THE TAO
OF HITCH-HIKING



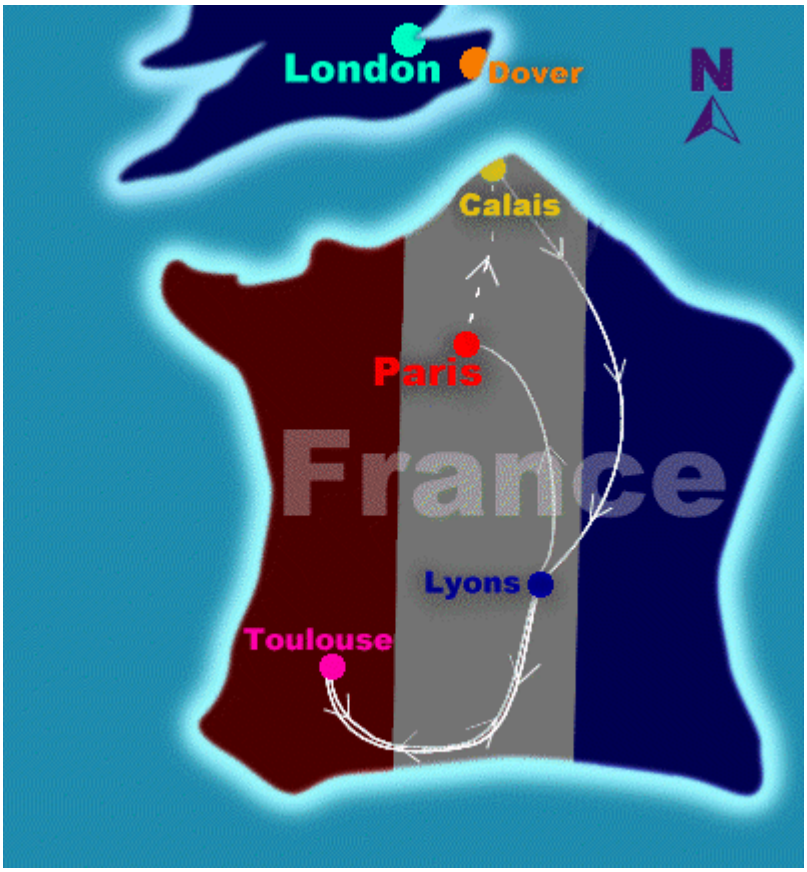
With the hitch-hiker's road as the laboratory, The Proof and Technique of Human Energy Transfer, The Quantum Theory of Fleeting Encounters, Non-electronic Information Highways, The Suppressed Significance of Godel's Theorem, Perfect Recall and Creativity, and dozens of Peoples' Wisdoms fuse into a Science Of Living.

***TAO*, LIKE WATER,**

"*TAKES THE LOW GROUND*".

Preliminary Exercise

Paris to Calais

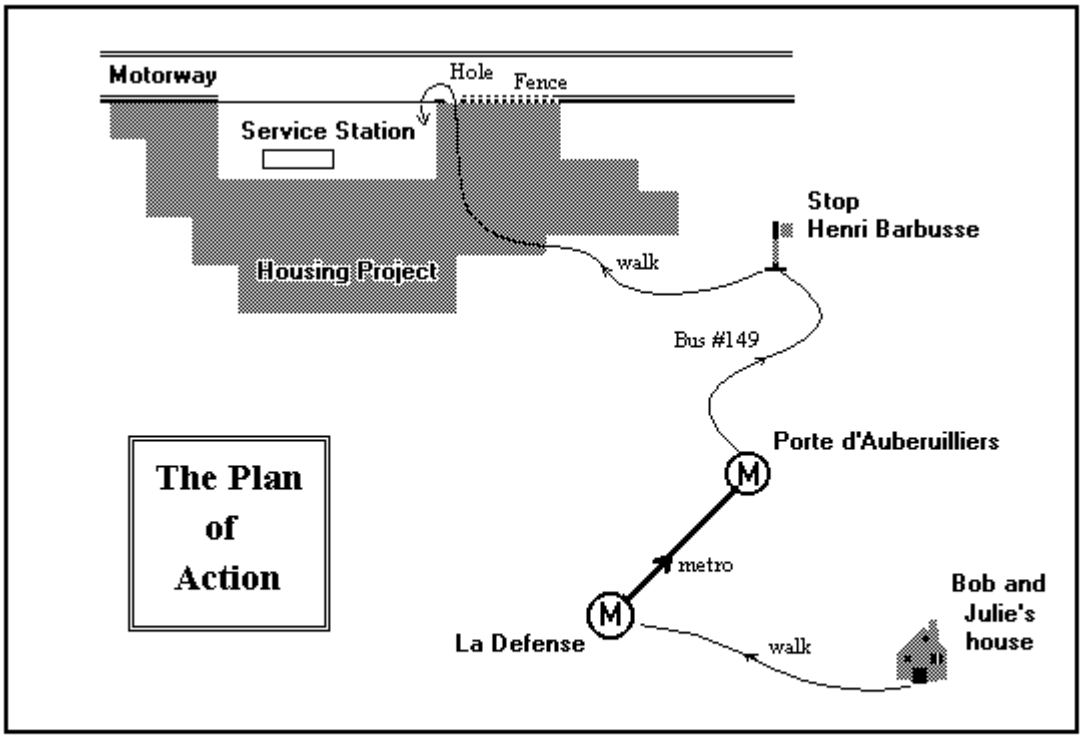


CHAPTER 1

TIMES HAVE CHANGED

--The Way that can be told of is not an Unvarying Way--

THE PLAN



Such was the plan of action before the action.

The plan worked out the day before.

But i knew that plans of action, no matter how marvellous,

might not stand up to the real conditions

encountered on the real road.

Time brings many changes. **Unforseeable changes**.

Four years have passed since my last voyage to France.

Changes, no matter how small, must be reckoned with.

And the big changes, accepted and loved.

They are the spicy food of adventure.

They force me onto new paths.

It does not matter whether the changes be 'for the good' or 'for the bad'.

The hitch-hikers' first requirement is flexibility.

A hitch-hikers' first strength is love of the new.

And what be that,

but the love of **the *unpredictable* wild**?

And a hitch-hikers' second requirement, (somewhat at odds with 'flexibility'),

is **to confront problems in a scientific way**.

If changes are to be expected,

if four years of absence mean four years of changes

to be sprung upon me at once, then i **must**

quickly

determine the new forms of the given.

Data must be gathered and this gathering done

with the least expense of energy.

.....So feeling a natural pause.....arise.... in my Parisian life,

.....a pause within the last phase

of my French voyage,

for i am on my way back

--having hitched Calais to Toulouse and now returning through Paris--

and feeling light of spirit and strong of body,

without the weight of my heavy rucksack, i set out,

days before

the actual hitch-hike, to explore

the initial and usually the most difficult part of the hitching enterprise:

the discovery of the best location for the initial hitch,

--the first, strategic placement of oneself in the hitch-hiking chessboard-

my best first move to make.

For 'Hitching north **to Calais** from Paris',

I plan to use my standard, old favourite solution

to this
'initial
location
problem'.

I had hitched this route, without exaggerating, 30 times before.

My only usual expense over a quarter of a century

of round-trip-hitch-hiking between the two countries

was the price of one bus-ticket and one Metro-ticket in Paris

added to

the price of one bus-ticket and one Underground-ticket in London.

Ferry-crossing the channel i systematically solved

without spending a penny, without spending a sou.

But i haven't done this particular hitch-hike in nearly 4 years.

Much, i know, has changed. **And so change i can expect.**

And change requires me to be a practical scientist:

(1) to determine the present, practical viability of my old solution,

and

(2) update when necessary,

in order to

(3) possess a solution viable in the present.

CONTINENT-LARGE CONSIDERATIONS

These past four years have brought the further maturation of

the

concepts,

'Europe' and being 'A European',

emerging from the secret closets of the wielders of power

--in absorbable doses

so that panic is not triggered and plans ruined--

into the daylight,

into the lives of the readers of newspapers,

into my life as a hitch-hiker.

National boundaries between the old european NATION-STATES

are evaporating

and beings like me are sent scurrying

for new routes into the new, European cheese.

'THE EUROPEAN COMMON MARKET,

--or, as IT now wants to be called--

'THE EUROPEAN UNION

[self-baptised a second time

in order to better satisfy ITS new needs:

to enlarge

the narrow, pocket-book presentation of ITSELF as 'a market'

in order to

bind human hearts to IT in 'a union',

from 'Us' as trans-national economic actors

to 'Us' as possessors of the same trans-national heart,

-converting historical enemies into organ-fused friends-]

HAS

actually altered

my hitch-hiking,

chessboard reality.

Nearly one month ago,

entering France at Calais Port,

i was confronted with ***The New Europe***.

CALAIS PORT IS CHANGED

The lorry drivers,

coming from England,

who would have stopped at Calais

to get their French customs'papers,

who would have congregated

before the French customs' window

in the warm, Port Building

--with French
administration offices
and

ferry ticket-windows and sweet shops
and restaurant cafes--

who would have been excitedly chatting to their fellow drivers,

offering warm counsel and friendship to each other

before they took themselves individually into

their lorries to pass another 8 hours of personal

isolation,

driving

thirty ton of freight

700 kilometres

further into Europe,

are not now there

--there, where i would have been able

to infuse myself into the buzzing crowd of

them

and speak my request but once or twice

and be connected for takeoff to Paris,

or, just less than best,

takeoff to the huge DREAM motorway Service Station

lying two hours from Paris.

Lorries are no longer obliged to stop here.

The national borders are evaporating.

So out roar the lorries from the British Ferries,

without a sense of guilt nor loyalty,

roaring past the few hitch-hikers spaced at intervals,

roaring past those who hold or shake their signs,

signalling their goals.

A hitch-hiker, now, has to count in hours

the time to get a lift

out of **Calais port**

onto **the motorway system**

connected with

anywhere and with anything thinkable

in continental Europe.

With the national boundaries **up**,

Calais had been a delight for hitch-hikers going inland Europe

or going cross-channel The British Isles

and

Dover, sweet for hitch-hikers going inland British Isles

--**but** nearly impossible for crossing the channel.

With the national boundaries **down**,

by some strange algebra,

the chessboard problem's difficulty inverts.

Dover has become

sweet-and-easy crossing the channel

and

Calais has become

difficult, difficult going inland.

THE DREAM SERVICE STATION

On that inland motorway,

some two hundred inland kilometres

from Calais,

some two hundred kilometres still north of Paris,

--with estimations very wobbly--

there is a huge Service Station

at which nearly all the lorry drivers stop,

before they dive out

into their different paths

to their different goals in France or Spain.

Stop,

perhaps,

for the fleshy professional services

of the gaudy-painted women bouncing in and out of the parked lorries.

Stop,

certainly,

for the only comradeship of the long distance lorry driver:

(aside from hitch-hikers)

the enjoyment of a lazy conversation over a meal with other drivers.

That *Dream* Service Station,

with its huge lorry park and just as huge car park,

and always crowded forecourt,

was usually my first goal in France. From there i had lots of

choices, and lots of drivers going down along these choices.

(I am actually in Paris contemplating the past and its consequences for me now.)

All this port's ease for hitch-hikers, that i had known, is now

gone.

The customs at Calais no longer exists.

A lorry driver no longer climbs down from his cabin

to jog to that crowded window

with a handful of official papers

to be approved and stamped by

the seated French

Customs officials

who speak only French,

and force these guys to use their intelligence

and solve the puzzle:

How communicate

with fingers and sparse, French words?

Lorries are no longer obliged to stop here.

The national borders are evaporating.

Now, the lorry drivers just roar off the ferry,

roar out through the port gates

and probably don't think of stopping

before they've arrived at the DREAM Service Station

on the motorway.

A DIFFICULT HITCH

At the outset of this hitch-hiking voyage, one month ago,

it took me ten hours to get my first lift out of Calais

onto the

motorway.

A storm had entered port that day

which maniacally drove the rain

and as coldly slung the wind.

There seemed no possible reason for a sane person

to want to test their stamina on that fury.

But are the young, sane?

Two guys, handsome,

in their early twenties, tallish, strongly built,

are hitch-hiking to a ski resort in the French Alps.

One has a job there. One is going to ask for a job there.

Their relationship to each other is unknown to me.

The rain and the wind are smashing into anything out in it.

But there they are:

refusing to stop side-of-the-road thumbing in the middle of this storm,

refusing to give-in to parent-induced fears

of colds and getting wet.

Their young, bull bodies' refusal to be dominated by any physical obstacle,

pressed them. And intelligence helped the first one i spoke to:

"There are rhythms to the ferries coming in.

So i know when to take a break and when to come back.

That's when i go into the Port Building to get out from the rain,"

.... the guy with the guaranteed job confidently tells me

as he

signals with a clearly written, crayon sign, **'Charmonix"**,

standing just outside

the inner port's exit gate for lorries, just before they get up any speed.

The guy without the job,

has chosen a hitching spot

in the dim, dim part

of the road leading out from the port to the motorway.

He's hardly seeable, and his sign is unreadable in such dim light.

I get in a conversation with him,

curious to speak with someone

so obviously innocent in the game of hitch-hiking.

In an attempt to help him,

i tell him,

"You are nearly invisible in this bad light.

And your sign is definitely unreadable."

Moreover, trying to help him further,

I tell him what i know about the hitch-hiking problem

at the roundabout

down the road one

hundred yards away:

"The lorries have effectively to stop

and look to see

if there's cars moving toward them

as they pick their entry into the roundabout.

But there's really no pressure on them to move quickly.

They can easily prolong the stop.

So your sign and a quick shout might work there."

But the young bull doesn't budge

though pelted

by the storm's swirling rain and its energy-sapping wind

and the gloominess of his present prospects.

"Hitching, where he is, doesn't make sense.

He must have hidden considerations inside his head.

He's probably proving something to the other guy,

--the guy with the job and the best spot to hitch from",

...i reason to myself.

Me,

pelted, as well,

but afflicted by it,

leave him to his own devices,

to pull my wheeling rucksack over to the far end

of the huge parking area,

to confirm again that

the special lorry was there,

the lorry in which slept a Scottish

driver

who had given me the ***guarantee of a lift***

if

i hadn't found one by the time he'd get up, eight

hours time,

because he was going to sleep. He had driven all day.

There was no other way out of this Calais predicament

than to latch onto whatever minimal solution comes my way.

For as far as i see, there is no way

of striking up a conversation

with the lorry drivers.

(I haven't tried the car-exit gate

because it seemed too far to go with this storm raging.

Moreover, for cars as for lorries,

i reason, or suppose, the same frontier conditions are holding.

Namely none.)

Because they have no need to stop,

when the storm stops

i will be forced

to enact the role of the time-honored,

side-of-the-road-pleading hitch-hiker.

Only allowed to

wave a sympathetic flag

-rich with adventure

or, rich with innocence-

and thumb.

Such type of access

to car-drivers and truck-drivers,

--the human nutrients in which the hitch-hiker lives--,

makes the hitch-hiker

too passively dependent

on abstract, human admiration for someone

going somewhere

without using money,

makes the hitch-hiker appear

to be living life

with the freedom of a bird of nature...

...whistling a song

on the edge of a

country road;

temporarily needing something

from one of the busy people,

rushing

by.

I don't want to stand on the edge of a country road

as those young un's are doing

--and the rain pelting down,to boot--

and, scream out a need

without being able to offer in exchange

something more than my presence .

i love face to face, unstressed encounters as i love tasting honey.

Chatting with someone i just met is one of my sweet delights;

which is another way of saying

that i know how to make myself welcomed by a driver

in search of a lively and

pleasant drive.

I try to be an unexpected refreshment to counterbalance the

grueling road.

And moreover, i believe

--corrupted by my own hitch-hiking experiences--

that to have a chat with unknown me

will prove super-beneficial for the driver.

That's why i am not angry

with drivers who don't give me a lift.

They and i have not been cosmically

matched this time round. They have no need for me.

I am here to give help.

As i am here to receive help.

So go your way. Someone else needs me.

MOVING

Sitting alongside the driver

and looking out the window at the motorway life racing by,

and feeling the changing of the gears as the driver decides to act,

and catching a vision of ourselves,

--a moving outpost in the night

eating miles of it up--

and, then, saying to myself,

"I must try to get the social ball rolling,"

and, then, thinking a second level thought in the same direction,

"What subject or questions would interest this guy, this driver?"

And then i start the ball rolling, if it wasn't already started by him.

"How many years you been driving?"

"Did you always want to be a driver?, an international lorry driver?"

"Did you ever want to own your own lorry and work for yourself?"

"What is the longest trip you've ever made?"

"What's the most exciting trip you've ever made?"

"Are you married?, have children?"

"What do you want to do most of all in the world?"

"How do you feel about how the world is going?"

I am here to provide conversation

when conversation is asked for.

I can energise the driver through conversation.

I recognize a good and confident driver.

His automatic-driver's body is working well.

I am in good hands. He needs no aid as a driver.

.....might need light talk upon which to hang his thinking body?

....might need a rest from himself, a diversion?

....might need a clarifying talk with himself, an intraversion?

He needs nothing and is simply glad to have me aboard?

I start off talking of just about anything.

But i don't let conversation stay at anything.

I love conversation too much to waste it.

'I have something to offer him, but i don't know what, yet.

So i must search and ...

"A joke is always a good one."

But i rarely, if ever, try to contact another through jokes.

Or let myself be contacted through jokes.

Perhaps i'm too serious?

But, maybe

it's that the world's too frivolous!

Yet perhaps i am too serious.

I'm serious when i want to be of help to another person.

i'm serious when i take pride in

being able to always offer something

useful

for anyone's deepest commitments.

So whether it be

his business

his profession

or his loves,

whether it be

his vision of the world,

or pride in his children,

i'm enjoying with him, himself. And that i am serious about.

I'm a hitch-hiker. The driver is my benefactor.

Of such stuff is my sacredness woven.

Lorries are no longer obliged to stop here.

The national borders are evaporating.

In Calais' Port Building

there's no longer any reason

to hitch-hike

in its second floor

cafe-pub area.

The lorry drivers are no longer pausing there.

This time, i go up to the cafe for other reasons.
Feeling really wet and battered
from my last sally out into the storm,
(to alleviate my anxiety about
my one, on-going possibility for takeoff,
--anxious to know that the scot's lorry driver hasn't quit me--),
feeling like i really need some warmth within
and a pause in the tension, without,
i, and my rucksack-on-wheels,
wheel up two long flights of stairs,
i, pulling,
rucksack, rolling
over the steps meant for stepping on,
to get to a seat and a needed, hot drink.

I choose a table far away
from the counter's
three guys and a gal
happily blowing bubbles in the air,
employees, of this dying, outdated establishment.

Across the room, three male conspirators

dressed in black

and a velvet wench in black stockings

hunch

over their table whispering,

in a foreign

language, no doubt,

abominations of

normality, no doubt.

They are at the only table

occupied

in the ten-tabled room.

I turn my back to them

and huddle inwards

over my table.

To myself i automatically focus.

"Well, there's no doubt about it.

It's quiet, wait-time weather.

I can do nothing better,

than repair myself

through rest and nourishment.

"Wow. What changes have come about!"

I'll have to re-solve

the problem of inland take-off from this Calais Port.

For the moment, the obvious solution

is standing on the side of the road,

signalling;

like i might be forced to do

if that scot's driver wakes up and i'm not around,

and he don't feel like

waiting

for a guy who may never show up.

