bill (haven't heard a peep since summer) and found myself asking him to tell me just exactly what had happened, how it was going etc. 'Cause I really don't know any details myself! This is all getting to (at least seem to) be such a mess. Anyway, I could probably make that mid-April date if that's what eventually happens, since we should be back here by April first. And it'd be fun to actually read (not TV) with you at last!

What other news (was the above "news"???)... Oh, tell Lewis that I took his advice & persuaded Messerli to include an outside publication date for my book in his contract (one year). He's still claiming I'll see proofs in Feb & the book should be out in June (I'll believe that one when I see it). He also wanted a clause giving him option on my "next book" (did I already tell you all this?), which I scotched and he agreed to strike that clause. So, the main thing I'm still worried about is the DESIGN of the book which he absolutely stands firm and won't let go of practically total control of, sob. I did get him to "agree" that I should have some input though, and I do have a photo in mind... Hey, maybe I should ask you if you have a photo in mind? What would you think of for a book called SOLUTION PASSAGE, and not too heavy on the caves-aspect please? Right now I have the inkling that you have the perfect photo hidden away somewhere. And Messerli says he could handle a color-job.

It seems like everybody's seen the new UNITED ARTISTS but me! George Tysh said he had it, and even Geoffrey has it, and now it looks like we'll have to leave here without it. But I imagine you sent one to Larry anyway? I can't even recall for sure just what you picked of mine to go in there. Two or Three Things? And will that really be the last issue? How

is UTOPIA coming? I'm going to be taking TWO HALOED MOURNERS with me to Boulder, use in class somehow. Also I'll probably be falling back on some ideas from your Writing Experiments in that WORKSHOP magazine. Hope you don't mind if I steal a few!

Oh, shit, this letter is a hopeless crammed mass. But, but, but....

Why are we so far away, and even going FURTHER!?!?

Anyway (all purpose link-word), our address, at least until mid-March:

731 Pearl Street/Boulder CO 80302
phone: 303-447-8224

Wish us luck. We're having nightmares of white-outs on the Nebraska interstate.

Please do keep in touch, & me too.

All LOVE,
Clark

["I" key is vertically misaligned on BM's typewriter; all upper and lowercase "i's" appear above the baseline throughout this letter]

February 4, 1984

Dear Clark and Susan,

So how're you guys doing in Boulder? & how was the trip there? Here things are probably nearly as changed for us xxx as they are for you, transplanted: Lewis now has a 9-5 job and an agent! (these dont necessarily go hand in hand).

Are you (all?) skiing?

Something has happend to my typewriter, as you can see, I cant type skiing, without looking very high.

Sorry Ive been such a derelict correspondent again but the advent of Lewis's job plus the work of laying out and pasting up utopia has left me busier than ever before, in fact there are some days I cant fathom it – racing from place to place and task to task. I have actually begun taking whole days off from Poetry Project work just to stay home and think, sleep, paste up, clean, etc. (I do not answer phone then) plus at the Poe.Proj. there are two new time-consuming events – an “incorporation” process which most amuses me considering my relations to eating and of course the impending election of my replacement -- I am so looking forward to my retirment, I cant tell you!

Lewis, in his usual race against time, managed to, in one week, have his first novel published, complete his second, and secure a “regular” job (at a place called FACTS ON FILE where he makes precis of news articles, just reading and writing all day, along with Marion Farrier, Steve Carey's wife.) The following week some Hollywood agent called asking about movie options for AGNES AND SALLY which event put him in a position to get an agent to work on that and to sell his other book to a publisher. She is Ellen Levine, a good literary literary agent. Meanwhile the first book has gotten reviewed in all the so-called trade journals, mostly well-received, and so we can begin to perceive how this novel-writing is an entirely different world from our long hard unnoticed poetry work, it is strange. In the meanwhile a Fiction Collective reading took place during which the reading-runners had the lack of temerity (or whatever it is) to not even bother to try to fix the immediately non-functioning sound system though the first reader was soft-spoken Fanny Howe! I was barely able to keep my seat for desire

to meddle with the system. 5 other fictioners read in a weird environment (at the old Huntington Hartford Museum), plus Lewis of course, so now we are all FACT and FICTION here in our house (I have already mentioned to many that it may be grounds for divorce to have married a poet and wound up sharing that same life with a novelist. On the other hand it's fun to know that stories can be told, but novelists are like junkies, they keep saying to you – why dont you write a novel too!

So that is the immediate news – my life is totally changed as I now have little leeway at the Poe.Proj. to ever stay late and finish things but must race about picking up children and take them to all the places they might need to go – it's a funny life, even I need to go xxx to the psychiatrist now but I often wonder if I have time for that, one simply races through there a list of one's worries, all rehearsed as if the very statement of them can make them disappear which I guess is one of the attributes of that process, I do not know. It is good though to see Lewis more happy than we was before, this is not due to time-consuming job so much as the confluence of getting out of the house with the novel novel events, so he feels less isolated and more like a person I guess though he is inevitably disappointed by remarks by his agent to the effect that his books are “too good” & dont contain enough dialogue for the fucking movies. Isnt this funny? By funny I mean odd, though not unexpected in the sense that we know all about it.

A great false

spring is taking place here, I dont know if it's taking place where you once were, that is New England, but I would guess that it is and that, as I've seen happening in February before, something blossoms out of turn at such a time. The bushes and trees in the Poetry Project yard are ready as they would be in mid-March, yet I have had to hand out extra keys to all the workers there lest another snowfall make the main gates dangerous again (ice falls from the roof on people's heads). I'm always happy for this relation via the church with the elements, since it reminds me of the country. In fact I have taken to staring xxxx at and studying construction sites since rivers run beneath them and real dirt is exposed. The mud in the church gardens is a pleasure; it's been a very mild winter though many complained of the “extreme” cold it was nothing.

Clark, how about reading on May 23rd with Geoff;?; it's ok with him if it's ok with you. I couldnt remember your exact schedule but hoped that this date was possible. Speaking of which, George Tysh is really in financial trouble and has actually asked me to spend two hours

with him and the museum person he works with, when I go there, to give money-raising advice! I said what the hell could I ever tell you! (he and that series always seemed so well-heeled somehow, but again B. Dalton has been unfaithful to them, etc.) Bill and I are a good pair too – Bill seems like he’s going to be able to go I guess and I can’t figure out how to get myself on the airplane for tremendous fear! Poor George has to deal with us unprofessional nitwits. I haven’t even given a poetry reading since January 1983 and am serious entertaining never entertaining again and truly entering my Emily Dickinson phase of being since I’ve no desire ever to stand up before an assembled group of people and do or say anything. I do think I’ve managed to make Bill Corbett mad at me by refusing to come to Boston to do that reading there. I’ve refused now three times, and though I have good excuses like time and family, he knows perfectly well the main one’s I just don’t want to “perform”. On the other hand, if Bill B. really can’t make it, let’s travel to Detroit together and make the best of it! Oh dear or oh god (Fanny, forgive me). (& George forgive me too). As the organizer of a reading series myself, I sure wouldn’t want people to behave like I do!

Meanwhile a lot of time and thought goes to Anne and her dilemma here. Ambrose has serious asthma and now has more congestion in his lungs, having returned with Anne from a New Mexico trip where he was hospitalized, and Reed is still on his 3-month retreat Buddhist and no one can understand why Reed isn’t here, since it leaves Anne in this desperate nearly jailed condition – she cannot leave her house, Ambrose can’t go out, and requires xxx help to simply get the groceries, laundry, etc. Many people are critical of both Anne & Reed for their continuing to cause more separations of themselves from Ambrose & all the while Anne is receiving advice from about a thousand quarters & given the fact that her mother died so recently, her father is seriously ill too and behaving strangely and now her son is 3 times in hospital in recent months, well it’s too much for her, plus her friends are criticizing her actions and she is finding it difficult to face, as many other parents have told her including Gary Snyder’s wife, the idea that the responsibility for a child sick like this means you stay put & have an ordered and predictable life. And for you in Buddhist-land, I might add that, in my opinion, the Buddhist tenets about child and grownup behavior do not seem to add up to much sense when facing Ambrose’s illness which is in fact life-threatening and though I have been blunt with Anne about my opinions about all this, please use your discretion in confiding what I say to Larry or other people there. I have felt lately that if a friend of mine were a profoundly tenacious

Catholic and were having another baby at a late age & threatening her health because she didn't believe in birth control, I would feel the same way, in a way, that I feel about this. That is, that the devotion to Buddhism that causes not only Reed's absence at this time but also the particular relation that these Buddhist parents have to this child is causing great harm to people I love. I support Anne [marginal →: now I've said this 3 times!] in every way I can, and she is tremendously fed up with the pronouncements of some of our other friends, I bring her soup and money and stamps, yet I feel as mixed up by it all as she apparently does. Yet she encourages Reed to remain on his "retreat." It is very crazy. & she is frightened that her freedom to travel around is on the verge of being totally curtailed which of course it is, unless Ambrose is suddenly free of his disease, which perhaps he might never be if Anne feels that way; on the other hand one doesn't know that. And it is astonishing to find out how many children xxxxxx have asthma! True, though mainly I am very worried about Anne who is sharing sleeping pills with Alice and then worrying that they will be so strong (which they are; Alice is not drinking) that she will not wake up when she takes them if Ambrose is crying! Yesterday and today I slept for 15 hours with a few intermissions for thinking, just reviewing and enjoying being still. I had a dream about everything that concerns me and some surprising things too.

I am looking for a photograph for you and getting most obsessed and inspired, but I haven't found the right one yet; I am also simultaneously looking for a cover for utopia! which I think xxxxxx will probably be a drawing instead, but please give me a deadline, as they say, for your cover to consider – my photographs are kind of in disorder.

Sorry that U.A. didn't read you sooner; I'm afraid you'll have to blame our changes of life, the consequent disorder and the quite dramatic occasion of giving our mimeograph machine to some young poets from New Jersey who are dead set on starting a new magazine which they couldn't decide whether to call "Blue Smoke," "Bleu Smoke," or "Blew Smoke."! (bleu as in cordon bleu!)

Utopia is all pasted up and laid out, like they say, and now I'm gonna put the page numbers on it and you know what happened? amazingly enough, one day when I felt kind of depressed by the fact that I knew I had to delay in publishing the thing because I didn't have the money to pay the printers' bills, I received a lovely letter from Kenward along with a check for \$25000 no wait a second \$2500. saying to use it for utopia if I wanted but mostly it was in honor

of the whole body of my work which he described as a national treasure. So now I've been able to hire somebody to help me redo the index and I would guess (not a messerli-type guess) that the thing could appear in the world by the end of April since the new printers here in NYC can do books in three weeks, really!

I saw that I've been working on this book for nearly three years and was appalled by that since, given other life situations, I'm sure the damn thing could've been written and also published (if only by me) in a much shorter time, but then I console myself by saying that my stint as a public service person is soon ending and I hope that the fact that I still have three children and self to support plus an active libido if that's the word doesn't prevent me from having a bit more time to myself in future years to read and write. After all I might die as soon as my x parents did! in which case, all my writing projects would be screwed! Including my attempt to actually write, which I've been trying to experiment with, one little hour with all the transparencies and transitions thereof – I still want to do that. My poetry lately has been very didactic and wrong, by wrong I mean too yearning and obsessed with political injustices, though were I a better poet, as for instance Jackson MacLow is I believe, I could probably write decent works in this way. In fact I can barely write about anything till utopia is off my desk and I have never felt so impatient or taken so long with such a simple-minded work as that is, which when I paste it up and reread it for the thousandth time, as of course I've already complained to you about, I go back and forth thinking it's too simple and also too complicated, so thus (like in the image of commercial fiction we've now been introduced to) no one will (want to) read it and then the thought comes: this whole world of our writing is like the people walking on Avenue A, once families and regular types, now [→: people] constantly overheard saying: "well are is **[underlined three times]** substance..." and other such remarks. I must admit I never understood how two macho men who said things to me when I returned to New York were so right: one was David Garcia, rector of St. Mark's who avowed that he was certain I couldn't refrain from political work for very long, and the other of course was Ted who sadistically yet accurately said (in his way): "you realize you're ruining your life by coming back here; you were happy and now you're going to be miserable."

Anyway, despite stuff like that, we must keep working (Jasper Johns recently wrote about "poetry" in a big magazine and said that the young poets were writing too much). Let's write more! (If we're still young?) & tell me what you think of the

recent anthologies: Michael's IO and the Language one? You tell me. I cant figure it. It seems like nobody has a real big view, though what I mean by that type of Brooklynese statement I dont know. I'll tell you one thing (also in Brooklyn-talk) I feel real relieved, like I said before, that I'm gonna be free of this Poetry Project work real soon so I can again think clearly and freely and have time to look beyond this community which if you tend to get involved like I do in empathetic and other stuff is too much and is not all that takes place in the universe, by no means. I dont know how to say this right but I feel at this moment such great love for all too many people whom I know – does that make sense to you? I mean I feel alot of animosity from some also, but that is not what I'm speaking of. What I'm saying is it's too much – I love Lewis, I love my children, I also love in other ways Anne, and Jack, and Eileen, and Gary, and many other ones I happen to know, like a construction worker knows about what he is digging at, all about them, and it is too much. Yet I receive love too and that's a pleasure – oh now I am waxing (utopia was waxed and burnished in the pasting up) silly. But I know you'll forgive me and wait like a friend for me to get more complicated again. Just let me say, to continue on in this vein that if when digging up the streets of the city the workers thought of what they were doing as metaphors, there would probably be little difference in their usually abhorred behavior (as men) to women. This thought just an example of my gigantic confusion. For instance, let me ask you this question, are we actually some elite group of people and though we might have to drive taxis to earn a living, we still can have the xxxx leisure to live differently from others? I know that what I want has nothing to do with classes (recently Pedro Pietri produced a play in both spanish and english, "The Masses Are Asses"), I want to be able to write and think and read and be calm to do those things, and that is mainly what I want. I do also want to help to change the world, either thereby (thru the writing) or/and as a citizen. I am confused by my permitting myself to give such vent to life as to have three children and take on the poetry project work, yet I love the fact of all the liveliness inherent in that, and what I have learned. (How come I always feel I'm writing my "apologia pro vita sua"!)). Well, what I am saying about writing is I am inspired by I CANT write because what I feel about love and politics and the other important matters is now for me too literal, having been made so by this time that Ted said was to be miserable, which it has not been so (except for his and other's deaths), and I feel perhaps like many writers getting older that my older writing was better, just like one's ancient fucking or something. Amazing how scared we are, isnt it? Oh I could go on forever, it's been a pleasure to talk to you, I wish we

were together and please write me a short note soon, not bothering to answer everything i've said, just read my letter once and then tell me what's going on with you.

I send LOVE,

Bernadette

[Letter handwritten]

Feb. 13, 1984—Boulder

Dear Bernadette,

This has been the greatest MAIL DAY since we've been here! Your wonderful long letter (I wish really was "endless") that must be as close to (at least one side of) a conversation as can be in letters, plus UNITED ARTISTS (hooray!) + Lewis' + Fanny's novels, a card from Bill Berkson, + even an actual letter from Bill Corbett. I'm really feeling blessed by all this. Susan watched the mailman stuff all this stuff into our tiny vertical mailbox + it's sheer luck that the books weren't totally bent + ruined, but they're okay. Hope you can read this helpless scrawl of my hand – I still don't have a typewriter here, probably could make a fuss + get the loan of one but I realized I actually like not having one for awhile, using my hand again (though I notice that these cheap pens run out quicker than ever – the points wear down so you have to hold 'em perfectly vertically) Though said procedure makes it tough on you, I guess?, hope not. Anyway, I keep thinking how you've had all that experience in piecing together Laura Riding Jackson's hand, so how bad can mine be?

Boulder feels like the most isolated spot in the world right now, partially because I haven't read a newspaper or seen TV News since we've been here (heard about Andropov's Death by word-of-mouth the other day), + partially due to this amazing unusual weather we've had the whole time including the drive out: perfect blue skies + warmth (temperatures in the daytime have gotten up into the sixties + even seventies on some days), it's really screwed up our sense of where we are + in what part of the year. What's happened to the Winter?!!? Actually now I fear we'll run back into it on the drive back, or at least find one of those April Blizzards waiting for us back in Massachusetts. The other factor that tends to keep this IVORY TOWER going is my need to keep my head clear for class. I find I can't help but devote all my energies to this teaching, even find myself waking up wondering what will be the "right" way to say something, even though my classes are only on tuesdays + thursdays so I do have four days between "bouts". It's actually quite tiring + certainly all-consuming, especially trying (as Fanny so rightly says) to find out what you know + thus can tell the students that will keep them interested. I surely wouldn't want to do this as a matter of course (excuse the pun!). Of course as a result I haven't been able to do much more writing than occasional scribbles in notebook, + I worry about this + am really looking forward to having time uninterrupted again for a new big project. But I know this will happen again soon, so I'm not that worried. It's actually good + sometimes fun to be doing all this talking to people every day for a change. And right now I'm amazed at how fast the time has gone – halfway through the term already! + it seems like only a couple weeks have passed. Finished with Kafka last Thursday, gave a big lecture (ha ha!) on his "writing as a form of prayer", + tomorrow I launch into the Beckett World. I've been reading aloud to them alot (3 weeks on The Trial) + I think they've gotten something (at least the mood of the writing) they wouldn't have otherwise. A pretty attentive + lively group: 10 in the reading class + 8 in the writing workshop. The writing class is hardest for me + I really have to scramble to keep finding new things to assign them to do. If you have any ideas for assignments that have occurred to you please let me know! There's one girl in the class that is very interested in your work + so I'm trying to dig up a tape of your reading here to play, but there seems to be some mysterious hassle about access to the tape collection, the tapes are all "packed away" to be sent to the BUFFALO LIBRARY to be copied or something. But I intend to break into their inner sanctum somehow, am curious to see also if my tape of the only reading of AMERICAN ONES I ever gave still exists. Anyway wish I had

thought to bring tapes of you (that PAULA COOPER reading, for instance) with me. I even had a hassle finding a tape machine at the school, they could only dig up a pitiful one that sounded horrible, so I ended up borrowing a Ghetto Blaster from one of my students!

Naropa, plus

Boulder itself, both seem very quiet but I suppose this is a natural contrast with the only times I've been here before, summers when there are so many other poets around. Drum Hadley was here, only for 3 weeks, but has now gone back to his ranch in Arizona. Nice to see him again (had not for about 15 years!), but he kept flying off for places like Jackson's Hole Wyoming or to go skiing (he's very rich, has a condo over in Vail, etc.) so I didn't end up seeing as much of him as I'd expected. He likes to drink a lot (always carried a flask of Brandy he kept offering around), + eat huge meals though he's hardly fat, + tell what sound like "tall tales" about Western Life (his poems are like that, stories, what he heard people say, + sometimes songs). He talks slow. He stayed in Larry's apartment, so Larry stayed with Susan for the three weeks but it doesn't really seem like they're "back together" in any practical (or even Romantic) way. She's very involved in Buddhist activities now, has a "shrine" with little glasses of water (which are sometimes strangely upside down + empty) surrounding a photograph of her teacher in her apartment, but seems about the same as always to me. Celia goes over there to play her records while Susan's out working in a Coffee STORE + then Susan comes home + they sit around drinking glasses of wine + talking, god knows about what (?) Celia's impressed with her clothes, the way she looks, etc. Actually Celia bought this amazing pair of leopard-spotted pants to wear to Boulder High, + I guess she's getting along okay there, though it's a big adventure for her to go from a tiny (400 kid) school to this vast place (1800 kids in only 3 grades). Susan has mostly been reading hundreds of mystery novels that Larry provides her with (this seems to be his latest "kick"). He tries to get me interested too + can't really understand why I can't respond right now what with my immersion in teaching, etc. He seems to view teaching as a system long tried + prepared in advance, while I have to scuffle to make it up as I go along, which I'm convinced is the only way to do it, for me anyway.

So, we've been going to lots of movies, + even got CABLE TV (Celia's idea, as we can't get it at home) so there are even more movies here at home every night, + all the ROCK VIDEOS that Celia likes to watch, though most of those are predictable boring shots of people walking down streets at night + guys pretending to play instruments + sing. The apartment here is very comfortable, even luxurious for us since we don't have to worry about maintaining it – 2 floors, even 2 bathrooms (!), great bathtub next to windows, a deck outside our bedroom with great view of the Flatirons, a real improvement over those VARSITY TOWNHOUSES! Very quiet, surprisingly, down this (west) end of PEARL, not much traffic + the house is set back from the street. Kind of an Oriental look to the place: light wood trim, white walls, red tile roofs. And lots of cats around the garden + walks that like to come inside and visit. So, we're totally enjoying everything here + will probably feel sad to leave. I don't even notice all the Buddhism going on, it's easy to ignore, probably because I haven't much interest in it + am so busy with what I'm doing.

Thanks for searching through your photographs! Messerli finally sent the contract we thrashed out (it now includes a clause promising to print the book within one year of the signing, as Lewis suggested, + thank you for suggesting that) + so I've signed it + sent it back. I also wrote + asked him for a deadline on the cover art, so as soon as he gives me his I'll send you mine (!) But please don't run yourself ragged trying to come up with something "perfect", just if anything pops up that might work. I should have provided you with a

copy of the manuscript, might have helped?, but you probably can recall enough about my works from that period (1978-81)? Actually I worry that whatever I send him for the cover he'll manage to screw up. And Larry has managed to "aid" me by always referring to SOLUTION PASSAGE as "POLUTION SAUSAGE" (!!)

NEXT DAY [in box]

A May 23rd reading is okay by me (I almost wrote "all the same to me"!), as I've already told Geoffrey. And then it seems that he has booked the two of us into the Washington Project for the Arts (Whatever that is – do you know?) on the following night (24th). Well, that's just what happens on the Geoffrey-a-Go-Go Circuit. I'm also "slated" to read at U of New Mexico (Albuquerque) on March 19th, just after I get done here, and since we're planning to go see Carlsbad Caverns (at last!) anyway that's right on our way. Poetry readings only make sense to me if I have something I really want to read, which has usually been something new (unread aloud before), + that sustains me. And I try to think of the act as a matter of making the words alive in the air rather than any other kind of calling-attention-to-myself type of performance. Also I find I've always somehow managed to do few enough (just enough) of them in a year, say, so I don't find the reading "circuit" taking too much of my time/energy from more primary matters.

Are we (poets) some kind of "special" people? Well, we certainly have uncommon abilities which I feel it would be a shame to make waste of. The word "elite" I hate because I've found it mostly hurled by people who are envious, spiteful, + don't know what they're talking about. The main thing is though that I don't feel I have any choice in the matter any more. It's more that I feel fated (I tend to pessimism anyway) to be this writer I have somehow become (impossible to follow back all the branchings of my route), + have long passed that "point beyond which there is no turning back", as Kafka said. Which of course makes all the other aspects of our lives (love, social, etc.) more difficult. We really don't have "leisure" in the sense a construction worker, say, might mean it. In fact I don't feel I have a very precise sense of the word "leisure" myself, only know I need the time to write (+ all the seeming sitting around doing "nothing" that might entail), + that time I have partly through luck + partly through the space I myself have made be. Of course then there's this guilt we've all been made to feel for making things that most people in this culture cannot even see. Every day I must try to drive that away. But, just between you + me + the lamp post (!), I must admit to feeling more + more some personal sense of what Kafka must have meant by "writing as a form of prayer", something I fear to even speak of since then it might go away – the feeling that the greatest importance + necessity is in the act itself, even if nobody ever reads what I've then written (I never really apprehended their world anyway). This gets at very deep + fragile religious feelings I find almost impossible to write here. The poem addressed to emptiness – who said that? I've forgotten + internalized it somehow. What's done never being the same when allowed to go public, thus the immediate frustration built in to poetry readings? I can't go further with this here – even my handwriting refuses(!) But I'm sure your feelings about your writing will change once you're out from behind that social service desk. And, yes, you must try that "Everything Hour" project you've been wanting to do for years! I can't wait to see what that'll be!

