

## Dumb and Unemployed (1992)

(Note: written during a period when I was not technically an academic, hence no obligation to reference properly.)

### Brogan Bunt

I have prepared some plaster and sand. I have emptied the pond. Some jets have flown across the sky. The sun has shone down on my head. I have placed these events together as a string of sentences. Can this string itself constitute a decisive moment?

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It seems Appolodorus left only one poem to posterity. Perhaps it is only a fragment.

Who?  
Who can be coming to the edge  
of my gates  
at this black hour of night? (*Greek Lyric Poetry*, p. 147)

Who are these words directed to? To the other who approaches? To Appolodorus himself? To posterity? I read them as a funerary inscription. It is the poet speaking from the grave, yet not speaking. Appolodorus leaves only one small fragment of his life - and this fragment demands his death. But at the same time he maintains his lucidity in the face of death. He draws on the resources of death in order speak across a vast chasm; his voice writing towards the silence of the night and discovering that strange silence actually.

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Loneliness does not  
Originate in any one  
Particular thing:  
Evening in autumn over  
The black pines of the mountain. (the priest Jakuren, 1205, *Anthology of Japanese Literature*, p.186)

A general statement followed by what seems a specific observation. Hard not to link the mood of loneliness to the character of the particular evening, but the poem sets out to explicitly detach the two. The basis of loneliness is obscure and complex. There is nothing in this specific instant that can provide an adequate explanation for it. Indeed it is more likely that it is the mood of loneliness which comes to explain the particular scene. The evening, with its mountain and black pines, emerges as a metaphor for an unaccountable emotion. The enigmatic character of a particular scene comes to stand for an enigmatic loneliness. So both terms are obscure.

It is enough to simply state the particular to indicate its elusiveness - rigorous brevity as gesture of excess.

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Some reasons for writing:

1. to communicate (social writing)
2. to detach experience from itself, reconstituting it in an alien territory (writing and the aesthetics of mediation)
3. to reach out to the thing itself, but indirectly (writing as a means of opening up a relation to the otherness of things)
4. to earn a living.

But why do I write? I guess because when there is nothing much left to do in the garden, no cooking required, the kids are at school, and I haven't got a job - then writing becomes the last half-way respectable resort.

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I cannot read anything that I write. I can edit it, but I cannot read it. My own writing becomes for me automatically intransitive. This is why it seems strange to write for myself - because I can never constitute an adequate reader. If I write for myself it is only to experience the not quite elsewhere of my words.

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Writing has become associated with loss and waste. Why is this? Since when has unwritten experience constituted something solid and enduring? Writing has long embraced the contradictory task of rendering the flux of experience upon the relatively permanent plane of paper. But having lost its capacity to represent the world adequately writing may now appear as an harbinger of death (as Bazin would have it in relation to the photographic image). Perhaps writing is loss and waste because it no longer relates to life - in the sense of restoring life through a mimetic circuit - but instead celebrates its own potential for pollution. The motion of loss within life is abandoned for the productivity of death - expenditure here entering into peculiar harmony with accumulation. The loss and waste of writing produces piles of rubbish - disappearance as trash.

It is worth remembering that writing is an aspect of societal production. There are far more memos, directives, and invoices written each day than poems. Not that a poem can't also be a means of ensuring there is food on the table. The non-instrumental has long had its valued place within bourgeois society. In this light, the notion of the radical expenditure of the text appears a far less subversive proposition. Interesting, as well, that such a 'radical' theoretical position achieves ascendancy precisely as the sphere of representation emerges as an increasingly large and vital sector of the economy. What critical function can the notion of the 'infinite play of the text' have within such a context? Perhaps silence is a more genuinely subversive option?

Not that it is subversion that concerns me as such. Silence simply seems an appropriate response to an excess of representation. It is also a means of engaging with the inexpressible. Silence is also a kind of loss, tempting in its refusal to make any compromise whatsoever.

Yet silence is also frustrating. It is like holding my breath. To speak, to write, to represent - is to exhale. This is my problem: inhalation depends upon exhalation. Silence disrupts both processes. There is a need here to reach some kind of balance, unless silence is to become suffocation.