I used to come to this cafe area

to take a break in hitching

or escape the cold

or escape the night.

But it wasn't always a break from hitching.

I got the big YES

for one of my great lifts

at one of these tables.

Slowly,

i would be walking from the counter

--still tired from the stairs--

and walk pass the tables

slowly, slowly,

balancing my expresso in one hand

and pulling my wheeled rucksack with the other hand,

and hearing the lorry drivers talking,

and take my seat

sip my coffee, think what i have to do,

and then walk nimbly, happily,

up

to one of them,

alone at a table,

and pose my question.

I would, then, if i had to because nobody was biting,

go the round of all the tables

and have a quick chat with everybody in the room,

and take my seat and wait for newcomers,

and maybe, go to the counter again and buy me a beer.

Everybody would know what i wanted

and would aid me when

they could.

I would become the common concern of the entire cafe.

All that's past.

Calais Port is dead.

No reasons for drivers to spend time here.

A DREAM

standing next to a driver,

casually leaning on a long-stalked, small and circular tabletop,

with our two, separately-bought

coffees,

(proving our independence),

brotherly sharing

the tabletop,

and me, just by accident, saying,

"By the way,

I've been stuck here ten years. I'm a hitch-hiker

that's got to make progress.

Can you throw me a lift?"

And the guy laughs and says "Why not?"

That's a real sweet way of getting a lift.

But those long-stemmed tables

are at the Service Stations on the motorway.

And i'm here. Calais Port.

(Actually, i'm in Paris and i'm planning to hitch North.

I'm telling a story

about my recent, harsh experience at Calais Port.

Harsh,

because all had changed,

and changed in such a way

as to put me, and other hitch-hikers,

in a deep, deep

hole.

Somehow, i've got to climb out of this hole),

as my story continues.

Lorries are no longer obliged to stop here.

The national borders are evaporating.

When i had just gotten into the port,

it was still morning

and it was still dry.

Doing a fast look around at the exit gate for lorries,

gave me **no great hopes** about the hitching here.

It was obvious that

the only way out of Calais Port

was hitch-hiking

from the side of the road

as close to the exit gate as possible

before the lorries gathered speed

and sped by.

But this technique creates too little contact with the driver:

through the windscreen he sees me fuzzily;

through the closed door and the roar of the motor

he cannot hear me.

This weakened type of impression-making

in the hitch-hiking endeavor,

which can only just be 'attention getting',

is the least successful.

And it charges a toll to those who practice it.

Pumping energy outwards

to people who hardly have time to react,

trying to catch their fleeing, gratuitous attention

and, therefore,

pumping energy out to people

who mostly don't

return a bit of energy

back to the pumper,

wearies the pumper, in the long run.

So i decided to check out the road

up the road,

the other side of the port's huge, parking lot,

where the road signs seem to indicate a juncture

and the lorries seem to pause in their choice of roads.

Pulling the wheeled part of me, my rucksack,

along the side of the road,

with the lorries roaring and speeding by,

fearful of their massive presence,

i stop from time to time

to hale the drivers with my voice

and bounce a two-step dance

and tell them what i want

--as if they truly didn't know--

with my thumb,

and soak up their refusals

and know that this side of road stuff is not for me.

At the roundabout juncture,

they actually are slowing down,

but don't find reason for saying "Yes" to me.

To themselves, i imagine them saying:

"I'm on the road. Everything is in order.

My lorry is moving.

Why complicate life?

Next time."

"No. No.", i say to myself.

"This roundabout ain't working.

It might tap all my energy

and give me nothing.

Psychically, it's the wrong place for me to be."

Rather than become depressed,

i remind myself of the universal principle,

"There always must be some better solution".

Visually following the fleeing, inland-bound lorries

on their trajectories

beyond this roundabout,

shows me that the road

bends, 500 yards away,

out of sight under a car bridge.

Too much energy at this stage in the game

to check beyond the car bridge

for an advantageous hitching

point.

I turn to the Port, turn to reconsider

my problem

through what is offered

here.

I shift my attention

from this road out of the port, which so much

obsessed me,

this road being taken

by those

whom i needed to be taken by.

I pause my eyes

on lorries, lots of them, parked;

like camels settling down for the night.

But its daytime. What's happening?

They are waiting for their ferry's loading time.

They are outbound to Dover.

Look! They already have collected their tickets!

A new outdoor ticket window perched ten feet high

--that never existed four years ago!--

is serving queuing lorries .

It's so conveniently placed out in the Lorry park,

that leaving the cabin

is no longer obligatory, as it was before,

when the driver had to

climb down out of his cabin,

get over to the Port building

and signal his arrival to the Ferry Company

or buy his ticket from the Ferry Company

or be obliged to chat with Custom's Officials

and, in doing, make himself available to me.

Hitching across the channel to England

was, then, cushion-easy.

I'd catch the lorry drivers on their way

to buy the ferry tickets

which had free space for a 'second driver' in its rules.

Everybody knew about 'a second driver' then, as now.

The lorry drivers use this 'perk'

to bring their wives, or kid, with them and sweethearts too.

Many a lorry driver, back then, was willing to give me a

"Why not?"

and then give me a simple gift of a five minute, free lift into the ferry,

and leave me there to my own devices:

to wheel my rucksack way through the idle passengers

asking each if they are driving; if they are going

along the road to London; if they would take me.

A voice inside says,

"On my way back to England,

i shall have to solve this how problem

'How to approach the lorry drivers,

before they get their tickets.'

But, i'm now in France and inland bound.

That problem is for later."

Walking towards the Port Building

and, at its side,the Exit Gates from the port proper,

i catch a possible break in the problem.

Some of the lorries, leaving the exit gates,
pull over to the side . Their drivers seem to be congregating
for a chat.

Here are drivers out of their cab. Just what i need. Drivers that
have come through the exit gate. Drivers, therefore, who are
inland bound.
What an opportunity!
But as i begin to voice my question, having gone up to them,
i get hit over the head with an undeniable truth.
These are East European drivers.
I don't speak their language. I have little magic with them.
They're together. There's no take-off with them for me.

And, then,
walking and continuing the survey of my possibilities,
i arrive alongside the young guy with a ski-resort job waiting for him,
still pushing his energy out to the passing lorries.
He tells me,
under a rain that had already begun its mild-mannered entrance,
i should check out a british lorry
parked way out
in the farthest corner of the parking lot.

And that advice i took

and that's how i got to speak

to this thirty-five year old scotsman

just before he was going to

take his obligatory 8 hours off-the-road

and profitably sleep.

And that put me into pretty good gear,

being the best thing going.

I had, at least, a little promise:

if i didn't find, in these 8 hours, some other lift,

he would take me to a motorway service station.

A LAZY WAIT

With the storm outside,

i knew immediately that inside is where

i have to 'do my hitching'.

I have somehow to occupy myself

for eight long hours

without nodding off

--and i haven't slept last night.

I have to stay awake to protect my rucksack.

I am alone and must be responsible for everything.

With the storm outside,

I must find something to do

in the only available

covered space,

in the three-story confines of an impersonal, universal mother,

The Port Building,

whose breast of sweeties and drink is amply

supplying

for those who ply her with money.

But my style

is not to play money games,

nor to first rely on money solutions.

So i trudge into the **The Port**

Building,, knowing that i must solve

how to live these next eight hours

without digging into my shalllow pocket,

and without too much pain.

I have to make the most of this forced, inactive interval.

Indeed, it is the best i am offered

within the heavy constraints of the moment.

I've got my lift. I'm cool.

Just a lazy wait. Can go to the bar. Can do what i want.

Buy me a coke or some other cold drink.

Can buy me a hot drink. Or an expresso coffee.

Even hot chocolate.

In the beginning of the wait, i lounge on the ground floor
with several other hitch-hikers
and interchange road wisdoms.
Then upstairs, two flights i trudge and into this cafe-pub,
desiring to lay low and conserve my energies.
.
I take a chance and ask the barmaid for hot water.
She fixes me a cup of hot water,
not thinking twice about it and refusing any money i offer.
At my table, hidden from the counter,
i fish out a tea bag from my rucksack
and convert the hot water to a fine cup of herbal tea.
Later on in the evening, i go again up to the bar,
and,
risking to be judged a non-spending nuisance
ask the luscious, obliging barmaid
for another cup of hot water.
And again she uses the expresso machine to
give me a marvelous cup of hot water.
And this also for free.
And,
again, i make myself a fine cup of herbal tea.

Later, i get into a conversation with a very young guy. He had
been in an accident, and he had called his mother who was coming
here this evening to pick him up and drive him home. He's going
in a direction that's not mine.
So time passes.

For a while, the young guy,

--with a job at Charmonix waiting for him

--who had told me about the parked british lorry,

from time to time shows up

Never the other

guy.

And then, towards late evening, he stops showing up.

He must have achieved take-off.

And i have still two hours to wait till my scottish driver awakes.

Why wait and do nothing?
"I think i'll go out and see if he's still there."
And lo and behold, i arrive at his lorry just as he is awakening.
He looks out , sees me, opens the window,

and tells me sweet

words.

"Come back in one hour, and we'll be off."

I do. I do. My first success!!

That was one month ago.

It's one proof amongst many, that

Times have changed.

The old solutions are no longer workable.

----The Way that can be told of is not an Unvarying Way---

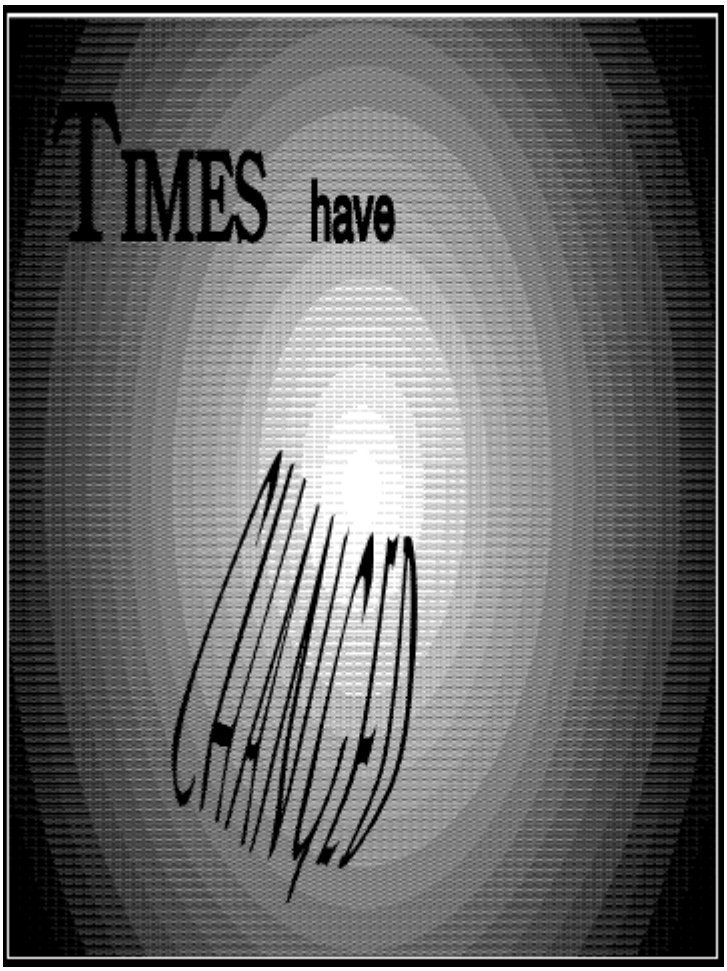
CHAPTER 2

THE PLAN PRE-VISITED

the hole in the fence

INDEED,

Times have changed



and the conditions of hitch-hiking

have dramatically changed along with them.

A possible alteration

--carrying a frightening potential menace--

was told to me,

at the outset of my voyage, during that port storm at Calais,

by an experienced hitch-hiker

in the ground floor lounge

of the

Port Authority's Building:

"In France, now,

there is a 10,000 franc fine for hitching on the motorway."

(This bit of information which i didnt completely trust

hit me pretty hard.

'Asking **for lifts**

at motorway Service Stations'

is my favorite hitching method for this French route.)

He suggested i do what he does.

He only hitches just BEFORE the pay-booth entrances to the Motorway.

Technically, he is not ON the motorway.

Maybe someday i will.

So far i have been fortunate

doing what i do.

When the necessity to change is confronting me in the real,

i shall change. So far i have been fortunate.

Twice, in this last month, in the South of France,

i had to slink out of sight:

from

a cruising police van

in my first fright-encounter with this menace.

The second, and only other similar fright,

came from

a team --two motorcycle police--

buzzing into the Service Station,

cruising slowly, slowly.

They decided, then,

to become pedestrian

and wander about, each in his separate trajectory,

to silently, dangerously amble around

through the interior spaces of the Station.

I was able, again, to tip-toe out of their sight,

take a long crap in the crapper

to emerge later. Thankfully, they had gone.

But that was in the South of France.

In The North, here,

between Paris and Calais,

i had never, ever, in all my years of hitching, encountered

police.

In this phase of my hitch-hiking voyage,

other menaces are

more probable.

In any case, i can do nothing about the police menace beforehand

except to be

passport-in-order,

clean as a whistle,

attractively dressed.

In the past, the worst that 's happened to me

was to be driven in their police car to a motorway exit.

Having checked out the fact that i was not an escaped murderer,

they didnt, beyond that, give a damn.

There was not even an accompanying verbal menace.

They expected me to start my hitch-hiking onto the motorway

as soon as they motored out of sight.

--For what else could i do, without a car in the middle of nowhere,

and one very good strip of road,

with loads of cars and trucks going to where i want to go,

--called **The Motorway--**

alive and kicking just in front of me.--

Once, i was transported off the motorway,

dumped,

and

told where to hitch to get back onto the motorway.

Their reasoning was:

"Inside a car, you are O.K. on the motorway.

You are technically no longer hitching."

They were only always doing their required job,

Upholding The Billion Laws the common man is subject to.

Upholding, blindly,

"No hitch-hiking allowed on the motorway."

WHERE AM I?

I am on my return voyage.

I had made it into Paris from the South via Lyon a week ago

and have been staying with my Parisian friends, Bob and Julie.

It is time now for the return

to my home base in England.

I now expect changes in my hitching conditions.

The chessboard has already shown me its alterability.

Using a pause in my Parisian life to prepare my future,

i decide to **check out**

my standard, secret, best **solution**

for getting out of Paris,

going North on the Motorway.

But why should i have a **secret** solution in **France**?

To know why,

we must look for

--cherchez...

... **la femme**! the woman!")

In France,

if you are a **man**, and therefore not a woman ,

with no one else around,

standing on the side of the road soliciting lifts

takes hours and hours

before some car stops for

you.

I had stood several times

at the side of the road with dozens of others,

using the known, standard locations,

standard formulai,

--learnt from travel guides--

to hitch-hike out of Paris.

Those were my innocent days.

In the summer time, three feet separate you

from the hitch-hiker on the right,

and three feet separate you from the hitch-hiker on the left.

And the drivers drive by,

and their flow lines

do not come within 50 feet

from where we,

--the standard, side-of-the-road hitch-hikers--

are gesturing, futilely gesturing.

And i stand there and stand.

And some cars separate off from the flow

and come ambling... low throttle... towards us...

...and cruise alongside,

somehow, ***nearly always***, stopping

*i*n front o*f*

a

a **woman.**

I realized **quickly**

(**quickly** relative to the mass of hitch-hikers who seem content to stand and wait,

not quickly relative to the few ,

who, like myself,

enjoy the challenge of doing things differently,

doing things one's own way)

that my hitching energies

should only start

when these gals have all flown-the-coup

and i have somewhat fairer competition.

Other hitch-hiking **males** seem to be fair competition.

But that's all the praise i can give it.

If only one other male is hitching,

i strike up a deal with him:

that whoever gets a lift first

would ask the driver if he could take the other as well.

This lessens the competitiveness.

makes living more cooperative, therefore, more pleasant.

But, if there are three or four of us males around,

it takes five times as long to get a lift.

Somehow, we don't aid one another.

It is better to be alone.

Unhappily,

and this is a fault in myself

i experience

the presence of other hitch-hikers

as, truly, a downer.

This objectively-competitive aspect of hitch-hiking, i truly don't like.

Therefore, i had to find a unique solution that no-one knew.

Moreover, the standard solution had another **great shortcoming**:

It didn't satisfy

my larger sense of self.

MY STANDARD

UN-STANDARD-SOLUTION

My solution involves getting,

by public transport,

to the first, northbound motorway Service Station out of Paris,

and there, anywhere in the Station's forecourt,

talk individually to the drivers.

Talking, letting the other get a glimmer of my unique resonances,

gives me a better than even chance

at a 'YES' response.

Year's ago --indeed beyond my memory of how i did it--

i had figured out how to get to a particular Service Station

on the motorway going North out of Paris.

I had gone through a complicated, search process.

It was not information available through usual channels.

Motorway Service Stations

are generally

tucked away in the countryside,

way out, beyond the city limits,

tucked too distant for anyone without a car.

So, usually the idea of

searching for A Service Station inside a city,

is a futile one

and, thus,

not even thought of.

This particular Service Station is unusual,

being actually inside of Paris.

It stands back to back with

a massive, many-building,

housing project.

This housing project stood up the road from a bus stop

on the no. 149 bus-route

which wove its passengers through tin-fenced industrial

estates

and other humanly bleak, treeless, proudless

stretches

in the

periphery of very poor, very working-class Paris.

For years on end, looking through the 149 bus window,

absorbing this bleak landscape moving by,

i would visually be surprised by clumps of

Publicity and Political Announcements

pasted up by the local

French

Communist Party,

and sort of see them

as small, isolated, flower beds

strewn here and there in this grey-grainy,

human

desert.

No other signs or advertisements were around.

Nowhere in central Paris was the local Communist Party so

dominant.

Nowhere in central Paris was System Glitter so dim.

No doubt, this has changed too.

I think the Communist Party has been politically routed in France.

I know The Soviet Union, its loving parent, is no more.

It died 5 years ago, at 75 years of age.

To get to that 149 bus

to take me to that housing project,

i need to take the Metro to the north-east corner of Paris.

Looking at the Metro map i realize that

i can get from Bob and Julie's to my Metro destination

along two routes.

I choose to take the shortest one,

simply judged by the number of stops,

--though it had one more change-station than its alternative.

If for some reason this 'shortest' path

proved unexpectedly

difficult,

i could return by the other route, checking it out in reverse.

PATH COMPLEXITIES

At the Metro station, 'Fort d'Aubervilliers',

one stop before the terminal, i exit as i had always done.

But this time without the heavy weight of a ruck sack.

This 'shortest metro path'

the one that i just took,

i now know, has complexities

not shown by The Metro-Stations Map.

At Stalingrad station, where i make a change of trains,

there are four **flights of stairs** to go down

and unusually long, **long corridors** to walk through

and finally several **flights of stairs** to go up.

My cart with wheels

--my ten year old, trustworthy wheeled, rucksack-carrier--

can magically **transform** **the heavy**

task

of carrying my heavy rucksack along the

flat corridors

into nearly-unconscious, nearly-dainty,

handle-

pulling.

But, in descending and ascending stairs,

i would have to support and guide all its weight,

including the cart's sturdy frame and wheels.

What extra work that meant!

Therefore, changing at Stalingrad, with its too many stairs,

is to be rejected,

except in

emergencies.