Sounds like, from what you say about George Tysh's financial difficulties, I might not get to go there in June (as he last promised, or tried to promise). It would be great if you + I could travel out there together, but it sounds like (from his last letter 2 weeks ago) as if Bill is planning to make it. But that whole

Detroit scene is immeasurably + forever screwy, no? Bill even wrote me apologizing in case his visit had in anyway “replaced” my visit there(!)

Sad to hear of Anne’s (further) woes with Ambrose et al. I had heard about the Santa Fe disaster as she called Larry here (from New Mexico) all full of fear + tears. I agree with you that the Buddhist “attitude” toward such things is no help at all, though I’m not sure I at all understand said Buddhist “attitude”(?) I had always hoped that the fact of Ambrose would cause her to stop flying around so much, that she could then find herself in a quieter mode, focus more on her writing, etc. But I guess that’s too much of a change to expect in anyone. I do find it hard to understand how Reed can keep himself distant at such a crisis time. But, I hardly ever see these people, so what do I really know about it. I’ll certainly not repeat anything you said around here. Anyway, will you give Anne our love + tell her we’re thinking of her? Little enough, but...

Amazing all this NOVEL business. And it is true (+ funny) how once one has actually written a novel he or she immediately expects everybody else to write one too. I still have vast doubts, though I’ll no doubt try again, + again...

Wonderful SURPRISE here the other night. I had just played my class part of that Kerouac Blues + Haikus record on which he reads sections of SAN FRANCISCO BLUES + told them how this work was still not available entire due to his widow’s refusal. And then what does Larry get in the mail at Naropa? The complete work of 79 choruses just as Kerouac set it up printed as book by some maniac bootlegger in England! Did you know, have you seen? And it’s a genius single-poem in its entirety! It feels like I’ve been waiting all my life to read this book + it turns out to be wonderful beyond even my expectations. Give that man the NOBEL PRIZE for book publishing!

Actually I haven’t been able to read much of anything here but the class texts. Larry seems basically sad, an irredeemable batchelor, with increasing needs for such “extended family” as we can provide here at the moment. He told me one day (quite a revelation, for him) that he sees me as able to maintain a formal enough life so that I can be “free” in my writing, while his set-up is just the opposite: a scattered life which cause him to put too much formal pressure on his writing. No doubt some truth to this too-graphic layout — he does seem to rewrite (when he does any writing at all) the same piece endlessly, never satisfied with its “Form”.

On CODE OF SIGNALS (vs.) THE LANGUAGE BOOK (terrible title?) I only find that there are pieces in CODE I can read (in fact I’m going to read Michael’s talk on DURATION to my class tonight) + the other volume I find unreadable + boring to even look at. There is certainly no big view + one is probably wrong to expect one. I’m even mad that I allowed myself to be included in that LANGUAGE thing!

Well, I’d best cease this for now, or face continuing this disintegrating handwriting forever. Wonderful to hear your words at length, that we can talk at least this way.

It’s noon here now, cats climbing on the next roof, clouds moving over from the west (maybe we’ll at last get some snow tonight?), + here comes the postman!

My LOVE to you, + Lewis, + All,
Clark

March something or other, spring
is here sort of (spring was here) [1984]

Dear Clark,

Where to begin? It's pretty hard to get a letter written these days but I hope this one is there to greet you on your return from your half-cross-country journeys & what'd you make of the spooky Carlsbad caverns ignoring sure the tourist stuff? I must admit it took me about ten years to read your letter despite my perspicacity with Mrs. Jackson's handwriting, each person's seems to be a different case, and when you mention not writing much but scribbling in your journal I wonder as I often have about Lewis's such stuff, who! will be the person who will ever be able to read it all that is in posterity when honestly and happily at least it won't be me! On the other hand(!) your letter is a great treasure and beautiful to look at, but, you'll forgive me -- to find the meaning! (only joking). Here it's kind of tumultuous as always but the weather's been bland and cold to us is forty degrees now (I yearn for a more stodgy attitude, like, hey man it's been zero for a month, or something). I didn't have any ideas for assignments for you except to read aloud which you already know. In fact I've been wanted to propose a kind of reading-aloud workshop to somebody for next year which would include Blake, Stein, Melville, Hawthorne and some more modern types -- no teaching! Shakespeare too I guess. Your teaching sounds inspiring and I wish I could've been there to hear all you had to say, do you by any chance have transcripts or notes that could be shared? I'd loved to read or hear them. The poem sure is addressed to emptiness, or into the courtyard or other type of window I've always felt, so that the advent of a moth is a big occasion, as I know you know I know. But I want to hear more about prayer, which sure scares me in the sense that I might really wind up being a saint. My (head) doctor tells me these days I forget myself too much! a funny idea, in the sublime sense. And then I read your letter and have thoughts like, oh I am too much in the world! which is true, even though I have trouble moving about it again. Drummond Hadley sounds a little like Dale Herd -- is that so? He, the latter? (Dale) was here recently to read which he did for one hour and fifteen minutes and I really don't know what to think of him, reading from a new book Fast Rides with such aplomb in so many voices xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx but in the same voice I felt simultaneously awed and appalled not to mention that I was personally overwrought on this night which I could've ignored well enough had not Tom Savage had an epileptic fit at the reading which felt to me like so much an expression of exactly my own approach to trembling and loss of control, yet all that was fine but then that heightened sense of things appeared and then Dale looked at me like a creature from outer space, which of course I told him, he's an interesting writer no doubt. He reading with Michael Ondaatje, what do you think of him? As for Susan Noel's empty upside down glasses of water, lack of meaning is meant only for the strong and the brave I feel; for others it is simply depressing or foolish, and sure at best very funny, but that isn't so. I wish she could be more realistic, but, liking her very much and understanding it all, I'd better not say that, knowing too it could be said of any of us (now that in itself might qualify as buddhistic, which is a fine tradition of knowledge we get mixed up by our friends' embracings of as if we were all not serious). Anyway your place there sounds nice or sounded nice and I envy you doing things though that might sound weird since it seems I do a lot but I mean being somewhere and doing things and all it seems to me I wind up doing is talking, endless talking, that is what I do now & that's probably what I want to do, and you were talking to in your teaching preceded by thought and studying which is the difference to me. Boy do I feel like an idiot lately. Anyway again I still have no

solution for the cover of pollution sausage which is a good title too and tell me was the title “everything hour” something I said or did you make it up? it’s great! I’ll take it, should I be able to write it. There’s little done on that but some exercises and I don’t know how to proceed with it, I’ve been mostly involved in getting utopia ready for the printer which it will be next week and then be a book three weeks later amazingly! For such a trivial book in many ways, I feel like it’s the culmination, no kidding, of my life’s work and can hardly bear the tension and expectation of getting it all done. Plus it’s all happening right as I’m leaving the fucking poetry project to which job, mine, Eileen Myles was last week elected. I feel x right as if I might die what with utopia “coming out” and the fact of having a “successor” and such a process was this election as would boggle your dreams of human nature, which gladly is something we do not dream about exactly. Though I’m glad to be rid of this task, I felt pressured and sad and too I have such nostalgia – there’s no other word for it – for the building of St. Mark’s all by itself, independent. I wanted very much for Anselm Hollo to get the job but the question of younger in quotes and older also there was the main one, myself falling of course on the older side. Also people’s drinking and not drinking, a question or issue which horrified me in the sense that it became for people more important than knowledge, spirit or capability, and Eileen having in the last year gone “on the wagon” generating for her so much support as opposed to Anselm’s looseness in this regard. Of course like we always say, don’t ever tell anybody I’m telling you this, and so on. Jack Collom was from the beginning completely out of the running, I don’t understand why except for all this sort of crap, he was considered to be a sexist, an out of townner, and a drinker too. What horseshit! I’ll be will rid of it if only I can find my regular or amber self again. But for the time it’s very involving and to me depressing in the sense that the best thing for the project didn’t happen and that was my final responsibility to the place. On the other hand, onward! right? I am of course being “blamed” for my lack of political perspicacity and maneuverings or machiavellian (can’t spell that) stuff by the church now which is hard to bear and all this has moved me, in combination with other happenings and my emotion at leaving, to a state of positive trembling though at what I’d like to know and wish when I tell you this you were my neighbor once again to impart to me your immediate daily view which I would treasure. At ten o’clock now Max is standing at the entrance to the kitchen staring at Lewis through a pair of xxxxxxxxxxxx binoculars, he’s (max) wearing a nightgown over a nightshirt and a pair of tights, due to general eccentricity. The children, I might say or add, are thriving, Marie having recently received a “report card” on which her teacher asked us what our theories of child-raising were since Marie was so great – you think she says this to all the parents? (I thought to myself). Anyways those guys are happy & healthy & by now grown more big and artful than you might believe when you see them, conversations with them all lately being astonishing to me. Anne and Reed and Ambrose are back, Ambrose being fine now for the moment with no asthmas but still with continuous colds and stuff. Lewis I believe since I wrote you last has won and lost a job writing the news over for a place that services libraries and schools. He got fired probably because he didn’t act right, was distracted and criticized his “supervisor”! They’ve actually reorganized the place since his firing but the funny thing was he was, as you might imagine, producing more writing for them that they needed to get done, than they’d ever seen before, he being a rather fast worker. It was, as they say, his attitude, which then leads us to sit around and wonder how shall we ever support ourselves – are we unable to join the regular work force if necessary? & how then will we ever live!

So now we're looking for what they call teaching, obs, I mean obs, see I cant even type it, jobs, but I dont want one at all I want to rest. Rest meaning think, read, study, write and do things that please me. I'm exhausted. As for our guilt at making things that cant be seen, boy I wonder about that. It's true isnt it, but just like that guilt or wonder, there's not too many people who'd even understand that point of view at all! How immobilizing poetry is for me! & why? I'm no jerk and I often feel like one, a fool for even being, much less guilty of my ignored opera. I watch the people on the street and think, oh look at that guy he is casual (like i thought of Dale Herd) and can just be, walking around, going from place to place, he's in charge of himself and I tremble. & what do I tremble about anyway? I'm just fine dammit. I tremble cause the light changes or cause I'm scared that tenth street or some street is just xx too far away, unlike new mexico. What's it my fate to investigate my brain for the sake of humanity? I want to be cool, like they used to say, and apomblike just like dale herd or some such person & this is very silly I know. some cold-type springlike air is coming in the window now, the super having told us he noticed that we keep our window open all the time and that was bad. A few movements in the direction of uproar between me and Lewis have taken place which does not not contribute like you might guess to my trembling state. I wonder sometimes how much you as my friend want to hear about these things but since i am i i always wind up sort of telling you about them, sometimes i think it makes you what's the word unsettled? not that you are but i, but it's hard to write you the way i want to write to you without oh shit, there sure is never any point in telling all either in letters or person, just in writing – right? maybe even not there! i keep remembering lately that time we sat in the orchidia and you told me a few things i didnt know about your life, now the orchidia's rent is being increased five hundred percent and they are closing to give place probably to some haagen daz factory since this neighborhood is becoming fashionably dumpy and exploitative. To put things into words is such an emotion, why is it my whole life? and I'm not even doing so well either I feel. Nor do I mean to string you along with prefacing but just to say that as might have seemed inevitable in this small world lewis and I now both have other lovers cause we werent loving each other very properly and nownobody can figure out what's going to happen except i keep hoping nothing will but the general everything which if we can get involved with might make us able to continue to live together & boy am I xx being vague. What fools we are we sit around trying to compose ourselves close to and away from our forms of possible surrender, if you'll forgive the wordx about which Aristotelian sortsof reasoning dont work. Descartes of course either, I'm so mad at the boys. Simultaneously I'm dying to see this boondoggled [→: do I mean this?] Kerouac book – how can I get ahold of it? [→: What's the address, etc.]

So I dont know

what will happen exactly but trust that the weather

[handwritten:] will what?

to be cont'd
like they say
LOVE
Bernadette

April 19, 1984

Dear Bernadette,

I'll start this letter late (nearly midnight) hoping I can just trick myself into falling into it, pretending I've never fallen out of the groove of letter writing, or typing anyway, I guess I need to type a letter nowadays to feel I'm really writing one. It does feel like I haven't written anybody for three months, even though I did write lots of letters in Boulder, but strangely writing them in hand made them so easy to write that I can hardly count them as letters. Does that mean I really need the difficulties of this machine, that you know about, or is this just some silly "revelation" from my Yankee background meaning only xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx difficult things may be thought of as serious things? Anyway, I feel like I've almost lost the knack of working this machine, so forgive the errors please. Being back at this desk feels strange so far, not quite totally through the door and looking at the back of a head which is not quite mine, or something geometric and difficult. I'm realizing how the teaching drew me far away from my usual habit processes, and I sort of don't want to get back to them entirely, excepting writing processes and I do want to get going with another big project but so far I've just been staring into the notebook I nearly filled up in Boulder and wondering what I've got in there and typing a little of it up just to see. It's an odd notebook full of teaching notes and some poems and things written while traveling (maybe the best part) and a few dreams and incomplete jottings. Funny how I never write down plans for writing, as I've sometimes seen in famous writers' journals that have been printed after they've died. Ha, I don't worry about my handwriting getting deciphered since I figure if you (& a few others) have been able to read it others in future positions should be able to. Anyway I never would have thought about that at all if you hadn't mentioned it, but it's too late for me to learn to write right, no? I've never been able to hold my mind on the future very long or responsibly or at all usefully anyway. Is that an odd confession? Does anyone? Time is always where I am at the moment (guess I am a good existentialist!). This is a funny letter, no center, but will have to do. The last three months has been good for the three of us I think, we finally got off our homestead asses and managed to move around a bit, did this thing together, enjoyed it all mostly, loosened the patterns. So much so that we're even less happy to be (back) here than ever! Celia enjoyed the big school in Boulder, after first being understandably apprehensive, saying there were "no jerks" there. I'm afraid her little (400 kid) country schoolhouse here will seem dull in comparison, although she was glad to see her friends again, having kept in constant touch with them all the while by letter and by phone. It's ironic to realize that after the Naropa administrators worried so much that a poet (me) would abuse their phonebill by making endless foreigncalls, in fact holding up my last check until we had paid our phonebill, Celia was the only one who made any longdistance calls! Maybe they should worry more about poets' children? It was fun for me to have a more definite schedule to follow week by week, for awhile anyway, knowing it wouldn't last. And Boulder is really a good town to walk around in, I haven't taken so many regular big walks in years. The weather so great, so unwinterlike, we couldn't believe it. Saw lots of Larry, sad Larry, of course. He's turning into somebody you could really finally apply the word "avuncular" to these days. And with the present shaky state of the Naropa poetics department, his movie deals having totally failed, he's worried about having no job, no money, no fun. He was so sad when we left, we felt like we had

done something wrong. And of course he tried his best to convince us to move out there. Actually I heard there's the chance the whole school may be moved, possibly to Boston(!), believe it or not. Or maybe Nova Scotia, where Trungpa's presently living. I'm still totally mystified about the operations of that place, the more I "know" about it. I was totally left alone to go to a room twice a week and do whatever came to mind, which is fine in a way but sort of strange too. I kept thinking somebody would be curious about just what I was doing in there, but as long as I and my students kept showing up they didn't seem to care. "As long as I" sounds peculiar. Anyway the classes became quite an emotional thing and we were all sad to leave each other at the end, 10 weeks finally seeming much too short a time for knowing anybody or teaching them either. Actually the writing class turned out to work more easily than I'd imagined, and I had difficulties getting the students to read as xxxxx deeply as I would wish. Guess I expected too much? They had so much trouble focusing on the book as the whole world to them in the moment of reading, but recalling myself at their age I can understand how their lives are so full of tentativeness and big roaring worries and change. I should tell you if I didn't before(?) how I managed (after some difficulty with the library finding what I wanted) to play some of the tapes of your classes there, how they loved hearing your voice, and got all excited about your work. Yes. Strange thought that the tape of your reading, which I most wanted, couldn't be located, making me wish I had brought one from here. There was quite a flap, among the students mainly, they were quite disappointed, about Anselm's not coming at the last minute. Plus all the uncertainty in the air sometime re the poetics program possibly being dropped after the summer, and the fact that the accreditation "team" came through and left them without giving approval, made me feel even sorrier for the students. Larry just wrote to say the poetics will go on but I still wonder. I spent a couple hours one day talking all this over with the dean (Judy Leaf) and felt that she didn't have much understanding of poets (or any need for same). Anyway, without Allen there as their Buddhist/poet liason man the (mainly Buddhist of course) administration doesn't seem to know what to do with poets. Then Anne managed to piss them all off by writing her plan to come back and take over, she & Reed to teach all the courses. But actually they do want her to assume command so I suppose she will and they'll manage to work something out. Well, I'm sure you'd rather hear almost anything but somebody else's administrative problems. Tell me how it went with you & Bill in Detroit. I thought of you two all that day, tried to imagine the scene. It appears that I will be going out there in early June after all. This is becoming an amazingly busy year for me, on the outside anyway. Otherwise though of course I worry about being increasingly dragged away from my desk. XXXXX I hope I never win any prizes! Lyn Hejinian just sent me a photograph of the Russian poets actually in midst of reading my work in translation at one of their sessions in the Dostoevsky House in Leningrad, amazing, I keep staring into it fascinated. They look like interesting young guys you might meet somewhere, with adidas sneakers in clouds of cigarette smoke, but the wall behind them looks ancient with damp spirits of newspaper plastered on, ancient as the whole Russian wordhoard itself. Wish I could know what they're thinking about! There's been some trouble getting the permission letters through to them so they can publish samizdat edition of my work, Lyn's, WCW's, etc. Makes me paranoid with visions of my name on secret lists, scary phonecalls in midst of night, guys in anonymous suits loitering by. But really it's exciting more than anything. Well, as you can tell I'm putting off saying anything about the troubles you & Lewis are having,

mainly because it upsets me to think how I can't think of anything that might help. I feel so far away. And I wish you could do what you thought of one time and bring Marie and come up for a weekend or something, possibly? We certainly deserve a few long talks, don't we? after all these long years. And now they're even shutting the Orchidia! Shit, this really hasn't been much of a letter, I didn't answer much that you asked I guess, but at least you get to hear me a little before longer times roll over us. I'm feeling kinda stupid myself, or talked-out anyway after all that classroom and jumping around. Need to still my brain and start again. Anyway. Let me know. Or call me some night?

Time to go to sleep, seeing things moving out of the corners of my eyes when there's nothing there.

Love,
Clark

December 3, 1984

Dear Clark,

Any good rocks in Rome? Actually I found a good phrase in some old work of mine today which made me think of Rome & therefore of you, it's "handcuffing x of hermits who grab the genitals' police." Despite that off the cuff phrase, we've all been thinking of you & wondering about your & Susan's European responses & general happiness, afeared you guys might never return!! I compare notes with Paul and Corbett (to whom I just sent your address, relating to some interviewer about Philip Guston) & with Geoff as to whether there's any x news of you, my line always being "oh shit you know Clark hates to write about his travels, ha ha." Speaking of travels, Geoff sounded like he was in outer space the last time he was in New York (to see the Van Gogh show & hear Spalding Gray read!). Well, more gossip later. Do you crave gossip over there? I miss you, even though I hardly ever see you.

So how is it being an "academic" poet? I myself love being a retiree or whatever you call it, it's my calling no doubt about it. I now have time to think, my favorite occupation, which of course includes dreaming and sleeping. I also read books again & am enclosing a current list for your amuse- amazement since I read lots of kids books too. Are you reading Dante in the original yet? Now forget all these questions I might intersperse out of curiosity, you don't have to write back & describe absolutely every Roman street but you must, someday, tell me who is Angelo Massina, & also why the Romans don't use Roman numerals, that's like asking why is the sky blue dad?

My vita nuova is I sit here in a house newly painted by me (that took a month & a half to do) meditating and exercising and practicing for (don't worry I'm not a Buddhist) my new book, some of the questions about which I've finally found the answers for but not, as I thought, from philosophy. I've begun to think that philosophy in relation to the problems of writing (language as they say) is about as useful as psychiatry for the problems of life. I really did think for a while that Heidegger would help me understand the nature of thinking, and maybe he still will but his conception of thinking seems to have to do with a notion that not everyone can do it, which mine doesn't. For instance could there really be such a thing as real thought, as opposed to thought that is what? unacceptable? unreal? etc. Not-thinking disguised as thinking? I "think" that a cow thinks also, of course a whole other matter. Not only that I'm going to buy a new typewriter!

I haven't begun to write the book yet, but for the exercises, but I can envision a "plot" for it (& of course a whole new meaning for the word plot) and of that I'll say no more. I'm also involved in typing out and sometimes even rewriting the myriad of poems I've piled up these recent years, some of which you saw this summer, taking great pleasure of course in throwing some in the general trash since my belief is I became rather longwinded as an eighty-year-old a bit before my time. Sometimes I sound like a filibusterer of poetry, for poetry? Meanwhile somebody interviewed me for a little magazine & the thing turned out to be 103 pages long (same old story) and now I'm stuck with the task of rereading myself and having to edit it down to half that and the irksome thing is (this is a magazine that interviews one poet and one artist in each issue & last artist was Yvonne Jacquette) that people ask artists these wonderful technical questions about types of gouaches & stuff like that & what the hell do they ask the poets? – whaddayou

think about reagan, etc. There was a moment in this interview when I was asked to tell about my parents' deaths! & I said no I wouldn't talk about that, then the interviewer (who is ann rower whom i like very much) seemed insulted & I hastened to add I would talk to her about all that by ourselves if she wished but certainly not for the tape since, shit, i have dwelled in that sphere in my lizard-like writings enough! dont you think? what am i supposed to do, give their diseases as if it were the national enquirer? anyway I wished heartily that the abstruser questions of writing even including such stuff as the funniest types of enjambment (& which are the funniest ones?) would be brought up rather than my personal life and political opinions, no less overwrought and no wiser than the baker's. Meanwhile II, i've been reading all over the place at Buffalo & the NY Academy of Art, at Ear Inn and the Nuyorican Cafe, at the Museum of modern Art & at Bard college & at this new place called darinka & later i even assented to go to the most hysterical city of this globe, mr. boston. each of these readings is a tale to tell, overall-ly so badly managed it makes you think even the other poets and the lovers of poetry xxxx dont care about poetry like the tendency to hard-nosed divorce when it's recommended by marriage counselors or something. Last night at the nuyorican cafe, no less a personage than Andy Clausen was introducing me & said to me beforehand, what the fuck should i say about you? I replied, say whatever the hell you want to say. Then he said, well what the fuck should i say. & so on. Then Amiri Baraka who was reading too said he had to go first since nobody'd told him about the reading till after it was advertised & he had another appointment. The most hilarious time took place in Buffalo where: nobody showed up to pick us up, then I and Diane Ward were dumped in a Best Western motel where the only amenity was a hot tub we were told we couldn't use cause "there were men in it", then Deborah Daley said she couldn't have dinner with us cause she was fasting but there was a really good restaurant just across our view of the parking lot, plus a guy on the train tried to pick us up while we xxx were writing a poem together & his line was, "You girls finished your homework yet?" It aint Detroit. But perhaps I am simply angry at the world like a gigantic 16th century Dutch bouquet.