Others have no need to write. Why must I? Not due to some inner necessity, but simply because this is all that I can do for a living. I am expected to write. I am not regarded as productive unless I do. So am I doomed to write endlessly about the temptation to be silent?

Both writing and silence appear as necessities.

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There was a time when others remarked and glanced about like thieves - this tree, that tree, the other tree - and another thing - the woman beckoned and each of us stood running until we could sit no longer - away, away.

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I am compelled to speak of myself, but have no wish to do so. So I shall pretend to speak of myself.

I write of myself because first person sentences lend a sense of activity and necessity to passivity and arbitrariness. I walked from here to there. I slept intently through the day. I shall cross the ocean this evening.

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Darkness surrounded us. This experience was like something else. We were lucky to have plenty of food. We kept our eyes open for sounds of help. Not a thing. We could anticipate the taste of the thing. It was like the food we were eating. In the end, help came running like the experience of darkness.

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Please write to me. And, in writing, prove to me that you do not exist. This is the way of the world. I shall cherish your letters, no matter how indifferent or brief. I shall read and reread them. I shall place them in a folder of correspondence. I shall keep them always. And then when both of us - who have pretended through these letters to live - pretend to die, these letters shall preserve intact the memory of our eternal love.

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Silence comes easily enough. It descends. Why resist it?

I could write of the weekend or let it disappear? What is there of it that is worth maintaining? For you - the other who I do not know, who I will never know? What do you care about my weekends? You have your own to forget. The value of the weekend is precisely its orientation towards silence. A silence that requires no memorials, that is inimical to the motion of representation - particularly everything I have written here.

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She removed her clothes to reveal, transparent like the sky, the terrifying prospect of our utter separation. I motioned to her and then fell asleep for awhile. When I woke up she was doing it. Something was being done at last. I felt vastly reassured and just a little bit thirsty.

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I can't abide sentences....Everything I've asserted, convictions I've expressed, it's all ridiculous and dead. I'm only silence, and the universe is silence. (Bataille, *Guilty*, p.40)

Why then does Bataille write? Perhaps, because in its absurdity and death, writing also enters into relation with silence. Ultimately writing cannot escape its implication in the silent universe. It could even be regarded as the most eloquent expression of the necessity and inevitability of silence. Writing transports speech into silence, alienating words from intention and from contact. It is language set adrift, making separation the condition of communication. One reads and writes in silence, so all these words, all these efforts to communicate, manage to attain - without even trying to - the dimension of silence. But there is still, for Bataille, the desire for total silence in which language has no place whatsoever. Writing emerges as one means of conjuring this other silence. It is the sacrificial ceremony in which silence is summoned.

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The night is dark. The night is light. This is the night in which everything can be said. And everything which is said is consigned to the night. Have you gone outside to feel the coldness of the trees? Can you remember any of this? Can anything remember any of this?

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The only abilities that interest me are those that I lack. I have devoted considerable effort to trying

to develop them but have consistently failed. So I am inevitably left only with what I can already do. It seems I can write - or at least I can occasionally string together four sentences.

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The afternoon is no time at all. It is time as essence - time distilled. It is also time become space - the silence of suburbs and sky.

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I would describe her but she is unclear. She disappears when words come to find her. She is always elsewhere. I cannot even describe her external characteristics. There is only the memory of her beauty appearing and vanishing - and the memory of her laughter. Iridescent invisibility, she phoned today and said she was not coming.

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It seems I am always wasting my time. I am writing this, but what is this precisely? I have no wish to decide. Any sensible decision would paralyse me completely.

This refusal to decide makes novelty possible, but also guarantees repetition.

How do people write books? How do they resist the temptation to fall silent or destroy everything they have written? For me, the urge to write finds its inevitable correlate in the urge to abandon everything that I have written.

The world of silence seems to prod me now and then to write. Though I would abandon myself to her completely, silence delicately deflects my advances, reminding me of my other responsibilities.

Then the words. They come through lapses.

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No deliberation. She takes what she wants and leaves the rest. I could scarcely face breakfast. There were cars travelling along the main road and birds eating the tops of the trees. Ruin had become inevitable.