When hitch-hiking,

all excess work is to be avoided if possible.

You never know how much energy might be demanded at some

future time.

As for my particular self, I'm no longer a young guy.

My 59 years require me to always be looking out

for energy-conserving solutions.

At my age,

living marginal styles of life,

requires me to be wiser, more scientific

than my youthful,

--more body-powerful--

self

needed to be.

BUS BLUES

At the Metro station, 'Fort d'Aubervilliers',

one stop before the terminal, i exit as i had always done.

But **this time**

without the

heavy weight of a ruck sack.

Light. I feel light and real good.

Adventure. This is what exhilarates me. Makes me young.

Bounding out of the station,

i go in the direction of the no. 149 bus stall;

just like i had done tens of times before.

There's a bus in the old 149 stall.

It seems ready to leave.

I'd better jump on first

and then, moving or not,

question the driver.

But getting closer to it, i realize its not the no.149,

nor is he preparing to leave that instant.

So, i jump on and,

lovingly,

tell my dilemma to the driver:

"Pardon me. I'm searching for the no149 bus

which goes to the stop 'Henri Barbusse'

which used to start exactly from here."

And the driver matter-of-factly tells me:

"That bus route has been discontinued.

I go to a stop called 'Henri Barbusse',

but it is in the

...(and here he mentions an unrecognizable name).

There's another bus that goes to a stop

called 'Henri Barbusse' in the Corneuve."

That name, 'Corneuve' rings a bell.

I think it was the name of the working class district

the no.149 wended through.

"Go to the office and ask someone there!", he counsels me.

Striking out through the quiet, nearly empty, desolate, open-air,

bus station,

I pass the broken shell of the old office on the way to the new

one.

I'm excited.

Its a lucky thing i decided to check this route out first

without the weight of the rucksack

and the implicit pressure that 'being on the road'

means for me.

For, once on the road, i don't like to turn back.

TURNING BACK

Only once in my hitch-hiking life,

committed to the road, did i ever return to home base.

The cause of my checkmate had been fundamentally

rhythmic.

The particular time of the week

in a post-holiday time of the year

had eliminated lorry traffic leaving England.

I was a couple of days too early.

i was at my special Service Station in England

--where lorry drivers crossing The Channel congregate--

20 miles north of Dover.

This was when Dover was a hitch-hiker's dead end for going to the continent. If one

found oneself at Dover, the only thing left to do was to pay the exorbitant price of the ferry, and on the ferry search for a lift.

Though it had taken three hours of difficult, hitch-hiking

to get to this special Service Station,

I had to except the obvious.

I went all the way back to my friend John in London

to pass a couple of days

before again setting out.

With

a **no turn-back principle** pressing on me,

every local problem has to be solved on the spot.

Forward progress has to be made.

This pressure acts like a humming motor in my body.

With it running, sleep is impossible.

Forward progress has to be made.

Today,

being **an exploratory trial,**

i have the luxury of

lots of time to spend

-- if necessary, i could return tomorrow to continue exploring--

and no heavy burdens to bear

--not even am i carrying

my usual plastic bag

with a book and a notebook within it.

A pure sense of adventure

surges happily within the deepnesses of my fibers.

I am in search of information.

Am i hitch-hiking?

Has my real hitch-hiking begun

with this dry run?

Not asking for a lift,

i am asking for information.

And maybe i am also posing a larger question:

Are all life's projects, like this one, preparable for?

What a deserted part of the universe!

What a sense of empty devastation this bus station posesses!

Maybe this bus station is closing down?

A KNOWLEDGE GUY

I enter the office without knocking.

Two guys are in it.

One, the younger, is standing in front of an open, internal office.

The other, seated behind the only desk in the internal office,

immediately radiates to me

a sense of pride in his own

knowledge.

But the standing guy,

probably a bus driver,

with the excitement of someone escaping boredom,

dives into serving me:

into finding the number of a bus going

to the old no.149's stop, 'Henri Barbusse'.

He grabs a map

out of a pile of old, identical-looking

bus-route maps

discarded in the corner of the office,

studies it, and says,

"This map is no good" ,

and turns to the guy

to whom i would have instinctively, originally turned

--the knowledge-solid-looking guy behind the desk--

and poses the question

that the knowledge guy must have already heard

me pose

when i first came in.

Quick and quiet as inhaling ,

cool as a guy who knows he knows,

knowledge guy

tells me

with absolute surety

that the no. 249 bus now travels on the old 149 route.

That, the boarding stop i want,

can be gotten to

at the next Metro stop, 'Quatre Chemins',

two stops before the terminus.

There, at the corner, i must catch the 249 going towards Grugny.

So out into the open air i fly,

still lightheaded and still enjoying this adventure.

Indeed, enjoying it more,

as more and more it becomes apparent

that what i am doing is absolutely

necessary.

And were i to have skipped this preparatory enactment,

i would be in the same predicament i now find myself in,

but with the painful addition of my rucksack heavy-weighting me.

I would have been obliged to lug it down and up

flights

of more Metro stairs

than my calculations foresaw,

and,also, on top of the extra physical demand,

the tense, mental demand to keep my attention fixed on

guarding it.

At this recent revelation of where i now had to go,

were i to have had my heavy rucksack,

i would have

begun to shrug

my not-yet-aching shoulders,

shrugged them for a half-a-minute or a minute at most,

and then, accepting unbudgeable reality, got myself together

and shoulder on

having lossed a little enthusiasm for a minute or two.

After all, on the road, there is no turning back.

"Fare Forward, Voyager!" is its primary principle.

God only knows what further changes have been made

on my hitch-hiking

chessboard!

Into the changing waves i leap.

Into the unchanging Metro hole

to the side of Fort d'Aubervilliers'

bus station

---a bus station i i probably will never see

again---

and, now, once more down into the humming guts of the Metro

system,

to be whisked one stop.

EXITING QUATRE CHEMINS,

spews me out into a teeming street of people.

Immigrant population. North Africans for the

most part. Wow! What an atmospheric change from the bleak bus

station one stop away.

It's almost freaky. Like the discontinuities in an acid trip.

Through the breaks in the crowd

and inside the heavy, grey mist submerging us,

i see

a halal meat shop. Wow!

And then looking around me, i spot another immigrant foodshop

whose foreigness, also, resonates with my sense of adventure.

I tell myself that i shall stock-up on food for the voyage exactly in

this neighborhood. What an extra treat!

Besides, i know that it shall be as money-cheap

as i could expect here in

France.

Around the corner i find the bus stop

and, with the help of a black-African grandmother, its direction to Grugny is

confirmed.

I'm on my way again.

The kids around me

--for mostly they are kids going or coming from secondary school--

are first generation french kids

with parents from black Central Africa or arab North Africa.

They are handsome, strong,

excited and abubble with their youthful intrigues.

I'm an invisible, elderly person for them.

The perfect social location for observing.

I feel that,

and i feel the urgency of my quest:

to arrive at Henri Barbusse,

and i feel, also, my traditional need to look out the window.

So i get caught in-between

and can't now give you another line about these youth,

nor about the neighborhood we were to pass through.

The bus comes. Everybody piles on in an un-queued, noisy rush

and i, the last to climb on,

easily pose the Henri Barbusse bus-stop question

and receive the busdriver's certainty-making answer,

"It's a forty minute bus ride. I'll tell you when."

CLOSING IN

And off we go.

And after a forty minute or so bus ride,

i begin to recognize the neighborhood.

And there, up the road, is my stop.

Its name has changed to the longer name,

"Mermoz,

Henri Barbusse".

But it's the same stop.

I recognize the corner,

and the supermarket

in which i always bought food for the voyage.

Quickly, i walk to the housing project.

And all the while i am asking myself if there are any changes.

If there are, they ain't evident.

I recognize and don't recognize the buildings.

What remains similar is the general layout

and the atmosphere of the neighborhood.

Real tranquil. Real quiet.

Its been misty all day. Now it's just starting to lightly rain.

Because i'm not carrying anything

and because i am going back to Bob and Julie's

--where i could dry my clothes on the electric heaters--

the rain isn't a major annoyance for me.

Just another feature of this adventure.

Were this to be the real hitching day,

this rain would be more than an annoyance.

Getting wet means usually staying wet

which means asking drivers to take a sloppy, wet being

into their dry and clean,

private space.

Such a proposition is a no-goer in France.

Everybody in the street, wherever i had gone this last month,

wore spotless clothes.

Only the **SDF**'s broke this code of dress.

And i'm sure they have a hell of a time hitch-hiking.

(As for what the **SDF'**s are, i'll get to that later on in this writing.)

NEW european CATEGORY as a sign of the times

and Dressing Styles as people signals

No why wait?

Didn't i hear of **NFA**'s in England? Sure.

Both letter-triplets began frequently to appear

in people's current jargon

about the same time.

In the last five years.

A sign of the times.

'No **F**ixed **A**bode' and **'S**ans **D**omicile **F**ixe'

mean the same thing

with the same nuance: **an incurable disease**.

SDF's and **NFA**'s are individuals who bear this social disease.

They have an aversion to being immobilised

via the possession

of

an **immobilized** 'home'.

Because **NFA**'s or **SDF**'s are roughing it,

--sleeping in abandoned buildings--

--parks--

their style of dress

best suitable

is not best suitable **for a house dweller**.

An **SDF**'s dress accepts dirt.

It would be, for them, energy-consuming madness

to maintain

spotless dayly dress.

For fixed abode people, spotlessness is easy and pleasant.

For them **'Cleanliness is next to Godliness.'**

They are 'instinctually' repulsed by dirt.

But dirt and ruggedness, of necessity almost, accompanies social adventure.

Thus, 'instinctually' is bred into 'Good People' an aversion to real adventure.

Thus, 'instinctually' is THE SYSTEM maintained within us.

The other side of the coin,

the side of THE SYSTEM'S RULERS,

is the side i haven't taken but have read about:

Ghandi, in the 1920's,

--as a young man, studying to be a barrister

in one of London's, hoity-toity, Inns of Court--

frugally spent his money and meticulously kept his accounts.

A very great slice of his week's expenses,

--many-fold greater than his food bill--

was **his laundry bill**!

The social rules required him to be

as immaculately clean as a Baron or a Duke.

Two and three clean and ironed shirts per day.

Several changes of suits per day, etc., etc.

Of course, these are the standards

of those who wouldn't ever conceive

of doing their own laundry.

Such 'immaculate cleanliness' revolts me.

I met it in meeting the British Barrister Class.

And i met it once in the immaculate house of a Baroness.

She had three effective slaves, called 'servants'

to insure the immaculateness of her outward show.

'Immaculateness' for me is associated with Tyranny.

So dress is effectively waving a flag:

telling the driver how the hitch-hiker lives,

telling the other who one is.

The guys, with the homelessness label,

radiate independence. They are playing their own game.

They don't care what the other's response is

to the way they dress.

I admire them.

When i encounter them, i put myself in question.

unlikely DRESS

In one part of my hitch so far,

--i have forgotten exactly where--

i encountered this guy who seemed to be attached

to two luggage valices

in the same way as i was attached to my rucksack.

This was on the forecourt of a Service Station.

No one but hitch-hikers would carry their luggage with them.

What astonished me about this hitch-hiker

was the unlikely dress he wore.

He had on a very clean, well pressed, suit,

with white shirt and tie. He was well shaved

and, in a nutshell, dressed for white-collar work.

I met him at two separate Service Stations.

He didn't want to talk.

He waved me away.

He was about forty years old.

He was more successful at hitch-hiking than i.

He got a lift before me twice.

But i didn't study his technique.

Of this i am sorry.

I am certain that i would have learned something.

But i was in a rush and i saw him, mildly, as a competitor.

Styles. Ohh the various styles that exist!

My style is to be clean and shaven and neat

and at-ease and well-spoken.

No suit. Leisure time clothes.

A perfectly reasonable, happy guy.

BACK TO THE PRESENT

So i am walking on the housing project's paths and sometimes on its muddy lawns,

wending my way through this vaste estate,

super aware of the specific dangers that might exist here:

the security guards of this housing project

and young bands of kids itching for excitement.

I see neither. Its a peaceful scene.

And then a backround roar of cars and trucks

suddenly penetrates my awareness.

The roar is coming from behind a twenty-foot-high mound of dirt,

left over from the days of the housing project's original construction,

and, now, by always-at-it **Nature**, irregularly grassed over.

I remember this mound!

Yeah. Yeah. I'm arriving!

Up and over the muddy mound my body, unbridled, surges.

Yes. There is the motorway!

And

Yes. There is the Service Station!

But it looks dead. The lights are out.

A discarded-looking car slouches, as though it were ill,

on one of the Station's asphalt paths.

Yet, there is some activity. A car pulls in.

I can see it

through the wire fence

and the tall bushes growing on the Service's side of the fence.

I see the driver going to the Service's store to pay for his petrol.

And now here he comes, driving his petrol-fed beast out into the

motorway roar.

But before he could fuse with the raging flow,

cruising slowly, outbound,on the Service's exit road,

he passes near me.

His car-number plate has '66' as its regional part.

That's not from here. Plates from this part of Paris have 92 or 93.

So, there is non-local traffic using this Services. But not much.

What a difference between now and what i knew to be

the usual flow through it years ago.

But why get upset? Everything changes.

Let me now see how i can solve this next, local problem:

getting into the station area.

WORKING ON A CHANGING CONSTANT

Getting into the Service's private space has always been the problem here.

Its management, evidently, does not invite pedestrians.

It says **"No Passage!!!"**

with a mute, 5 foot-high and spiked, wire fence.

Sometimes my found solution to their mute "No Passage"

was a big, nearly invisible **flap**,

--clipped out of the wire fence--

which moved aside as you took hold of one of its free edges.

This was the royal road.

But the next time i would come through,

i would find that royal road repaired

and find, twenty yards further on,

a new, small, squeezable-through **hole** clipped out.

The local kids, i suppose, are my benefactors.

I don't have a clue why they make these **holes**,

Maybe, they want to extend their game-play beyond the fence?

Maybe, they want to get on the motorway?

Maybe, they want to get into the Service Station

--which lies on the same side of the fence

as the motorway?

Some of their mates might have cars

and to rendez-vous with them

in the Services car park

requires such fence-surgery.

Anyway, for one reason or other,

they,

like me,

want to get to the other side of this fence.

I am humbly thankful

that the concrete world's logic

allows many alternative uses

for one and the 'same' thing.

The freedom achieved by the local children

--to not be blocked, in their play, by a fence---

extends my freedom as well.

And, with regret, i know that

as the children's world shrinks down, shrinks away

from the vacant lots and other, uncivilized stretches,

so my freedom shrinks as well

--from the vacant lots and other, uncivilized stretches.

I am losing my freedom to enter the undefined.

Fences are being put up nearly everywhere.

Every space is becoming function-specific

by the unrelenting application of success-minded energies.

Children have, no longer, space to freely play.

"**Every space is Private Property**"

according to the **State's**

Holy Law

and developing **Private Property** requires

Planning Permission given by State Administrators,

and Planning Permission requires

explicit naming of its usage.

And so the sane world of perfectly insane people

increasingly strangle their own childrens' freedom

and believe they are only preventing

black, murky **'chaos'** from seeping in.

All adventurers travelling marginal routes

must depend on accidental gifts of the marginalized.

When i discover a new hole in the fence,

i become happy as any

kid.

This local problem of getting into the Service's area,

for the moment, amounts to nothing more

than getting to the other side of this wire fence.

This obstacle is moderately formidable;

it is five feet high

and topped by spikes

--the woven fence's endwires

sharpened into

upright points.

This obstacle was my original reason

for setting off today without baggage.

Maybe

the hole in the fence

i had used four years ago is no

longer there?

This was the only local obstacle whose solution

had varied many, many times.

And these solutions, these **holes in the fence**,

were created by

others.

I merely found these **holes**. I didn't create them.

And, i had also found

that **the hole in the fence** i had last used

was usually professionally corrected;

professional, social guardians of the fence were also at work .

My **mission,**

as i unconsciously first understood it,

in my earliest glimmers of a need lurking here,

was to find out if

a hole in the fence

is waiting for me,

and, if not, figure a way around this obstacle fence,

without the burden of the heavy rucksack.

So here i am --in a rain starting to beat down--

before the fence

that i have to pass through or

climb over.

Let me see what it has to offer.

I spot a first possibility!

At its corner, where the motorway fence joins the Service area fence,

the fence is bashed downwards.

A simple step-up on this crushed part

and one could easily jump down on the other side.

No doubt, this was a much used **hole in the fence**.

It looks well worn. Approaching, to closely examine this easy route over,

i recognize,

within the mangled mesh of crushed down, wire fencing,

windings of barbed wire.

Fucking hell! The guardians of the fence at work again.

But they didn't reweave the damaged fence

--remake the fence anew--

as they would have standardly done for as long as i remember.

As though they were short of money,

they only have cheaply enwrapped some barbed wire into the partially crushed fence,

making it perilous to risk climbing over. (Perhaps, their penury is

related to the dead-look of the Station?)

In any case, that's that

hole in the fence plugged.

Not totally.

Maybe i can find something to cover the whole mess,

protecting me as i climb over it?

Let me try to find **the new hole in the fence**.

Later, i'll search for something to cover this barbed-wire mess.

Continuing my study of the fence,

i discover,

30 feet away, the motorway fence has been worked on from below

by my benefactors,

who i am now supposing to be pretty young,

because this particular **hole in the fence**

seems inadequately small,

sufficient for ten year olds, but hardly more.

The bottom section flaps up a bit.

If i had to, i think i could crawl under it.

I would have to spread newspapers and plastic bags

to keep me clean of the heavy, clay mud.

I'd have to open my rucksack and push its contents under

piecemeal.

But that's all i would have to do.

This **hole in the fence** is potentially usable.

I go further along the motorway fence

to see what else it might offer me.

Fifteen feet further,

where the clay mud has black grease marbling through it,

and rusty, greasy motorbike detritus scattered here and there,

a cut-down, 10 foot sapling,

with its roots still well-anchored in the ground,

stands adjacent to the fence.

The fence's spiked top here has been pounded into horizontality.

My benefactors at work.

You can now stand on its flattened top

and jump the five feet to reach the ground.

And you can get to stand on its top

by first stepping

onto one of the remaining branch stubs

sticking conveniently out of this remnant tree.

Your easy second step is to the top of the fence.

Your third step is the jump out

beyond the six-inch horizontal

spikes.

But i'm 59 years' old.

Jumping those 5 feet,

even though i would land on soft , clay soil,

seems a little risky.

I haven't jumped from heights greater than 3 feet in years.

I'd have to do some preparatory exercises

before i took on this five-foot jump.

I truly don't have a clue as to how my body would react to such a shock.

To jump without preparation,

would be a most unscientific move for me,

though, no doubt,

it is a ridiculously, easy demand on young adults.

But, voila, a second solution comes to my mind.

If i could cover

the horizontally bent spikes

with some heavy cloth,

i could roll on my stomach

over the fence's spiked-edge top.

So, both,

the meshed, bob-wire **hole in the fence**

and

the **hole in the fence** next to the tree,

need some material to clothe its sharp points,

its barbed-wire spikes.

And there's the crawl-under **hole in the fence**

which needs newspapers to spread over the clay mud.

Not a bad haul of **holes in the fence**!

And that's without mentioning

the five feet jump, **hole in the fence**,

that i might unscientifically go for,

if trapped here with no viable

alternatives.