Anyway, onward, as some famous poet once said. It's wonderful to think of you perusing the foreign streets, avenues and perhaps even countrysides and discovering different types of pasta, ink and typewriters. Here, of others: Lewis is teaching at two colleges and writing two more Barron's books (The Stranger & Madame Bovary! quite a tas k), Paul has finished his trilogy of novels and is now writing another book from the "point of view of a (dare I say?) girl (woman?)". Siri is going headlong into finishing her Dickens thesis and is also about to become thirty. Bob Homan (who is all at sea without enough to do!) and Elizabeth Murray are going to have another baby & it's a girl. Fanny just gave a reading at the Ear Inn of new poems, Suki looked mad & alas Fanny read with this impostor named Robert Gluck; Fanny's poems were very good. Corbett's new collection of poems is imminently appearing & is being touted at Harvard by a reading there by him & Creeley on Pearl Harbor Day. Beverly's getting the part of the house ready she needs for her private practice which will then begin. The American book Review asked me to write a review for them (of Top Stories) and I havent seen the new Wim Wenders' movie "Paris Texas" yet but I will. I saw xxx "All of Me" which was great. No fewer or less imposing personages than Larry, Anne, Allen G. & John Godfrey are all suffering from the attempts of their landlords to evict them from their ny apartments. Ambrose alas has had some attacks of asthma even in Colorado but those guys seem settled there for a while and, as i'm sure you heard, have bought a ranch style house. Messerli is going to do a short book of Fanny's but hasnt responded yet to my sending him the complete studying hunger journals (still

no title for that) though he told somebody he was reading them. Marie and Sophia arrived back at school to learn that, for them, art was being replaced by computer classes (no recourse), Raphael Soyler had a wonderful retrospective show and asked me to bring the children at which point I learned that he and Marie are now the same height!

George Schneeman opened his annual Xmas store in a fancy downtown gallery this year and, in an unrelated incident, is having his rent reduced to \$112 a month via my lawyer (that'd be a good name for a street). My sister lost her temper & quit her job as a proofreader at the ad agency she's been struggling to support herself working for and now she's scared witless at the prospect of being "alone" in this world & having to summon up more than a thousand a month to live. Peggy got mad when Rosemary quit her job (she works in the same place); Peggy published a book by Steve Carey (AP) & a little pamphlet by me ("The Incidents Report Sonnets"). Alice still doesn't say hello to me even when we meet in the Y's locker room naked; that seems odd doesn't it. She seems to be, though, if not happy, surviving ok and many people come to her workshop at the Poetry Project. Anselm goes to junior high in Chinatown and everyday I see gangly Edmund leaping down and across the streets & he always says hello. Paul & Lewis & I have a plan that if x any of us gets an Nea grant (ha ha), that person will take all the others to dinner at Lutece; if none of us is so honored, we'll go out together for grilled cheeses. Allen Ginsberg is in China, let's see who else might you want to hear about? Richard Hell's going on tour next week; Diane Tornado had a baby. Larry (don't quote me) is apparently having difficulties at Narope; somebody told me somebody had accused him of a felony. I was invited to teach there next summer, maybe I'll committ a felony too. Farrah Fawcett Majors won't marry Ryan O'Neal even though she's pregnant. Lewis's parents bought new winter coats for Marie & Sophie (who, by the way, are studying Chinese at school!) right after I had bought them new ones. Bill Berkson, busy as a beaver, barely ever puts pen to paper though he might appear here at xmas time. David Shapiro wrote a book on Jasper Johns. Gee, I'm running out of items and i've no doubt that, as always, i've left out the most important parts. Michael Brownstein walks with a cane due to a sprain. Anne's Toothpaste book got reviewed in the Times in a joint review with carolyn kizer.

& here it is nothing if not balmy, there has been no winter weather and this December there are still leaves on the ground, old worn-out new york ones. I hope you guys are having an also-warm and inspiring time cruising around the continent and that you think, occasionally, at a certain kind of footfall on the ruins, of [→: Latinate] me.

LOVE,
Bernadette

December 15, 1984

Dear Bernadette,

So terrific to get your letter full of just the sort of news and thoughts we need to hear (here), so much so in fact that we're extra embarrassed not to have written you! Just back from a wondrous week in Venice and then Florence (can hardly believe I'm saying this) to find your letter in the first actual pile of mail we've had since we've been here. Other than you and Geoffrey we've only heard from parents, and them all the time! Part and parcel I spose of being in a foreign land, and being thus cut off for a while is quite wonderful in a way, we even forgot what day was election day until we saw a hand-scribbled notice on the Academy bulletinboard : "Reagan Landslide" and thought "Oh, right... Shit!" All such political heresxy seems so far away in this land of the casual coffee had standing up watching what all the people do in front of some amazing façade like the Farnese Palace, and then dancing off to duck the streams of hundreds of little cars (hardly any big American cars in this city). And STONE!!! Walking these streets is like exploring a cave as you cut through a tiny slice between slab ochre walls and emerge into a perfect open space like the Piazza Navona (which is currently all ringed around and blocked with little tin sheds full of Christmas stuff mainly for the children and flashing lights at night almost like an oldtime midway). I had the thought yesterday that everything is built of stone here, and I doubt there's a wooden building in the entire country! Which does something amazing to the light, gives it an extra weight possibly, and in fact at sundown the light seems to sink back into the stone or into the ground so you can finally believe in what those ancient guys thought about the sun going underground till morning. It's so inspiring here, you wouldn't believe it, actually you'd love it and we do wish you could somehow just appear around a corner one day as we're climbing the hill coming home. We just met Glen and Carol Baxter in Venice for the weekend, literally met them in the street, or actually on a little bridge over a canal, and that feeling was sometime unbelievable and of course why not? One can go anywhere in the world (naive us?) and meet anybody, like we also met my old friend Alvin Curran in famous Florian's (bar) on the Piazza San Marco all in silver mists and stadium lights. I've tried to suggest you for a residency here (and here we get back into the Politics) but the director Jim Melchert who is a tall funny bearded guy who likes to kill three bottles of chianti of an evening and tell tales out of school, seems truly blocked by idiots on the board of directors (corporation-type guys) who don't know any poets exist unless they read their names in Time Magazine. In fact, Melchert told me the story that he'd first picked John Ashbery for this year's Writer in Residence but John never answered his calls, so then he suggested Bob Creeley but the board rejected him, can you believe it? So I got asked I spose because none of the famous acceptable guys were available (but isn't Creeley "famous" by now??) and I was at the top of a list that Barry Watten(!) gave to Melchert. How about them apples? God, I'm starting to sound like Bill Corbett! Actually I think the way it works: the artists are a sort of icing on the cake here, names that the corporate types can read on a list and feel okay about giving more money to this place (which is always crying unbelievable poverty!), so what else is new? But Melchert seems genuinely to want real working artists to come here and get involved with the fellows (students) and not be like Alex Katz who was recently invited here for 4 months but only stayed 3 weeks and never said boo to anybody and split without warning. Some of the fellows are nice and bright and friendly and curious, but most seem strange and uptight and worried about somebody stealing their projects, a real academic meatmarket game, a battle actually over jobs etc. One girl here in classical studies named Eve Dambra who is short and has short hair actually became ill at

a party when she realized there was some German guy there working on the same capital of the same column down in the Augustus Forum as she was, but it turned out alright eventually when she talked to him and found out he was studying it in a “different way”.

[new page] So these types run around the Academy halls looking worried and not saying hello and for a while we felt like every time we went over there we had to introduce ourselves to everybody all over again! I’d forgotten what an uptight scene the scholastic whirl is. Of course, we live across the street, not in the academy proper (and it is proper in what seem olden and silly ways, like one day Susan commented that she never heard anybody over there say “fuck” or even “damn”!), so we only contact these people when we want to. We have dinner over in the diningroom about once a week and try to decide who’s the CIA man, and I’m sure there is one. The place has a Roman staff and so some of the dinner menus are odd and funny, like for a few weeks we kept hitting this meal which featured a cold slice of precitutto with cold French fries on top(!) Oops, I mean prosciutto! In process of coping with Italian I sometimes feel like I’m forgettin my own English, spelling going to hell even worse than usual. So far have only picked up enough Italian to “get around” as they say, but Susan has done much better and quickly began jabbering with the folks at the wonderful open-air markets, amazing. It’s so hard to remember the words (I have to keep going into the dictionary and looking up the same words!), some of which are like English but with a crucial consonant changed (or missing), some are easily learned from the Latin I remember, and some are completely different from anything you could imagine. Crazily inconsistent, but English is worse!, and I’m beginning to remember how difficult it was for me to learn English as a child, an amazing realization I never had before. Of course we keep running into people here who speak 5 or 6 languages and think nothing of it. In fact my old friend Alvin, I grew up with and never thought of ~~as~~exceptionally “smart”, speaks 4! I’m a big dummy. But it’s great actually wandering around looking and hearing and having your own thoughts in your own language the while everybody else is jabbering away in an unknown tongue (I’m beginning to see what Gertrude meant!). I have been fumbling away at Dante, one of those little leather-bound ancient English volumes somebody left here, the Vita Nuova appropriately and Canzoniere, in the original and a bad facing translation, so I scramble through the Italian dictionary and this has inspired a few poems at least. I’ve been writing a lot since about the second week here, when we slowed down a bit from being totally amazed at every turn, all kinds of poems and jottings and diary entries and sketching in front of things and dreams. I’m even making progress with my Sex Book, Rome being a very sexy town actually though I’m not sure I could describe just how outside of the poetry. Something about the way the people move and watch each other but without any particular intent, certainly no dangerous feelings anywhere in the streets and we walk everywhere day or night in peaceful ways unimaginable in American cities (I realized that NYC is a bad model to use in comparing or imagining cities). Also the color: the whole spectrum of stone tones that must have been invented here, plus the great blacks and saturated scarlets (I got a great red shirt) everybody wears, the leather and brass, and then the layers of lives apparent everywhere, the strata of centuries’ habitation and the feel of use in everything, even the edges of buildings, in the rub of well-worn suede. And the way the Old City (we have a great view of from here on the Gianicolo) seems to boil and simmer in orange smoke at night (all those orange street lights), exciting, active, never

sleeps. And the weather, which has been so dramatic here the last few weeks (the first month it was all blue skies), with days of rain, sudden sun shafts illuminating a row of buildings or a single church far away then moving on, a tropic downpour for a few minutes, and even lightning (one bolt of which almost blew us out of bed in the middle of the night from out of nowhere, just a single brilliant stroke that must have hit quite near on the hill here). It was freezing but beautiful in Venice, crystal days in which you can hear each footfall in the narrow streets (no cars), then eerie fogs at night on the canal as you peer from a vaporetto (I recall Lewis was once searching for that word, no?, for his novel?) which flashes its headlight and peeps its horn and the bridges have traffic lights underneath for boats. I've been taking millions of pictures and so one day you'll see a great slide show of all these memories. And already Venice is receding into memory like the fantastic city you only get to visit in rare dreams.

And the painting!, all totally wondrous and endlessly inspiring, and we haven't even hit the Piero Trail yet (will do that in January by car). Highlights so far being the Caravaggios in Rome (it's great creeping into all those silent churches, dark in the daytime, putting coins in the lightbox like junkies to see his shafts of light which come out of the darkness anyway, and the actual thrill of seeing the paintings in the places they were painted in/for where they've been for centuries, the San Luigi dei Francesi with its great Calling of Saint Mathew etc right across the alley from the palace where Cardinal DelMonte took Caravaggio in to live while he was working on these pictures, so you can easily imagine C shambling across the street swearing and probably drunk and looking for a fight--one day on the nearby street we almost bumped into a guy who looked just like Caravaggio himself in foot-length wool coat all hairy and sweating), the Carapaccios in Venice, the Fra Angelicos and Uccellos and Pontormos in Florence. And by the way, tell Rosemary how I loved the Pontormos and thought of her book which I should be able to buy here if I could remember its exact title/press/where published etc (can you write and tell me?), I've looked to see it in all the bookshops here but no luck so far. I've been reading an old book on Pontormo from the Academy library (which is loaded with such things) written by a Frederick Mortimer Clapp in 1916, and just made a poem out of his "analysis" of Pontormo's Diary (there's a translation of in Rosemary's book?). We spent hours amazed in the Friars' cells of San Marco (Florence), forty odd little stone domed chambers each with its own jewel-like Fra Angelico fresco from the life of Christ painted around 1440, probably the closest I've come to feeling the ancient mystical Christianity and I could imagine coming every day to sit alone before these images (each intended purely as contemplative object) and then going out for coffee (hahaha), but seriously, and each chamber has its own resonant pitch which I found quickly by humming a scale, you barely have to breathe and the whole cell begins to vibrate as if you were sitting inside your own ringing skull, whew. No doubt lots of poems will come from this and they'll all say Coolidge has become a born-again Christian or something(?) Well, who cares? As you can see I've got a decent typewriter here the Academy rents me for 10 bucks a month, a good old metal Olivetti Lettera 35 which I'd actually like to steal when I leave. Or maybe I can find a used one cheap. Everything seems quite cheap here, due to the American dollar exchange rate being embarrassingly good right now (circa 1900 lire to the dollar). We go to the bank to cash Travelers Checks, a bank where you have to enter through a metal-detector isolation booth since they've had so many bank robberies here. There was a terrorist plot to attack the American Embassy which you probly heard about(?) and Al Curran got held at gunpoint by the carabinieri since he happened to be coming in on a plane they were watching that day, but we haven't seen any of that. Nothing but a few young carabinieri lounging across the residence of the American

Ambassador to the Holy See (I can see from this window as I'm typing this) and smoking and playing with their machineguns and peeing in the Academy bushes. There's a video artist named Frank Gillette, who shows at Castelli and is the world's worst name-dropper but who is okay once you penetrate that and let him know that you know he's just a little boy afraid that everybody hates him but you like him anyway (a bit like Larry, and we did imagine a confrontation between the two like a movie of Duelling Name-Droppers). I thought of asking him if he knew Ed Bowes but he'd probably say he did even if he didn't and anyway he does Artist/Gallery Video and not the Movie kind. I've so far only seen his color photo collages which are quite good and splintery and made from his own photos. This is all so scattered as an "account", hope you don't mind?, but there's so much to report and muse over. Reminds me of Umberto Eco's Name of the Rose novel which I just read (we got desperate for books in English after awhile, having brought none, so people have been lending us whatever has been left around on bookshelves here and there) in which he takes 500 pages or whatever to make the point that there is no order in the universe since that would be a limit on God's freedom(!)

Great to see your Recent Reading list, and to know that you're back into mode of reading and thoughts and plans for new works, great! I too am reading Augustine's Confessions, and also having another go at Jerome but ultimately he's too anti-sex (to put it mildly) and boring long-winded. It's the visual Jerome that's the greatest kick, and Baxter showed me this great Bestiary For St Jerome book he got which categorizes all the paintings by the animals in them (many more than just the lion). Which reminds me of how one night in Florence I saw a guy with a tiny owl perched on his left shoulder(!) I also read Don Judd's thing in Art in America but got pissed off at him when he called Robt Smithson "Sophomoric" (what a jerk!). Also have been reading Frances Yates' Art of Memory and Giordano Bruno (there's a great statue of him here in the Campo dei Fiori where he stands in bronze with a great cowl and covered in pigeons as if presiding over the great vegetable market they have there in the mornings, this supposedly the exact place where he was executed). Also a great study of Durer's Melencolia and further by Panovsky and 2 Germans called Saturn and Melancholy. What is "Fucking by Don Yorty"?? And is that Kronhausen book anygood? I read Gay Talese's American Sex Study but it's mostly boring except for the parts about Diane Webber. I found a used copy of Kathy Acker's omnibus novel volume (the English edition has Blood and Guts in Highschool, Great Expectations and My Life My Death by Pasolini) in Florence. Also read White Hotel, William Wharton's novels and etc for semi trash pleasures. Also had an inexplicable experience with a perfectly awful novel by Margaret Drabble (sic) which I started reading outloud to Susan and only stopped at 3 A/M/ to realize I'd been reading for 7 hours(?!), the thing having some horrible undertow I spose I got caught in. The Ice Age. I don't know who Angelo Massina is/was (or why the Romans don't use their numerals) but will find out. Great to have all the gossip (I've never felt the need of so much as here) re the typical American poetry landscape simmering along as ever. Tell our mutual friends we're having a great time and I'll write as soon as I can (too bad I never developed the patented BillCorbett postcard method). I did write to Bill B and to Larry but have heard nothing back. Larry's "felony" is probably the result of book stealing (I heard a horrible story while in Boulder of him getting caught in a bookstore in Denver and almost going to jail!). Mathew was supposed to send me some books but so far hasn't (maybe he's awaiting a card?). Messerli wrote that I should see proofs on my return (late Feb) and the printed book April (that'll be the day!). I'll do my best with him re Studying Hunger Journals (already have nudged him as best I can). Fanny sent me a great little book of new poems before I left, maybe that's what

Messrli's doing? Oh, did you get a copy of that FRICTION mag from Boulder which features me? I only got 2 before I left and Geoff immediately grabbed one. Your interview tale reminded me of it since I too had to type the whole interview there, edit, etc. Where are the great Poetry Secretaries? Paris Texas is playing here now but I don't think I want to see it dubbed into Italian (they dub everything here and sposedly invented dubbing). Fellini is making pasta commercials for TV. All the new art here is terrible, boring, bad imitations of U S pop and "expressionist", but who even notices with so much great "old" art everywhere? I think of Guston here a lot, naturally, am even wearing one of his shirts right now. And somehow DeKooning keeps coming to mind, appropriate here somehow(?), saw a great catalog for his Pompidou show which is one-third great photographs of him (and Elaine) from all perods , most I'd never seen. The kids here seem into Mod culture, ride around on scooters, "Mods Forever" painted on walls. Also Heavy Metal bands like Blue Oyster Cult, and Lou Reed and Jim Morrison ("We want the world and we want it now" painted on a wall down in the Trastévere (sort of Bohemian section this side of the river). Well, I better stop for now, too much to say! Celia will be back here for Christmas next week, and my mother is coming over for two weeks after that! She said she couldn't stand not visiting us in Rome even though my father refuses to come (he's afraid of illness though he seems in fine shape). More adventures to come. And you too, please, send further reports. At your last "footfall in the ruins" line we both got weepy (true).

LOVE to All,

Clark

January 7th, 1985 Ukrainian Xmas (local
butchers closed)

Dear Clark & Susan,

Got your fullsome letters in the midst of my down-in-dumps xmas routines & boy did they not only cheer me up but make me feel I've been to Florence & to Rome! & soon to see the Piero's, those being the great things, or among them, about friends, traveling. I cant wait to see your photos of the stone tones. I started out tonight writing a possible poem x called "chance encounter on a dissecting table..." having to do of course with Breton's quote about an umbrella & a something else by Lautreamont but found that it all turned into this letter! just as fellini is making 'bisghetti' ads. Are they 'realistic'?

Here in tomboy new york, everyone's obsessed with a person named bernard goetz lately, a wealthy electronics whix I mean whiz who was attempted mugged on the subways and happened to have a gun & shot his four assailants, or alleged ones, or whatever you can all them. He didnt kill them or manage to shoot anyone else and this 'poor' man is being heavily praised for his erstwhile aggressiveness. I'm telling you this to keep you up to date on the american news. Quite different from what's underground in Rome & no doubt the stuff of some future Elmore Leonard novels or imitations of them.

Here among friends, not so much a circle of muggers and whizzes, Bill B. recently zoomed into town and put on a grand party for his pals, which he assured me in advance was to be a small party for about ten of his friends (I having complained of this being my only chance to see him). So we bopped into his mother's fifth avenue apartment (you've seen the place?), the first ones there cause I didnt trust him & wanted a chance to talk to him. A strange man in formal attire was sort of guarding the door: hello, can I take your coat, what would you like to drink? Well that's too many things at once, one has to answer, hello, yes here it is, um a Campari with some xxx vodka & much lemon and soda, meanwhile attempting to caress (assassinate?) Bill whom one wont see again for a year or years. Followed a party for no fewer than eighty, though to defend Bill I'll admit that many were friends of his motherxxx. There was a fruit salad as tall as Max nearly and at one point I got to overhear the maids making fun of the guests through the ajar kitchen door. There were turkeys and hams and pates and linen napkins that when one was standing opened up and fell all the way down to one's knees and all the well-heeled guests with whom it was kind of hard to strike up a talk with, though I did wind up getting seduced by Kenneth Koch (after brooding in the smallest room & being told, go talk to someone) to give a little speech about the ignoring of poetry by the press to a woman who turned out to be Marion Javits and then called me a firebrand. There was a black forest cake. A generous & fascinating evening, but alas not my idea of a night with Bill. Previous to this Bill C. zoomed into town also in his usual mayhem way. The plan was Paul & Siri & Bill & Marni & me & Lewis would all have dinner together. Fine, I suggested having it here, Paul thought we should go to a restaurant. Then Bill called and said dinner was off but I had to get Paul & Siri here at 8:30 to have drinks with him, no Marni who was with her

Xxxxxxxx [page break]

boyfriend (she's at NYU) & also had a hangover! Followed a long discussion about teaching which kind of left me and Paul out though I mentioned zeugmas, and I must admit that Bill stayed for more than an hour. (Paul got an Nea grant, though none of the others of us did including Bill though his great fan bob creeley was a judge. We've had a bet going with Paul that

if one of us or some of us got a grant we'd take the others to dinner at Lutece. Now xpoor or rich? Paul has to do it! The xx alternative was going out for grilled cheeses. Also Bill's book is out, his Collected Poems, which was supposed to be called CITY NATURE but the publisher just sort of left off the title without saying anything because he likes to publish collected poems. Bill was mad but didn't say anything because the guy is in his seventies and wears attractive lumerjack-type clothes & is devoted to poetry his name's C.F. Terrell, do you know him? Meanwhile Bill screwed up the acknowledgements which really irked Lewis. Meanwhile III, Bill & Beverly are making the changes in their house which will lead quite soon to Beverly's having a 'private practice' there. Siri's to be thirty in Fxebruary, the occasion of a no-doubt grand party. Paul's got staples in his ears from the acupuncturist he doesnt trust, to stop smoking. Whew! The Corbett/Auxster/Hustvedt news).

Having finished ROUGE ET NOIR (which I think Fanny should reread) I'm now rereading PRIDE & PREJUDICE, among other tomes. I realize I read more manuscripts than books these days, whaddoes it mean? Forget about the Kronhausen book, it's uninteresting except in that it makes a case for incest. The book is excerpts from sexual fantasy 'texts' as it were interspersed with commentary by the K-hausens. I shouldnt say for incest, but not against it, that is trying to show **[marginal →: confusing sentence]** it, as often thought, does no one any 'harm' depending onx the culture. However it's not an exciting book, also as it were. I've just written a review of some Top Stories books, commissioned (for \$25) by the American book Review. & what a difficult job that was, I doubt I would ever do it again. But these are short fiction works and in the midst of thinking about them I found myself to be thinking of and ultimately espousing what my sister finally confirmed for me was or were among the most unfashionable notions currently. You see, as Rosemary told me, structuralism has gone through a period called destructuralism and much of this has to do with punk & cynical & hopeless notions or lacks of visions, so that beyond existentialism we have something truly depressing which my sister described as encouraging your children to fuck with dogs (from a recent sex issue of Semiotexte); the thing I cant understand is how relatively objective structuralism because a trendy philosophy. However I have been reading a book called Anti-Oedipus by some of these guys in which, despite the title, every human being talked about is referred to as a he & all the false intellectualized radical political notions are espoused & Henry Miller is quoted all the time & it's just another rehash of Marx and Freud, it makes you think this form of intellectuality is just something to do, to pass the time? Badly written too, a fashionable book. But I wont go on with transcontinental book reports!

Max can say the numbers 1-20 in Spanish & Sophie & Marie can do 1-99 in Chinese now. Marie can 'read' Roxemary's chinese posters for her & Sophia can draw the chinese characters much more beautifully than she can write in what we call English. If I saw no one but the children's friends, I'd be convinced I lived on some fantastical border between Indiax & China & Puerto Rico (three corners) & Afghanistan!four.