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This evening as darkness comes to stand on its own - upright and honest, with no one watching - I feel something akin to regret. I have turned everything else off. I have shifted toward the obvious. I am prepared to be quite open about this - all my secrets disgust me; contents congealing like a city execution.

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Even images must be resisted. The aim, employing all the resources of language, is to say nothing whatsoever. The nothing whatsoever which opens up another space altogether - but intermittently, like death bed words in the ears of the healthy, like the moon taking the place of the sun; like curious animals emerging slowly from a dark forest. I have imagined nothing.

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She kissed me. No one kisses this. I tried to tell her. But she was determined to ignore the evidence of her senses. She had obviously never learnt how pointless it is for a cloud to discipline a sleeping child. I would drink and drink - but nothing would lead me to water.

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Now that we are up to date, now that everything has been recounted, we can get on with writing towards lunch. Then after lunch we can move about the house. We can call for entertainment and learn that the palace is empty. We can look out the window at our fighting children.

I would say more.

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What is it that I believe? Do I have a set of beliefs? And if I do, can I express them simply, concisely?

- Reality is not interpretation or representation - it is the otherness that leads us to interpret or represent. The experience of reality is irruptive and inexpressible. Reality is truth only in its poignancy and decisiveness. Complacency has nothing to do with this form of truth.
- At its limit, representation struggles to annul itself.
- There are silent means of engaging with reality.

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I would not try to assemble my beliefs with such brevity and ludicrous clarity except that I occasionally become aware that my own beliefs, however vague and inchoate, are out of tune with the temper of the times. A concern with reality appears anachronistic to those who have embraced the horizon of simulation.

I am told that any decision is decided both ways, opening up two worlds of consequence. Each and every possibility takes place. So then what is decisive? This vision of worlds splitting and multiplying to conserve all possibilities is the denial of the ruthless character of chance. As Nietzsche would no doubt insist, the magic of chance is not simply that it opens up possibilities but also that it selects a single outcome. Chance and necessity are linked. It is the linking of these two that lends poignancy to the experience of reality. But where is the dimension of necessity in the sphere of simulated reality? How precisely do simulations affect us? What genuine demands do they place upon us

I am told that mind and body are separate (strangely anachronistic opposition, but vital to the proponents of the virtual). The mind, it seems, can imagine itself in another body (say in the virtual space of a computer-generated environment), so therefore it is logically independent from this specific body. The mind can imagine all kinds of things - that is one of its functions - but this scarcely entails that it is separate from the body. The mind is distinct from the body in that it lacks the physical determinateness of the big toe, the liver, or the brain. The mind is less a thing than a set of processes that have both an organic and a cultural character, but however abstract, the mind is utterly dependent upon the body. This is not a sad dependence but an affirmative necessity. In rejecting the body, the computer transcendentalists withdraw animating necessity from experience.

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The beach, another beach, through green leaves like on television. It shone brightly in the sun. I glanced at the beach before turning back into the jungle. Above the jungle grew the condominiums of my youth.

The grey of Paris. It no longer exists adequately for me.

Even the dull streets of Panania.

To withdraw, to go quietly, to disappear.

There are ways. There are byways. There are roads that loop back and implode. The problem is not to choose but to be distracted.

What is her name? As though you don't already know.

I wandered down to the beach again. Was this the beach I once ran along with my father? Was this the beach I used to ride to in the afternoon? Was this the beach with the lighthouse at one end? But why should this beach be any different from all the rest? All the others that I remember? All the others that are still spelt, "beach"?

The appealing prospect lacked appeal. Paris has caravan parks too. Panania has trains and a dump. Speak to me darling. Speak in tongues.

To drift down to the sea, to drift into seedy bars, to drift out intoxicated into the tropical night, to drift sideways, to drift to a full stop, to drift into collapse, to lie in drifts like sand.

Composed and yet mobile. No more.