Though the rain is still beating down,

i decide to reconnoitre the unknown-to-me,

backside of the Service Station,

where it abuts, further on, on this housing project.

Maybe, there --where i never, ever, had reason to go--

is an unobstructed way in?

Maybe the world is fundamentally ironic?

Maybe, through all these years of solution-finding, my puffed

pride

was

founded upon

a trivial

ignorance?

I back plod, returning toward the Station,

alongside this very real, physical restriction to my path liberty

(now taking the form of a wire fence)

...to where

the wire fence

no longer separates me from the motorway

but becomes, after making a right angle,

the proper guardian fence of the Service Station...

....through it, i see the Service Station building,

its petrol pumps and a few cars--

plod...

...to where

the wire fence attaches to a 15 foot high, impregnable

concrete wall.

I pass a heavy, steel door embedded in the wall.

It's locked and obviously an unbeatable obstacle.

So on i continue; the rain still mildly pelting down.

I am concentrated. A real problem.

I still haven't found a definite route into the Services.

The obstacle to my entrance is now this 20 foot high, concrete

wall,

forming here an awesome, continuous back-boundary

of

the Service Station's area.

Dynamite or serious climbing gear seems the only solution here.

In this dreary part of the housing project, the arse-end part,

car-parking seems to be its sole purpose.

But what's this?

A mud and grass and thorn-bush covered, 10 foot embankment,

--another leftover from the days of the project's construction--

flows up the side of the wall to nearly half its height.

I decide to climb on it. Who knows what i might see from on top?

Maybe a real easy solution might be staring me in the face?

With my mind filled by this hopeful fantasy,

i climb between its thorn bushes till the very top

and find absolutely nothing hopeful.

But lo and behold, as i am climbing down again,

carefully pushing the thorned branches to the side,

i spot a man's black suitjacket lying in the mud.

Its completely fucked with mud and water

and years of unidentifiable crud.

But, picking it up, i realize,

"this suitjacket is just the heavy material i need

to cover the fence's horizontal spikes

adjacent to the remnant sapling."

And it could also help cover the meshed,barbed wire

if i decide for that **hole in the fence**.

The rain has started to come down heavier than ever.

I make for a momentary shelter

in one of the ground-level,

open, basement-like areas

below one of the houses of the housing project.

A housing project employee,

busy with his own work, passes by

without even seeing me.

I guess this part of the world is as anonymous as

any street in the teeming center of

Paris,

or, this guy is cool enough to fool me

and is making detailed, mental notes of strangers

hanging around.

Anyway, he goes and the rain, five minutes later,

appears just as indifferent to me. That is to say the rain

departs.

Only puddles remain, and soaking wet, muddy clay.

Ten feet from the remnant sapling adjacent to the fence

i throw the suitjacket into the grimy mud.

"Nobody would be wanting to use that", i reason.

It'll be here for me in a couple of days.

I must definitely carry a little load of newspapers to cover the

jacket

so that i can belly over it without getting dirty.

A solution more or less exists now.

In the passion of the actual hitching day,

climbing that fence should be quick and relatively easy.

Good.

ONE MORE LOOK

But let me take one more look at that Service Station.

Let me see if i can see what is happening.

There's been great changes since last i was here.

This Station has gotten dangerously quiet.

It almost doesn't seem to be in business.

The blazing lights,

heralding from far a Service Station for motorway drivers,

creating an island of life in grey, rainy days, like this,

are missing. Only the shop shows a glimmer of light.

I walk over to the Service's side of the fence

and peer through it and through the bushes behind it

into the Service area.

It still looks dead. Nearly abandoned.

Though cars, at times, enter it...get petrol

and drive pass me into the roar of the motorway,

it still doesn't seem alive.

Is it?

Suddenly, i spot a figure moving through the still architecture

of this nearly abandoned world.

He is wearing a wornout, red-speckled uniform.

An attendant of the Services.

He walks to a green metal bin.

A hand-painted word is splashed in white on one of its sides.

I don't read it. Its an irrelevance for me.

The attendant throws something in the green bin.

He has now begun his return movement probably back to the store.

He's the nearest he's going to be, to me, now.

Why don't i scream out?

Why not?

"Hey!!! Msieu..."

and the moving impersonal figure turns

and walks directly towards me

and magically grows into a young, smiling guy.

He's about twenty four or twenty five years old.

The separation between us reduces to ten feet

of bushes, grey air, and the

wire fence.

"Hi! Is this place working?"...

He looks at me. He doesn't understand.

Why doesn't he understand?

O God, i'm talking in english!

Switching into french with a somewhat, accented english-american

accent,

"Pardon. j'ai parle anglais. Je voulais savoir..." ,

and he, in french, cuts into what i am saying, no doubt because i am taking a long time saying it --as though i was some novice at the language-- and, smiling, says in french,

" You want to hitch-hike?"

and i answer with an enthusiastic "Yes!".

He quickly then says,

"I'll come out here and open the door for you

when you give me a ring."

"What's your telephone number?"

"483 9476"

"What's your name?"

"Eric. I work from 6 AM to 2 PM.

Only Sundays and Mondays I don't work."

"Thanx Eric! Thanx!"

What a **'hole in the fence'** i've discovered!

Wow. It's as good as i've ever had.

Wow.

Though my body wants to celebrate

my mind does not let me loose.

I must still,

according to its reasoning,

find a telephone

to use the morning,

of my return here.

MAGNETIC FRAUD

"Wow", "Wow", "Wow," my mind repeats to me.

Walking back and feeling like i'm galloping back.

Because I don't remember seeing a phone booth on my way here,

i don't follow the same return path through the housing project.

My body is surging

like a huge, young doberman straining at the leash.

I can see nothing

but passing, vague outlines of the

project's greybuildings.

I can concentrate on nothing

but the driving desire to find a phone booth.

And, as if by magic, a phone booth appears

exactly where i exit from the housing project

and step onto the pavement of the road

running along the project's front side.

This local problem,

'Find the Telephone Booth from which to call Eric in the morning',

is not completely solved.

You need a phone card

to phone now in France from a public booth.

It used to be the coins of the Republic that gave life to a public

telephone. Now, in these four years absence,

the keys to the telephonic Republic have been switched.

Magnetic cards, now,

miraculously dialogue with

the modern telephone's computer mind

and, perhaps, even more miraculously

lets itself be altered by the telephone machine.

We are obliged to carry these nearly live things

around in our pockets in order to use the public phone.

Just think,

if each public accessible utility required a different card?

And if a finite number of different cards

satisfied all of one's money-purchasable wants,

Why not unify the different cards into one card?

(No problem for today's technology.)

It would be a universal money card!

Each person on the planet carrying one or two or three, ...

Who shall be allowed more than one?

What's obvious is that one's money agilities

would multiply immensely with more than one magnetic address.

It would be as valuable as a legitimate, different second name would be

in today's bank-account game,

or, in today's State Passeport game.

Who sets the rules, wins the game.

In computer systems,

What may the common person query?

Can i query and receive the method

as to how to add or subtract memory in the Universal Store,

creating

second addresses?

Surely , some persons shall be able to do that

in order to account for births and deaths.

If i possessed this answer, then i would be able to give it to my friends.

So there must be a rule which determines who can have this answer.

But then i know:

Who sets the rules, wins the game.

Is there, of necessity, a European-wide mafia of money?

Is this mafia pushing us into Europe?,

pushing us into a single currency continent?

Money, originally **precious stones**,

then **precious metals**,

then specially printed, **special paper**

and now, in the ultra-modern world-to-be

is fairy-like transformed into

information

in

magnetic memory.

Who controls this magnetic memory?

(Will the ultimate, substantive difference

between me and a billionaire

become

a different, rearrangeable arrangement of 0's and 1's?,

and the rearrangement doable in an unguarded

microsecond?,

converting £365.000 000 000 to £365 000 000 000.

Give me the language used,

access to the operating system

and i, overnight,

can make billionaires of my friends

with no difficulty.

What imaginative thievery we are inviting for the twenty first century!)

Who sets the rules, wins the game.

WHO CONTROLS THE MEMORY

WINS THE GAME

What an obvious GLOBAL fraud!

OR , maybe it was always fraud and we never cottoned on?

Infinite Depth and Uncertainty

So i will need a workable phone-card the morning of my leap

into hitching North out of Paris.

And i know that the phone-card in my pocket

must be nearly out of units. I never read the

phone booth's dim-written, liquid-crystal read-out,

--its computerized message to my phone-card--

telling me how many calls i have left.

For some reason, there is a block in my soul

against having anything to do with this message.

I can decide to get a new card.

But it's quite a lot of loot to pay for security

I probably will never have further use for it on this voyage.

My use of the phone in France is rare.

Or, **i can jump into the unknown.**

"I'll risk it" i say to myself.

Because i do not delve further

to determine whether i have a working phone card or not,

i am puttting my global hitch-hiking problem in jeopardy.

In failing to pose an additional local problem,

"**Is my phone-card working?**"

i am accepting risk.

"But the risk is actually small.

I will always be able to rig up a telephone call to Eric.

I'm sure of that".

I refuse to think further on this uncertainty.

Away, Thought! Away to other problems!

You have to leave some problems somewhat unsolved,

or you'll go out of your head.

There's an infinite depth to each 'thing' in the Universe,

and therefore, an infinite depth to every practical problem.

If i try to dive into every hole and corner

of my global hitch- hiking problem,

into the local problems of the local problems, ad infinitum,

i would never reach the first day's real hitch-hike. I'd go mad.

Confronted by uncertainty,

my intuition vibrates to me a feeling of

security or

insecurity.

I can delve no further than to listen to my feelings.

I feel sure about solving 'the telephone call to Eric' problem.

TRAPPED IN MY OWN SUCCESS

So i start my walk back

to the 'Marmoz, Henri Barbusse', no.249 bus stop.

The street is vibrant with people.

I am still elated by my successes.

My being is autonomously moving, with an unforced, confidence,

from one problem to the

next.

i have the feeling i can penetrate any obstacle.

.

My mind naturally turns to the return voyage,

which as i know

is the exact reverse motion

of the real voyage i shall take.

"These kids and adults walking the streets now

must know the best way into the heart of Paris.

They live here. They are the geniuses of transport locally.

Why don't i ask one of them?"

and sure enough ... the first guy i stop gives me

without a milisecond of hesitation

the information i sought.

"Walk that way and that way to the tramstop

and then go a few tramstops to 'Corneuve'.

There's the Metro."

I was using the wisdom learned in the1960's.

Trust the people. They know.

I follow, without hesitations, the directions

that this guy (and, in confirmation,

another guy at the tram station) gives me

and refuse

the infinite number of diverting choices

beckoning me,

-----at each instant of my return---

to go in search of something else,

to get away from this hitch-hiking madness.

For my sensitive part of me

is not satisfied by the life of the conquerer.

It craves nourishment.

It reacts to an unknown neighborhood seen through the tram

window:

"Why don't i explore that for an hour?"

But the sensitive part of me

is only asking questions and not commanding.

i push my body into the tramway

not allowing my desire for freedom

to get the upper

hand.

Hitch-hiking from here to Calais is my urgent problem.

Everything else is veiled irresponsibility.

I step off the tramway

and the entrance-hole

to the Station, 'Corneuve, 8 Mai' is ten steps in front of me.

I look at the large and alive shopping district surrounding me.

I feel a bit cheated.

I am tempted to break this obsessional drive.

But something within refuses dialogue and pushes me forward.

It has taken control and refuses

to stop and look and love and experience

this unknown-to-me corner of the world.

It won't let me. I must rush onwards;

concentrate only upon my immediate priority

and refuse to bend before my 'fickle' desires.

I am not free as i would like to be.

I am being driven by something within.

I thought it was my higher mind.

But now i recognize that this willful base is of other material.

It brooks no questions. It is not of the higher, imaginative mind.

It commands me

'To determine, in practice,

the best, initial location

for hitch-hiking Paris to London'.

My mind and my body are subservient to this willful me.

It is this willful me that triggers my panics

when things go a little wrong.

It doesn't like to think. It likes to do.

It definitely has to do with a profound and serious sense of security.

And, for the moment, my security is entirely housed in hitch-hiking.

PLACES AND THINGS TO BE FORGOTTEN

The Metro terminates at **'Corneuve 8 Mai'**.

'Fort d'Aubervilliers' and **'Quatre Chemins'**

are its next two Stations.

The Metro station i have to aim for,

from now on, in hitch-hiking Paris to London,

is **'Corneuve 8 Mai'**.

Goodbye to Fort d'Aubervilliers and its bus station!

Goodbye to the 149 and the 249 buses!

Its tramway action for me. And am i not better off?

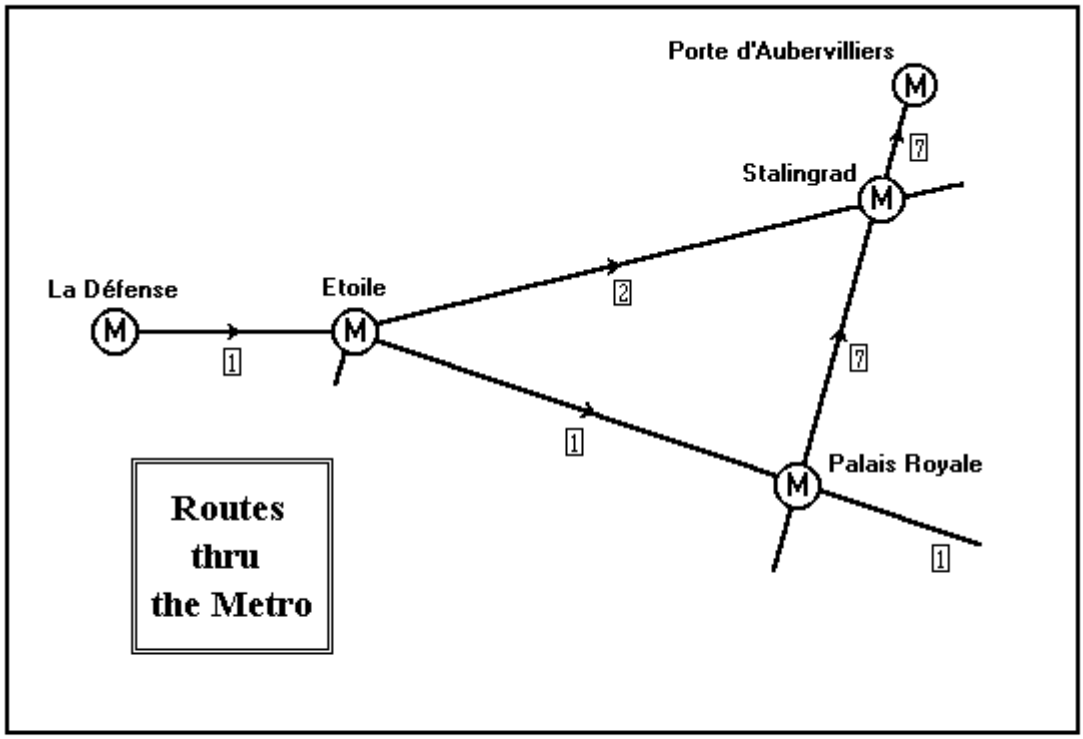
The tramcar is smooth and speedy. The ride just 5 minutes long!

HOW MODERN TECHNOLOGY BRUSHES THE OLD AWAY!

Palais Royale or Stalingrad?

Still working backwards...

I now have the problem of the best route to take.



I don't like the stairs in the Stalingrad change station.

I could take another route

which would be ten stops longer

but with 'Palais Royale' as its only change station.

I should check this route out

but i want to get back to Bob and Julie's.

I'm feeling a bit wacked..Uncreative.

Spent.

Let me leave myself in uncertainty about this Palais Royale change.

The likelihood of it being less demanding than the Stalingrad exchange

is nearly a certainty.

I had lived in Paris for a good 5 years

and had loved travelling the Metro.

Transfer stations with ultra long

corridors,

complicated with

many stairs

are 'instinctively' known

by me.

My feelings tell me Palais Royale is a good bet.

But i won't check it out.

I again decide on uncertainty.

What i am risking is a mildly, more--physically-demanding route.

Tough shit. I want to get back and take a shower.

I want to get out of these humid clothes and soaken trainers.

I want to make sure i don't get a cold from this reconnoitring expedition.

But can i stop thinking?

ERATIC BOUNCES OF THE OBLONG

Bob and Julie's Metro stop is the terminus, "La Defense".

But the stop is on a hill overlooking Puteau,

where Bob and Julie live.

I would have to pull my cart weighted by the weighty rucksack

up that hill. That's no joke. It would make a mighty dent in my

energetic body.

There must be an alternate route.

And again as if by magic,

my thinking mind automatically coughs out,

"Why not take the bus to "Pont de Neuilly"

on the same line as La Defense,

two stops nearer the center of Paris?"

My mind works very fast on this local problem.

It answers, "Of course, Yes,"

This is an easy problem for me.

Since Bob and Julie moved to Puteaux some 12 years ago,

from their house,

i had always taken the no.144 bus

to the then Metro terminus, "Pont de Neuilly".

But for this stay in Paris,

i early learned that the Metro had been extended

two stops beyond 'Neuilly' to 'La Defense'

and that the walk route

to and from La Defense to Bob and Julie's

was quicker than to Neuilly,

and that the people-bubbling novelty

of this newest, Trans-national Business district of Paris

'LA DEFENSE'

had become more seductive

than quiet strolls through Neuilly,

through the people-less streets of

a district with the richest of mansions,

and with a strip of the Seine,

conquered by the richest of houseboats.

Lots of wealth in housing. I liked strolling through it.

But for this stay with Bob and Julie,

i have entirely abandoned it.

What had been

'the maximum solution'

for my body translation

between

Bob and Julie's and the Metro System

--going through Neuilly--

became second-best and forgotten.

But these calculations leading to the best solution

get overturned by the simple addition of a new fact:

i am going to be carrying **heavy weight**.

Heavy weight makes

walking up the hill to La Defense out of the question

and

taking the 144 bus to Pont de Neuilly very, very attractive.

I have more than enough bus and Metro tickets.

This local problem is solved.

What had become a second best solution

and, therefore, become in practice, totally discarded,

now becomes

the new, best solution for my trip to the Metro.

The world erratically evolves..

as the bounce of an american football or a European rugby

football. Sometimes as expected; sometimes erratic.

If a simple football has this eratic principle built in,

is it not daft to expect less of the **universal shebang**?

Look how i have had to change Metro stops

going and coming

for my Calais hitchike out from Paris!

Look how a simple addition of weight, has bounced me about!

We are all eratic. We have to be. Life vibrates through us.

DESTROYING THE COLD IN ME

My hitch-hike's beginnings seem assured.

I'll ask Julie for old newspapers to drape over the mud-globbed jacket

so that i can role over the fence adjacent to the sappling

if Eric for some reason is not working.

No one is at home at Bob and Julie's.

I take a heavy dose of vitamin C and a good multivitamin tablet.

Vitamin C, taken in very ample dosages,

really does insulate me from colds and flu.

As soon as i feel i have demanded too much of my weary body,

or have been in contact with people with colds,

i drop two grams of Vitamin C in powder form

and follow it with another two grams an hour later.

Moreover, every morning, I wash down with orange juice

two grams of the stuff and take a vitamin tablet as a chaser.

On the road, i supplement my morning multivitamin

with another one at bedtime.