Jack Collom is back in new york this week after recovering in colorado from his weird operation, he's fine now. When I asked him how Anne & Reed & Ambrose are he said they're acting like good citizens and dutiful scholars, & getting into living in the suburbs. Larry is due to come here to appear in court with his landlord/sometime soon. The case against Anne was dropped-
this has nothing to do with the 'felony.'

A bookstore in a gentrifiable part of Bklyn (which you now have to dial a separate area code for!) got its rent raised by triple recently & began selling the mayor's autobiography for \$58.75,

triple its price. The newest 'store' in this neighborhood is called "This Spud's For You." They sell 85¢ baked potatoes with various toppings (50¢ to \$2- extra) & barbecued chicken. All these new joints on the lower east side also have video machines. It's hard to keep up with which place was what even in the recent past. I'm sure nothing like this takes place in Rome. The final piece of info on this boring subject is that George S. got his rent reduced to \$112 a month & it being retroactive his landlord owes him something like twenty thousand dollars Here's a bit of dialogue you might enjoy:

Susan (Cataldo): what's the gossip?

Peggy: I don't know any.

Susan: Does Eileen know any?

Peggy: She doesn't tell me any, she's always too tired and distracted.

Susan: Oh, so I can tell everyone Eileen is too tired to remember anything.

So that's the gossip. Your tale about the overwrought students vying for the same column-study made me think of Lewis who meets with students who actually weep if they discover he's only to give them a B+: "you're ruining my index." What an odd world it is. Somehow Lewis wound up teaching in graduate school at Long Island University and is now an associate professor, not that he gets such a xxx luminary's salary they just kind of throw you the title. So the students, who were all here last night for their last class & are as ethnically various as Marie & Sophie's classmates & also astonishingly naive for people of average age 35, all call him Professor Warsh.

On the poetry reading scene, which I'm sure is the furthest thing from your minds, but just to amuse you, there seem to be taking place in New York City now numerous, really unending numbers of, to my mind useless and pointless group readings at various new in-place[s?] for which of course no one gets paid more than a few dollars. There's even one place that keeps calling up mimeographed magazine editors & asking if they want to do benefits – the guy who organizes these, a former student of Jack's, actually takes a 'cut'! The magazines raise about \$35. I've given no fewer than ten readings since the fall but these have been mostly out of town and for an honorarium of some sort, though you always have to practically beg for your money. Just now Bill & Philx called & said xxxx tonight they got arrested for (the charge is) 'selling poetry.' Stuck for money for paper for their magazine ('Blue Smoke'), they went out door-to-door in some rich New Jersey neighborhoods adjoining theirs to sell copies. After making \$14 in this way, three cop cars came to take them away, their trial is tomorrow. They were arrested in Al Pacino's driveway.

Other startling news is I have a new typewriter and it's electronic! I got it thru Peggy's office (this isn't it), only thing is I can't use it till I can find a damn ribbon for it which of course no one has. You'd hate it Clark, but I like its memory!

So when are you guys coming back? Ever? & How was the great historic Roman snow? Had you brought your boots? Funny it would happen while you were there; I hope you were there and not on the road so you could, New Englandishly, sneeze at it. Marie thought the article in the newspaper implied that the snow made the trees change color because it said something like, Rome used to reds and yellows became a city of whites & grays. Marie figured this was like autumn in New England and she chose this story for her current events report.

Well I've gotten my ears pierced, I'm running out of news. Max is writing numbers from one to 199 tonight, I don't know why, it's his own notion and soon he'll be five which'll make the children an all-around odd 5, 7 & 9, leaving us free of birthday celebrations for a while.

Rosemary enjoyed very much your references to Pontormo and she said she was going to write to you. Her book is called Pontormo's Diary & contains x her translation of that plus pictures of and essays about her own work, a weird way of doing things but it's a fascinating book. I just saw her original handmade book in which she copied the diary in Italian & her translation overlaid with drawings. The publisher is Out of London Press.

[new ribbon] I have a book for you which I'll send. & no, I don't have the Friction magazine, I'll try to find it. I'm sure your interview (is that where it is?) is a thousand times more succinct than mine which I only left off editing when I felt I had at last had it. As I probably xxxx said, I can't understand why questions to poets aren't totally specific. Bill B. & I've resumed interviewing each other & now he asks me things like, 'what is the relationship between reason & desire'! and, no less a question than the well-known 'what is realism'? Well, Really! As far as I understand it, what is called realism exists only in painting & fiction (& of course philosophy). I was trying to figure what is a realistic poet, we should start that school, or maybe post-realism. Are Riding's truth-tellers the realists? (Who is Charles Doughty, by the way, do you know his work?) Then I thought maybe poets are all in the other categories – idealists & x (dare I call them) nominalists! I remember some jesuitical types trying to palm off on me when I was quite young the idea that no idea exists unless and until it's put into words! How's the pope by the way? Of course I have no idea if my books dance and sing while I'm out, I would not forbid them to as I often ask them please not to disarrange themselves so badly so that Mozart winds up next to Mother Bound.

Please dig the frescoes & too the fagiolini for me & write back if there's time. Au revoir for now or I should say ciao.

A aglio!

American love,
Bernadette

[handwritten:] P.S. Been to Troy?

December 27, 1985

Dear Susan & Clark,

Many thanks for the presents! Sure helped me fill up those stockings this particular year. I'm afraid Xmas has never seemed dumber though I love the giving of gifts and so on, and one does have to put on a good show or something and we managed to make the great chaos of fun in our house, but I prefer birthdays, more to celebrate. Sophia felt that I had finally gotten what she persists in calling the xmas spirit when I permitted them to jump on the bed and thus destroy it that day, I mean they didnt destroy the bed just its madeness. Max just sits around all the time, while he's not beating somebody up or trying to (by the way my prediction about his being the oldest and the xxx biggest and the most bored intellectually in kindergarten has come true - he's gotten elected president and now he makes rough trouble all the time), making philosophical statements like is this all a dream or who am I anyway? & stuff like that. He's very interested in sex too which he describes as putting your finger in your ass (an incipient Wm. Burroughs?) or lifting up my shirt and grabbing my breasts and saying, I'm doing sex with you mom. Marie is actually beginning to mature or become pubescent or however one puts it, just at ten. In an unrelated event she just received a gift of piano lessons and though she can already play by ear and even in these virtuosic shows with her eyes closed or hands behind her back! she's thrilled at the prospect of finally learning to read music. Her teacher's to be this composer Alvin Novak who told me, perhaps in a fit of sexism?, that Max will no doubt then become very interested in music formally cause that's the way (the imitation of an older sister) Arthur Rubinstein got inspired! Meanwhile Marie asked for (and didnt get) for her birthday a walkman so she could listen to Mozart (she said) while on class trips. Peggy who has little interest in music at all and even less in electric appurtenances just won a ghetto blaster at her office xmas party and is now devoted to a rather lazy attempt to tape all four of her records so she can get rid of her record player altogether.

As for news of the other grownups Lewis is now living in his old apartment at 33 St. Mark's! as some kind of test case (thru Anne) of the subletting laws in new york city, but recently he may have lost his case because Anne was in town and seems to have succumbed to accepting what they call a buyout. Everyday I receive here xeroxedx letters from real estate types offering me thousands of dollars to move out. I've been mostly involved in the incessant quests for money and jobs, a debilitating scene but often funny. When I first got some freelance proofreading work, the book they gave me was called THE GLAMOUR GUIDE TO OFFICE SMARTS and in it it said that a dandelion wasnt a flower, among other things about panty hose and stuff like that. Alas the chapter on sex in the office was dull. But then I got lucky and proofread an Eric Frank Russel novel in tandem with a book on Bolshevism and now I'm doing an adolescent novel called STRAWBERRY SUMMER which was or is real shit I'm afraid. Meanwhile I'm embroiled in the futile attempt to get somebody to let me teach which is what I want to do; but also meanwhile I'm considering taking a hideous arts administration job at Poets & Writers, 40 hours a week, more money than I need, but at least enough to be able to buy flowers and books which was Emma Goldman's description of a fair wage. I'm also studying Whitman for my California lectures at which I am going to say (for three hours) Whitman is very fine, or something like that. And I'm trying hard to write this adolescent novel for money through Fanny Howe's publisher but all it seems to result in is writing a sort of adjoining grownup novel about the same subject which is of course adolescence (& love, ethics, money

and sex). But, oddly, in my writing what I am mainly doing is studying the sonnet form and writing them and then getting befogged in my understanding of that short form in my attempt to write this long poem that's been on my mind now for two years and though I wrote the beginning, or the origins of it the other night, it's apparent that I have too much on my mind at once like the old situation of going into the kitchen and forgetting what you're there for.

It's difficult getting adjusted to this new life and to the constant searching around for money, perhaps not so different from before but quite a bit more desperate in the sense of having children to support and realizing one is down to one's last hundred dollars – if I were single(?) I might think I was rich at that moment. But the children are fine and forthright, though I do believe something Russell Banks said to me recently (and did he coin this word?) that this situation is for children what he conceives of as “lapsarian” meaning relating to The Fall(!) – a fascinating and pretty true idea. Do we now get rid of original sin faster? But the fascinating aspects of all this are pretty strained to my mind, it's just this artless struggle and i've no interest in ever entertaining what is called love again that is with a grownup though, strangely or not, it's all i seem to want to write about, and of course “about” is an original sin too, and thus all this is much to the detriment of my writing at the moment, maybe. I've often noticed that when my waking thoughts become too complex “for words” and my dreams become simple, then that means my writing is off the mark, and often kind of corny. But one does get bored from time to time with the absolutely literary and you just wanna get regular a bit which contemporary poetry doesn't always let you do, I read Nancy Drew – new novels about her in which she's involved with cocaine deals with rock stars! & in which they use phrases like “macho creeps”! – better than Judy /Blume! And she/[**typed above:** Nancy] is always described as being so stunningly beautiful and all these other stunningly beautiful people fall in love with her and she sits on airplanes now instead of in her roadster and mumbles to herself, do I or do I not love Ned Nickerson?!.

Anyway, as you can see, I am obsessed with this genre of novels Marie and Sophie can read. Today Marie picked up my copy of a long poem by Hans Enzensberger called THE SINKING OF THE TITANIC and she said like a true American, oh I'm so sorry this is a poem because I wanted to read it. And then I said to my flesh and blood, like they say, read it anyway at least it's a narrative like the Iliad.

It doesn't snow here yet except one pretty night of about one inch. On occasional types of days we can still roller skate and play ball in the park. I hardly ever go out and like my reclusiveness ok x except when my heart beats too fast and I see I have a weird city version of cabin fever. I have all too much to do and all too little too, it's unusual and also scary that change is still imminent xx but what the hell. Bill C. occasionally writes dramatic alternating with totally absent-of-content letters, Bill B. is in town, I've been offered good jobs in California & Kentucky!

Write to me! & thanks again for that
great box that came in the mail

Love,
Bernadette

[letter has bullet point marginalia on left]

Feb 9 1986

Dear Bernadette,

Greetings from your worst correspondent, or one of them probably. But at least when I do write I don't send postcards! Actually I may be reduced to that one of those, what with all the busywork letters of request that seem to be looming and teetering thesedays . Too bad I never developed the "brief style", haha. I fear if I did that I might blow my writing into tiny crevices and I'd end up the new Cid Corman or something horrible. Ah, worries & woes & strange nervous disturbances. I've been reading Richard Holmes' Shelley: The Pursuit, all about his nervous disturbances & wildfires. Poets like him don't seem so far away anymore, you know? Or maybe it's that nothing does and I get claustrophobic? All the myriad world teeming in one's own walls, etc. and such Romantic junk...

I was in Boston chez Corbett last week. Bill claimed it'd been THREE YEARS since I stayed there but I doubt that can be true (more like two)? I read at the ICA with John Yau the night of the day the space thing blew up and Bill somehow managed to slip on xxx his front stairs and fall down and hurt his back and bump his head and knock all the wind out of himself. And Fanny had some kind of "flu", so it all seems like (as Fanny just wrote and said) The Boston Infirmary! Lewis was there too brooding about blowing his reading the night before at that Blacksmith(?) place Bill runs the readings at (he, finally, asked me for next year). I slept (as usual) in that top east room which is usually freezing in winter (it was) and the sun comes up like thunder out of Boston harbor at 4 A.M. or something uncomfortable. Actually, Lewis had slept there the night before and kept warning me ("I'm telling you, man, there's demons in that room!") he had strange furious nightmares, but I escaped with cramps in both feet that kept me awake for hours the first night. There is something not quite right about that room, though I doubt it's anything as romantic as "demons" exactly. Reading went okay, no big excitement, and I at least did get to talk with Fanny some (without Bill) and she amazed me by giving me a letter that Beckett had written her a couple years ago, as "a little memento of Sam" (!) She talked of having written a play (somebody at MIT is gonna videotape I guess) called "Hell", you know about this? I'm fascinated and want to talk with her more about it. Fanny says she thinks we're all too busy doing what we're doing to talk about it while we're doing it, and I spose that's true enough. Though, we really should make more of an effort? Best intentions etc.

Biggest news though is that I got invited to come to Paris for ten days at the end of April. Some kind of festival being put on by guys like Emmanuel Hocquard and Claude Royet-Journoud (I'm always nervous about spelling their names right!) around publication of an anthology of American poets I'm in, and Michael Palmer is in (and has been asked to come), but we don't know who else and some people you'd think would naturally be going (Like Paul Auster, Lydia Davis, maybe even Geoffrey, who know these xxxx French guys) haven't been asked and don't know anything about it. But it's great and they pay everything, including "a gratification" (instant?), so we're all excited and going (Susan too). Celia can't be pursued, I think she's more thrilled by having the house (and the car: she has her liscence now) to herself in secret. Anyway, will tell you more details of all this transport when I have them.

Did you see my “sex” piece (except, actually it’s the beginning section though Clayton didn’t see fit to indicate that) in Sulfur 14? The only response I’ve had has been Jackson MacLow (via Chas Bernstein) who thought it was great. And now George Tysh calls and says he wants to to that mss as a book, but I’m nowhere near finished with it. Feels like I have less time than ever to really work on such things, what with people xxxxxx wanting me to travel here & there, the “public” aspect is getting tricky.

Just talked with Geoffery and he says The Crystal Text will be out next week. Can you believe this?: He wants me to come over to this weekly wednesdaynite “discussion group” (all male) he’s got going at the house in downtown Barrington he’s rented (it’s a big 3-bedroom house that feels like a college dorm room) and read from the Text and “explain it” to the guys(!?) I feel like I’m going backwards somehow (sophomore talkies??). But, Geoff certainly spoils one for all other publishers, he’s so straight ahead and on time (the main thing). Messerli is another matter, quite other. He just (week or so ago) sent me the second stage of (“Bound Uncorrected”) proofs, and there were many many errors, scared me so immediately called him and read ‘em all on the phone (major things like: one poem stuck in the midst of another poem, typos in titles). Then I made him promise to send blueines so I get one more chance at cleaning it up. He mutters about “cash flow problems”, which I believe. I’ve still not seen Paul’s novel in any stores (I looked in SF & Boston, among other urban centers) though DM claims the second edition is all sold out(!?) Funny business. Bound proofs (which he’s sending out to reviewers despite all the errors) say “April 15” as pub date, so who knows? BUT, DESPITE ALL THIS I still think you should send him another mss, best maybe a big collection of poems/shorter proses, and he’d probably take it. I’m optimistic anyway. And how is your teenage noel going?!

Actually if you do manage to complete that I’ll be jealous forever. But seriously doubt I have it in me anymore, if I ever did, to do such a thing. Perpetrate a fiction on the world... well I’ve done that, I suppose, helplessly and semi-intentionally. But hardly anybody knows it. Anne just sent me a big questionnaire for some kind of “Jovean” collage poem she’s doing with impossible (but interesting and tough) questions like “What do you most fear/love about your father?” and “What do you think are your Masculine and Feminine xxxxx Powers?” And ending up with the real kicker: “Describe the sex act from your point of view”, whereupon I had to tell her that that’s part of my project right now and once I do that (if I do manage it) I’d like it to be in my “poem” not hers! It seems like the new “poetic technique” around & about right now is to get others to write your works for you. Anne, and Brodey’s NY School questionnaire, and now comes a request from Tom Raworth to send him the first image that comes into your mind right NOW (for some big poem he’s casting around for). What’s going on? Should I/we get in on this? I don’t think so. But it’s in the air.

Looks like I got at least 3 readings (plus this double-talk with Michael Palmer) to do in City first week in March. Ear, Blue Mountain, & Stevens. I’ll be down for a week, since I talked Helena Hughes out of my reading at BlueMt at 6 P.M. after my EarInn thing at 3 P.M. on the sameday(!), so it’ll be on the following saturday. And Joel Lewis wants me to take his “WCW Tour” sometime in there, which I probably should do since I’m giving these lectures on Williams at New College in the Fall (thankgoodness it’s not YEATS, as they first asked!). When do you go out for the Whitman, April? Have you decided he’s more (or less) than Great? There’s that funny stage of mind where you come out of the first big blush of enthusiasm and finally have to

xxxx decide what words you'll actually speak for three hours or whatever lengthy. I'll do that in late summer.

Did I tell you our phone broke right in the middle of a conversation with Larry (!?) Appropriate enough. He could hear me but I couldn't hear him. So now we've got new "rotary touch" phone (phones actually, one in bedroom, which I fought against but Susan sez she needs for her new Daycare director's job) which has buttons I don't understand on it (one with a "*" and one with a "#", do you know?). I asked Bill C, who's had one for years, & he says he doesn't know either. More technology nonsense. But at least we can turn these phones OFF.

I'll try to be

a better responder, yes.

See you soon!

Love, Clark

[date handwritten:] 2/23/86

Dear Clark,

The day I got your letter I had a dream I'd just read *The Crystal Text* in book form. Then when I woke up from the dream I realized I had also read *Solution Passage* and had been holding both books in my hands. Boy was I disappointed to be awake! The Fruedians (?) used to say that when you wound up dreaming these plain old ordinary wish fulfillment type dreams that meant you were kinda healthy, ha ha. At one moment that day I almost started to say to somebody, had they seen your *Crystal Text*! I swear! But I'm not so healthy at all cause I'm totally jealous you've got these books coming out while my publishing career (is that a word?) is like this broken porcelain dollhand I'm staring at (sorry to make an image). But I'm on chapter three of the teenage book and chapter two of this other book that occurs in chapters and beyond that all the writing I seem to be inspired to do lately is made up of endless notes I accumulate throughout the house and on my person and then gather together as if I were giving a party and have the sublime fun of trying to make them all make epistemological sense, in fact the last one I wrote like that wound up being about (I know you love that word) epistemology. So so much for fiction. I got a lovely letter from Beverly Cleary the other day, who writes the *Ramona* books which I know Celia has read, saying that she has never really "created" a character. I also got a letter from Laura Riding advising me to "think human thoughts" which I took to be a directive to get back to work on my one-hour book, though she doesn't really approve of such perhaps contrived plans. But I haven't had a lot of time to write and by the end of next week I will have no fewer than 250 poetry students in the public schools of Harlem and the South Bronx! plus proofreading an occasional trash book or history of communism. I've also been reading all these verbose (I should talk) books about teaching children about poetry, most of the recent ones of which seems pointless.

So where are you staying while in NY? xxxx Is it, as rumor has it, with Jim Brodey?! Larry was here the other night, telling me that he had definitely been the absolute and total discoverer of all the weird books Joe Brainard gave me to read, and he also said we three – you me & him – should go out together some night while you're here. I've been being a bit of a tourist lately – today I wandered aimlessly into the Theodore Roosevelt museum on 20th St! It was a riot. & in Harlem I discovered (not before Larry) the only formal gardens in NY and a grand russian orthodox cathedral with five minarets. Harlem is really quite undangerous and has many beauties including, at the north end of Central Park, fascinating birds. At lunch time I drink a Colt 45 with a straw.

Is Anne's project only for males like Geoff's discussion groups? What's going on? She didn't ask me to describe the sex act from my point of view, and I'm surprised she considers it to be in words an act! I hope she asks Bill B. this question. I saw a play today that seemed to be about Dante's conception of fog, though I don't know about Fanny's "Hell" and wish I did, but it does seem that xx absolutely everyone is reading *The Pursuit*. How's that for a sentence?

But I'm not reading *The Pursuit* yet, nor can I find my copy of *Studies in Classic American Literature*, nor have I seen *Sulfur 14* but before you arrive I'll do my best to locate a copy and maybe even steal it for the sake of a more proper attitude (x to sex). I'm dying to read it, like

they say. Oh and I have been meaning to write to you for some time also to tell you I wound up reading over all your letters from the more distant past which is a way of putting it I've always secretly loved. Alas because I sold them to the University of California. And reading them was a great pleasure in a couple of ways – one because I realized I kind of had them memorized and so would never actually “forget” them, and another joy in them was the way we speak. & what a great sense of etiquette we've got!

As for your new telephone buttons, the one with the asterisk is a redial button, so you can, no wait it's the one with the # that's redial, so you can press it and the phone will call the last number you called; the one with the asterisk is, in NY at least, a useless button, though on the fancy Poetry Project phones that was the button the phone company told us to press when we got obscene phone calls so's to threaten the caller with the simple noise it makes. Whaddayou think of that?

I cant wait to see you. I'm gonna try to come to all your things in the city but I've got profound babysit problems (shouldnt call them babies anymore), only enhanced by the fact that everyone else will want to hear you too, but since I believe I've become now not a poet but just a problem-solver, I'll solve these problems too.

The weather here has been, just at the moment when in New York one can expect a type of spring, a great drought of sun, that orb not having been seen here except as a dull gray glow for more than eight days, it's dismal and the wilting below-sea-level kind of cold makes the very air look overwrought. When I thought of an object for Tom Raworth, I thought of this but I couldnt describe it in black & white.

See you soon! **[handwritten:]** Love,
Bernadette

[typed:] Do call me when you get into town and we can make a plan to have some time to talk or go about together I hope.

I'll take you to some places Larry never heard of!

March 28, 1986

Dear Clark,

I'm sort of having a party in the sense that this is the first night I've been able to stay up late, indeed all night, and do what I please, including pleasing myself with these commas, in a long time. Therefore (pleasing myself with rhetoric and logic?) I am writing you this letter to thank you for your book. I've been so busy in recent weeks I almost wrote you a postcard but I knew that you would never forgive me for that. Your book is still so startling. I had a dream the other night, the words from which went like this: the procrastination of the blue crystal importation documents is just fine. Also, across from Random House, where I go all the time to pick up manuscripts (the latest: UFO:s Past & Present!) is this place called the Crystal Pavilion wherein is a glass elevator and a piano player.

New paragraph. alas for our time in New York but that's often the way. I tend to blame Larry. I've never been the type to fight someone for another's affections (only fooling). Lately, what with TEXAS and teaching, I've been too busy to, as Ron said while he was running the Poetry Project and I never tire of repeating, fart. I was though really mad at circumstance for not allowing us the time for say a twelve hour conversation. I even had the thought that my unhappy situation makes people not want to see me, since, to tell you the truth I hardly see anyone anymore but my 252 students and my 3 children. I barely know what it feels like to converse with grownups. And as a result maybe of that I seem to get tired of how smart poets are, I dont mean you but Walt Whitman who isnt even that smart. How smart is he? Do you think he too would wind up in the discipline problem class at P.S. 161?

I do think Crystal Text is my favorite of all your books. I may be able to tellx you why when I finish rereading it. Surely it's the most inspiring of all your books, that is to other writers – dont you think? It's as if the whole book is beginnings and endings done xxx with such gorgeousness as to thrill throughout. I've often had this feeling about your writing, that there is equality in the lines and therefore no middle, but didnt we used to say no beginnings & endings? but now you've gotten too good. And then, when I have that thought about this work, I think next well it's time to get too good and of course I am not just speaking about being good in that way. It's very different reading this book as a book than it was reading it in manuscript. As a manuscript it seemed to be various and wild, and now as a book it seems exactly and even tightly one. Why is that?