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Nansen saw the monks of the eastern and western halls fighting over a cat. He seized the cat and told the monks: 'If any of you say a good word, you can save the cat.'  
No one answered. So Nansen boldly cut the cat in two pieces. That evening Joshu returned and Nansen told him about this. Joshu removed his sandals and, placing them on his head, walked out. Nansen said: 'If you had been there, you could have saved the cat.' (*Zen Flesh. Zen Bones*, pp. 105-6)

What does this mean? Nansen sets a problem and a solution is provided, but the solution provides no answer whatsoever - yet that is what qualifies it as a solution. Any solution that could be logically interpreted would be insufficient. The Zen answer must somehow articulate and provide an instance of nothingness. A "good word" is called for and a silent act is provided. But the act also takes the shape of a riddle, or seems to take the shape of a riddle. The Zen acolyte is forced to ask, "What is it about placing sandals on the head that amounts to, or perhaps comments upon, the saying of a good word?" All sorts of answers suggest themselves - "perhaps placing sandals on the head indicates reversal of the accepted order - suggesting that the cat could only have been saved by a response that avoided all lofty moral sentiment - all recourse to good words." Logical interpretation seems tantalisingly possible, but somehow never emerges as adequate. Just as no linguistic response could save the cat so no logically coherent interpretation can explain Joshu's response. Both riddles retain their enigmatic character in the face of all attempts to solve them. They push interpretation to the point of collapse, to the point at which nothingness opens up and provides, without answering, the answer.

But what of the cat? What did the cat care for all this furious effort at enlightenment? Why should it serve as an example? The killing of the cat suggests that both Nansen and Joshu are still caught up in the conceptual world - they negate the specific thing in the interests of broaching general riddles. In a way, to fall silent, to fail to answer, to see only the cat and the irrelevance and cruelty of imposing this generalized discourse upon it, seems more in keeping with Zen. "Fuck you and your riddles, leave the cat alone" - that is the appropriate response.

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It was raining as we returned. Strange that it hadn't been raining at Nerriga. Everybody expects it to be so cold there. They won't come.

In a room full of people, I couldn't stop looking at their hands. Soft and pudgy, long, pale, and thin - content to be in that room.

The fog is darker than the night because it prevents the morning from appearing. There are only afternoons and evenings now.

I received three phone calls. One was a wrong number.

What is a day? When everybody has returned home? When everything is brought to a perfunctory end?

To speak of this day, which is partly yesterday.

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It could be best felt when it could not be clearly seen...the spot was, indeed, a near relation of night, and when night showed itself an apparent tendency to gravitate together could be perceived in its shades and the scene. The sombre stretch of rounds and hollows seemed to rise and meet the evening gloom in pure sympathy, the heath exhaling darkness as rapidly as the heavens precipitated it. And so the obscurity in the air and the obscurity in the land closed together in a black fraternisation towards which each advanced half-way. (Hardy, T., *The Return of the Native*, p.4)

Hardy writes towards the heath - towards its fecund darkness, which is darker than the darkest night. It is this which concerns him. The romantic drama played out upon its surface seems somehow less important - it is simply a vehicle to enable a reflection upon the heath. The drama itself is directed towards the heath - towards a darkness that anticipates and out-blackens the night. Ostensibly, Eustacia casts herself into the weir to escape the heath but the darkness she attains is nothing other than the darkness of the heath. And this is a gravitation, a sympathetic attraction, a "black fraternisation" between two instances of darkness - the one bright and restless and the other obscure and patient. The romantic melodrama of Eustacia's death enacts in social terms an impulse that looks beyond society, that reaches out through writing towards a darkness that is at once close and absolutely distant.

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I am not convinced, as Habermas asserts, that dialogue is the essential basis of all communication. This is to recognize only the intra-social aspect of communication and to ignore its extra-social, even anti-social, aspect. As well as enabling society to operate internally, communication also serves to negotiate a relation to the societal beyond. We are compelled to speak to that which we know will never reply. Here communication intentionally squanders itself, surrendering itself to the certainty of no-return, to the absence of dialogue. It is the equivalent - however inadequate this metaphor may be - of wolves howling at the moon.

Perhaps because I have never had anything published, writing never seems to me a form of social communication. I know, of course, that it is one - but this is not how I experience it myself. The dialogic circuit seems far too long and uncertain - even were somebody to read something I had written this would scarcely seem to establish an adequate means of social contact between us. I find it better to write then as though my words are for no one. They are not even for me. This is not to say that I don't want an audience, simply that I cannot allow myself to require one. The aim, I suppose, is to re-cast alienation as freedom.