All the time i am in contact with someone with a cold,

i suck on a Fishermen's Friend, lozenges which i always pocket,

and, immediately on leaving the person

apply a wet Fishermen's Friend to the mucous membranes of my nose.

Thusly, i've killed nearly all colds attacking me over the last decade.

Though its winter, my body, till now, has been very strong on the road.

I hope it remains strong for another couple of days.

Living on the road,

asking people for lifts in their mobile personal space,

requires me to be in tip-top, attractive form.

BEING A FRIEND IS HITCH-HIKING.

HITCH-HIKING IS FRIENDSHIP

Bob and Julie are out.

I take a hot, hot bath.

This serves two vital purposes.

Firstly, on the road i will not be able to adequately wash my body.

So the best strategy is to start out really clean.

That's a rule i have always kept.

Secondly, the hot, hot bath is to relax my body.

It's got to be strong and fit for a long, unknown demand on it.

Really relax my body.

I lounge for several hours,

finishing the readings i promissed Julie i'd do

about the Bosnian and Chechenian wars

which have burst out so close to the European heartland.

On these issues, Julie has become a passionate part

of the protest movement here in Paris.

When i arrived she gave me a series of standup lectures

on the politics behind these events

and followed up with

the loan of two "necessary" backround books to read.

She is my host.

I naturally give support to the life-style of those i am living with.

In fact,

my life-style inside Paris and Toulouse

--the two french cities i live in--

living, from time to time,

in the houses of my friends,

over a period of thirty years,

and returning always to my home base, in England,

---a home base sufficiently distant,

and my French visits sufficiently rare

to make me,

between visits,

a non-actor in my friends' lives--

resembles

my hitch-hiking life-style.

Though, the two are not identical.

The personal spaces

offered me by my friends are not moving spaces.

--they are immobile homes--

Time together is not measured

in hours but in days or weeks.

Though they are my long term friends,

friendships with more than twenty years of past behind them,

friendships which were begotten in deep relationship

--when our families were living communally together--

i still am accutely aware that i am the guest

and they are the marvelous, offering hosts.

Not unsimilar to when i am hitching on the road

and i am enthusiastically available

for any aid i can give the driver.

Because Bob and Julie are so able a pair

in the lifestyle they have chosen,

i am, on this visit, reduced to a seemingly small contribution:

getting interested in what Julie is interested in.

However, this is not to be thought of as of no great value.

Reflection and ongoing discussion

for a week or two

about one's political passion,

with a foreign, political animal

of four decades of political experience,

must add enthusiasm and horizon and shades of meanings

perhaps, not had before.

I do value myself here.

Besides, Bob is a little sceptical about Julie's present politcal enthusiasm.

"It's too distant from our lives for us to be able to do much about it."

So i can take up the political slack

and feel i'm fitting in to their energetic flow.

CHAPTER 3

V O Y *A* G I N G

DREAMING

Julie comes home. I find out from her that it's the 11th of January.

Tomorrow is wednesday, the twelfth.

It would be a good day for hitching North.

Many British lorry drivers would be returning

from weekly European trips

aiming to spend their weekends at home.

Besides, i want to be into my life

at home base

by the 15th.

So **tomorrow will be the day!!**

Julie is a little upset that i am going to leave tomorrow.

"Why don't you stay a few more days?"

But she accepts my reasoning and i go into my room to pack.

'My room is no longer mine.

My room has magically disappeared.

I am evaporating.

I collect my toys, having scattered them about the room,

and return them to the ruck-sack.

I pack everything except the clothes i shall be wearing.

In departure time,

i cannot help but think of

Arrivals and **Departures**.

My life is built upon them.

And at every departure time,

the real substance of my life is highlighted.

Bob and Julie, Michele,... become **beings in a dream**,

as i become for them,... **a being in a dream.**

Special Dreams --to which we can return--

but **dreams**, non-the-less.

Dreams we can re-enter,

at another phase in ***the dream***..

What is life, but a dream of evolving dreams?

And with every departure,

the time for movement arrives.

The hitch-hiking mode arrives.

The QUICK-time

of

Arrivalsanddeparturesentrancesandexits

of

single , isolated,

dream - bubbles

arrive.

I want to eat a good breakfast at about 6 am

and be out at the 144 bus stop by 7 am.

All my effort now is geared to such a demand.

How shall i wake in time?,

--i borrrow an alarm clock from Julie--.

What shall i exactly eat in the morning?

--layed out and ready--.

Where shall i leave the key to the apartment?

--on Julie's desk, having already asked her.

My mind doesn't stop going through the innumerable details

involved in exiting from this friendship cocoon

in which i was so comfortably berced for the last

eight days.

Julie talks warmly about the next time i shall visit them.

A WEAKNESS IN MY ARMOR

On the morrow, everything works like clockwork.

I am at the bus stop by 7 am.

I'm feeling great were it not for one important, unexpected

failure;

one that snuck its way in last night.

It was the local problem of getting a good night's sleep.

I wasn't able to sleep.

I lay on the bed the entire night;

my mind refusing to turn off.

The night before i left England,

i couldn't coax my mind to sleep.

Also, the night before i left Michele's house in Toulouse, last week,

it refused to sleep.

And, it refused the night

before my morning takeoff from Lyon.

A new pattern seems to be emerging.

I don't know why?

Perhaps i really have to tire myself

just before i go to bed

the day before i leave to hitch-hike?,

instead of taking it as a day of rest?

In my nearly forty years of hitch-hiking,

i never before confronted this problem.

And **a big problem** it is.

I am beginning this **hitching**, **in a sleepy state**.

What a drag!

I don't feel it now so much.

But in six hours time

i will be bearing it-as-a-burden.

However,

I know i am now accustomed to this extra burden.

I know it doesn't kill me.

It weighs heaviest

when things

are not

going well.

It's a challenge that, later, invigorates the spirit.

It proves the fundamental resiliency that one posesses.

It helps deny the weakness excuse for not living full-throttle.

THE MAGIC MARSH

I stand at the bus stop in the darkness waiting

for the marvelous

--the public vehicle that will carry me on my way.

Nobody else waiting at the bus stop.

Are the buses working?

I'm getting worried.

Slow down i tell myself.

Sure enough, after five minutes of early morning quietness,

a thirty-five year old guy shows up.

He's wearing a suit below his smart-cut, light overcoat.

He's got a tie on. He's well shaved and his shoes are shining.

He's carrying a polished, black leather hand bag

for his personal and his business needs.

There is no criciticism to be made about his dress.

No doubt he is going to work.

The contrast between him and me,

as viewed inside my mind,

gives me a great sense of liberty.

I feel younger than he is, and older than he is.

By just that amount that

he appears bound to his work,

i feel myself to be free.

Free almost as the birds are free.

And just as vulnerable as the birds i might appear.

For my route, inside the whole shebang,

is taking an unpredictable route, the hitch-hiker's route.

While he, for his part in the whole shebang,

when he goes to work, like today,

or tomorrow ,when he goes on vacation,

will take the standard, comfortable, forseeable route

of the money-

paying voyager.

The non-trial route.

As though arriving at Y, coming from X,

is always more

important than

what the unexpected can

contribute on the way.

In this latter part of my life

i have grown not less

but even more antagonistic

to such normality.

I have developed, with the piling up years,

a positive passion for

the unexpected

--the magic marsh in which space-time has no order--

What grossly happens not forseeable

and, because of that, loved.

TESTING MYSELF

Before i started out on this present hitch-hiking voyage,

i was uncertain

about my physical capacity to endure

the demands normally made upon the hitch-hiker.

After four years' break,

i understood this voyage

as a test of my 'youthfulness'.

Before i began it,

i had already confirmed that my body was

in better shape than it had been

since i injured my shoulder two years before.

I had restarted my late-night, long-distant runs

to and along the

Brighton shore.

I hadn't been able to run like that since the accident.

So i felt better and just ripe for a real test:

a month hitch-hiking through France

visiting dear, dear

friends.

Two more people show up.

They add nothing to my certitude

of the bus showing up.

The guy with the suit had totally dispelled my fears.

Then, as a gift from the Cosmos,

the 144 bus to the Metro station, Pont de Neuilly

comes smiling up the road,

and stops to perform its miracle.

BRUSHED BY A SEXUAL MAGNET,

AND REBRUSHED

..I enter a metro car.

Not very many riders. It's early.

There's space between people.

I take a seat. Feeling good. I know where i am going.

The stations are speeding past.

It would be crazy to use the double-change, Stalingrad route.

Just lie back and feel good. The stations will whiz by.

I grow calm again.

Thinking ahead,

i imagine the worst that could happen

is that Eric is not there

and i would be forced to climb the fence.

The station advertisements speed by.

The most frequent one is

a grandiose, three-times life-size, photo

taken from the side of the bed at bed

height

of a very **good looking**

woman

lying on her back

on an unmade mattress

with her nude legs spread wide.

I'm not interested in the advertisement's words.

I am searching out her smile

and also how far into

one dimly-lighted section of the photo i

can see.

The stations go whizzing past.

No doubt millions of male voyagers, going to and from work,

are unconsciously sucked also

into this same unconscious-conscious, innocent-non-innocent

striving.

I am leaving this city. I am putting into the closet my self in Paris.

COLD-HEARTED

As i arrive at street level,

having emerged from The Metro at "La Corneuve 8 Mai",

there is a crowd hustling to get on both tramcars.

I have no time to stop and stare.

I have no time.

I race into one of the crowds

and ask the person, accidentally in front of me,

"Is this the tramcar going to "Hotel de Ville, Corneuve" ?

And luck is with me. It is this tramcar.

I lift my rucksack into it and away we go.

"Danton" is the next stop. I recognize it. I am going the right way.

"**Systems all go**" i say to myself as final blast off from Paris nears.

At the tramstop Hotel de Ville, Corneuve, i get off.

i look around

and

pick out the big INTERMARCHE sign.

It signals the road i have to walk down,

because it's the road of the 249

and upon it, a hundred yards away,

on the other side

of the

street,

is

the bus stop

Marmoz, Henri Barbusse.

Yeah. All is going well.

This is the exact route i took by foot yesterday.

Details on it, i had spotted yesterday,

come at me

in reverse order. I am on my way.

My body is surging forward of itself...

pulling its obligatory load of wheeled rucksack.

Pulling it with a sense of absolute necessity.

My mind is not thinking of it.

It is looking round.

It's still sort of dark. Kids are going to school.

Young adolescents and younger still.

The atmosphere is warm and non-menacing.

I have not to worry about being attacked.

Yesterday, as today, there is no menace at all.

Good friendship feelings are in the air

as the school-kids walk in pairs and triplets

..... not noticing me.

The paranoia i had picked up in the newspapers

--the reported violence in these working class neighborhoods--

is dispelled in seconds. I don't return to that thought again.

My present, local problem is to find the telephone booth.

It's in front of the housing project but further

up the street

than i had ever gone.

(The project's extensive grounds

surround

about ten

eight-story buildings.

This is my imaginings.

I never tried to understand this housing project.

In the many times i had encountered it, i was in a hurry to hitch;

Too much of a hurry, and too burdened by my rucksack

to stop and look at 'a housing project'.

What alone interested me was

how to get through it to the ServiceStation.

I knew nothing of the project's life.

I didn't care.

I, to it, am a coldhearted lover.)

P A N I C

There's the telephone booth.

Inside of it, i realize that i am about to confront

one of the inbuilt uncertainties lying in wait for me

and now come to the top of the deck.

Does my telephone card have an unused unit

with which to telephone Eric?

Out i get the phone card, stick it into the telephone and ...

BINGO. I'm being given the dial tone. I am able to make this call.

"Hello. Can I speak to Eric?"

Pause and then a voice says, ..**"Yes. This is Eric."**

"**Hi!**" i answer.

"This is that Englishman you spoke to yesterday."

"The hitch-hiker?"

"Yes. I'm one minute away."

"Ohh. Yeah. I'll go open the door."

"Great!"

And i hang up and spring into the housing project pulling my

cart.

And now it seems i'm truly approaching blast-off.

Into the housing project grounds i plunge.

I recognize nothing.

I realize i haven't ever approached from

this entrypoint.

So i try to situate myself with respect to the larger

geography.

I make an estimate and determine

what direction i should travel.

And

plunge in that direction,

over the ground's paths and muddy green.

Going to where i want to go, whether or not a cemented path

exists.

I'm in the panic of the takeoff.

I'm getting nearer and nearer to the other side of the project .

Its

back side. The motorway side..

When i get to what i think should be the back,

i recognize nothing. The services are nowhere in sight.

I can't even hear the roar of the motorway traffic.

I must have gone too much to the left. I'll walk more

to the right.

More panic walking.

More confusion. I recognize nothing.

A corrogated iron fence of a large, internal parking lot confronts

me.

I never saw it before in my life.

I'll have to go around it.

Where the fuck am i?

The door to the motorway is open and waiting for me

and i'm lost.

What the fuck is going on?

My cart gets caught in the mud of the green.

I'm not waiting for it to roll.

I won't stop and clean its wheels.

I am just manhandling it.,

dragging it by force behind me.

I'm in a panic.

What the fuck is going on?

Why can't i find the stupid Services?

My trainer shoes, in part made of canvas, are decked with mud.

I'm now sliding through the mud sludge.

Where the fuck am i?

Why am i panicking?

I know i don't have a good sense of direction,

but this takes the

cake!

INSIDE THE PROMISED LAND

Finally, finally,

after climbing a mound of mushy clay

with sparce grass haphazardly string-greening the brown scene,

i, at its soggy top,

spy **the Services** and its entrance,

and hear, for the first time,

the roar

of the flood

that's going to bear me to England.

Takeoff is about to happen.

A driver is going to say with a smile, "Yes. Hop in."

Hundreds of happy kilometers are going to be spent

discussing some part of the world most interesting to him.

I am soon going to be entertained and entertaining

as the kilometers between me and the Calais port diminish to zero.

I push at the heavy iron door.

It's moving! It's open!

I shut the door behind me.

I am in the grounds of the Services.

It looks as dead as yesterday.

I trudge through theStation's side-door. Downstairs are the toilets.

I better clean the mud off of the cart

and the ugly caked-mud from my trainers

before i start asking people for a lift.

"But first things first" i say to myself

and, leaving the cart with my rucksack before the toilet stairwell,

i quickly walk to the front of the deserted shop

where the guy behind the till is busy with something. It's Eric.

"Thanx a lot!"

"Oh. Its nothing."

He doesn't seem as though he wants to talk with me.

He has pressing work to do. So i leave him

and lower my cart down the two flights of stairs

into the hardly used toilets.

There,

alone,

i take a good crap,

a good piss,

a good wash of my trainers

and

a good wash of myself.

In the mirror i judge myself again to be in agreeable, visual shape.

Up the stairs to begin the takeoff.

"Wow! Wow! I'm on my way!"

My preliminary **song**

leading to

THE BIG QUEST ION:

"**I am hitch-hiking**",

i say simultaneously pointing to my rucksack.

"**I am going to Calais. Are you going in that direction?**"

I know that this Service Station

serves only one side of the motorway.

All traffic is going in my direction.

Therefore,

Why do i pose

the question

"**Will you take me as far as you can?**"?

The essential questions are,

"**Will you take me?**" **and** "**How far?**"

But how pose these questions?

One month ago, I began this hitch-hiking voyage with a style

that abruptly posed this important question of mine:

"I'm going to Toulouse. Could you give me a lift?"

That, i learnt, is less than the best and changed my approach.

THE FIRST FEW SECONDS

Usually, a driver first sees a hitch-hiker

as a tiny pinpoint up-ahead on the side of the road

and then as a growing pinpoint,

and then as a guy, bodily, imploring passing drivers,

and only then, a little while longer,

another ingredient is added:

a sign is being waved directly at the driver

and is now big enough to read.

The driver reads,..... "**X**"

and knows that the guy waving the sign

is definitely a 'hitch-

hiker'

and that the sign is saying,

" **(We are going in the same direction.**)

I am going to X.

(How far are you going?)

Will you give me a lift?"

But, here,

on the grounds of a Service Station,

i'm not carrying a sign,

nor am i on the side of a one-way road.

My voice and general outward appearance

must deliver the necessary information

and

The Big

Question.

I usually approach male drivers

after i have determined they are alone in their car.

People together usually don't want company.

A woman alone won't take me under any circumstances.

Twice or thrice in my life

--and that was when i was a young man---

had a woman alone, taken me.

Though i still, from time to time, play with possibilities,

and pose my question to a woman alone,

her response is always, "**No**."

A very solid **NO**.

Distrust,

from fear of violence,

has grown to become

a hiding monster

rearing its head and doing its

damage

in the first few, all-important, seconds of

contact.

It is the hitch-hiker's first, major, ***unconscious*** ...obstacle.

A man, alone,

looking at me and seeing

a guy,

a couple of inches below normal size,

who seems

quietly talkative and happy,

l**earns immediately**

that he can trust me and even find me entertaining.

At least that is my very conscious goal.

And yet,

my approach is nearly always touched with some violence.

For

i must seize

--the opportunity--

his

presence.

Because of this unexpected incursion

--i am obliged to make--

into the life of another,

creating trust is foremost.

While a driver is coming out through the door of the Stationstore,

returning to his car

and the long road ahead,

I intercept him

to pose to him **The Big Question** for me.

No matter where he is in his trajectory

--anywhere in his walk to the car--

I would intercept him.

Though he was already in gear --seconds before his takeoff--

I'd come trotting up to his side window

and say something to him

through

the window glass.

He'd turn to me, somewhat surprised, and role down the window.

He has no idea what i want.

I am not on the side of the road.

We are in a Service Station.

Perhaps,

he didn't notice me on the fore-court of the Station,

going over to cars and people

and having quick, easy chats?

For him, I could be either

another car driver,

or a car inhabitant,

or a Service Station worker.

These are the constants of the Service Station's life.

Being a hitch-hiker,

i fall into the category of '**unpredictable**

appearances'.

Who am I???

Before he roles down the protective car window

he looks at me.

I don't look dangerous or angry.

I am trying to look a little pressed.

Yes.

I'm in a hurry to takeoff.

So my minor look of urgency

combines with his expectancy of who i might be,

and he usually judges the scene

sufficiently non-threatening and possibly

important

to roll down his car window.

And now you know why i begin by saying

"**I am hitch-hiking**" ,

and, simultaneously, point to my rucksack.

I am alleviating any sense of danger on his part.

I am showing him that i am an honest person

--not trying to trick him

into giving answers

to questions

which he might think are coming from

the mouth of a bona fide

Station employee

and, then, deviously, lay on him

The Big hitch-hikers'

Question--.

No.

I am consciously radiating with my body and my voice:

I am a hitch-hiker

and an honest man

and someone who tries to be happy and constructive.

And with this, all-important, component

weaved within,

i pose **The Big Question**:

"**I am going to X. Are you going in that direction?**"

AN UNTHREATENING LAND

It's curious that, in originally writing this down, i didn't think of

the extra, hidden power i have

in this very particular, chessboard game.

A very Big power it is.

I speak french well and we are in France.

Good conversation is possible.

Also, i have an obvious and pleasant english-american accent.

The french drivers who hear me understand me to be

a foreign, easy-going man of a certain age

who speaks french.

i am temptingly intriguing starting from the very first seconds.

Some drivers want to practice their English.

Some drivers want to hear about my wandering life

which they first suppose i live all the time

and not as i do from time to time, once a year or twice.