Paragraphs are a sign of advancing age; now I dont mean to put them down. I started this one to tell you something different and new, but I forget what it was (only joking). I've been busy in ways I've never dreamed of, it's almost as if the world wants to exhibit to me what life is supposed to be like: the public schools, other jobs, the landlord, the courts, the IRS, not to mention the spectre accomplished of separation, or whatever you call it. And oh I forgot to mention the subways, there's always them. All I ever wanted in life was to be a poet and live with some guy who wanted to have children and we could together figure out a way of working very little. I really wanted to be a housewife in the country, I mean short of being a rich person. Oh well, now I am Emily Dickinson in the city among children.

My poems are just poems

the desire

to, please

I wonder what Whitman did to fabricate that less than artless leaflike book of his? How come there was never a conversation among him and Stein & Hawthorne about America's and time's stuff? What would she say? I think I know, though often I confuse Stein with Peggy. Oh I am all mixed up and this Good Friday I have no faith at all. I had to explain the resurrection to Sophia today! At first I thought to say, "Christ died and then he thought he rose from the dead"! Then I thought to say that everybody else thought he rose from the dead. Then I thought about the question of belief: he did rise from the dead (they say). Sophia could not fathom any of this but she accepted my confusion about how to express the myth politely. I was real grateful when philosophical Max asked, "Well then what do eggs have to do with it all?" That was easy. But then I was asked, "Why kind of animal created the first kind of egg?"! As Anne would say, "Oh-Oh Cosmology!" Recently one of the kids told me that Michael Jackson wouldn't say the same thing as Prince about the same subject. My studentsx gave me the homework of watching Miami Vice and Hulk Hogan on t.v., also New Editions(?) I have this list of things to do in front of me, it says: laundry, dishes, Walt Whitman. None of which needs to be put on a list!

I won't write more now as the dawn is vertically here but I did want to thank you for your book and for your reading & talk in New York. Here spring is desultorily becoming summer before you can even change your shoes but that must be as okay as eggs, right? Wanna write a novel? What are the immortal novels? My students don't know what novels are; they don't know what fiction is either. But they do know what poetry is, isn't that funny? (average age 8) I make them write dialogues all the time among the sun, moon, wind, spring, sky, etc. and then in the middle of it all I let them change into something else if they want to, so one day one girl said, "I want to be a pocketbook" and then another student said he wanted to be a foodstamp inside the pocketbook so he could spy on people's conversations even in Central Park. And then someone said, "I don't want to be anything, I just want to change the color of this room."

Write me a letter soon, telling me why things can't be
about things

Love,
Bernadette

Dear Bernadette,

Hey, just back from Paris, can you believe that? And then Celia promptly totaled our car. But more on that later, as they say in letters.

I never drank so much in my life as I did in Paris. But I never got drunk. Strange? Or it's the food? Scotch. They love it there, and all over Europe I guess, Italy certainly, more than anything like Jack Daniels. The fault of the English, I suppose. And of course then there's the wine, with everything you eat and extra bottles all over everywhere if you want 'em. You should have seen this scene before the big reading at the Musee d'Art Moderne (where they put on extra guards for "The Americans" but nothing happened except a few more jokes about concealed Uzzis in our bookbags), they took us for lunch to this Russian music school (Rachmanioff School) where they have a private restaurant in the basement with single dangling barebulb and ancient black polished wood tables, and dusts of the czars you could almost believe, and here were these caraffes of chilled Russian vodka like water jugs all over the place, a kind of amber glowing vodka flavored with buffalo grass, yeah and we start in drinking and toasting poesy and everything crazy and I'm thinking What a reading this is going to be! and there was further red wine, but I didn't even get drunk there, though I must say I didn't try very hard not to. Must've been all that heavy and good Russian food we were scarfing inbetween sips...

Anyway, it was all great and mad rushings around dark Paris boulevards, where they now have big neon multiple-cinemas too(!), though in amidst the new posters for BODY HEAT (which in French translation of the title it has more sense of "in heat" than ours does, I'm told) and DELTA FORCE you see other new posters for Orson Welles' LADY FROM SHANGHAI letting you know that this is Paris and people want to see new showings of the classics allatime too, where they think they invented the movies too, and probably they did? In one store in Montparnasse (I can't believe I'm actually typing down these names casually and as if I long knew them from intimate prowls) I saw this great huge yellow poster from the original release of Godard's LeMepris, all Bardot though, featured, huge in the window, and I wished I could have afforded it and carried it back, though it was too big and Michael was hurrying us on. Into the curving midafternoon on the streets, and my head is going PARIS, it's PARIS!, and the streets really do CURVE there like I've never seen, great gentle arcs. And that blue-grey slate they tile all the curving tops of the old apartment blocks with. Zinc. Brass rails. Gorgeous scent of Gauloise and Gitanes rising in LeDome through the ceiling of the world in the middle of the day. Romance! It's real! And the people in the streets, like you could meet everyone you've ever known in your life in one day here. And so many of the young girls wearing the new floppy shirt-out styles just like Celia at New Lebanon High! She would have loved it there, but is too concerned to be a senior in her last semester. We tried to convince her!

And by the way, she's okay, but she didn't look and pulled out in front of a big Olds bombing down Rte 20 and got smashed in the front end and twirled around, bumps and bruises (had her belt on) and one spectacular scalp cut that drenched her silk blouse in blood (I took a picture of it!), checked out at the emergency room okay. But the car is finee (and practically new still, sob!). Now we deal with the insurance redtape nonsense and hope for the best, for a new car! Meanwhile a rental Plymouth hunk of shit, paid for by the insurance anyway. It's all too stupid. The fat women in the Olds had easy chance to avoid the whole crash by pulling into the slight

turnoff Celia was coming out of, but they didn't and you can see by the skid marks that they realized too late at the last minute, probably yakking away anyway. I guess they were okay, they were gone from the emergencyroom before we got there anyway. And it was amazing how that night Celia was celebrated hero of all the teens. Phonecalls forever! I'd forgotten what a big deal a crash is in all that crowd. Famous!

This letter is a blend of nuts. But you should get to hear from me sometime, my god. I'm the world's worst, worse than Berkson ever was! Worse than Corbett, I don't even send postcards! And I'm losing my typing skills. Forgive me!

And hey, in the big marathon reading of all the authors in the anthology (I hope they've sent you one?), I read your work. Mei-mei wanted to but I said Hey, she's mine! And I think I read it good (there's a big hi-tech tape we may get to hear someday), though impressed with how impossible to equal your style. But people spoke about it afterwards, loved the work, from MOVING!, my god, how many years?

Really wish you had been there, true. You should have been! Replaced Mei-mei, or something. She who ripped the Royaumont Foundation off to the tune of a \$2000 first class airticket! And then proclaimed she didn't like translation anyway(!) Which was actually great, the way it made you look at your works, fine-grained point-to-point, see how it finally all COHERES! Michael and I loved the process anyway. And those guys took it all so seriously (the translators in great warm teams), like we're really not used to here at all and have almost forgot such a possibility, your words taken as a goddam FACT OF LIFE practically, and no questioning about "meaning" etc. Paradise! And they're gonna publish 60pp books of our works translated at the end of the year (I gave'em the Crystal Text, natch). One great moment, in between all the drinking (haha): one of the translators with furrowed brow, pondering the impossibility of this American language madness, suddenly looks up at me and says "Have you ever read an author named Maurice Blanchot?" Wow, right! It's funny (horrible actually) though how French language still has such a tightass hold on even the younger farther-out poets there, they don't have permission to fuck with the syntax at all, even though nuts like Artaud did exist but they still think of them as weird anomalies or singular characters. And the fact of their unaccentual sense of prosody, even-stresses everywhere. Though, when I read my works they told me they loved "the beat" and watching my hands and feet move.

By the way, I read my Godard work (Two or Three Things) at the Village Voice Bookstore reading, hoping somehow the man himself would conjur through the woodwork, or somewhere somehow hear about this mad American and offer to let me do his next script or something hooey... And he should, my god... Rumours of his next: King Lear with script by Norman Mailer(!!!?!!) Fooey.

Well, I gotta go and let a million cats out & in, and hassle with insurance "adjustors". How did the BayArea Walt Whitman go? Did you fall in love with him or learn to hate the American masculine vanity forever? Wish I coulda been there, even if just to give you a quick grin now & then. Were they all arrayed before you in most deadly seriousness? Hope you had some fun anyway. Oh, Solution Passage is out, finally (only a year late, not bad?) and I'll be sending you a hardcover (looks somehow nicer than the paperback) as soon as Messerli deems it proper to send me my scant 10 copies. Mister Generosity(like Geoffrey) he aint.

Hey, actually wrote you a letter
and lickety-split. Wish I had your typing skills! Now if I could only stop typing “Hey” allatime.
How are you? A teacher of deepest Harlems?

Love, love and let me hear,
Clark

June 30, 1986

Dear Clark,

Gee, I've run out of (proper) paper but not out of time. I've just finished with all my two thousand jobs of recent months and now have enough money to lay off for a couple of months and so am celebrating by staying up all night writing, which night this is actually the morning of! Havent seen the dawn, except of anxiousness, in a long time.

Great to get your letter of Paris, it sounds so childlike in a way, the visit I mean or the city itself? You know I didnt even know or remember I was in that book until I tried to get this package from France from the post office and had great difficulty all the while reading your letter and suddenly I realized that you were talking about the book that was waiting for me at the post office, it's fun to read your works in French, I can then act like a regular guy and say to myself, "Gee I havent the vaguest idea what this guy is talking about!" Thanks for reading mine across the ocean, wish I could've heard it all! (Mei Mei around that same time asked me to send some works to "Tyuonyi" so I sent them a little anthology of Greek & Latin translations and imitations and they all got rejected by somebody named Philip Foss?! I dont think I've had my writing rejected by anybody but the New Yorker in 15 years! Perhaps this sounds spoiled? Well actually I forgot about the fallen angel Douglas. Oh well, think I'm entering a spere of failures?)

Here in this sphere it's pretty cool (not like they used to say, but I mean nice weather for NY summer). Strangely I'm sort of living alone with Marie now. Sophia wanted so much to go away to camp that I let her do it (now I regret it, missing her so much), she's gone for three weeks & is so happy! Max is staying with Lewis for half the week so Marie and I have this sort of bachexlor life where we go out to the movies and have dinner and lengthy conversations about everything & one. Actually we're more like each other's suitors than bachelors! Marie & Max will be going to some day camps for as long as they like it and it all seems kind of disparate and unsettled to me but everyone's pleased & it gives me the chance to replaster the ceiling in their room and write a few long poems and novels during my breaks.

Now I have to tell you all about teaching but I dont know where to begin. I got very inspired with what happened during the Whitman lectures, it was like when poems write themselves, I lectured all extemporaneously from notes and I was amazed by what wound up being said. The students were great and wild times were had outside the classroom (which was an old funeral parlor). We went to about seven different beaches, saw Bolinas at last! (Bill wasn't there, couldnt break his date to see the Harlem Dance Theater, can you believe it! They kept saying it was so x rare for them to go over the mountain they couldnt change their plans. I saw Bill alot in the city though and did my best to see Lynn but she was elusive and worried that I only wanted to see Bill, etc. Glad I dont live there. Spent a gay time with Joanne Kyger who took us to a real old-fashioned hippie party replete with ecologists & dope & lots of pickup trucks. Joanne also took me to see Bill & Lynn's house in their absence so I could get a sense of where they are when I write them letters. Now this is the end of my Bolinas parenthesis). We were good tourists too and went to the exploratorium and every park & museum in town. Ethie came from Boulder & we stayed for a while with two of my students from last summer & so we went to dance in the gay bars which compared to NY's are veryxxx hardnosed and I didnt like them at all. The Walt Whitman bookstore in San Francisco, as you

might know, only has books about gay (male) life! Apparently I was the only teacher out of six for Whitman who actually “liked” his poetry. I ended my classes by having the students read to me & the last poem we wound up having time for was “One Hour to Madness & Joy.” I’ll say this for Duncan McNaughton he was right to invite me to do it, but the New College punch line is they couldn’t pay me (a long story, I recently got half my fee in the mail, don’t know if I’ll ever see the rest & I had to put the heat on to even get that). David Schneider appointed himself, I don’t know why, my driver and guide & took us everywhere in his car full of tapes of The Bobs. He also showed me a book he’s writing about Philip Whalen! I also did a radio show & got to introduce Ethie at Larry Blake’s x and Larry Eigner was there. The language poets didn’t pay too much attention to me.

Meanwhile my teaching here was engrossing me totally till last week. I wound up editing three magazines of the students’ writing & even got a spontaneous standing ovation from the 6th graders when I showed up by surprise at their graduation. I’m still shocked a little (though why should I be) at the gradual finding out about their lives. Some of the older kids in Harlem took me aside one day & told me I was lucky they liked me. In the south Bronx three of the third graders were raped while at the school. & in that same school one of my first graders’ grandfather (my age) got murdered in the midst of a drug deal & there’s lots more I’ll spare you. Still one can’t help going every day naively to school & sort of forgetting all of that & assuming that these kids are like the great fields.... I taught, at one of my classes’ request, a wonderful class on insults, inviting them to imitate Catullus and the Greek Anthology poems. They loved the idea that these old classical guys talked about farting & bad breath! You can imagine. Since they were insulting everybody else in the room, I invited them then to insult me too, in fact I told them it was their “assignment” so they wrote: Bernadette’s so white they mark her absent when she comes to school in the afternoon. ! I’m the only white person there. So I do love to teach & I don’t mind spending my entire life with children, going from my 350 students to my 3 children at home, but really! I want a grownup to love! at least once a week? Charlie Vermont keeps calling me up and telling me he wants to send me plane tickets to places like Reno and Little Rock to meet him in hotels! Again I’m shocked.

What I’m planning to do for the next two months is write as artlessly as I can and forget that I can’t get my books published & all my attempts to love grownups have kind of failed. To tell you the truth I sometimes feel pretty good & I have a couple of artless boyfriends who ask my naïve enough questions so I can feel one with them

So that is my partial tale. Please do tell Celia only to drive when there are either no jerks on the road or she has a chauffeur! But the chauffeur has to be as experienced as a bird at flying.

I’m very secretly planning a little trip in your direction this summer and if it all works out I’ll let you know or just come and knock on your door

Now it’s absolute morning, Marie’s gotten on her bus to go to camp and the supreme court’s said homosexuals can’t make love in certain ways. It seems like a good time to go to sleep and all this reminds me of the old days in more ways than one, like they say.

Do you have any advice for me as to what I should write this summer? I know that might sound a bit straightforward & funny but I mean it. For the first time in a while I’ll have this precious time and I might finish the

adolescent novel but I'm sick of doing things for money, but if I do finish it I'll probably also then begin to finish the grownup one I'm writing in tandem with it, and/or I couldx try to do mind of hour. Or i could just drift about which would be interesting. but also apart from what to write I'm thinking about how to write & all i know so far is i want to do something very complicated, takes up the whole desk or ship, whadddayou think?

So why dont you guys come down for the big 4 of july fireworks? You could stay in my apartment and view them from my roof for only \$3,000 per night x (air mattresses free). I'm praying for rain!

Love,
Bernadette

[handwritten:] When you to Naropa?
Did I miss you?
Love to Susan
+ Celia

Aug 3, 1986

Dear Bernadette,

Back from Naropa again, which is getting so familiar it's ridiculous. That place is getting a bit too familiar, at least to me, it's the fifth time I've been there. The students, and there were more of them this time (50 or 60), were different but still the same, rich kids with a tickle for poetry or the "scene" and nothing else to occupy them. And Anne is still spinning around (she managed to invite me to dinner and say she had to go to a poetry reading at the same time almost in the same sentence!), and Larry still worrying about sickness & old age (and hanging out with young girl students), and Jack still trying and failing and trying to get off the booze, and Anselm off the booze and wonderfully healthy and funny (I had the best times with him, actually), and Allen playing the old Groucho and performing White Shroud with a string quartet backing while a mammoth VanHallen concert reverberated through the walls from the CU Bowl across the parkinglot, and Ed Sanders sweet but with an undertone bitterness left over from the Sixties somehow not "working out", and Todd helpful but collapsing from exhaustion of running the summer program, and Jane Faigao (sp?) complaining that this was "the worst summer yet!", and Joanne explaining that I really should start my own press(!?), and who else? You get the picture. Larry's little cabin is right around the stockade fence from the Naropa back parkinglot, too close for comfort and people just appear at the screendoor by day & night. He & Susan seem happily-enough back together, though Susan still retreats into her back room to watch The Thing on TV with strange "illnesses" (she gave a great reading though). And Larry one day thought he had skin cancer (a little mole on his temple) but the (female) doctor just laughed at him and threw him out of the office and made him happy. I dunno, summer daze as usual.

Your letter came just as I was on my way to the Albany airport, so I got to read it on the plane, great, just what I needed! I hate airplanes more and more. That flight (Albany to Chi) was one of those nightmares of constant foodflying and people puking you always hope you'll avoid forever. So, anyway I'm late as usual in answering (but not as bad as Bill B who hardly writes me a card anymore). Got back here and immediately had Paul Auster as guest for a night, then had to go down and read at Bard (with Geoff) the next night where Kelly (I'd never met before) came on all friendly and we-should-have-met and then pulled a strange fade, said he had "student responsibilities" and split, didn't even come to my reading(!) So what. Even John Yau didn't come, though he'd given us a great lunch at his house beforehand, so we ended up reading to students at a long classroom table. Blah. 100 bucks. Actually, I'm thinking of turning down gigs like this in future, too little bread, or is that too capitalist of me? Michael Palmer and I just, independently, turned down the same reading offered by Art Lange at Chicago Art Institute in December, \$400 and no transportation, which seemed absurd when you realize how much plane tickets cost these days (& I hear they're going up more at the end of the year), and later I found out that the Art Inst always pays transportation for their guests (so howcome not poets??). The main problem with this turning down is that the other half of said reading was/is Bill Corbett who'll no doubt have a snit when he finds out Michael and I both "refused to read with him". But doesn't he hate to fly anyway? This is all nonsensical.

Hey, that Foss character rejected some of my poems too. This was after Anne screwed things up by accepting the same poem for 2 magazines (Foss's thing and Bombay Gin which beat him to the punch and printed the same

poem he said he'd already set up in type). Another so what, I spose. And I just read in Albuquerque and he never showed up at the reading.

Neither did Mei-mei, though I did read with her (& Jack) at Naropa. Is she following me around? She's kind of weird, or masked, or something, I really don't feel I've met the real her. People tell me she's "manipulative", but she's so quiet. Do you know her well? Does anybody?

I had a great time visiting Phil Whalen outside of SantaFe in this big adobe extravagant house Dick Baker uses for his Zendo operation (I think he's really a jet-setter!). Phil said, when asked how he liked living in SantaFe, "I was born in a tank town and now I'm stuck in another one!" A great comment actually on the kind of precious artsy SantaFe atmosphere, but xxxxxxxx I suppose he really meant that the local library was inadequate to his purposes. He's had to go on yet another diet, is hugely fat, said he'd lost 30 pounds so far, with another 50 to go. All that weight is finally getting life-threatening, but he so dearly does love to eat! He wants to go back to SF but is left in charge of the place a lot by Baker so feels all responsible and stuck. When we left (Gus Blaisdell with me) there was the most terrific downpour and lightning and all the dirt roads turning to tomato soup, funny actually, but felt we barely got away before the countryside all washed away. It was raining a lot when I was down there, which they say is unheard-of in July. And meanwhile the whole area is running out of water!

Well, as if this all isn't enough (traveling) (and when I got back here we went to the Vineyard with my folks for a week), we leave again for the Bay Area on August 14th, spend two weeks hopefully just visiting friends and family and then seeing Celia into her dorm at CCAC and probably weeping our way back home. I've told everybody not to tell anybody I'll be there so I don't have to do any readings or public displays for awhile. I do have to go back (more airplanes!) in late Oct to do my 3 lectures on WCW for NewCollege and I wonder if they'll pay me either(!) I know Bill B is similarly worried, but Lyn Hejinian (who's just been hired to replace Duncan MacNaughton) assures us cheerily that all is well. I have my doubts anyway. And I haven't the slightest what I'll be able to find to say about Williams that everybody hasn't already said endlessly. I'm not even sure I like him anymore (probably the usual pre-talk jitters?). It seems you really can't get away with "just writing" anymore. I have more doubts about teaching anyway (my teaching, that is). I seem incapable of looking at student poems and usefully indicating anything. I got pissed at Naropa when I realized that most of the poems handed to me had already been "corrected" by Allen and/or Anne, so they were now merely little "sense" poems full of "bird/tree/sidewalk" etcetcetc. I told one student: Why not write big vague abstract theorizing rants?? If poetry isn't bigger than sense impressions, god help us all. So, I guess I'll see Bill in his Bolinas cottage again. Joanne filled me with gossip about how they had a great time in Mexico but now Lyn has this big new job as director(directress?) of a fancy shoppe in SF and will have to drive daily over Mount Tam and she's already all nervous at the responsibility etc. I hope Bill has time left over enough from all his tasks to even see me(?) Maybe I'll just stay up at the farm & swim laps and ignore everybody. Probly not. More gossip (& what else is Naropa anyway?): Jenny Dorn told me that Tom Clark doesn't speak to them anymore because he thinks they hate him(!) Oh, Todd wrote just now that he wants some of our Cave Collab for the next Human Means (Do you like that title, I don't), so is it okay with you if I type & send a few sections? I think it's okay, anyway. And I don't know what to advise you to write this summer (now that it's almost over!), but naturally as you know I'm sure you should do

something big and complex and table-swamping like Mind of Hour. But the novel (novels?) sound(s) intriguing. And by now you've probably already done it(?)

So, hope this fills the gap a bit. This isn't really summer this year, a mere rift between winter and next winter! You should see the FIVE cats here, who are giving me fleas! What to do? And now I've gone and left out all the important stuff AGAIN!

All LOVE,
Clark

[date handwritten:] August 8 1986

Dear Clark,

Your letter makes me so jealous. There's so much going on plus you have the ancient Bill-Berkson-type stability as of versions of faithfulness and family, whereas here I sit in hideous New York City Summer memorizing that I only wound up here to please Lewis I thought and he and Geoff, with startling masculine nerve, as I know you already know, computed a deal for Lewis to be enabled to take my children two by two to my favorite place in this tornado-ridden neighborhood of the east coast, where you guys also are. Oh perhaps I'm not making any sense, it's probably just as well. If you couldnt bear to know what I really meant, I couldnt either.

Suffice it to say that I feel like a neglected poet and the "flight" of love has made the larger poetry fly away from me too, I might as well finally admit. But dont tell anybody I said that lest I lose even more than love. To tell you the truth the only reason I begin this way is cause I find it so infuriating for Lewis who gave me such a hard time about living in the country to be able to be there and see you because he has money from his parents. Oh well, your images of Naropa are not exactly lacking in drama either. My life's dramas are all well-suppressed except in burstsof pretences of confidence. Onward, as you-know-who would say.

Did Kelly really invent the lune? His "student responsibilities" were probably amorous, wouldnt you guess? I often wish lately I were a man. I could grow a beard and also be fat and nobody would mind; people would think I was as a result, intelligent, and then I could fuck young girls from my famous classes on how to mold the poetic line. As it is I seem to spend all my time with my children and a myriad of ex-students. I have so many manuscripts by them piled up on my bed that I cant think clearly inmy sleep. These days I've been staying up most of the night writing, a great new old luxury for me and I've only written what I felt like writing so there is a great pile of anomalous stuff, but no novel yet finished though many chapters (as they call them) and no Mind of Hour (though many more exercises for it). All I do is write even though I hate to work in the summer. I even write in my sleep again.