I can speak easily enough, but writing is more difficult. I am not one of those quiet people who through writing find a voice. Writing is the place where, if anything, I lose my voice - where the whole notion of voice becomes problematic. Rather than enabling me to speak, writing opens up, for me, a relation to silence. I must confront silence, and draw on its resources, in order to write.

It is a question of finding rhythms adequate to the experience of silence. Writing is for me the stroke-victim's determined walk. Extreme slowness - torpor - searching for grace.

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Dawn rose over the distant mountains, orange and serene. Or perhaps it arose behind a twin curtain - one literal and the other of cloud. Or perhaps it descended like the evening - prompting insects, fires, and preparations for sleep. Or perhaps, resisting all guises, it slipped away unnoticed. There was nothing after all to be said. Dawn had long ago shifted beyond its mood of expectation. It no longer wished to form a contrast to the night and proclaim the promise of a new day. It would allow day and night to confront one another directly. It would reveal itself only to those who could not recognise it. Never again would it be beckoned forth.

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There was once an old castle in the middle of a vast thick wood. In it there lived an old woman, and she was a witch. (*Grimms' Fairy Tales*, p.32)

What is it about such a beginning that is so appealing? It is partly the speed of the exposition - none of the dull metonymy so typical of the novel. Straight away a conventional, yet entrancing, scene is opened up. It is also the rigorously formulaic character of both the narrative and the narration, which manages to avoid all sense of individual invention - these words, this scene, are not at all the products of an act of expression. They seem to come from a place of non-creation. They are words from elsewhere, speaking a language of impossible clarity. Their heritage is oral, but they manifest, as well, the silence of writing.

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Even for the author, written words can have an oracular status. They can appear strange and estranged. For me, the process of writing is linked to the abandoning of creative intention - to somehow allowing a certain experience of silence to speak. This is not a matter of giving in to chance but of opening up a relation to the indifference of words.

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But there is also - every so often I return to this - the experience of unemployment. Not the dole queue or anything like that, just aimlessness and a lack of money. I have decided that I must learn to work harder than if I were actually working. This is work with no return and no expectation of return. Work that may very well be useless, but at least it is a uselessness that I bring upon myself. Here is where writing with no sense of audience corresponds to engaging in unpaid, socially unrecognised work. Not that I think I deserve to be paid. On the contrary, I am acutely aware of the worthlessness and intransitivity of my efforts. Normally such an awareness would lead me to stop writing. But now it motivates me. I am not suggesting that work is valuable in itself, but rather that to deliberately pursue useless, worthless, silent work brings me closer to the experience of unemployment.

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A tree covered in black fruit with pink flesh.

The uselessness of my work is not its aesthetic self-sufficiency. My writing is not an end-in-itself. It is a letter without address.

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Once upon a time in a deep dark forest there lived an old woman. The moon was her only friend. She wondered whether she was a witch. She wore black and waited patiently for young children to stray towards her house. One day two young children arrived at her door. They said they were lost. She invited them in and gave them some drugged soup. They drank it quickly and then fell into a deep sleep. The old woman considered picking them up and cooking them in her oven. She asked the moon for guidance. The moon remained silent. She could not bring herself to do it. She decided



that she was not a witch. She took the children into hospital to have their stomachs pumped.

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I would like to write other words, but they would require other habits.

Needless to say, there is no need for that.

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The blackest subjectivity cast headlong into otherness. This is objective only in that it affects me from without. This is subjective only in that I stage the scene of my own disappearance.

To adopt the guise of functionary. To function, though adopted. Once upon a time in a deep dark forest. Once upon a time in a blue sky.

At night, in the arms of the sun - while outside the sheets pass from underneath me - I feel compelled to think. I am anticipating the speed of sleep and stumbling backwards. It is difficult to neglect this. It is harder than ignoring thirst or getting up in the middle of the night.

I would like to add to this.

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Why can't I write stories? Inventing names, setting the scene, developing characters, establishing suspense, providing a resolution - it all seems ridiculous and tedious. I can't even read stories any more. Perhaps it is the level of control that is exercised. Perhaps it is the implication that a great deal can be said. Perhaps it is the pathetic, protracted artifice of it all. And perhaps, most especially, it is the ease of the words.