On this voyage, till now, i didn't speak about myself.

(There really were no requests.)

In fact, I mostly find myself very comfortably listening

and responding to the concerns of the driver.

I am searching for some way to be of aid to him,

someway to pay the implicit debt i have to him.

We both feel we only have

this hour,

or these two hours, to enjoy

together.

So we play at conversation with each other. And exchange many

facts.

Many intimate facts about ourselves to the other,

without naming names, without giving addresses.

We are in an unthreatening land

where there are no direct causalities from it to our dayly lives.

A land

which can only re-emerge in our separate futures

through our own, independent and separate

uses

of it;

the future uses

of a

conversation

in a car

between oneself

and

a forgotten driver or a forgotten hitch-hiker.

By the time i finish with my little, preliminary song and dance:

"**I am hitch-hiking**" , i say

simultaneously **pointing to my rucksack**.

"**I am going to Calais. Are you going in that direction?**",

i believe the decision to take me, or not, has already been made.

Further entreaties are futile. Worse.

They leave a bad taste in the mouth of the driver,

who, sometime in the future,

will encounter other hitch-hikers.

Thus, an inescapable karmic relationship

ties me to other hitch-

hikers.

I give gifts, helpful and unhelpful, to other hitch-hikers

through drivers.

And they to me.

VIOLENCE AND HARMLESSNESS

All the motorcars and trucks and vans and motorcycles,

passing through this Station,

are 'forced' by motorway rules

to go in the same direction till, at least,

the next exit.

So my preliminary song's question,

"**Are you going in that direction?**",

has only **YES** for an answer.

I have subtly biased

the response

to the follow-up,

really **Big Question**.

The hitch-hiker's Big Question,

"**Will you take me?**"

As i use this form of question making,

breaking up The Big Question, into two questions,

the first of which, the preliminary,

has always the answer "Yes",

with all consciousness of its manipulative power,

HOW SAYING YES. BREEDS THE DESIRE TO SAY YES AGAIN

am i not creating a sort of violence engine,

which converts a legitimate desire

to say "**No**" to me,

into an ambivalent bitter taste in the driver's mouth

when his "**No**" is to

be recited?

Mia Culpa.

Having received the pleasure of having already said "**Yes**" to me,

a certain sense of loss might come upon him

were he to follow

with a "**No**".

Every offer of friendship is a covert offer of love.

How many "**Yes**" answers

(implicit or explicit)

does it require for making a friend?

The first "Yes" is a step in that direction.

A mighty step in my

case.

For i have come upon the driver totally unexpectedly:

from out of **the night-time** **blazing lights**

of a

Service Station,

or from out of **the day's** ***rainy-grey mists***,

or, **like a dazzling flower**,

from out of

a

sunny

morning.

"What would it have been like",

the driver might ask himself,

"had i given this interesting guy

another "**Yes**"?

For those drivers with good reasons to not take me,

the hurt caused

is the sensed loss of a possibly lovely time.

This is my violence to them.

A teeny-weeny fantasy violence.

For those others

--and luckily they are a amall minority--

who say "**No**" with **only** the unvoiced excuse:

"**Why the fuck is he asking me to help him?**",

(or any variety of the ten thousand societal condemnations

of the

social underdogs,

promoted, legitimated

and hurriedly imbibed

to protect

the psychic well-being

of the puffed-up),

their negative might boumerang in their souls.

My offer of friendship, albeit tinged with self-interest,

is rejected

for no other reason than an inhuman prejudice.

A subtlly induced,

self-hurt

is, thereby, caused

producing

a further hardening of their heart.

BUT,

when i ask

The hitch-hiker's Big Question,

i am not interested in hurting the person

who gives me a "No"

for whatever reason.

For if he is pleased by our contact, leaving it up-spirited,

he will, maybe at the next opportunity, give some other hitch-hiker a lift.

And even if he didn't, he has his reasons.

We are entitled to our own reasons.

We are caught in our own reasons.

Being aware of the potentially violent effect,

of my question technique, i take precautions to cure the harm

before it passes from short to long-term memory.

To the many who say "No",

i have evolved a response,

a magic tap of lighthearted, up-comment,

"**Well, a thousand thanks anyhow!**"

and really mean it.

Or some joke, if it is appropriate.

Or a question that he can give me an answer to

and thereby restore his sense of 'doing good'.

I am not usually in such a dead location

in which i have to rely upon one driver

to get me out.

So its easy come, easy go.

Someone, from this roulette of life, shall pop the exciting **"Yes!"**.

Somehow, for some driver soon, the alchemicals will read **green**

and, then, with a kid's excitement,

off i'll scamper

to get my ruck-sack

for take-off.

PICKLES

But difficult situations, pickles, do sometimes occur.

I was with Christine -- the woman i made a child with--

before we had consciously thought of making children,

in a time of our wooing,

when we were carving out the foundations of our being

as a couple.

We were going to be heroic. That, for sure.

In the early hours of the morning, in a rough and cold night,

with negative body implications

were we to remain outdoors for several more hours,

with no refuge from the night available to us,

and only a truck

in a truckman's yard in a closed-for-the-night,

wholesale fruit and vegetable market,

and we in its dark recesses.

We were hitching and we arrived there.

And Christine was worried by the darkness and the lonely

location.

One truck,

and the truckman had just awoke, and was starting up his truck.

I ran over.

I ran over as a man who was kissing the dust before a saviour.

I explain him our situation. That all we want to do is get to a

motorway Services, or lacking that, back into Paris. We had to get

out. We were desperate.

He said "No".

But i wouldn't let him stay with it. He had to take us with him.

It was a question of life and death.

I became very frantic and very clear.

"There are no other trucks around. It is you or no one! "

To this passionate request, he could not refuse.

I believe there was one other time,

in all the years of my hitch-hiking,

in which i was forced to plead with all my heart.

To throw my body before a stranger and implicitly say,

"If you refuse me,

you will be conscious of having been

inhuman."

This is almost impossible for most people to accept.

And, by nature's natural balance, it is probably impossible

for a person, who is not in extreme circumstances,

to emit

the call of the desperate.

HITCHING ON THE FORECOURT

I've set my rucksack up just beside the door, under the awning

outside.

It's in clear sight from most everywhere on the forecourt.

And being adjacent to the door,

--through which all those paying for their petrol must pass

on their way to Eric, seated behind the counter within--

it gives the drivers a hint that a hitch-hiker is lurking about.

Who he is, when the Services is very busy --not the case now--

is not obvious;

roaming, as i might be through the store,

chatting, as i might be to the employees,

talking, with one or two of the drivers,

as i make lively, lively contact

with my social surrounds.

I become an important being:

one of the welcoming team

in this transient waystation.

I interest myself in everything.

My soul sings.

I sow joy here

as part of my self-decreed obligation.

But, also,

staging my preliminary dance, singing my preliminary song,

and then posing **The Big** hitch-hiker's **Question**.

And not stop dancing and singing till someone says "**Yes!**"

and i'm running for my rucksack

preparing for takeoff.

TIMIDNESS

Hitch-hiking is not for the timid,

though many a timid person hitch-hikes.

I suppose they rely largely

on a driver's unpressured, social conscience:

on his private recognition of someone in need

and his private, decision-making conscience.

"**You have taken me**", i suppose they implicitly say to the drivers,

"and i have not asked you.

You posed The Big Question to yourself

and because you said "Yes" to yourself,

you approached me."

A timid me,

hitch-hiking at a Service Station,

would stand immobile next to my rucksack,

as isolated cars separate out from the flood

and, into the Station, slowly cruise

in order to understand theStation's geography

and con out what route through it, or parking space in it, to take.

Timid me wouldn't make a move.

I would be as a statue, a timeless element of the Station's forecourt,

not following the car with my eyes,

refusing to react to any movements happening around me,

solely concentrating on my own internal space and its dialogue,

What kind of being would i be?

Not even to think on hitch-hiking

and let the cosmos select the world i am to meet next,

what kind of being would i be?

i would be fashioning myself 'a guru' to an outside viewer.

To myself, maybe i would be testing 'the cosmos'?

Certainly, i would be 'going against the grain' of the life there.

I have never taken nor contemplated this ultra-passive mode.

It would lay too much psychic weight on the drivers.

It would pin me down too much, inside the car.

I like flexibility.

On this voyage so far, one guy,

--before i could say anything--

surprised me with a **"Yes"**,

because he thought i was an artist.

He, looking out, had seen me through the glass door.

He had studied me and decided to take me.

(I, vaguely, recall someone looking at me through the Station's

glass door.

But i continued looking the other way

--out at the forecourt, 'looking for a lift'.)

HELP ALWAYS COMES

And even if i did not have within me

a guru image of myself

but assumed and radiated an extreme catatonic posture,

--and this is the deep truth of hitch-hiking--

there would always be a driver who would stop for me.

This market always clears.

For the gurus as well as the insane as well as the normal.

The offer is always finally matched.

It may take hours and hours,

like seven hours,

or a day and a half in quiet, quiet locations.

Or a week for a lift to cross a desert.

(I have never been so bold as to hitch-hike cross a desert

but have spoken to people who have.)

The writer of these lines admits to the speed disease.

As a hitch-hiker, I want to move fast.

Rarely, have i gotten into 'desperate' situations

where the next lift seems days away.

But it has happened.

Once, i was

up in northern Germany, on some side road in a small town,

a holiday-festival, blazing-hot, summer day.

The entire community is flying in happy, loving alcoholia.

Nobody is driving.

And the sun is beating down. And i'm taking it full blast,

but, being young, i brave ahead brutally,

continue to stand there in the sun,

(me, who reacts to the sun as an albino

with sunburn, eyestrain and headaches),

continue to flag at the rare car that passes.

I don't speak the language.

i have a fear of the people's drunkenness.

So i stay where i am, and continue to be

a weary, pleading youth

by the side of the road

signalling irrelevances to the local trickle of traffic.

Hours are passing and I am seriously dehydrating.

But there will always come along some human being

who takes an interest,

for one reason or another,

in a hitch-hiker

wherever he be, however he be,

whoever he be.

A police van pulls up,

i shout to them where i want to go,

continuing to play the hitch-hiker's role to the driver of the van.

They get out of their van and slowly approach me.

But because i don't speak German and they don't speak English,

the complexities are reduced.

I feel innocent as a one-day-old baby.

They mime something and say, "Passport!"

I give them my passeport.

I don't let that shake my sense of self as 'a hitch-hiker'.

They invite me into their van. I interpret it as a hitch-hike.

But, I am not as happy as i usually am. I am subdued.

They are not trying to speak to me. They are talking to each other.

I have become a pawn rather than a partner.

They take me to a Police Station.

They consult a machine. That takes thirty minutes.

Finally, being satisfied of my 'innocence',

satisfied also with my civility while with them,

they --for those reasons or for a matter of courtesy, or justice--

then, drive me out to a ferry-crossing,

pay for my ticket and buy me some food.

On the other side of the river, they point out

a very good road

for continuing my hitch-hike.

On that road, with not five minutes sun-kissed into the past,

Heinz comes along and stops

and seriously proposes to drive me to Great Britain.

We blast along at speeds in which mad youth exhilarates.

But i cannot really be inviting him to go out of his way several

days.

He is a radio, disc-jockey, regional 'star'. His life is soaring.

There is nothing he would not consider that has heart.

And 'Going to Great Britain to take a hitch-hiker home'

seems reasonable enough. Why not? He has a couple of days to

spare!

But i tell him "No. No. No." and he eventually finds real reasons for

driving me to a Service Station on the Motorway

and probably not the nearest.

The market always clears.

The hitch-hiker, somehow, eventually,

is home.

TIMIDITY AND ME

This timid type of human filter,

--filtering drivers

by timidly soliciting "Yes"--

this type of timid filter

who doesn't want to participate

in the drivers'

recognitions and the drivers' decisions

about **The Big Question**,

is not my

natural style of relatedness and happiness.

So mostly, and closest to my joy,

i'm an active hitch-hiker,

agile and happy,

talking with everybody, joking with everybody, bouncing

off everybody. Life is a playful carnival when i'm on the road.

Except, at special moments, when i panic.

Here's a driver just finished paying Eric.
He's approaching the exit door
outside of which i am standing, just alongside my rucksack.
He has just this instant passed me,
possibly seeing me looking at him.

(Most times, drivers just come out the door

and

behaving as if i don't exist, continue their trek to their car,

thinking of other things.

For them, i have to be outrightly audacious.)

With speed and boldness

i intercept him,

stop him in his path,

force his recognition of me,

confront him

with my preliminary song and dance,

...and, then.. pose **The Big Question**.

And, now,

i receive for the fifth time, the same response,

"I'd take you if i were going far.

I'm only going to Charles DeGaule airport."

THE TRUTH GROWS LARGE

UNTIL IT BECOMES INESCAPABLE.

AN UNDESIRED REALITY

INTERCEPTS ME.

"Fucking hell. Nobody's going further than the airport."

And I think there's a Service Station

just 5 kilometers beyond the airport.

But nobody is going further than the airport.

And many, too many, are taking the next exit.

This is mostly 'local traffic':

This Petrol Station is mostly a local convenience.

That which i cannot use now is 'local traffic'.

Such traffic will circulate within Paris forever

and i want to leave Paris now.

By the low 90's of their number plates, I can recognize local traffic.

My fate here is linked to the intercity car.

I'm dependant on the intercity crowd.

I have intercity goals right now.

Maybe that's the nature of life?

I could have said,

"My fate here is linked to the intracity car.

I'm dependant on the intracity crowd.

I have intracity goals right now."

But i didn't because

i have intercity goals right now.

i have stake in a biased reality.

But my intercity goals seem to be

out of reach from this Service Station;

my biased reality, a present insanity.

I go inside the Station,

and pose a query to Eric who responds,

"Ohh Yeah. Yesterday was the last day to buy petrol

before the added tax comes into effect.

So everybody filled up yesterday."

I should have known what that meant when he said that.

He's mostly talking about the local traffic.

But i didn't pick that up

and i go out to do a stint of hitch-hiking,

and receive the same two answers:

"I'm going to the Airport. I'll take you if you want to go,"

or

"I'm getting off the next exit. "

So i pop again into Eric's domain,

and tell him of my findings:

that "no-one is going beyond DeGaulle."

"Ohh Yes", he says.

"They've built a new motorway which goes north.

This station is no longer used."

HOPE SPRINGS ETERNAL

And now,

i had to confront suddenly

a truth

that another hour or two

of whatever i might do

could not alter:

"**My favorite hitching place has become a fucking dead-end.**"

Fucking Hell.

What am i now going to do?

I have to get back to Brighton in two day's time.

In my hitch-hiking plans,

i never considered other transport solutions.

I didn't search out the buses that, for a whack of money,

would carry my body from Paris to London.

Perhaps, i should have put more energy into that?

All my eggs went into the hitch-hiking basket.

My only backup

is a very costly, one-way train ticket.

Fucking Hell!.

But still the cars and trucks are roaring by.

They all can't be going to the airport!

There must be a few going further.

And a certain percentage of this few,

no matter how small,

must have been given, in the last few minutes, a need

by

The Cosmos:

petrol

or something else

this deadened Services can offer.

Relying on this meagerest of chances,

i return to doggedly asking everybody for a lift.

And the same two answers are repeated and repeated.

Except for

two cars which went too far.

They actually didn't know

they had passed through Paris.

They were going back the other way.

Fucking Hell.

This is a dead-end.

I'll have to take the train.

Which means i have to get back to the center of Paris.

What a drag!

I'll try some more.

Maybe the dice

are not so perfectly loaded

against me?

THE COSMOS RESPOND

A guy pulls over to the side of the forecourt,

gets out,

makes a quick-step, round-trip to Eric in the Service Station

and then, gets behind the wheel and starts to

gun his motor.

i run over, intercept him and perform for him

my preliminary dance and my preliminary song

and he, in return,

gushes out,

" **You are completely in the wrong spot.**

Everybody is now taking a new motorway

that meets up with this one just beyond De Gaulle airport.

But i'll take you to your best place. Porte de la Chapelle."

With a hesitant and idiot response, i ask him,

"Is that in Paris?"

which i do in order to gain time

and think, and be able to say

--when he says, "**Yes. It's in Paris**"--

"**Yeah. Why not? I got to get out of here**."

And away i run to return with my wheeled ruck-sack

and take my seat alongside

this helpful guy.

He tells me that he is the local,

'**Supervisor of Motorway Service Station Constructions**'.

The Cosmos might have sent the best adviser that i can have

for the rut i am in.

But it's not sure.

People who are not hitch-hikers do not necessarily know

all the hitch-hikers' problems.

After all,

Eric must think that i finally did get a lift

beyond DeGaulle Airport.

I didn't tell him why i was leaving.

I left like any successful hitch-hiker.

So the next hitch-hiker,

who wants to hitch-hike from his Station,

will receive the same 'helpful aid' he had given me.

Unknowingly, he is hurting us.

But i am also responsible.

I should have ran into the Station and told him why i was leaving

before i left.

It would have taken 30 seconds more.

But i was in an irrational hurry.

I was irrationally frightened of losing this lift:

that he might drive off without me

--something that never, ever happened to me,

once a "Yes" was given--

I was thinking only of myself.

Not of the other hitch-hikers who will come after me.

Don't i want to aid them?

Can i not control my irrational panic to aid them?

I don't like myself

when i bow to my irrational fears

and think only of myself.

It makes me feel very little, petty.

THE COSMOS

RETURNS ME TO SQUARE-ONE

"Everybody who hitches NORTH out of Paris,

hitches from the place

i'll take you to."

"But that's the problem", i think to myself.

Hitching

from the standard locations

means

hitching

alongside of ten other hitch-hikers.

And that has its

problems.

Firstly there's a problem for men to get a lift

when a woman is there.

No matter how long you're there,

And no matter how recent she's there,

And no matter where in the queue she is,

the car will stop in front of her,

and the hours, for us men, will pass in semi-despair.

Secondly, there is the explicit competition

when several people are hitching.

In such a situation, i try to enter into

some sort of accord with another hitch-hiker.

"If you get a lift and there is room for another,

will you ask the driver for me. I'll do the same for you."

That is the best i can do, i think.

It creates a comradeship

that truly is lacking

when you find yourself in

a pack of competing, (though unspoken), hitch-hikers.

Another technique is to separate oneself off

from the whole line of hitch-hikers

by going up the road a hundred yards.

Those drivers, who refused to stop,

--because they saw no way round

the unpleasant making of a choice--

seeing a lonely guy

and feeling a little guilty

for not having picked up

someone

from the dotted line of hitch-hikers,

might stop.

So, here i am going back to square one. As though i was a novice.

But its in Paris,

and if square one doesn't work out,

there is always the Metro.

I know, now, where he's going to take me!

It is the standard, uncreative solution!

The solution mated to the self-image of

the classic, side of the road hitch-hiker.

What the Henri Barbusse-no 149 Bus-Service Station solution

saved me from!

Why didn't i think of it at the Service Station, ten minutes ago?,

think of it, instead of the train,

as an alternate solution?

Strange. I had completely forgotten

the ordinary hitch-hiker's solution

for going North out of Paris,

the solution that every once-young Parisian

can offer the

hitch-hiker.

And now we arrive.

He circles to a stop

at a corner of a vaste intersection

of boulevard and motorway spaghetti.

"Right there", he says as he points.

"Right under that car bridge, on the left hand side of the

road.

All the traffic going intercity, northwards,

takes that left hand choice.