Have heard nothing but a whimsical postcard from Bill B. but Bill C. just sent me his new manuscript for a book with an xx exhortation for me to tell him if there was anything in it I really hated. I admired him for that and will do the same next time I send a friend a "text".

Sure you can send sections of the cave work at your discretion. How did they ever find out about it?

You and Bill B should go on strike and refuse to lecture on Williams till I get paid for Whitman! I cant believe your lectures are still on since their excuse for not paying me was they were going bankrupt but since then I've met students who've paid their fall tuition also. I feel insulted by the way I've been treated by the New College, in the sense that phone calls and letters since May 1st, when I was supposed to be paid, have all gone unanswered as if I didnt exist, much less that I might be an honorable person and poet to be treated with dignity. I remember trying to explain how I felt poets should be treated to Bob Holman no less than six years ago but maybe Bob was right to be flippant with everybody in the poetry "field"!

I loved it when you said you got those poems that had already been “corrected” at Naropa. When that happened to me, I asked the students to bring me new poems. I was ridden with students who had already been told by Allen & Philip Whalen that they were senile useless horrible poets, as I think I told you. Allen actually told one of my students that you could only write great poetry when you were young and this guy was 30. I’ll never forget seeing Anne & Allen’s corrections on students’ poems, it seemed almost like eavesdropping to me (but everyone else was unashamed). It was almost as embarrassing as hearing certain poetry readings. There’s a hardware store in my now highly-gentrified neighborhood that is now sponsoring poetry nights! but when I went there today to find out what was happening this week there was a sign: closed for renovations.

I’ve also been amused lately by my proofreading exigencies. Last week I went to Random House to pick up a G.I. Joe book which they apologized for giving me but needed to have done. The minute I got home the phone rang and it was Praeger asking me to do a book on international security problems. “It’s a fascinating book,” my editor said to me, “it turns out to be quite anti-nuclear by default.” Just as the nuclear family has turned into the unclear family I’d guess.

As for Williams, only talk about Paterson. Why not? I’ve just dusted off my copy and will reread it for you if you want, or we have the time (\$1.85 in those days!). The structure of Paterson is fascinating and I often wonder what kind of thought was given to it (maybe mentioned in those awful biographies?). Don’t worry though, as I found, despite all-encompassing and degenerative doubts about teaching, you will have much to say that will be inspiring and also kind of new even though you’re talking about an old fart. It’s amazing just for your own self (as Max would say) to review Williams’ work, even if afterwards you only say “Etcetera” or something like that. Who knows what your mind will end up saying anyway. Wish I could attend. I still haven’t put the Whitman talks into written form but still intend to. I’m too mad at the college for catapulting me back into landlord difficulties to feel intellectual enough to write a fucking monograph, but my notes will remain more intact than my relationships with lawyers I can’t pay.

Contrary to your doubts about teaching and doing things other than writing, I think you should be teaching all the time if you could bear it. There’s certain aspects of poetry that only you know how to speak about so you might as well share them with whoever’s listening even if the students at Naropa seem a bit jaded. A lot of them pass through New York & always mention that they read and love your writing. Often I give them some.

Bumped into Jim Brodey just yesterday and speaking of old farts he told me he was invited to talk at a Poetry Project symposium on Frank O’Hara. He was hilarious on the subject: “Never met the guy, is his name John?” etc. The Project seems to be just the usual mess, no worse than ever except for less money and the fact that Jessica wants to start up a column in the newsletter which is now to be entitled “Poetry Project Inc.” (after Manhattan Inc.?) called the good ol’ days to which she’s invited people like me and Ron to xxxxxx contribute “fun stories about humorous moments” sort of like the Daily News (only they pay \$5.). I’d like to contribute something more in the line of Heloise’s Helpful Household Hints (how to make onion earmuffs, etc)

Anyway the birds are singing at the phony Lisa city dawn so I’d better be going off to a different kind of thought than wishing we were conversing in person instead of just these silly letters that have to end!

Love, Bernadette

[skinny letter]

September 12, 1986

Dear Clark,

I thought you might like to see this enclosed. Gordon says she's coming to see me in a couple weeks to begin research on her dissertation on me! Do you think she really looks like her picture? Should I get married etc.? She 'picked up' your style!

How're you doing, how's WCW? Received a note from Louis Patler today to say I'm sorry and it will never happen again (I at last got paid). I don't know exactly why, but he assures me he's got the money for you guys.

Here I hear from no one, not you, not either of the Bills, well once in a while Bill C. who's sending me three red sox hats so I & my children can get into fistfights in NY (I asked for it, them). I do hear from students everywhere. I'm proofreading a Marxist semiotic radical economics text. no kidding. I can't understand a word for it, except that some think to discredit Marx by putting down his knowledge of calculus. & I like the parts where they put down Hegel. Actually the book is one big intellectual backbite. (I still like Hegel)

Holy shit now the bell's rung and guess what just came in? A rather spiffy looking copy of IN THE AMERICAN TREE! I'd forgotten about that one. It's nicely fat too. During my recent vacation (Hannah took me and the kids to this sort of a nonprofit New Yorkers' farm in New Jersey), Hannah spent two weeks reading Charles Bernstein's book of essay and when I asked her all about it she said she didn't understand a word of it. I told her what catechesis means but she wouldn't even ask another question....

Now on breezing through TREE, my first thought is that I didn't know we were or are involved in a delineation (dialectic?) or writing (poetry) as not-speech, which I don't find an uninteresting concept. Surely Marx would say that if writing were speech (once) it was at the same time not-speech anyway, so what's the problem, it's just depending on what we can show through our exercises. I use that word in its best sense, like you know. Silliman's fairly artful don't you think? though Alice's name is spelled wrong and I never understood why she don't get included in these things.

So write me soon with **[handwritten →: –not-thing]** nothing to say! Tell me your new theories of WCW or will you know them not till they're spoken? that's the way I felt about that other large W, and in the end all I think I really pointed to were the possible symmetries and their relation to the moment

[handwritten:] Must return to proofreading a chapter called "Reproduction of Class Relations through Predatory Accumulation in Precolonial Bagirmi"! Can you use that somewhere?

Love,
Bernadette

Sept. 17, 1986

Dear Bernadette,

God it's embarrassing to receive two letters before I've even answered one! I deserve it though. Too much galavanting(sp?) (that word seems to be coming back into use?) this summer and now the usual guit... (guitar?) guilt-making mail heap here. No excuse. I just have to learn the age-old practice of no sleep.

Thanks for Dana Gordon's...whatever it is(?) I must say I can't make much of it. It really doesn't sound like "me", does it? What is she on about? Praps best she 's writing a dissert on you(?) But I wonder why that name is so familiar to me, can't place it, but... From her picture, if it really is a pik of her?, I certainly haven't met her. What publication does that page come from? And she won a prize for the poem? Mystifying.

I too don't hear from anybody, except you(!) No Michael, neither of the Bills. I didn't even see Bill B when in Bay Area just now. Talked on phone a couple times, but he said he was too busy running a week of art critics appearing at the Art Institute. He's becoming one of those people you have to make an appointment with? Sounded pretty much as usual otherwise. Actually I do hear from someone thesedays, Larry. But he requires loads of lists of millions of records etc immeidtately, etc. Some friendships require more & more stamina.

Celia got well "inserted" into CCAC Oakland. We moved all her load of stuff into the dormroom and stood around like you do (I spose?), S & I thinking our own projections about how she must be scared & already homesick etc, then suddenly I realized she was just waiting for us to leave so she could get on with it, dive in. Later she told us she had a plan for making friends, which worked: put a xxxxxx Violent Femmes tape on her player & leave the door open. She immeidtaley... god, immediately met two girls with cars and went to SF to check out the clubs, etc. Thrilled with big urban area after dinky Lebanon, I spose. The only other news of her, and this'll crack you up, so far is that she has Michael McClure for English. Some sort of weird loop being closed there? She said "He's really weird, dad, do you really know him?!" We agreed she is not to tell whose daughter she is, just let him figure it out. Also, I heard the news while out there, that x he & Joanna have just spilt (split) up, after what is it? 30 years or so. David Meltzer was struck dumb by that, plus the news I brought from Boulder re Stan Brakhage getting thrown out by Jane for fucking some teenage girl. Same distuation [**margin arrow: (!) situation**] with M MCC I hear. There must indeed be something wrong with us "Old Marrieds"...

As you can see (above) this Hermes is developing vertical cog ills. Which fills me with fear & sadness. I may have to give up writing if this trusted old friend dies. Or break down & purchase one of those lectronic flatnesses which spook me I must admit. Susan pushed a CANON ad at me the other day...

Well, New College... I dunno. I certainly heard yards of detail on all their ills (from Michael & Lyn, mainly) while out there, but can't say I really learned anything, unsure still what's going on there except that they're in a financial pit for sure. Bill & I did discuss refusing to lecture if you didn't get paid, but quickly learned that Lyn had written letters to all concerned saying she would quit if you weren't paid immediately. That seems to have worked. Sufficiently embarrassed those responsible at least. And "they" all assure me that the \$1000 is there, earmarked etc. a special grant (David) told me assuring that me & Bill get paid though the staff may not(!) Meanwhile I'm going ahead, I guess

it is, preparing. Though so far this is mainly scratching down little notes here and there, reading a poem or two, nothing concerted yet. Typical for me, I'll probly wait until the week before. One thing I realized I wanted to do is go down to the Harris Collection at Brown and look at the actual BOOKS he first published all that stuff in, since the 2 vol COLL POEMS is such a mess. Hoping I get some real inspiration from eyeing/touching the little press versions. The woman in charge seems smitten with me, ever since I read there, and wants me to autograph all my books for them, so I'll do a deal with her for the WCW looksee. They have everything, even POEMS (1909). I'll pretend I'm a college student, for an afternoon anyway.

I feel, so far anyway, that I'm trying to scare up my original enthusiasm for Williams, which has faded quite a bit while I wasn't looking. The only poems I still like are the Twenties stuff (Spring & All etc), when he didn't know what he was doing! Later it all gets codified or something smooth and elegiac, and his "theories" of the "foot" etc are dull enough. Also I don't seem to have any enthusiasm for things American these days, so maybe that's an (unfortunate) factor. I certainly can't see him with the fascination/excitement I first did when I was trying to imitate his poems. But that's probly true of just about anybody? I hope I don't end up putting him down(!?) That would feel strange indeed.

Proibly it's that I'm too involved otherwise at the moment. Close to finishing my long Egypt poem now. Champing to get back to the sex work. Plus I have to try to dig up things re music for SULFUR (not exactly digging being on this end of that stick again, rejecting people's work, begging for manuscripts, etc.).

Messer Li just called me to tell that he's nominating me for a PULITZER(!?!?) That'll be the day... How does that work anyway? The publisher puts your name in? Must be lots of politics etc I know nothing about and don't even want to know. I'm amazed enough by the reviews I've been getting (Antin in the L.A. Times for ex., who called me "an experimental master", is that good? I didn't know he knew I existed). Well, it seems to make my parents happy.

I too read Charles Bernstein's book at the beach, and felt the opposite of Hannah: I understood everything all too well. There's nothing really "wrong" there, but... Do I need to read this? I spose not. It's for... who? Ditto on Sillman's anthology, which I guess is "for" those who don't know this stuff, haven't read it. But I figure they will never get to read it since they won't ever see the book, given Terrell's nonexistent distribution. I saw Silliman briefly in SF at a concert and he told me all how Terrell works for or is head of the U of Maine Press so gets to use their equipment when they're not using it (which may explain something re delays etc?). Did you get a hardcover? I got a paper, but I hear there is a hardcover at some ridiculous price like \$45. Seems like us contribs could've been sent one of those, since we'll never see any money...

Though all I need here in this dim basement is another BOOK. Must get rid of some of this stuff, I spose, but exactly what? Just close my eyes & throw stuff into boxes? I mean, even Larry sold a lot of his books a year or so ago.

Did you see the photo of the back of Michael P's head on the back cover of the new issue of ACTS?

So what's new in NYC? Dunno when I'll next get down there (you'll probably have to come up here where we have lots of room with Celia away). Don Byrd wants me to come over & read The Crystal in its entirety at SUNY. & Geoff & I seem to be reading together at the Berkshire Museum(!) in

November. Plus there's a rumour I'll be asked to give a "master class" at Binghamton, Jerry's Rotherberg's aegis. I always wish the Fall was empty for me to fill as I wish, but it happens less & less.

Actually I most want to leave the country, accept this Berlin year grant or something, anything, anywhere! But. Susan's teaching a course at BCC now(!) Things that hold us...

Finally
got some harcover SOLUTIONs from the man in L.A. So one is on it's way to you (finally) (sorry).

Some guy on the radio now is singing a song called "It's Not Easy Being White"!

All LOVE,
Clark

[Blank postcard
postmarked 1986
handwritten]

Oct 3–1986

Dear Clark –

A salute to Solution Passage! What a pleasure to have it + how many new things I've found in it. I've by no means finished my study of it, but got very enamored of "A Lure of a Broken Prism Promise Us" + so I read it to one of my former students over the phone + asked her to guess who wrote it (elitist ques.?) + she said Shakespeare. I think I'm going to try this trick with more of the poems esp. "Without the Typewriter." I love the Peru poems also esp. the page that begins "Who are you?" which seemed at first like an alone poem. Be patient + I will **[the rest written around the edges]** soon also have a sense of the whole maybe. Thank you! Love, Bernadette p.s. you like Frederick Pohl?

October 24, 1986

Dear Clark,

Oh what an awful week it's been. I am simultaneously being inundated with proofreading work, all of a rush nature, and scolded by the public schools in which I worked last year for my "bad" behavior – at one school I used to eat lunch with the students (enough of a crime in itself) and, in those my naive days, I would sometimes have a beer with my lunch; at another the principal told Teachers & Writers that the way I dressed made him certain I was "smoking reefer". So now everybody thinks I'm an alcoholic dope addict and of course it's true that I even enjoy sex too. The public schools are really a trip, like any dope addict would say. Lately I've been told, in my new school, that I must wear skirts only (Men can still wear pants). Well it's good to know that one can still cause a stir even when you can't afford enough alcohol or pot or being x inspired by sex enough to live up to one's reputation. I really do entertain the notion of reclusivity more and more (proofreading, most recently a wonderful book of Frederik Pohl's, enables me to think that). I wonder if it's "evil" to just work at home. Alas I have commitments to two science and technology high schools this year, in one of which I just introduced Einstein's writing in the poetry class along with Gertrude Stein's and Wittgenstein's, with gorgeously mixed reactions – some students enwrap, some falling off their chairs in outrage at the complexities. I will no doubt be fired from this school too for that. Ron told me a funny story about being fired from a public school poetry job for reading a student's work which involved the word (or concept?) "doo doo". He was taken to task by the principal who introduced this whole notion by telling Ron that a 6th grader had gotten pregnant. Ron then said, "I didn't do it!" but alas the principal had no sense of humor and proceeded to say that they must be very careful about obscenity. When Ron then asked what that had to do with him, it took twenty minutes for him to get the guy to say "doo doo." It's lovely to have Ron around in these circumstances. I've been sick about this whole matter and xxxx amidst it all having little time to think or write. (By the way did you see Kenward's House in Vermont In House & Garden?) I can't fathom how I may have managed to ruin my writing life by being xxxxxx insensibly human (& out of date now?). All I want to do is work on a big project and all I have time for is the dashing off of poems in such a way as would have appalled me twenty years ago (& I was right!). On the other hand one can feel debilitated by a lack of interest in the work but so what to that. I feel even more debilitated by the threat of being disempowered to teach simultaneous with spending most of my social time with former

students who ask a lot of questions both sensible and serious. I must come and see you though I know you might not like talking about some of the things I might bring up (but I do want to speak about Heisenberg too). Perhaps I would bring Elizabeth Fox who is interested in conversing with you. Are you just back from the WCW's talks? What happened? Did you wind up liking the poetry all over again? I'll still go for Paterson, won't you? Here there is going to be an American Tree reading and Alan Davies was wondering if you would come, I sure wouldn't blame you if you didn't, as my dissertationist in Calif. wrote me quite a funny description of the one there – which maybe you were there for? Meanwhile or therefore, I mentioned to Alan that it'd be nice for the authors to have some hardcovers and for the poets at the reading to have books at a discount. He figured both those things were impossible. So then I got into my outrageous mode and said politely, "but what are we doing this for?" These days I must admit except in the reclusivity modes I am lost. I've got eight years of poetry carefully mounted near my writing desk, not to speak of other wholish books, plus the rest of my life could be a wreck if I let it. Happily my children are healthy and have just gotten full scholarships to the music school but my sister requires constant help and Grace & Peggy are in debt in the tens of thousands of dollars to the credit card agencies, and then there is the question of love. I do everything and nothing. I'm happy sometimes and then I see how little it takes in NYC to upset me, though how much there is! Today a man with no kidding a suppurating gangrenous leg I encouraged some other people on the streets to help me take to the hospital, so then I missed one of my job appointments plus I got all freaked out, it's amazing, ah perhaps I shouldn't be writing you on this day which has no particular meaning, really but turned out to be the accidental day on which I first had some time to write letters and writing – worse luck? I am much too prone for survival in general. I hope that makes us laugh. It would be nice to be preserved sometimes I think from the pretenses of even happiness though I don't mean of the sublime or regular laughter. Do forgive me for writing you today & write me soon & forget my complaints ok?

[handwritten:] Now, next day, Peggy's discounted her debts + bought a myriad of bowls + amphorae at George Schneeman's [→: paradisaical] opening, then appeared in Stein's "A Circular Play"!

Also received Human Means with the Cave collab – did "we" write it?

Love,

Bernadette

Nov 10, 1986

Dear Bernadette,

Forgive this fading typing ribbon. I've long ago given up changing them regularly as they take only a week or so to look this way (dim) and I refuse to become that devoted a consumer. Where be the dear silks of years gone? I know, I know...

Yes, traveled to SF and returned. Did my duty (I hope) by WCW, and certainly did my best by the students. Wore myself frazzled and flew back here and collapsed with the flu bug nearly everyone has. I do believe my backbrain (or whatever it's now called?) keeps me in helath (health) just long enough to complete whatever task momentarily proposed and refuses to "think" in long terms. Of course, within a week of my return I had to go read at SUNY Albany sick or no, which I managed somehow, though head be full of gunk and throat closing by the word, aided in large part by the trusty Black Jack flask. Medicinal use only, I insisted to my grinning crowd. No matter, they insist on seeing one as desparate poet. Which one of course is, however little or distorted they know it. It occured to me while in California, and worrying at my next public appearance, that from now on I would always be living previous to some further reading or exposed whatever. "Always in between readings". I doubt this aids much the psyche but it did irremoveably occur to me.

I think the talks went well. At any rate, all told me so. I still tend to, in between the planned parts, open the mouth and let words pop out, which is both fun and a blank when searched for later (memory is such a game without a board?). Of course all was recorded, Kush there with amazing hi-tech digital equipment and even a suit and tie(!) So perhaps a transcription and rendering for print will someday be made, but all I have on paper are the notes (bare) I was jumping off from. I finally found it difficult to revive my early interest, fascination at the start really of this poetry writing, in him. His poems now seemed to be all in wood, crazily? And in fact I admitted this at one point in midst of class, which inspired a fairly lively discussion exploring thankfully far beyond the man's poems themselves. It's funny to think how, of the two "alternative" poetry schools, Naropa is kind of dumb and out of control though sometimes most usefully so, and New College more strictly scholarly and thus "to the point" (which is often a blockade to a moving spirit). And now I hear that Trungpa is actually dying (after long rumours) and New College may not survive the year due to horrid management from the top and lack of funding (unless somebody like Leon Botstein actually, and they say he may, takes an interest). At any rate, I think I gave of my best, bearing always in mind your admonition that I be more generous with what I somehow know.

The most fun, and the thing I realized once back home I was mainly dealing with as a new shock and turn in my life out there, was seeing Celia well ensconced already and living in another place, a place sametime most familiar to me. Strange but great! She loves the art school so far, the work (which isn't work like highschool assignments to her), the dorm (which is fully as nuts and stocked with adolescent craziness as one might imagine it), the streets, the behaxvior visible on all corners of Berkeley etc (same seemed easily as weird as in the late Sixties, what's going on??). She & I had dinners together, went to movies (Blue Velvet, which she loves, seen it 3 times so far), and just generally hung out, more like two friends in the world than strictly father and daughter I must say. I guess you know she has McClure for English, another odd loop joining itself somewhere beyond all our intentions. She showed me a paper he'd corrected of hers (in purple ink! as she says he

always does) saying “just as concrete and particular as your poppa!” I told her to save it. Amusing anyway? Of course he’s going through a big split-up with Joanna now, so comes in to class hanging his head and hinting at “personal problems” and telling the students that if he weeps it’s okay they can just leave (unethical teaching method?). So it’s all dramatic and fascinating to the kids. Celia didn’t tell him she was my daughter but one of her friends finally did, so the cat’s out whatever may result or not. Oh, and Celia got to come to my reading on the BART train with her friends and show off a bit (I signed their xxxxx copies of my books!) which was good fun for all. And, she’s getting more involved with the cinematic end of things there, has already appeared in one student film. She’ll come home for Christmas and bring one of her girlfriends to stay for the holidays here.

That’s probably the biggest news. Otherwise, writing and feeding the five cats, worrying about the new winter which has already arrived (freezing rain the day I had to drive to Albany, natch) and which everybody in these hills is predicting will be a real bastard (as they always do here, but...). We’re going down to D.C. for the weekend next, Susan attending a childcare conference and we’ll get to see the big Matisse show and visit with my old friend Dave Berger & family. But first I have to give a reading with Geoff Young on thursday at the Berkshire Museum! I know you must be jealous. Maybe I’ll get reviewed by Milton Bass! Edmond Jabes gave a great reading there last week (what’s happening to Pittsfield?!?!), during which I had to keep pinching myself to stay awake (not his fault: I had just flown back from SF and was coming down with flu). Oh, and Bill Corbett finally(!) asked me to come read at the Blacksmith House in February. I couldn’t believe it (bottom of the barrel?). Meanwhile (in January) I have to go read in Clayton E’s series at Ypsilanti and once more appear at the Detroit Museum chez Tysh xxxxxxxx (who of course xxxx wants me to give a talk on sex! and read from my filthiest works). How did I get talked into touring the Midwest in winter’s heart? I knew it would happen someday. By the way, Clayton E has taken to refering (in letters only SULFUR editors get) to my Book of During as “Coolidge’s xxxxx dirty book”. Lyn Hejinian tells me that’s insulting and I should complain but I just think it’s funny.

I did get paid by NewCollege, believe it or not. At least I cashed the check over a week ago and it hasn’t bounced yet so I think I’m in the clear. But, the last I heard, Irby still hadn’t been paid, despite Lyn & Michael’s best efforts. Seems the administration baldface LIES to the teachers about such matters (told Michael that Nate Mackey had been paid when he hadn’t, etc.). Lyn keeps threatening to quit, and so far it’s working. But nobody has much real hope for the continuation of the place.

Great to have your generous reaction to SOLUTION. Even Charlie Simic sent me a poem inspired by it and told me I was now his favorite poet(!) Did you see the Rasula review in the latest SULFUR? He does go on. And all that information theory stuff I feel it’s perhaps best I know little about. No one should have to spend brain in attempts to understand others’ interpretations of one’s work, that’s too consumingly inane! But it is good to find folks out there reading. Whatever they make of our latenite pains.

Saw Bill B only briefly, as usual.

Mister Busy. He literally ducked in and out of my last class with apologies and great worries that he might tread on my territory in his lectures(!) I told him to take it easy, and he’s all into WCW’s artworld connections anyway, which I barely touched on. He says he & Mose will be in NYC over Christmas.

Well, having (traditionally, now) forgotten all the best stuff again, I'll sign off for now. What are you reading for purest pleasure (not job)?