To write stories with a wry grin - placing everything between quotation marks - isn't this to eliminate the genuine risk of writing? Isn't this also to miss everything that once made stories valuable?

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"I could be wrong," I said. She handed me the dagger. "Take it," she said.

The horses broke into a gallop. We had no chance of catching them before nightfall. Jeb kicked at the ground.

Good night my little one, the world is wearing thin. There are demons beyond the garden and goblins within. Sleep if you can while death stalks by. I'll be in the kitchen baking gooseberry pie.

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It is not right that everyone should read the pages which follow; only a few will be able to savour this bitter fruit with impunity. Consequently, shrinking soul, turn on your heels and go back before penetrating further into such uncharted, perilous wastelands. Listen well to what I say: turn on your heels and go back, not forward, like the eyes of a son respectfully averted from the august contemplation of his mother's face; or rather like a formation of very meditative cranes, stretching out of sight, whose sensitive bodies flee the chill of winter, when, their wings fully extended, they fly powerfully through silence to a precise point on the horizon, from which suddenly a strange strong wind blows, precursor of the storm. (*Maldoror*. p.29)

Lautreamont issues a warning to his readers and provides two similes to enable shrinking souls to imagine the nature of the prudent retreat which they should hurriedly beat. Yet they are odd similes.

The first relates retreat from the dangers of the text to a son avoiding gazing directly at his mother. The deferent and respectful response to the maternal visage is ironically likened to the response of the cautious reader to the blasphemous text. No sooner is this first simile suggested than it is rejected in favour of another - that of sensible cranes altering their course to avoid a storm. I have not included the full text of this simile - it is long and complex. Indeed, it seems intentionally tortuous - designed more to lead the reader astray than to guide them on a surer line. Here the irony affects the nature of language, parodying the rhetorical conventions of poetic and logical clarity. It is simile in excess, pushed to the point at which likeness is forgotten, so that the original term - the caution not to proceed - is displaced by the "perilous wasteland" that we are ostensibly warned against. The warning is actually a spell of enchantment.

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It is windy outside.

I would like to imagine a place above the clouds viewed from a desert vantage, but am unable to. Deserts are far away and clouds have meant little to me recently.

Yes, well.

I would like to get to the heart of the matter but the book is in the other room. In any case it makes no difference where the heart is found. It is perhaps best to maintain the heart as an external thing - as something that can always be called upon when there is nothing to say.

Once upon a time in a deep, dark forest on the edge of a terrible abyss an old woman found herself remembered in words. "This then is how I shall perish."

There is nothing to say about the sun.

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They die in the morning, they are born in the evening, like foam on the water.  
It is now the end of the third moon of 1212, and I am writing this at the hut on Toyama.  
(Kamo no Chomei, from "An Account of My Hut", *Anthology of Japanese Literature*,  
pp. 189 & 203)

Kamo no Chomei withdraws from the world, but before doing so he issues a statement - a meditation on disaster and evanescence. Having experienced the pain of worldly attachment - the necessity of loss, he describes his move to a tiny hut in the mountains. It is a place in harmony with disappearance, though he worries that he has grown too attached to it - attached to it precisely, paradoxically, as a symbol of loss. But if he wants loss to be complete, why then does he write? Why not be silent? It seems that disappearance too must appear, but through a formal gesture - the present moment of which is instantly obliterated, leaving only the precisely dated written remainder.

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Annulled and ignored, billowing like a token of sleep. Against the grey sky, the grey rain, the green garden. Was this the place I remembered from last night?

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There is no problem with my mind - I have simply set problems of mind aside. The only problem is that I must make public shows of possessing a mind - and indeed of daily, patiently, tirelessly employing it. The trick is to devote very little attention to the isolating mind and yet appear to do precisely the opposite. The words I write here are the product of another mind - one that is prepared to let things slip and that keeps its motions of display to itself. It makes no grand claims and

demands only a very small part of each day.

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Across the backyard fences, through the windows, past other people's furniture and intimate possessions there walked - once upon a time - an old woman who lived in a deep dark forest.

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There is no need to write. There is every need to write. An unanswerable need leads me to write, though no demands are met.