And they can easily stop there, too."

I look out

at his solution,

and realise its possibilities.

But it's a side-of-the-road,

beckoning-with-a-sign, style of hitch- hiking.

Maybe there's some better place in this mishmash of traffic?

Yes.

There's the red and green light system that's controlling the flow.

I could stand next to one of them

and, on the red signal,

do my song and dance to the unmoving drivers,

and get a "yes" before the light turns green.

Ahh No.

Its not so good. I have my bulky, bulky rucksack.

The driver has to get out of his car

and unlock the boot

to store my rucksack.

It's too complicated for the little time

the red-light system gives me.

No. I'd better first try the solution given me by

The Supervisor of Service Station Constructions.

BEFORE A GRUELLING PROSPECT

The temperature has jumped downwards a few degrees,

and the wind is blowing a bit harder than at the Service Station.

"I better dress warmly before i start hitching", i say to myself.

"This could take several hours."

"I'll put on my heavy sweater",

i decide to myself,

as i make my way to the left side of the left mouth of traffic.

I step on the 30 foot-long slab of concrete sidewalk

adjacent to the roaring, absorbing mouth

into which the mess of traffic plunges,

and stop and pause and look around.

No one is here. Thank God. No hitch-hiking competition.

Competition drives my spirit downwards.

I don't know how to handle competition.

I talk with it and manage a warmth that's just skin deep.

This ambivalent, emotional reaction,

to my fellow hitch-hikers,

does my sense of righteousness in.

I am confronted with a me whom i don't like.

I better

get my sweater out from the rucksack

and also get my notebook out

and draw a large, visible, colorful sign

on one of its pages,

like

"**GOING NORTH?**

I'M FOR CALAIS."

I get my sweater out,

and also my notebook.

I have not yet got out my colour pens, when,

all of a sudden,

as i am shutting my rucksack's major compartment,

a big, black car with a smiling, round-faced driver

drops out of the noise-booming, rushing fluid

and slowly rolls friendily up to my perch

and stops his car.

For a moment, i assume he has broken down or something.

But he's still smiling at me

even after i do my preliminary song and dance.

"**I am a hitch-hiker.**

I am going to Calais.

Are you going in my direction?"

But he's been smiling throughout my performance,

and throughout my performance

bobbing

Yes

with his head,

from before its beginning till even after its finish

smiling

and

bobbing **Yes** with his head.

He pops out of his car to open the boot for my dear rucksack.

I jump in, and away we go.

"**How far are you going?**" i automatically question.

"**Don't worry. I'm going North and it's good for you,**"

he confidently answers.

"**Can you leave me off**

at the last Service Station

before you leave the motorway?"

"**Sure. If you want me to**."

"**Do you know the last Service Station?**"

Sure. No problem. You'll be dropped exactly there."

Now, that i know that he will do me well,

i relax

and almost can't believe my luck.

"**You picked me up even before i put out my sign.**

I wasn't there for more than 30 seconds."

I give him a friendly tap on his shoulder nearest me.

"I really thank you."

and tell him my day's hitch-hiking story

but make it short. We have lot's of other things to talk about.

THE JOY OF HITCH-HIKING

So, away we speed.

And talk.

He's the managing director of a porcelain manufactury.

He's going to meet a client.

His company sells plates and cups and such like things.

The industry measures the amounts sold in tons.

The clients are charged by the piece.

And what clients he has.

Big institutions.

The French Army is one. But the Army's budget is down 30%.

So business is difficult now.

Also, some Eastern European firms,

using cheap, East European,

labor,

are undercutting the prices

with not such good goods, but good enough.

From powdered dried-clay

pressure-stamped by powerful, by powerful machines,

the plates are made.

Here's a guy who is in contact with his instincts.

Firstly, he feels the truth of a position

and, secondly, then he reasons.

He likes to be clear about things.

We entertain one another through our conversation.

Somehow, we get to define ourselves.

I am a man,

culpable

for having left his daughter

by leaving his family.

But i don't suffer from guilt feelings at all.

He is a man,

culpable

for participating in business meetings

at restaurant tables.

"Somehow, i think business and pleasure shouldn't mix.

It corrupts the business transaction", he tells me.

We were sailing along at high speed

and i felt so worldly comfortable

that i turned my experienced and helpful attention

from the menacing surrounds which high speeds create,

entirely to him and chatted,

and he from time to time would look my way with a smile.

He is an optimist.

"**The glass is half-full**,"

he tells me,

"and not

half-empty."

The disarming nature of this guy makes me like him.

He is, after all, my marvelous angel of salvation.

Before i saw him,

in the pose i was then contorting,

--preparing myself

for the great endurance test of my voyage--

he selected me.

I could have been seen as a very untogether, confused beggar-man

raking through his wheeled sack of possessions

for something or other.

I was not evidently a hitch-hiker.

I wasn't asking anything of anybody at that time

and yet he came over to me

and knew exactly what i wanted,

and **"Yes"**, he can and will aid me.

Such is the magical hitching power of Porte de la Chapelle.

Such is the magical power of this marvelous angel.

Such is the Cosmos laughing.

And then isn't

that Director of Service Station Constructions

another angel of my salvation?

It was he that fetched me out of

the dry well

and posed me at the mouth of this navigable river.

And if that be the case,

and

two angels within me are made,

then,

aren't they the gift

also, of my difficulties, today?;

and, also,

--the last, and most unexpected gift it ever gave me--

of MY PARIS SERVICE STATION?

WHAT IS GOOD?

WHAT IS BAD?

THE WORLD CHANGETH.

THE COSMOS LAUGH.

After more than two hours of mutual enjoyment,

he,

who is culpable

--mixing business with pleasure--

leaves

me,

who is culpable

--having left a daughter--,

leaves me

50 kilometres south of Calais, just south of Bethune.

"Thanks a lot" , i make a point to tell him.

"This is one of the most thankful lifts i've ever had.

After the morning's frustration and energy loss,

before i could signal that i was hitch-hiking, you

offered me a lift. And what a lift! Two hundred miles or so!"

To this he answered,

"**I used to hitch-hike when i was young,**"

and off he drives to his business lunch,

and off i walk to the Station's Services

to hitch further and further away from my daughter,

having seen her in Toulouse.

HITCH-HIKING TIME

This Station's Services are empty.

My wait here, easily, can stretch into hours.

The traffic is so thin.

I know this type of small Station.

On all the French motorways i've travelled,

only at this extreme, narrow, unbranching end

--where the traffic is mostly Calais bound--

can you encounter motorway Stations so small.

They are the only ones whose toilet space

is bigger than their showroom space of their goods on sale.

There are about three of them. Small like this.

The crowded showroom

snuggly surrounds the electronic cash box

--eighty percent of whose money intake comes from petrol sales-

The vast spectrum of offerings

--beyond a pleasant display of sweets--

includes

an open, serve-yourself refrigerator

--with cold, bottled drinks--

and a robot which takes money

for its hot,

coffees and teas and soups.

This robot, as 'Homo Economicus' ---'Economic Man'---

is multifold, more valuable than me.

I am a horrendously frugal consumer.

As a producer, i am an expendable resource.

And i do like to hitch-hike.

3 STRIKES AGAINST ME

in my struggle for present survival.

I mention such considerations

to lay firm appreciation

for the level of humility, i must here enact.

I am standing in Business Territory.

This particularly small Service Station

is a business, founded on much need, and a touch of temptation.

"**Have another sweety dear. It will be good for you!**"

and the uphit

that coffee gives to the tired.

I have to be real nice to the station managers

at these types of

stations.

He and i might spend several hours together

in this very small, goods-for-sale-crowded room.

Outside, the wind-chill factor has become serious.

I don't want to spend more than the time needed

to pose my BIG QUESTION

to each driver

taking petrol from the pump,

or walking back to his car.

For, i feel obliged

to conduct my business outside.

and if the answer is negative,

to re-enter quietly, reverently, the manager's life's space.

Because he hasn't spoken to me at all,

dodging away from my offers of conversation,

I have to be real nice, tread real lightly, for this particular manager.

I better tune-in to what he is doing,
dissipate any doubts he might have
about my presence amidst his interests.
I'm here to be of service, if i can.
I am in a situation of cumulative indebtedness
as the minutes tick on.

He continues to busy himself.
He hasn't stopped since i've gotten in.
As though he's running away from conversation.
I won't press him. I'll be as light as a feather.
I'll have a paper cup of expresso from the robot
and, thereby, prove that i understand the social rules
and that i share the common temptations.

I'm in the same situation as being a hitch-hiker in a car.
But, at this Station now,
i am hitch-hiking TIME
and not SPACE.
Does this mean
that
when i am a hitch-hiker in a car
speeding in the direction i want to go,

i am actually, also,

hitch-hiking TIME?

Of course, Yes.

The world-space inside the speeding car

and

the world-space inside the immobile service station,

are

not of **2** distinct, separable stuffings,

but are ultimately of inseparable, identical stuff,

distinguished by unimportant ephemera.

They are ultimately **1.**

And i am smuggling my SPACE-TIME into them both,

fusing with them both.

i am hitch-hiking.

And the **YES**-saying driver --if he be humble enough--

would see that

one of his own, internal SPACE-TIME WORLDS

is hitch-hiking, smuggling into,

the world space

made by his car and this stranger, me.

Whose driving anyhow?

'The Car'

'The Driver'

or 'Me'?

Or, why should i attribute special status to a car's TIME?

Am i not always in my own, LOCAL SPACE-TIME?

When particulars change,

to coincide with one of the infinite varieties

of SPACE-TIME the cosmos offers me,

why should i care?

Another particular will follow,

whatever i do.

Perhaps, a particular beyond my wildest dreams?

Enough of all this flimsy, flamsy!

I'm a hitch-hiker, obliged

to get my ass to Brighton, England

quick-time.

Standardized, Tick-Tock Time

and

Ordinance-Survey-Map Space

are cracking the whip, calling the tunes.

State-kept Tick-Tock-Time,

State-kept Ordinance-Survey-Space

are reaping their harvest.

The mice must scramble for the owner's have returned.

Cindarella's midnight is beginning to clang.

FREEDOM AND OPPORTUNITY

VERSUS THE PLAN

I know i have given up my freedom

in accepting such institutionalised space-time constraints.

Indeed, i have never, for share pleasure, hitch-hiked intercity.

And in so far as i haven't done that,

i haven't burst the bounds of

the societally-defined 'hitch-hiker'

--who always is going to a particular somewhere--

and truly leap into the emptiness

from which all things take their beginnings.

There have been many, many occasions

in my hitch-hiking life

in which i have had an opportunity to jump

from my pre-planned path

and follow an offer.

On nearly every trip, there is an offer.

On this return part of my voyage,

as i was going north on the motorway up from Toulouse,

fusing with the North-bound traffic

roaring upward

from the Italian andFrench Riviera,

as i was hitch-hiking at a Station

just South of the turnoff for Charmonix

--the same ski-resort as

those young un's at Calais were hitching to-

i met

a team of three video makers

on their way to this same ski resort, Charmonix.

They were going to do some filming up there.

My preliminary song and dance

must have impressed them.

The director really wanted me to accept a lift with them.

His solid confidence was clearly there for me to see.

He radiated his success in an easy and confident style.

Somehow, he caught something attractive in my being.

Why didn't i go with them,

propose a deal to work with them for no cash but lots of learning?

And wouldn't those hitchiking young un's be surprised at seeing me?

And wouldn't they be of aid, if aid i needed?

Charmonix? Dare i?

"NO. Not this time. I must go quickly to Paris," i, illogically, reasoned to myself

as i have done hundreds of times before.

And yet, there were no 'musts'.

"I'm sorry i can't go with you," i feebly expressed to them.

Ahh. Life was on offer

and i was too foolish, even to hesitate.

There's always invitations to take another path.

Follow the wind.

And if your light enough, you will be as the wind.

So that on every trip

an invitation will occur,

which seems promising and adventurous.

Hah. Advice is easy.

I never have truly, truly leapt.

i never have accepted complete freedom.

I'll try to sometime in the future just go off and wander.

Be open to the offers.

Wander to wherever.

PRESSING ON

But now i have a goal squeezing me.

It grabs me all of a sudden.

When i'm getting interested in something else,

it says,

" Time to get going. Time to be off."

I got to get to Calais Port.

Two spanish lorry drivers have sort of tumbled in, making it

pretty crowded as they stand next to me, talking, talking.

They are too wrapped-up in talking to each other,

really enjoying each other,

to think about what has to be done here,

what social graces to exhibit,

what purchases to make.

They are at ease and they talk and enjoy talking.

One of them brushes passed me,

squeezing in to the narrow space

between

the robot machine

which exchanges hot drinks for money

and my body

as my body is pressing itself against the cash register's counter.

"The toilet is bigger than this showroom"

i would have joked to him,

in spanish

if i could.

I was amazed when i had first entered the toilet.

It was as large a toilet as you would expect

in a fairly large Service Station.

And well looked after.

The spanish drivers are now drinking their coffees,

and continuing their easy chat chit.

They're really enjoying their conversation.

They're probably together in the same lorry,

so there'll be no room for me.

But i'll just chat a bit with them in my Spanish.

"**Hola. Tonto soy jo. Amigo del fuego y tomatos**

y, la mas fuerte de todos mis deseos,

es la obsession que

soy autostoppo con siblo unico:

estar al Puerto de

Calais!"

Any way, i want to practice my spanish.

Maybe i want to prove myself to the Station manager?

Maybe, i want to lie to you, the reader?

Maybe, i stammered out some other approximate gibberol

which, more or less, served

as a spanish translation of

The Big Question?

The truth is as i had divined.

They are in the same lorry. There is no room.

They are going to Great Britain.

BINGO!

I got a feeling that nearly everybody

who walks into this petrol station's showroom

is going

to where i want to go,

Calais Port,

and going with a rush that i want to share.

Some other drivers come and go.

Lightheartedly i press my needs.

I let them enter and get adjusted to the atmosphere.

I feel like a millionaire.

All the signs flashing

"No further problems now."

The next lift is Calais Port.

I won't take less.

And there's four hours yet of daylight..

If a guy doesn't decide to pop a drink

and hang around invitingly,

i'll open the door for him and follow him out

and catch up to him by his eighth step

and do my song and dance to him alone.

But nothing goes.

But i don't care. I'm well placed. I'm sure to get a lift, soon.

A young guy between 25 and 30 years old

is at the petrol pump.

The car's plate is foreign.

I go up to him and, speaking in French,

do my preliminary song and dance.

He doesn't answer; as though he is confused.

I ask, but now in English,

"**Do you speak English?**"

"Yes...i am studying in an English university.

I'm going to London"

and he says this with a European accent i can't identify.

"Hey... Could i go with you? I'm hitch-hiking."

"**Sure.**."

And this part of the hitch-hike i will not detail.

I become, for this young man, an older acquaintance

who had once, also, studied economics in London.

Yes. This hitchhike was unique;

i, the hitch-hiker, felt older than the driver.

Usually, i am so attentive to the driver and his interests,

that i lose my sense of me, and become me,

as i was, at my beginnings,

when everybody was more important than me.

I become the young kid watching men working,

standing and watching

with great concentration

and asking them questions

and trying to learn how things are done.

There was psychic room in my family for me, the youngest, to do

that..

At three in the afternoon,

i am walking London's streets.

One minute from the Underground station, Mile End,

and thirty minutes from

my friend John's digs at Highbury-Islington,

to which i have the keys,

and, from there,

an Underground

eight minute

paid train-ride

and then a **paid** bus-ride

two hours distant from

Brighton.

I am not a purist.

I play the waves.

CHAPTER 4

FRUITS OF THE WILD FOREST

THE IMPERMANENT SHEBANG

I have to tell you about an evil guy i met on this hitch-hiking trip.

i just said

"I have to tell you about an **evil guy** i met on this hitch-hiking trip",

and realize

i am speaking as though i believe,

with a bit of joyful
animosity,

this **other being**, in part,

can be absolutely pinned
down by me:

a true sub-component

of invariant him

perceived
by

clear-
seeing

invariant
me

can be held in my mind's
hand.

As though my encounter with him

had distilled

an **unchanging,** evil, solid part of him.

As though
this

m
a
l
i
g
n

i
n
v
a
r
i
a
n
t

c
a
p
t
u
r
e
d

b
y

m
e

c
a
n

s
e
r
v
e

a
s

m
a
t
e
r

i
a
l

f
o
r

a

t
r
u
t
h

(for why else would i
have felt this necessity to
talk to you about him?)

As though

via this invariant,

(evil), solid part of him

can be foreseen

his future, or mine, or yours.

And therefore is important.

As though people were a fixed species of robot.

As though my vision was absolutely faithful.

If

he did 'this'

then

he is 'this'

and, naturally,

therefore,

he will forever be 'this'

But life has taught me

TO DOUBT the power of

'TRUTHS'

of the form

"He is 'this'!"

" He is 'that'!"

Just as i would want people to feel an irritating grain of DOUBT

when one boldly affirms

that i am 'this' and not 'that'

after a short one-hour

encounter with me.

Having scribbled and scribbled descriptions of my life upon notebook pages for more than four decades as an explorer notches the trees in an unknown forest so that he will not go in circles,

life confronts me with

one important, BIG truth

a
b
o
u

t

human 'truths'.

i am 'this' and not 'that'

is a type of truth

that holds no predictive value.

As quick as it is said,

this

has already started its voyage

to **that**

More subtle happenings are happening.

The Truth-Judgement Function

of

The Universal Shebang,

(if there be a logic explaining **IT**,)

varies in time,

or, is so unstable

that a microscopic variation

in circumstance

alters it.

Every person i ever condemned for doing something 'horrendous',

that 'very same' form of 'horrendous act'

i, later,

with passionate-felt integrity,

with passionate-felt honesty,

in another social circumstance,

found myself doing.

This is such an important result of my research

that i must say it over again

in order to impress into your being its
revelatory truth.

Indeed,

it is the greatest personal truth i have ever discovered

in my nearly 60 years of

search.

Every person i ever condemned for doing something

'horrendous',

that 'very same' form of 'horrendous act'

i, later,

with passionate-felt integrity,

with passionate-felt honesty

in another social circumstance,

found myself doing.

I, once, robbed an old lady.

It was just before i was to hitch-hike to Africa,

with hardly enough money

for both

four
months'
living

and

money
enough

f
o
r

t
h
e

r
e
t
u
r
n
.

I was a bit tight on that money level

and so i had been hesitating for weeks

to dive off into great adventure land...

for i was planning to go all the way down to Ghana

to meet friends there

to do, together, something GOOD for the universe..

One quiet, sunny morning,

as i am wandering through some vacant streets in London,

i spot on the pavement,

and pick up

a

wallet.

It contains a heavy amount of money.

It absolutely insures me going to Africa.

In the wallet, there is also identification,

addresses, pictures, everything that would be

needed to return the money to its true owner

--an old woman, not seemingly rich.

There is also a bill for her wedding dress;

her daughter is getting married.

The cost of the wedding dress corresponds to

the amount of money in the wallet.

I am certain that the loss of this money for

this woman would be a great one.

Did i give the money back to her?

No. I started for Africa!

If i had not built-up in my head

a sense of mission,

a sense of going down to Africa to do a specific, important GOOD,

would i have done the robbery?

Or,

if i had not come across

the perplexing wisdom,

SIN

IS

THE FIRST RUNG

OF

HOLINESS,

would i have robbed, then,

an old, poor woman of some joy?