All Love,
Clark

[along left edge:] Yeah, I too thought we should at least get a hardcover copy of TREE as unpaid contributors!

August 11, 1986 [1987]

Dear Clark,

Well it's been a minimum of seven centuries since I've written to you, about 2½ since we've seen each other, and maybe 1½ since I've been able to get to my typewriter – quite literally the machine had to be unearthed as had myself from the incessant preparation for and doing of teaching and other forms of money-earning less interesting that seem to have taken over the better and also the better parts of my life lately. So, having disembarked from Naropa about three weeks ago where I went the day after finishing my last class at the New School, and having been amazed at the numbers of students I had to have in my classes in Boulder (which I was told would be kept down to 20), and having had to conduct conferences with most of, over two weeks, fifty thoroughly confused writers of all the kinds except for about eight unconfused ones, and having had to listen to some more strange anti-female murmurings from Hollo, Clausen et al (caused by somebody's insistence on yet another faculty colloquium on men and women – is that a "subject"? ending by my greeting Clausen and others next day by saying "Hello boys!" and his responding, "Wow if you messed with her you'd have to haul your balls around in a wheelbarrow" – remarks like that make me wish Frank O'hara's forms of wittiness and acerbity were more around)

anyway then, I proceeded to the rodeo in Cheyenne with John Ensslin. He was reporting on it for the Rocky Mountain News and he and his lover a child psychiatrist (sounds like Robert Parker) and Marie and Max and my teaching assistant and I all shared his motel room and watched staged gunfights on the streets of Cheyenne (twice a day!) and Emily Lou Harris and wild horse races and drank thousands of budweisers so we wouldn't have to drink coors and I finally got to see a .357 magnum and for the press (John) they had a dress code (no fooling, required cowboy hats), and sad performances by show american Indians and more idiotic stuff about women (the only woman in the rodeo etc) (+ the only black cowboy in the rodeo who was described as being a credit to his race) and all this began to take place the afternoon after the morning of the second faculty colloquium which was on the subject of THE PERSONA!

I'm
formulating a letter to Anne with advice about Naropa and first thing I'm gonna say is only I can determine the subjects for faculty colloquia (perhaps only I know the meaning of either the word or the concept of fooling). The best thing about the rodeo was in the adjoining festival there was a guy trying to sell certain kinds of knives that could be used to make flowers out of potatoes. Also I got my sister a 1988 calendar featuring "men of the west" and autographed and inscribed to her by Mr. March 1988. Also when you get a hotdog in Cheyenne they don't know what sauerkraut is, Max was surprised by that. He and Marie had a good time in the west in general and though I had to work much more than I expected, they had enough old friends around to take them hiking and swimming most of the days I spent in the honorific classroom, where I got a lot of new ideas. Sophia had decided to go to camp to get away from her siblings for a while so when we cruised back to New York awful city, we were returning to an unmeshed combination of her joy at life and the worst heatwave since 1980 they said (that's the year I moved back here), and we did it in a taxi from Kennedy the driver of which kept shouting while we were in a traffic jam on the Long Island Expressway and his airconditioning had broken down, "Let's kill the Sandinistas!" Life sure does get harder as you get older, even your holistic house gets dustier.

Your description of your view of your work at the new college is inspiring to me, after working at Naropa. It reminded me, as “one”, of one’s purpose, if such a thing can be said. I would love to be able to hear your WCW talks. I heard great things about them from a mutual student. I would love to be a student myself these days – I want to study astrophysics, Spanish, and Absence of Prosody. I’m going to be teaching once a week for the whole year or season at the Poetry Project and I have an idea to attempt to introduce the students to the notion of knowing everything. Now don’t laugh yet. The way I can think of it so far is to real quickly familiarize or re-do that with everyone all the possible poetic and prose forms known to me and them, so that they’ll be at hand. Then get into the names of things which might involve x making everybody get lots of field guides and reference books (they’ll complain but for the most part these guys make more money than i do); then study them; then, once a month or so, when it seems appropriate I will introduce a particular science, I figure I could introduce 20 sciences in a year. Each science would be a taking-Off point for writing and a way of learning more names and things. Then, since the workshop’s at night, nighttime field-trips about the city of names! On a whim, I took my boulder class during the second most crowded week to the boulder creek to do the most Japanese gesture of writing poems never read on rice paper and floating them downstream. alas or not alas, it all seemed to turn into an old-fashioned hippie gathering (I’d never dreamed we could swim in the stream) with people ripping off their clothing, plunging into the icy water and of course making love – perhaps the most romantic thing that’s happened at Naropa since Wm. Burroughs didn’t love cats so much. Many of the people in the class asked me if we could do the something the next day. I said no, we had to have a final exam. They didn’t realize that i wasn’t kidding and i did create a little exam for them, partly based on ways of perceiving what had happened the previous day, like Queneau’s EXERCISES IN STYLE. Later somebody mentioned to me a class they’d attended where a teacher staged an event on the first day of class that the students took to be real, then told them it was put on and asked them to write versions of it. In my old age as a teacher, I must admit I am beginning to love trickery.

But shit, it’s much more fun to write. And I’m mad cause i’ve had so little time to do it and xx I also am beginning to fall into my ancient poet-painter sensations which means i keep thinking it’d be so much better to paint, to paint all the time! to never cease! but writing, i think, mustn’t i have done enough of that by now? If i could publish a book i might feel different about it, or if i had more time to write all the things i want to. Fuck this shit. Now I have to spend all my extra money at the dentist even the nicest of whom says, how much \$ do you have so they can figure what they’re willing to do. & Lewis is being a horse’s ass (rodeo language?), not only does he not share with me any of the money his parents give him for the children but he doesn’t provide them with any sort of summer vacation except for going to the movies and two mets games. I wanna send him to outer space along with his smallness, he earns twice as much as i do and contributes nothing but his inviolable insensitivity. The other day I told him quite nicely that I’d promised to teach marie how to make vichyssoise and so she had to remain home for that night. This seemed to enrage him so deeply, partly because i’ve been able to entertain the kids more during the summer than lewis’s own ted-berrigan-predicted-stinginess allows, that he xxx slammed the door to my apartment that he knew to be broken shut hard enough to actually lock me in! Just like he always wanted! I must admit I felt then never happier than to have left him, but what a fool I’ve been to have loved him. I can’t help but feel that I’ll have no grownup love in the future, nor can i sensibly trust either my own instincts [➔: of love] for idiotic lewis(with the children), he who told me that the book he recently published (I think) was based on experiments he made on me

(on, no kidding) and that he wished for my phobias to disable me so i would wind up in a mental institution. i mean i know i'm xxxxxxxxx sensitive but this would be too much even for the dullest of us. Happily the kids are exempt since we've split up, and lewis is nice to them now, but shit. I said that twice.

Meanwhile I would wish for more leisure not only to write but also to come visit and do some talking. Also I've been devoting some funny time to putting my books in order which I realized i'd sort of raped in the midst of my teaching of the last two years, never putting the ones i pulled off the shelves back where they "belonged" and now i have to write a book about the teaching of science writing and my science books were all over the house -- in the midst of this i see i have no copy of your THE MAINTAINS. If you have an extra one around, do send it to me. I enjoyed placing all your other books at eye level, totally out of alphabetical order!

I have a thousand other thoughts and really would love to visit. Many students have offered to drive me because they would love to meet you. Perhaps I'll find the right one and appear there. I miss you and Susan alot and as for Celia I cant even say! What's she up to by now?! Marie has just gotten xxxxxxxx admitted to a somewhat fancy private school for free so she will be able to avoid the dangers and ugliness of public junior high school in new york city. this is some small relaxation. As for the weather i'll have to say shit again, however, in boulder, (commas are holding my coat for me), i happened to see a triple rainbow, just like this:

[drawing]

[rest of letter handwritten:] Then I had a dream there were four aspects of poetry:

[drawing of four types of links]

[arrow to image:] this link not to be lost, it said

[line to image:] described as "chain link" like-prison?

Then also? (in dream)

Love,
Bernadette

15 Sept 87

Dear Bernadette,

Well, writing letters has become even harder since I began to feel sorry for those I answered immediately (can't type that) thereby forcing them to consider answering me immediately (better). Which is probably all bullshit procrastination actually and I should really do what Larry told me to do last night on the phone (write one letter a day) and not worry about anyone else's sensitivity so much (do I really?). I guess this really goes in the Exigencies Dept., meaning that what I really (most) worry about is cleaning my desk (clearing) for all these projects I have waiting which I feel I should term "primary". And just allowing Fall's inception (it really feels like an early one here this year) to perk up my writing urges. These sentences must really be influenced by you (just reread your letter, so I won't forget I'm responding here to an actual letter!). What a muddle.

Anyway, your summer sounds much more exciting and varied than mine/ours. It's funny how we seem to have alternate Western (Naropa) summers. Did Anne somehow plan it that way? Did anybody? How come we never get to be there together?? I never seem to get scheduled there with anybody I hardly get to see and want to see more of, like Phil Whalen too. Some personally antisocial force is gumming the works! Larry came here last week all gloomy and asking Susan if she would either hire him to teach pre-school kids or somehow find him a similar job in some other school around here or anywhere. I wonder what happened to his "good" connections in NYC public schools(?) He talked a lot about writing songs with Marianne Faithful (did you meet her?) , and how he sat around sobbing with Stan Brakhage like middle-aged male wrecks but did get to see lots of SB's private stash of underground films (which I do envy). I guess turning 50 was a big depressing deal to Larry, though I think that he does insist on the numbers meaning lots more than they do. He needs such a big dramatic event in his life (even if depressing) but I don't feel like participating (especially in his nostalgic glooms). What I'd rather do (and we may actually do it) is go to Sweden next summer and participate in my old friend Dave Berger's 50th birthday bash in Gothenberg with blues band and general hilarity and the added strangeness of celebrating a birthday in such a weird locale (to me anyway--Dave's wife is from there and they go spend a summer there every year). Maybe we'll manage to do it, and then, as Susan suggests, go down through France etc and spend some more time in Italy (great!). This of course all hinges on Susan getting enough time off her job directing the Center. Which wouldn't be so bad except she has to get her M.A. points too, must write a thesis (neither of us can believe this) this Fall. Maybe I should write it (only kidding?). Anyway, we're both looking forward to our two weeks (and no readings or poetry business this time) in California, and especially our week (the rationale for this trip) in Yosemite celebrating our 20th wedding anniversary, which is really (the date) in December but we must go to Yosemite because that is where we really fell in love on a camping trip there in Oct 1967 (see what I mean about dates?). This will be great but we'll probably freeze and the bears will scare Susan again just like in 1967.

Celia had a summer here of racing around with friends in her new/used red Mazda (& got her first speeding ticket just before she went back to Calif) and waitressing for the first time in a shoddy place in Pittsfield thus not making much money (one guy even stole her tip to buy beer with(!) but she told the bartender on him so he didn't get away with it (good for her!). And now she's back in Oakland living in an apartment shared with two other girls (one of whom she already doesn't like) and taking film courses. We just mailed her off my old super-8

camera which has been gathering dust since forever (since our projector died, actually) so she doesn't have to borrow (sign out) the school camera for projects. I hope she really gets into making films (secretly hoping). So she's doing okay, except she wonders why there's no "man in her life" but I actually think she's super-choosey (which probly isn't a totally bad thing?). I think she's quite astounding looking and probably intimidates the boys (just like I remember feeling inadequate to such a presence). She talks to her mother mostly about such things and I guess that's traditional but I hope to achieve a breakthru one of these days. I must confess I've always had trouble thinking of her as "daughter" but more as this other person I've known all her life. This subject obviously needs deeper language than I feel capable of at the moment. Also I need a beer. Wait a sec...

You mention dentists, and I had a tooth adventure this summer, horrible pains in upper jaw and face like sinus which I first thought was infected (never having had one of those) so went to walk-in clinic on North St where a distracted woman doctor told me no, so went to not Colby (whox seems to be semi-retired, in other words you can't count on him being in that day) but Doctor Gold, who, let me tell you, has not got the hands of Colby (they quivver and he hurts you a bit probly accidentally). Anyway, he took X-rays and said I had a deep infection in roots of a back molar and get this, as I was lying there completely horizontal and helpless, he says I have to answer this question RIGHT NOW: Do I want a root canal and cap (which would cost \$800) or an extraction? So I fairly immeidtaley (ha) told him to pull it out, which he proceded to do but first broke the tooth off at the gumline (I have long roots) and I thought of dread "surgical" longwinded procedures to extract the roots, but he somehow levered 'em out pretty quick. So now I have this hole in my mouth I didn't used to have but at least it only cost 60 bucks. I guess Doc Colby is really on the way out (to the golf course, to Israel?) and the office is all changed around and I'm beginning to wonder about the future of my dental care.

The big event here on the hill this summer was the month they took to put in a complete new pumphouse and water system inside, epoxying of the cement holding tank, new submersibles etcetcetc. I suppose it's for the best but I must say I have trouble connecting in mind all these new space-age panels with flashing red lights with a glass of water or a bath. Maybe I really am a technical-throwback? The funniest item is a black plastic buzzer attached the outside of the shack that's supposed to go off when the water level gets too low, and guess who will be the only person to hear it in the middle of a dream? (Susan wears earplugs) So, I spent a lot of time talking that specialty language with xxxxxxx Viet Nam vets who are now water workers.

Literary matters, publishing, magazines et al, though I'm probably more involved with same than ever, seem boring to speak of, and I'd really rather travel. Do you think there is an increased need for travel as one gets older? Funny thought. Michael Palmer this summer on the Vineyard (where he spent 2 months this year) said, when I asked him how he felt about going back to SF, "Actually I'd rather just keep going east"(!) Writing on the run is possible I've found and actually fun. So one could have and eat it too?

Actually tho, to speak somewhat of lit matters, a guy at the Vancouver Art Gallery wants to hire me to write a catalog piece on Beckett's video works, says he'll send me cassettes of all these fascinating-sounding things Beckett has done in Germany London etc which nobody ever gets to see normally, plus a thousand bucks too.

If this all works out I'll have to finally break down and get a VCR (I can hear Celia cheering all the way from Oakland), which will probably "allow" me to watch endless porn classics at all hours of the morning, most of which I've never seen actually though everybody talks about them as if they've seen them. Maybe I'd just get bored and the machine would break down and be impossible to fix here (my worries about electrical gadgets). Actually it was great renting this converted boathouse on the Vineyard (from Bob Perelman's wife Francie's family who are 3-M millionaires or something) which had no electricity or hot water, which all somehow reminded me of childhood (tho we certainly always had electricity) what with all the kerosene lamp lighting etc. Plus I had to go outside twice a day and pull the string on a gaspump like an outboardmotor-pull to fill up the pressure tank so we had water. I found I never worried about "support systems" like we do here all the time. Hmmm. No doubt this is just one of my personal phobias I'm xxxxxxxx entertaining?

Actually not much is entertaining around here at the moment, not bad xx just not entertaining. Lots of gloomy grey rain and cold, the cats wanting to be let in and out all doors all the time, and we have to get our roof fixed again but waited too late to schedule the fixers and they're all booked up so I'll probably have to go up on roof myself and swamp big buckets of tar around (that might be entertaining in a way?).

Yeah, I agree with you about those Naropa colloquia or whatever they turn out to be (bullshit mostly). That's why I urged the subject of TRAVEL on 'em last year, mainly to avoid all the boring Persona topics and second-hand politics, but of course even then Allen had to take hours recalling from memory the number of every apartment he ever lived in. Naropa has never been a center of high wit exactly. I think I really keep going back there mainly for the rocks and the nearness of the sky and some kind of big xxxxxxxx general "West" feelings from my childhood. And some of the students are great to talk with, and even teach if I may be so bold. Though I couldn't imagine the value of all those half-hour "interviews" they seem to have to schedule for you (sound like you did the same this year?). I began to feel like a dentist ("Next..."). Did you notice any changes (of attitude, shit, ATTITUDE) anyway now that Trungpa is demised? I even had fantasies of the poetics school failing since it was one of Trungpa's pet projects and the administration people didn't seem to have a clue toward its possible value. But I suppose it will stagger on just like most things that once had some xxxxx spark. XXXXX I hear from Lyn & Michael & David Meltzer that the New College poetics is already having problems with the new Antioch people that took over this year, so that mail fail(may fail!). Well, I shouldn't be surprised at what happens (mainly doesn't) on these thin margins of America.

Your Cheyenne cowboy experiences remind me of a day when I was waiting for a bus there in summer of 1958 and just kept gazing at the old railway station across the street with its stone clock tower (is that still there?), trying to imagine that I was really finally in the West. And then I rode over the plateau west of there in the blackest possible night with an army guy who told me flying saucer stories. This all has something to do with the book of a hundred poems based on 19th Cent. landscape photographs (mostly western USA) I did in June, called Literal Landscapes, which I suppose Sun&Moon will bring out some year. I'm sorry about not being able to send you xeroxs of recent works right off, but copying possibilities hereabouts are lamer than ever. I thought I'd finally found a place in the Spring but they suddenly went from 8¢ tp 12¢ a page without warning or explanation. Wish I was a bterr(ha) BETTER (faster) typist.

Yes, hope you can get up here at some point before the snows. We'll be here except for the two weeks (Oct 15-28) in California. We'll lay in a case or two of RollingRock (in bottles) and the cats will curl up on you and even deign to make you sneeze. Next week I'm to give a reading down in Sheffield called, get this: The Boiler Room Cafe. What is appropriate to read in a place with such a monniker? No doubt I'll feel like a "local poet", of which there are many more than when you lived up here. I may have to get my phone number xxxxxx changed (only kidding, aren't I?).

Oh yeah, saw the Metcalfs in Lenox bookstore the otherday after years of not, they're on their way to some kind of residency in what used to be Fort Cronkite (those hills on other side of GoldenGate Bridge full of old military bunkers and, Paul sez, Nike missiles!) but is now some kind of art center. Anyway, this reminds me of the choicest bit of gossip locally in some moons (which maybe you've heard? but if not you must hear it). Adrienne got caught by hubby Al Weinman in the act of fucking a Lenox cop in the back of his patrol car on a Lenox street one night not long ago, whereupon AW somehow got the guy fired from the force, and now Adrienne is split from him (it's about time?) and is running a Mystical Crystal Store in Great Barrington. Upshot is that Paul has disowned her (wouldn't you know he'd side with Weinman? in fact I've even heard rumours that AW has been passing him cash xxx for years) and Nancy is sad since Paul won't let her speak to her daughter. What shit, right? Evidently Adrienne has been fucking other guys for years, which maybe you knew(?) but I was amazed to hear it since to me she's always seemed a fairly bland nonsexual presense despite her physical appearance.

Anyway. My beer has run out. But maybe this catches us up a bit.

All Love,
Clark

**[Postcard of “Remains of the Morris Canal, Waterloo, Sussex County, New Jersey”
postmark unreadable but dated October 1987
handwritten]**

Early October of MCMLXXXVII

Dear Clark + Susan,

How was your untimely snow fall (I’m so jealous) which only inspired beautiful photos here in NY Times + the drama of no heat from the inveterate landlords. Thank you for The Maintains, Clark (once again) – Now I have Everything! Love, Bernadette

**[Blank postcard
postmark unreadable; “©USPS 1984” and 1984 Olympics stamp on the front of the card
typed]**

October harvest moon, Dear Clark,

Just as I am attempting to write a sort of delineation of McPhee’s ORANGES for my science writing “text” “book” (did I tell you I was doing that?) (& it’s about the feasible or not teaching of writing to science students so they can develop ideas in words (!)), it occurred to me to inveigh upon you to make me a little list of your favorite science texts, which could include both books and articles, with little notes as to why you like them and what they’re useful for in terms of experimentation. I hope I dont sound too much like Larry, asking for lists! Just like any scientist, when I embark on a project like this, I initially think I’m doing it alone – then I realize I have cohorts! Dont feel obliged to oblige this uption? utopian assumption, but if you feel inspired I’d be grateful because as always i dont really trust one mind & would like to have at least three, which with mine plus your two is perfect.

Love, Bernadette

4 november 87

Dear Bernadette,

Seems like every other things is distraction, and thesedays everybody sends me postcards which as you know I could never answer (!) Including you. But I better answer. And also, to see if I can, having given up smoking, can you believe it? Can I?

You ask me for names of science books, which makes me think I've never read one, or at least can't remember the names of any I have read, what's the matter with me? No smoke?

Science "texts"?? I don't remember reading any, except under duress in school, or am I being perverse and thus difficult and should rather be just seriously thinking toward answering your request? Why am I writing you a series of questions?

But seriously, I can't think of any favorite science books, unless you regard things like McPhee's Binding Energy as such. But I guess I don't. Though his Basin & Range is certainly the best popularized geology I know of. But I never really read heavy science tomes for pleasure or otherwise unless as above under duress, did you?

I do recall getting fascinated with a book called Animals Without Backbones in juniorhighschool, which book later turned out to be a very ordinary college firstyear invertebrate biology textbook. But at the time I thought it was something other, a wonderbook, and it drove me out to collect pond water and find out cute cross-eyed infinitely-dividable xxxxxx planaria years before McClure.

Is this at all helpful?

And unless you include something like Luria's Mind of a Mnemonist(?) Which is beginning to feel like the most overly-quoted/referred-to book of our and subsequent generations.

I don't think I own any science books. Except for a whole rack of cave books, but they're not really science books are they? Norbert Casteret's endless series of caving adventures in the Pyranees(sp?). And the long story about the connection of Mammoth and FlintRidge systems (The Longest Cave by Brucker & Watson) which I think is quite great but maybe a special interest too tedious for others not already immersed? I'm hopeless!

Actually I always found science writing incredibly boring and never could get through any of those books entire, I confess. There must be a better way of knowledge, he said, dripping with hallucinogens.

Actually my long dream is of a book I'll never find in this life, the perfect exactness science, or all-knowledge, tome, full of golden figures and platinum engravings and the kind of color photos that would end your present life. Where is it, if "we" don't write it? It's like that, anyway. Not around in some drawer somewhere.

I'm so pleased to find I can type without reaching for a lit butt. But I guess you asked the wrong person, or at least one in a presently wrong state of mind. Science books are in libraries...

And please write me a letter answering my letter, or didn't you receive it so far back now?

Love,
Clark

10 may 90

Dear Bernadette,

A true dream state with undertow and attendant furies? Amazing and I wonder how you turn that switch, through language practice alone? I can sometimes manage a train of hypnagogics if I squeeze real willfully. What does the language look like that comes from that? Interesting that you should be disappointed in it, seems right somehow, dunno quite why.

Yeah, I often think we should let the word "poetry" go. I've never really felt comfortable with it as name for what I/we do, even less so now that I see what it means to most practitioners.

And I agree that thought ain't language. Or at least we're at a stage where it isn't useful to attach the two, or even possible (?) given certain language practices we've attained? I'm less theoretical than ever actually so can't really talk of this this way. For years I've tried not to think (ha!) about words in words, but bring in all the other dimensions of visual sonic whatever, my original inspirations anyway.

This probly won't be much of a letter, I'm out of practice. I can't pick out your best poems any more than I can pick my own. Messerli asked me to pick my "best ten pages" (!) for some crazy vast anthology idea of his and I said, You must be nuts! I can't think of my work that way, and I'm sure you can't either. There are no single poems. It's all a wave of work, after another wave. Or is it bubbles? The impulse to goof here...

I figure, if you feel you have to present NewDirections with a "Selected" of some kind (or they asked for same?), just grab a few poems from all your books, plus new sonnets or whatever and give 'em that. Of course, you should really publish The Desires of Mothers with them, put that in their face? Or whatever is the newest most exciting to you. I find I can't care very much about my old works, feel thus irresponsible toward them sometimes. But, so be it, if that's what it takes to get on. I never thought of this as a career, so this is all a bit mysterious.