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I know this feeling. It is sickness.

He had a better day. That is, he was unable to write. The necessity to write had abandoned him precisely because he was content. He had no means of establishing a relation to silence as he himself was silence. Lived silence, happy silence, has no wish to annul itself.

And yet silence must also speak. For this to happen, it must be approached as though it were a mode of darkness.

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At the very edge of the room lay an old cat. We paid very little attention to it. Scarcely seen and scarcely seeing - it was always there. Blind and almost deaf, it lay dreaming of things we could know nothing about. Later, once it had died, the carpet assured us that the cat had often purred.

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Though unhappiness can also be silent.

Everything can be said of silence. But the only words that can reach it are those spoken by the dumb into the ears of the deaf. To be deaf and dumb and still have faith in the powers of speech - the stupidity of the writer.

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Pelting down like rain, aggrieved and luminous, the moonlight halted for a moment in order to reflect upon its relation to sunlight. The street and the trees which lined it fell into darkness. Everything was gathered up into this pause. The moonlight traced itself back to a dark object. It could see the moon absent in the sky. It could see sunlight reaching the moon, but not quite reaching it - because the rays were instantly devoured by the darkness of the moment. Suddenly the moonlight recognised that it had the power to annihilate the sun, that it could lead the sun to collapse before the prospect of an utterly dark reflection. But the moonlight had no desire to see that happen, so it started up again - slowly and on its own.

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It is night again. Often enough I have tried to write this and would almost certainly have written of an intimacy based not upon memory but upon surrender to the unknown. Yet memory also has access to the unknown. It takes us from this night to another night, to another night again. And each night appears close, but also utterly strange. Their stars glimmer upon a starless night. And the need to remember disappears.

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Filming, for me, is based upon temptation. The images which result simply establish that I was

tempted. They are a residue - never adequate to the impulse which motivated them. But writing often begins without impulse and then, when nothing seems possible, discovers temptation.

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There is an art to pulling apart collapsed sheds in winter darkness.

She felt inclined to tell me. She had only just remembered. She paused before continuing. I touched her lightly - so lightly that neither of us noticed. These things are constantly happening.

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Across a vast horizon, across a desert space; to gaze - and later remember. Memories are painful because everything that matters is gone. Memories are fragile indices of the utterly unrecoverable. The past, my past, is infinitely more strange and fascinating for me than the future. If I dream of travelling, it is always to places that I have already been.

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Unable to hold on any longer - as night falls, as the phone rings, as the washing needs to be brought in.

To suddenly have some money to spend. Change - that was the last thing I considered.

To stumble into a job, but to remain unemployed. To consume again, but no longer innocently. Silence remains, but no longer encourages me to speak.

Or so it seems.

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What have I said about silence? Certainly very little that is consistent. It seems that I have taken advantage of the word, over-using and deforming it. If there has been any purpose behind this abuse it has been to explore the possibilities of "silence", and particularly to discover the term's critical edge. I can distinguish at least five different senses the term has for me:

1. literal silence: silence without compromise, the absence of sound.
2. metaphoric silence: the otherness of the world beyond the sphere of human representation.
3. the silence of writing: the literal silence of the written word, and its status as an mute object (other and separate from its author), but beyond this the silence of writing refers to the impossible relation of a certain writing to the otherness of the world - a relation in which silence (definition 2) affects words and words gain access to silence.
4. silence as unemployment: silence as disengagement from the useful, from everything that is readily processed and consumed.
5. silence as counter value: silence as a lived engagement with the incommensurate and the unrecognisable.

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In the evening weariness made him forget, made him long to sleep.

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This said.

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The cannibal turned to his fellows with an imploring look - but evening had fallen and hidden his expression. The pile of stinking bodies - heavy as dirt - made their way off through the forest.

The sodden ground held up things. The others took up their positions in the back. The camels would require some work, and quickly. The lions would have to be collected along the way. The small bloody bundles that they carried in their mouths would also have to be returned to distraught parents. We would doubtless be delayed by the need to explain that children not only run away to join the circus - sometimes they are carried away.

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Evening in the city is like evening at home.

She grasped his hand that final evening but nothing could make him stay.

Something was afoot.