Peter, who I don't see very much actually now that he's in Providence, keeps saying I should send my Odes of Roba (book of Rome poems he likes special) to N.D., but I can't get interested enough to actually do it. That one, like most of my books, if they don't get published within, say, a year of writing I tend to forget about them. I hear that Larry goes around to our mutual friends these days saying, "Clark shouldn't write so much"(!)

Yes, I do feel old (in sense of body giving out anyway), but usually refuse to entertain that feeling, try anyway. Get into the work and then I don't have those thoughts. Only when flagging. Funny word I never used before that way.

I'm in crucial(ha) last stages of typing big Russian poem now, so am nervous wanting to see it happen at last. Gotta get back to here at 7 in the morning. But wanted to respond however poorly so you don't think I totally sank beyond traces.

Hope you can come up. It'd be better to talk all this but not on the phone. You know me! Off to Cal next week for Celia's graduation, can you believe it, we can't(?!?!)

Love, Clark

12VII90

Dear Bernadette,

Want to get these to you quick, may have some interest(?) Don't know for sure if you envision any "extensions" as possible in this operation? Anyway, sometimes I think something came through other than words from easy association, current works in progress, words in my periphery from your next lines, etc. What you think? Anyway, a response.

What happened with NewDire-ctions? I'm thinking of sending them a mss myself. Severe doubts though. I hear rumour they're only accepting things "that sell", whatever they could mean by that (?) Most of their new list(ad) is little-known writers in translation...

But.

Ha!

Love,

Clark

[Mayer note at the bottom of the page: "send to Cydney? (wrote Sept 19)"]

17 August 93

Dear Bernadette,

Looks like we won't be here to see you on those dates as we're leaving for 10 days on Martha's Vineyard on the 28th. Awk! How we do seem to plan things...

This is somewhat of a spiritual "hike" for my mother, in the wake of my father's death and her own recent physical troubles (pulled muscles in leg/hip). So Susan Celia et moi will trail along, push & pull, hope for the best.

Sorry I wasn't with you at Naropa (actually I'm not). I sometimes wonder if I'll ever be invited there again during Andrew's term as director (he & I didn't exactly see eye-to-eye the last time I was there (& his first time). Oh well. Maybe I've done that gig enough times(?)

Enclosed find strange new incarnation of OWN FACE chez Messerli. His idea entire. I hope it doesn't piss you off(!?) At least I made him put Floyd on the cover. Who knows what he would have placed there if left to his own devices. Of course I would have preferred he do something new (he's sposed to be doing now, THE ROVA IMPROVISATIONS, but I get chewed out for not submitting my work already on DISC!?). Meanwhile I have 16 other books (haha) ready to go long since, and only three "publishers" "interested" if they can scrounge the money.

Glad you liked the In(Un) augural Pome. It was an education, realizing that most of the poets we sent it to didn't know what it was, hadn't seen her book, cared less I spose. Now I wonder if many poets even frequent bookstores(?) Gus Blaisdel (proprietor of one in NMex) assures me they don't. I guess we should have printed 100,000 copies (instead of 300) and gotten them into the chains. Then we probably really would've gotten sued (as Larry feared!).

Hope we see you sometime soon, no matter this screwup. Maybe in Fall, Berkshire's Best Season??

Love,

Clark

Dear Bernadette,

Great to have your letter! Sorry about missing your "date" here. Now I hear Marie's "miserable" at Smith, true? I'm sure I would be, but who asked me? Hope Celia connects with her there—I think Michael gave her Marie's address/number. Celia's also miserable with a series of nowhere jobs, selling clothes in malls, etc. But on the other hand she's becoming a photographer(!) She did some great shots for our collaborative Lowell book, and Michael and I want her to work on our Providence project too. Sunday we're supposed to go over to Hudson so Celia can take shots of Ashbery for LINGO. A career? Maybe I can get her to take some shots of me I won't hate?

Had a great time at the beach doing nothing much. Spent a lot of time just Celia and me xxxxx jumping in the waves and listening to her taste in rock&roll: she turned me on xx to the Seattle bands, Pearljam in particular (we both love Eddie Vedder!!). I'm glad to see that I can dig the sounds of a younger age, but then Celia is very persuasive in her way. Anyway, we dug hanging together without a care.

Glad you survived Naropa again. I sometimes wonder if I'll ever get invited there again as long as Andrew is director of summers. He said some fairly insulting things about me on a panel, gratuitously it seemed, what could he have against me? My naive soul! Actually I'm pretty sick of all that teaching pretense, but it is fun to see people you don't normally, run up against student enthuse. I understand they're having a "New York School" Summer in the next few years, wonder who gets invited to that? I almost said, Aren't all those people DEAD?? But then, I'm bound never to feel a part of anything much.

Sure, I'd love to see your NEW DIRECTIONS (Dunno why I capped that??!) mss. What is it, prose selections, somebody said? But since I usually don't like things that "sell", I doubt my advice is worth much. Publisher problems on the increase for lost poets everywhere. People accept my books but cry No money! Actually, I just finished proofing my ROVA IMPROVISATIONS for Messerli, so I guess I shouldn't xxxxxxxx! complain, much. Stephen Ratcliffe's supposed to do one (Avenue BQ [arrow pointing to the "O"] next Spring. Maybe Charles Alexander at Chax, Arizona, though he was supposed to have gotten back to me DEFINITELY months ago. And that Zasterle person from the Canaries (tho he just sent me a Dennis Barone book he did and didn't even mention the CC book he's supposed to be preparing!). Blah. Meanwhile millions of meaningless ANTHOLOGIES continue to pop out. Go figure. (A phrase that should die soon)

Did you hear of Aram Saroyan's Selected Ted coming from Viking? I doubt it. Viking sent me the mss of Robert Hunter (Grateful Dead lyricist)'s next book to blurb but I can't do it because it's not good enough. People say I should do such things to get "on the list" but I can't. I don't unnerstan the book biz...

Meanwhile it seems to be Retrieval Season, more & more as deaths occur. The Po Proj Nwsltr will have my address to send errant Brodey mss to. Hopefully we can get a xx big book of his done (maybe HardPress?) as seemd impossible while he was alive. That's sad enough in itself. Then heard that Piero Heliczer got killed by a car in Paris almost on same date as Brodey's demise. And, I'm involved in helping edit a book of Musa Guston's poems/plays/etc, with

Geoffrey & Corbett as co. The message is obvious: Die, and your friends will all edit great books of your work. How cynical, Clark!! We should all be so lucky.

Oh well. Ive really got to be better at answering my mail as nobody writes to me anymore and with good reason, I'm not complaining. I'd rather be reading The Story of O too! And actually I just finished that big new French biog of SADE which is great, I reccomend it! He doesn't seem so "unusual" anymore. Lots of great letters in there too.

Well, what's new? I won't talk about all my unpublished manuscript. Actaully, though, I'll trade you: a copy of my latest prose masterpiece, CLOSER AND DARKER, for your MIND OF HOUR, ok? I need something to get inspired by that isn't by some dead person.

Actually, there's tons of gossip I could be giving out with from hereabouts. Mainly about the big Louise and Geoff DIVORCE and law suits and general scrapping and not speaking and S & I being caught between but manage to act like we'Re not and won't repeat anything one of them says to us about the other. That kind of fun. Actually, I don't see much of Geoff, but Susan sees quite a bit of Louise, does catering jobs with her, etc. No, no "etc", just catering jobs. Actually the Berkshires are pretty xxxxxxxx boring but once can only hope that they come apart a bit here and there to let in a little fun. I think I'd rather live by the sea...

Looks like the Meltzers and I will be forming a new "band" (titled MIX) for gigs starting in California North & South in Jan/Feb/. Guitar drums and voices and god knows... Cares thrown to the winds and we're not getting any younger. Actually, this was inspired by a silly McClure/Ray Manzarek reading that everybody hated in SF, and so Tina said, If he can get awy with that shit, why can't we do better?!? Tina told me that some SF Examiner reviewer had the temerity to say in print that MMC needs someone to teach him how to read his own poetry (how beautifully nasty!). Actually he dies. Oh, what a horrible mistake! (I meant "he does")

Lots of BeBalm (BEE BALM) here, but Susan should really write you about all that, she being the keeper of our natural grounds.

Running out... Come back! Hope we see you soon this Fall. We'll be here entirely. I may come to NYC to read in some ArtGallery (Oct 23) as Yau & Gizzi tell me I must do. Also hoping there will be a Jim Brodey Memorial Reading at St Marks soon(John Godfrey is seeing to that but no date fixed yet). I had a nice letter from Jim's mother(!) by the way. Did you know that she turned him on to writing poetry as a mere tad, sent his early poems to such as Auden Bogan etc for an opinion (how did he ever survive that?). Actually a BIOGRAPHY OF BRODEY would probly be a great thing, but don't look at me.

I forget everything else.

You must prompt me.

Love,
Clark

4 july 94

Dear Bernadette,

Since it seems to be the “FourthofJuly”, a hoida (huh?) a holiday I HATE more than most (tho I hate them all for interrupting my threads), I can think of no better way of avoiding thoughts of same than by answering your letter. Susan always makes me read yur **[little narrow and “!”]** letters out loud to her and so I did with this latest. Later I heard her quoting from it to an old L.A. friend of hers on the phone. So, thus, in another way, you are”published” all over and further.

Peter Baker, I had a hard time recalling, did write to me but I didn’t answer till you gave me permission. Then I remembered Michael Palmer having a copy of his book with chapter on the 3 of us in his house years ago when I glanced at it but didn’t retain anything. Now he says he will send me one, though he thought I didn’t want one, which was true enough but. I never know what to say (write) to such people (what do they WANT!?!?) since they seem to know what they think about “us” anyway and seemingly nothing will peel them from it. But I did try to think back to the “way it was” with us in NYC in early Seventies, say, and ended up feeling nostalgic for that atmosphere of craziness, isolation and collaboration. Maybe I gave him some report of that, I don’t know. Strange how collaboration is so little valued now, or ever? Officialdown tells me that the Guston’s collabs with poets are “less valuable” than his drawings without poems. Go figure, as somebody says. I think they’re worth “more”. And nobody has yet managed to want to publish our beautiful Cave Collaboration. John Martin once said to me that he’d never seen a collaboration that “worked”. Shit.

So I probably told PeterBaker more about the “times” as they felt to me anyway and about how you & I certainly felt compatrioted against the general “school”, how everybody complained about our “length” (a rather personal matter??). It’s probably not what he wanted, but anyway...

Susan and I just got back from a great two-weeks cave expedition to Kentucky Tennessee et al, visiting some holes I’d missed in my youth and some I wanted to revisit before too old to leap and squirm. Susan really got into it (as they say) and wants to do more, which we’ll probly do

next year out west. Incidentally, we met a couple at one of the caves who said their son was a caver in the Northampton area and that we should get in touch

[BM writing on top of page: “Cave collab – Thom Bynum”]

with him as he can get us permission to enter Eldon’s Cave now(!?) I thought that was impossible for the foreseeable, even heard somebody had dynamited the entrance (it’s been so long since Julie Harris!). Wanna go?

What else is new? Michael has Interferon (sp?) shots every few days and suffers from evil sideeffects but what other choice? Mathew is superdad and loses interest in his store by the day, it’s really slipped, no books! Geoffrey and Louise are “getting back together”, but I have my doubts. I hardly ever see him anymore but he called up this morning and told Susan we’re invited to a Chas Bernstein reading(!) next week, plus dinner plus who else? Far’s I know, your book is just waiting on me & Lyn to hand in our blurbs so don’t worry overly. Actually, Geoffrey waited so long to make copies and send to LYn that she told me she was worried that you were mad at her(!) Geoff does tend to get vague toward the end of projects. You should probably call and yell at him, a little anyway, make him jump. Celia’s been hereabouts a lot working for Barbieto’s gallery and doing paperwork for HardPress. The girlfriend who was supposed to accompany her on Fall Italy adventure copped out so back to square one. Also she’ll have to find another apartment soon due to conflicts with others also living. But she’s optimistic and doing painting and photos for our Providence Project. My latest opus (Rova Improvisations) has finally arrived in sufficient copies I can now mail you one. That one only took 8 years to come out, I could be happier. All these anthologies, yeah. I dunno, I can’t really pay attention, so Lyn H balled me out (nicely) saying I should take more of an interest since that’s how our works will all stay in school or something further than our lifetimes. I spose. But they’re still boring! George Tysh called me, long before I got a copy, to say how great he thought the Norton one was, “just what we’ve been waiting for”... Well, he’s a teacher. I think they’re sorta like gigantic dense magazines that never come out again but also never go away. My mother’s here now visiting and watching Wimbledon and she likes them (anthols) and wants to talk to me all about works of mine in them that I’ve hardly any memory of anymore. I’m presently working on something about the Abductions titled Alien Tatters. It’s got all these funny voices... Meanwhile and while, I watch

millions of movies, mostly on tape(got some great recent Godards you should see!) (Peter says he'll get me copy of Rivette's new JoanOfArc lengthy), and listen to the bands Celia likes (PearlJam Nirvana Fugazi MeatPuppets PJ Harvey). Wish I/we could see you one of these years!!! I seem to be losing touch with all my old friends. But I'll try to be good.

All love,

Clark

[handwritten]

Another holiday
(Sept 9, 1994)

[date is inserted in different pen]

Dear Clark,

I remember when we talked about calling it “Clark’s Nipples” – that was probably around the time we were encouraging you to call everything you wrote “My Penis” – how come you so far haven’t? Well you almost have. Anyway I’m glad you’re happy about this potential book. My pen’s down, as computers go, so my script is not normal, but I’m enclosing a list of what I have of the cave work + some xeroxes of crazy notes I made about our discussions of titles. I do like Cave of Metonymy but I must admit that “The Clark’s Nipples of what a wreckage corrects” is pretty enticing too.

Recently I went to a commercial [→: series of] caves in Ellenville, N.Y., so commercial that you can get your photos taken outside, [marginal note →: Ever realize you were a “caveman” type?] a man + a woman posing behind a [→: caveperson-type] graphic, saying “I dragged her to the ice cave mountain.”! It’s sort of a 50’s tourist attraction with signs on the trail to the caves saying things like: a mountain goat you are not; don’t go off the trail and duck your head down now – these rocks are harder than it is, etc. This tour came replete with a tape-recorded guide who kept saying things like “Well you’ve made it this far; I’ll meet you at point #17” etc. The caves are full of ice that never melts + they’ve become more a haven for lovers than spelunkers, but graceful in the sense that it is tempting to kiss near + within them. It’s the corniest place you’ve ever seen but one of Phil’s neighbors says his friend knows how to get to adjoining caves more in the wilds. The place is famous for its views – on the top of a mountain – “you can see five states” – what does that mean? I hate views, elevation 2300 ft, high for around there, but a great dark blue lake that has no bottom, no vegetation, no fish. Depthless! What’d the language poets make of that! No growth because the bottom is all rock, so they said (I had my period when I was there) [arrow from “there” out of parentheses, arrow from “goat” to the same place, presumably to “angrily”] angrily cavorting like a mountain goat beyond the formal boundaries of the trail.

Let me know Everything,

Love,
Bernadette

21 sept 94

Dear Bernadette,

Here's copies of the sections you're missing. Page-counts are different in some cases, as you can see in the "Attention to Pain or Piano" (that's the title) I've enclosed xxx which is 5 pages not 15, and "Clark and Bernadette" is one page, not two. Also "Karstarts" is 19 pages, not 11 as you have it (maybe a different typing?). "Cave of Metonymy" is on legal-size pages, so that'll be more on regular $8\frac{1}{2}$ x 11.

At least we both recall the same sections! er, excepting "The Body of Water with the Bowl", which I don't think was supposed to be part of this work, and which I don't seem to be able to find here. I think it was a variation on some material in Karstarts (?), but this is all too long ago for me to be sure. Best for the thing to start with the "Trip" narrative, planting(!) the reader, before all our wavy in and out roads? But you can send me a copy if you feel like.

I hang on to the Cave of Metonymy, which I can't spell, obviously... as best title, though I don't really like underlining one section of the work this way, generally. But it still is least precarious title we've come up with, while remaining sufficiently mystifying. The Cave of Obfuscation??

The Cave of Oblates??

The Cave of Machu Picchu? I just finished a long poem based on that trip, called The Light in Depth Then. Actually, I just finished a work based on the alien abductions, called Alien Tatters.

How about,

The Book of Tom Ball's Marbles?

and attendant silliness, you betcha. Funny, I recently found a tourist folder for just the ice caves Ellenville you just visited, always meant to get there someday and now you've beaten me!

Mike Gizzi just called with news of your DESIRES in hand, says it looks great! Congrats!!

I'm off this weke-edn(?) I'm off to spend this weekend with the Two Bills (how odd) at Addison Gallery Guston **[letter is cut off]** to SF for two weeks. more gigs with the Meltzers.

So, wanted this to go off to you instantly. I'll be back here on Oct 12.

Love,
Clark

11 april 95

Dear Bernadette,

I heard you were being visited by vast mobs, so thought I'd wait and not add to the glut. Also didn't know if you felt at all like communicating(?) Anyway, glad now to know you want to hear from me.

Gossip? Um... er... I guess that's all I've heard of or from everyone. So, here goes. Bill & Lyn Berkson are dividing up the furniture, signifying Splitsville. Is Bill living in his art school art supply closet in the interim? Peter Gizzi has been offered a job teaching at the U of Denver, unless he takes a similar gig at Santa Cruz that Bob Perelman also wants. Clayton Eshleman is being sued for libel by one of his former publishers. Celia Coolidge told me that Susan Noel confided in her that she had had a nipple pierced. John Ashbery fell down again (stewed). Robert Creeley is angry at Charles Bernstein for only appearing at SUNY Buffalo a couple times a week and for living in New York. Jack Collom is threatening to sue The Star for libel. Quentin Tarantino's next movie will be The Man From U.N.C.L.E. Francis Ford Coppola, now casting On The Road, thinks the Beats wore jeans and black leather jackets. Wim Wenders is helping Antonioni direct a movie. Jean Luc Godard says that one of the failures of his life has been his inability to prevent Steven Spielberg from recreating Auschwitz. Shit, I'm running out already! Obviously I'm not tapped into Gossip Central on the Internet.

Celia

Coolidge and Barbiero Gizzi have xxxxxx started a bead business. Clark Coolidge just got back from a tour of the northeast with the MIX band (with David & Tina Meltzer). He (why am I writing about myself in the 3rd person??) also just published a review of the Kerouac Letters & Portable that will no doubt get him in trouble with the Academic Beat Industry led by Ann Charters (see April 11th issue). Coolidge also just completed the rewriting of his late father's diaries. And now it's Spring (I think) in these our Berkshires and the sky is alarmingly misty blue today. I can even see the ground from here (desk window). Soon will come all the smaller creatures.

Hope you're daily regaining full powers.

All love from Clark Susan Celia,

C.

APPENDIX – UNDATED LETTERS

DEAR CLARK,

Sorry cant answer the mail or write movies
so.

Someone "out of his/

her system

Tom's thoughts on moments or

timing or

space

we found boxes

We picked up boxes

Greek & xxxxx Bulgarian products

get delivered in

the space between

just
existing

doing something
like,
writing a book
that can be a book

You allow to be a book

or,

instincts take you further

to a space beyond

the allowed space

& so,

in between

there can be no such thing as a book

or,

but

the waiting around is difficult, like,

1966-1970

(he shuts off the light is he taking a pill?)

because I'm recording

what someone cannot

&

I dont want

(like centered

like laundered clothes

you cant wipe yr hands on)

a point of view

*

& you?

recording & beyond

are the words I hate most

among them_____

Put together
 & not let self
 let - there's another one
 FAMOUS!
famous Rimbaud dreamed at night
& nobody swooned identical.

 Here, air
 heavily dotted by swell oil barges on fire
in the sea in the morning - we missed it - it went out in
the afternoon xx fire of the poets who sleepxx till 3:30
& dont milk cows

 Where air we?
 A regular division
 A plus
Cant get outta bed hello
Cant get outta sleep no need
 I river anyway
So skid
 speeds up to 70 mph
& Ithought just the energy it took to hang on in the boat
was too much but when I looked up & saw what I saw it could be
much more x I didnt fall out, of the xx race

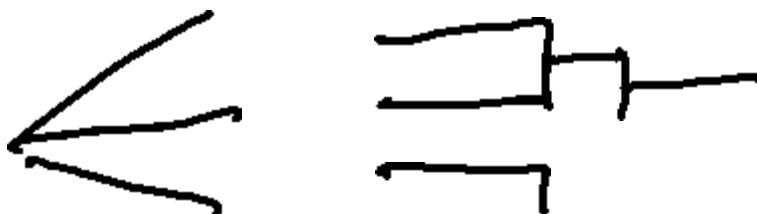
 Now there's a comma
 So precious
 What you want me 2 do.

 **

 Accumulate
 Ha you pisser
 Men who live in white houses & centralize
their heads

 Heaven becomes
 a pier on fire early morn

She was
She was
She was



representative
of something missing
 indescribable language of the act
indescribable act of the language

& so Wilhelm Reich sits nicely on a well-written fence
on the world as situation

Men incumbent

(Carl Jung's men & women are quite derivative

My parents

once said:

Fantasy you like you store for us

& we invite you

like no one else

I am back where I started from

Dante drums roll & the

sentence begins

& ends as

upside down as what you

derive

from

with about & it,

or,

Steer clear

of the ones you know

the ones you dont know tell more & more

more to you

Who is familiar

with any ground

he/she is (xisting) in

No way

So way

Syllable

Resort

Long ago,

what shld I do now

B.

1 ate

2 much

2 many

4 ever

5 eyesights

6 sex

& 7 above

8 everything

9 children, 10 is money, &tc. WATER

[handwritten]

Friday night [**June 3, 1978**]

Dear Clark,

Forgot to give you this list of my favorites in the chaos of the day.

Loving My Place

My Gaps Are Bags

* At the Poem

A Winch or Ghost

How I Open

Chalance

* Connie's Scared

Album – A Run thru

* The Fall Returns

In Positions Is the Matter

Totally inspiring “see the’s”, your poems. The asterisked ones are my suggestions for Barry.

Love,

Bernadette

Also, still got your lecture transcript

[in the righthand margin, vertically]: Thought of this title, kind of a steal from you, for something I've been doing: TWO SPINS OFF GERTRUDE STEIN REVIEWING HER Whirling? Rotating? Revolving?

[Postcard of "Custom House, Salem, Massachusetts"
postmark unreadable
handwritten]

Hello Clark speak unnatural acts glad you appreciate others coming + state of something else
no plans of trips Toronto soon everybody left New York + state of poetry forgets herself
message ends fine

Love Bernadette to Susan + Celia² [**"Susan + Celia" triple underlined**]

hdjskdjfhrytueinmvbcmxkzlaowpq

jd hfgtryouwiqopalskdjfhgvcbx

Feb. 1

dear clark,,

those pokes are closed now

d

d

1

[Postcard, figure on front, description unreadable
postmark unreadable [early 1970s]
handwritten, mostly in block letters]

DEAR CLARK + SUSAN,

IT'S NOT SO NICE TO BE BACK HERE BUT IT'S OK. COULD YOU BUILD A
LITTLE HOUSE FOR US IN THE FOREST? THE WK. IS IN PROGRESS – you'll get it by
WEEKEND?? **[to margin →: SOONER! Are you doing one?]** 10 pgs. called DASH. COULD
YOU BRING DOWN W. YOU THE ISSUE OF SUNSET ED was reading w the COFFEE [→:
SYRUP] RECIPE IN IT?

[below a line:] LOVE, the aborigines

[to the righthand side:] HELLO, CELIA!

[all following is in the right margin:]

When R you coming?

Love, Bernadette + Ed

[typed upside-down:] LIKE THIS MAN ASLEEP ugh

U-all could stay here when U [? come]