If life were only clean and neat,

i would have been able to return the dosh

with adequate recompense, her smile of thankfulness.

The Universal Shebang

has no intrinsic moral orientation.

Two beings can start out from the same place

in the social map.

And they --though guided by the same moral philosophy--

within some future circumstance

will find themselves

on opposite sides of the barricades.

Therefore, who am i? *A* **harsh** *judgement is asked for.*

A thief? *Again a* **harsh***judgement is asked for.*

Who is she? *A* **soft** *judgement is asked for.*

A pure and innocent old lady? *Again a* **soft** *judgement is asked for.*

How else make a condemnatory judgement of me?

But can we say anything with absolute certainty?

If all is change, how legitimate are condemnations affecting the future?

To defend against such abominations of thought,

there has been brought into existence

the antidote,

THE GOD

OF

JUDGEMENTS AND LEGITIMACY

JUDGES pray to such a GOD.

JUDGEMENTS

to injure another being's future

because of some past happening

must be magically legitimated.

JUDGES entering the place of judgement

must possess **NO DOUBT**

as to **THEIR RIGHTS**.

Stand up! The person possessing RIGHTS is entering!

He has a **GOD** on his side.

A TYRANNICAL GOD on his side!

A sensitive once said,

'Judge not so that ye be not judged;

For whosoever judgeth, so shall he be judged.

Someone else, MORE MODERN AND LESS GENERAL, once said,

'Being a Court Judge is a form of mental illness.'

I presume to have no RIGHTS over others.

I have given up the hard touch.

I can command no one.

I am the lowest man on the Social Totem Pole.

Perhaps, that's why i hitch-hike.

It situates me in my most comfortable position.

I am the lowest man on the Social Totem Pole

and yet i am a success.

Do you doubt that i am a success?

Have i not, for nearly 60 years,

got enough to eat, and escaped being eaten?

I robbed her and accepted the human burden

--whatever it be-- for this robbery.

I consciously took **the sin** on my own heart.

I wanted also, then, to understand **what sin is**.

I was young, but old enough to know that deep knowledge

is only gained first hand.

This was **the** biggest **sin** i had committed till then.

It fell into my lap and i couldn't say "No!"

I had become a thief

of a poor person,

at 35 years old.

THE QUANTUM THEORY OF FLEETING ENCOUNTERS

A righteous upstanding citizen might now, at this very moment,come ambling up to this 'me',

and turn around

and looking at you, the readers,

smilingly say

"**He...**", pointing at me, " ... **is a thief!**"

And you all might grin and up-and-down wag your heads in agreement.

And i am, from that moment forward,

'a thief'

and not

'a good person'.

Or, a friend hurts my pride

and i fall into the easy judgement:

"**He is a fucking dominator!**",

and distribute my attack on his reputation to one and all,

and grow rigidly cold to him

and refuse to speak to him

ever again.

Is this what i risk believing in?

A world in which

i have to renounce forever

the infinite other possible beings he is in life?

A world in which

he will have to renounce forever

the infinite other beings i, potentially, am in life?

Who am i?

i was ONCE 'this' and ONCE was 'not this'.

Who am i?

I am 'this' here and playing 'that' there.

Who am i?

Who is he?

Who is this 'evil guy' i met on this trip?

Who is any he or she i meet in my life?

Can i say more than

She is an usher for me

providing possible access to the million, billion rooms

which life opens to her alone.

Who am i?

An access route for another being

to the million billion rooms

which life offers to me alone.

Can they or i be more VALUABLE than that?

Would i want to condemn forever such keys to the infinite?

WHAT IS THIS HITCH-HIKING SITUATION anyhow?

A 'multi he' and a 'multi i'

encounter

through a particular circumstance, 'hitch-hiking'.

In the first half-minute, or sooner,

each of our multiplicities

resonatingly collapse to 'oneness'.

Our pair of onesses jog along together

for a small, small interval,

enjoying each other,

playing a small, small role in the other's cosmic multiquest.

I get one fleeting flavor of him as he gets one fleeting flavor of me.

Not more.

But maybe that's as much as one can expect

in 'fleeting encounters'?

Then, again, what are permanent encounters?

I am nearly 60 years old.

My father has shed his mortal cloak.

My older brother --my first mentor-- also..

Two of my long-time, best friends also..

My body is changing. I am inside the human rhythmn.

I am certain of my ultimate impermanence.

Doesn't this understanding

effect who i shall be?

My father told me and showed me

the last age is the sweetest time in life.

The culmination.

The summary.

That which gives meaning to it all.

Doesn't this parental blessing

--coming after forty years of my life--

effect 'the who' i shall be

in the future?

'the who' i was in the past?

'the who' i am in the present?

changing and fleeting

are our lives

PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE.

MY ONLY DEMAND

Hitch-hiking is a special sort of 'fleeting encounter'.

Almost before it begins,

both parties consciously know

where and about when it will end.

In fact, this mutually contracted constraint

is the first, and, hopefully, only demand

that i make upon the

driver.

Though i have just gotten a "Yes" to The Big Question,

and my rucksack is in the car's boot,

and i've just seated myself in the seat adjacent to the driver,

and fixed the seat belt about me --if there is one--

and i should be bursting with excitement,

i contain that excitement

till

we have settled upon

a mutual agreement

as to where he will drop me

-- at the exact Service Station he will leave me--.

The formula --as i might already have told you-- is,

"I want you to leave me at the last Service Station

before you leave the motorway.

Do you know that Service Station?"

And many smilingly say

"Yes, no problem!" and we are off.

And others say,

"i don't know exactly",

and that's when i know

that i have to be my own, very, very responsible,

navigator.

Before he starts to gun the motor,

or with it just idling,

i hope to look at a map and determine exactly

where begins the crucial terminating stretch of motorway

in which our hitch-hike together shall end.

Any Service Station in that crucial stretch is good for me.

That settled, i lean back

on the comfortable cushioned chair of the car

or

on the upright regality

of the lorry's 2nd driver's chair,

on high,

and...

look out the window

at the passing countryside

--no trees and plenty of cultivated fields--

and this driver

--with seven years of experience on international routes--

introduces himself to me as an 'Ecologist'

and raps about the passing countryside:

"Did you see that fox?

Do you know there are twenty hunters now for one

fox?

Its absurd.

I gave up my gun. I bought myself a camera.

There's too many of us humans on the earth.

A plague is what is needed.

And that means deaths in all our families.

Otherwise, all the animals will be destroyed.

and then,

we'll soon destroy ourselves.

We need a real, human calamity to save us."

A light-hearted, deeply sincere encounter with
someone whom i might never have met.
someone whom i will never see again.

Perhaps, these two qualities preserve the conversation's lightheartedness?

We, hitch-hiker and driver,
are not preparing to act together in two weeks or two years
or two days.
No conspiracies are contracted hitch-hiking.

The hitch-hiker and the driver are somewhat
in life together
but,
the two of them,
sitting alongside each other
in what they both know to be a unique happening,
are also not in life together.

In an hour, they will never see one another again.
A love affair doomed from its very first minute,
accompanied by invisible tears from its very first minute.
"This shall end." "This shall end."

(But, what shall stay? What shall stay?)

How best act in such a circumstance,

where the death of the present is a guarantee?

"All, all is flux on the road.

Hitch-hikers can hold onto nothing."

I retain memory. A type of pseudo-reality.

How best act in such a circumstance?

GIFTS, **GIFTS GIFTS**

Give each other gifts,

and quickly leave. No lamentations for the inevitable.

Feel the pain, but do not mourn.

Act

as though this car-room or lorry-cabin is

a detached, observation booth

looking out upon

The Universal Shebang.

This detachment renders us bodyless.

Interchanging knowledges in this observation

booth

is

a sacred service,

an importation from

the

Infinite.

There are no gains beyond the present

to distort our mutual honesty.

We give each other gifts:

honest feelings

about things and happenings

learnt in our disjoint lives.

We exchange our unique creations, our wisdoms.

And, via some cosmic recognition system within each of us,

the driver and the hitch-hiker

know

that the free, exchange of these feelings and knowledges,

is,

somehow,

aiding The Universal Shebang;

that we are participating in something holy.

.... SOME GIFTS ....

LOVE'S POWER

One of the lay leaders of a very religious sect,

--a businessman

whose patrons were mostly from the sect--

picked me up and eventually told me

that he, married though he is,

is having an affair

with a married woman,

a member
of his sect.

Though they tried, they could not stop seeing each other.

He did not know what to do?

Disaster was necessarily in front of them.

I only listened ••••

A young, French guy tells me

that he was part of a crack military commando.

They

had,

a year or two ago, flown
in

t
o

a
n

A

f
r
i
c
a
n

c
a
p
i
t
a
l

c
i
t
y
,

and, in lightning-fashion, captured the city militarily,

and

forced The President of the country

to bend

to the will of

The President

of

The French Republic.

POST SCRIPT ---he added.

The commandos' actions were never reported

by The
Media,

though the change in policy

of the African President

was••••

CLASS

Long, long ago,

when i had just begun to live in Great Britain

as a young, successful academic,

sporting an American accent

more visible

than a luminescent, orange top-hat,

a very smart-dressed woman of a certain age,

told me in a very studied English accent:

"We Ahhhrr not like you Americans.

Here, in England, we have 'CLAhhSS'!"

Hitching, way back then,

and everybody happily recognizing me to be an American,

--and Americans, then,

were all thought rich,

and, ALSO, liked a lot--

i ran into a topguy in Top-Business.

A member of 'The In Group'.

He told me,

that if you are 'In' in England,

and you got into financial difficulties,

you would be aided by a

£1,000,000 loan at 1% interest,

payable in 100 years.

POST SCRIPT

At that time, bank interest for punters

was not less than 5%.

If the money were simply put in a bank,

it would generate

a clear profit of about £800 per week.

State Unemployment Aid for the common person

--what he or she had to live on for the ENTIRE week--

was then £5.

"**We are not like you Americans.**

Here, in England, we have 'CLAhhSS'!" ....

Weaknesses

Occasionally,

i come across some driver who

has nothing to say to me,

and trying to engage him

is met with hardly a response.

I ask myself, "Why did he take me?"

I am dropped into an undesired time

in which

I must be a prisoner inside my own head.

He demands nothing further of mute me than

to **SIT AND WAIT** for my stop

and then get out.

He does not allow me to work off my debt to him. I am made

uncomfortable.

Language-dead in the extreme,

was a guy

who had been driving trucks internationally

for the same company

for thirty years.

He seemed to not know how to formulate a thought.

He had not enough practice.

His voice,

the few times that he did risk replying to a question of mine,

faulted out only fragments of a sentence. A couple of words.

I felt he was more comfortable not talking.

His flicker of social life was extinguished. He hid from discovery.

He has made himself a truck driver. Nothing else.

I hope i am wrong.

He,

as i portrayed him,

--the hypothetical, permanent, objective
'he'

whose

existence i doubt--

never will sing, never will dance.

The cocooned life

of the international lorry driver,

--alone, for days on end, in his noisy,
droning cab

EXCEPT

for the hitch-hikers he picks up--

can insulate him from active, human contact.

Unhappilly, it also can keep him from the possibilty

of breaking through into contact highs.

Cocooned,

For thirty years, cocooned.

I hope not.

There are many unique flowers in the forest. •••• •••• •••• ••••

THE GREATEST INSANITY I HAVE ever ENCOUNTERED

A Spanish truck driver

said "**Yes**"

at

The Dream Motorway Station

200 kilometers North of Paris

to take me beyond Paris to nearly Bordeaux.

My goal was Toulouse and Paris was my big obstacle.

The time was **the time of the World Olympics**.

A good-sized television set

in working mode

was perched on the controls panel in my corner of the cabin.

Every now and then

he would turn his face to the television

and

gaze,

mentally exchanging

physical time

--the time of our corporeal bodies

in which body injuries can be explained--

for

television time,

Virtual Reality time.

What a dangerous situation i found myself in.

A crucial second in an Olympic race

could retain his interest

and

allow him unawares to get mentally lost in it.

We were belting along. A second was a long time on this motorway.

So,

i keenly watched the road.

I knew i was in great danger.

I was hardly 'just a passenger'.

I had been transformed into a frightened
co-pilot.

The other end of Paris, at a Station on the main Bordeaux motorway,

happy to be intact, i got out.

I had risked

and lived
to tell it

•••• ••••

••••

COWBOYs and HITCH-HIKERs

International truck drivers,.

are at home one weekend every two weeks.

Sometimes more. Sometimes less.

For them, making a family requires

a loving wife

who can live with such conditions and not feel cheated.

His inability to be home,

is the greatest cause of problems for the young driver.

His young wife or girl friend,

after a day's work, wants to go out at night.

And that spells p r o b l e m s.

Yet, this moving, cowboy life, on the road,

is felt as freedom and enjoyed.

With no boss over one's head.

With money jingling in the pocket..

With bunk space for sleeping, just behind him.

With all matter of music entertainment and radio to listen to.

With sole captainship over

a difficult, responsible, and well-paying task.

And when it finishes,

a return to the mysterious woman

--not debunked by life's day-in, day-out details--

waiting.

What could be lacking?

And the answer echos: People. People.

And i answer, **Hitch-hikers. Hitch-hikers.**

PRACTICALITIES

But Insurance Companies

threaten all the other companies

with the misery of their littleness:

'A passenger allowance costs more to insure.'

They know they can make more money with this rule.

But **this rule surely doesn't decrease accidents**.

It probably causes more accidents.

To the benefits of having a non-necessary passenger,

the business mentality and insurance calculations are blind.

Why did the driver say "Yes" ?

Why did the driver,

decide it would be good for him to have

someone alongside him,

chatting?

Is it possible that

there are MANY LESS accidents

when hitch-hikers are also in the cab or car,

than

when the driver is alone?

Is it possible that people

healthily decide to say "Yes" to a hitch-hiker

because they feel a need

for a little relief from the solitude

and boredom

of the motorway routes?

If they don't get that relief,

aren't they more likely

to be in an accident?

POSTSCRIPT

ENERGY TRANSFER

ABOUT TWENTY YEARS AGO,

Christine and myself were driving Michele's van

up from Marakesh in Morocco to Toulouse in France.

We had crossed the Straits at Algeciras and

were making our way northwards towards Madrid.

I had a lapsed New York driver's license,

so Christine was the only driver.

She is an excellent driver. And we are in love.

When you're driving several thousand miles,
five days of nearly non-stop driving,
you've got to develop techniques to handle
the menace, '**Driver Fatigue**'.

We solved it in two ways:
We slept well during the night.
And we devised this technique:
When Christine was beginning to feel sleepy,
I would go in the back and take a
nap.
When i awoke,
i would return to my seat alongside her
and begin to rap about things
that i knew interested her.
I pumped out energy through conversation
and she absorbed this energy through the
conversation.
And so on we travelled. Christine's batteries had been
recharged.

This technique amazed both of us.
How can it be that energy is actually transmitted
from her to me by conversation?

But something else occurred which gave us

complete proof of this interhuman energy-transfer

phenomena.

At one point, about 600 kilometers south of Madrid,

--on a road with roadstones telling the exact distance from

Madrid--

Christine had come to the end of her energies.

She was whacked out of her head with tiredness.

So we began a search for a siding in order to sleep.

After about ten minutes we finally found a promising siding.

But, entering it, we discovered it to be

adjacent to a stinking garbage dump. So off again we

go,

in search of a spot to sleep, when... on the side of the road,

waving

to us,...

are two, young, Spanish women... hitch-hiking to Madrid.

Well, we're young and they're young,

and they excite me and excite Christine,

and we gab away excitedly

all the way to Madrid without a stop.

Christine, Do you remember that?

Where did you get that energy from?

What a proof of energy transfer!

Who dares tell me that hitch-hikers are not needed?

THE KING OF BALSA --an aside.

A month before the energy transfer events described above happened,

Christine and myself had hitched down from Toulouse,

down through all Spain and into Morocco's Atlas Mountains

to live with Berber friends of hers.

Afterwards we hitched to Marrakech

to Michele, a French school-teacher, friend of Christine.

Talking about that era makes it impossible for me

to skip the tale of a French guy who,

on the ferry across the Straits,

reluctantly accepted to give Christine and

myself a lift.

He told us he never gave lifts to anyone.

This was a first for him.

But we both spoke French, and we were young, and,

though dressed rough,

we were clean and evidently 'University Kultured'.

He was dressed in a smart suit;

at the spotless, immaculate level of the British Barrister class.

His car was a super-duper, air-conditioned German sport's car.

For several hundred kilometers, in the dead of the night,

we zoomed along deserted highways.

To have a car in Morocco then, meant something special.

His commentary on the common person was filled with scorn.

He was a Frenchman, with a Moroccan passport,

who only dealt with rich Sheiks.

And this only for business purposes.

He is one of the few persons --very rare in my experience--

who dislikes humanity.

"Just after the second world war", he told us,

" my uncle bought up hectares and hectares of balsa wood

trees.

I went to aid him in his business and it never stopped

growing.

He died and i took over the business.

All the Balsa wood of Morocco i own.

I am the King of Balsa Wood"

He also owned a hotel on the French Riviera.

He was what my friends would call 'stinking rich'.

But his life was not a joy for him. His wife and his son hated him.

They no longer lived together.

All that he had built up was going to be inherited by people who hated him.

This fact tormented him.

And being tormented by a life-situation

amongst the 'successful' makes me recall

this other, very human, French guy,

owner of a clothes factory upon which depended two hundred

families.

He had picked me up on his way to Paris where he lived.

He had been out scouring for business.

"Why do i continue to do it?

I have money enough to retire."

His wife and child, a year before, had left him.

His home, that he was returning to, was empty.

He had worked and worked and made his business a success.

"But for what?," he asked.

INHUMAN CONTRACTS

No person should be forced to be alone.

No contract should demand that.

We are social animals.

We become ill from lack of human contact.

He Says,

"I can't pick you up. Insurance... Insurance.."

and warmly, i vibrate back,

"**I know... i know...**"

According to an inhuman logic,

certain company-lorry drivers,

and certain company-car drivers,

must always refuse to pick up a hitch-hiker.

O
r

e
l
s
e
,

if an accident happens,

and the hitch-hiker sues
the company,

the driver

will almost certainly lose his job, if not
worse.

Some drivers get worried by this menace

and systematically refuse to pick anybody up.

But there are many,

sufficientl y many,

who

don't give

a two-bit fuck

for bullshit restrictions

upon

their

life

in-detail

made by

distant, legal

accountant minds

and greedy, pin-striped

insurance men.

When a driver, as a person, strikes me

through the force of his being,

--the way he bouncingly walks or wisely talks--

then i know, in advance, that he would be ashamed to say,

"**I can't pick you up. Insurance... Insurance...**"

Then i know he will say, "**Yes**".

THE WORLD'S UNSPECIFIED LOSSES

As a person,

trying to be happy,

the lorry driver's greatest weakness

is knowing only his native tongue.

So not speaking French, for the British lorry driver,

means France and its French-speaking population

are to be forever at a distance,

means that the French person is to be mistrusted

because un-understood,

because not deeply
enough encountered,

means that British lorry pickups and deliveries in France

are not
lived

very
happily.

And, symmetrically, the French people,

lose potential British friends

who are living in a very visitable, foreign country.

If information is considered power

in this information-hype time,

then how much more invisibly powerful

is the ability to befriend strangers?

A million times?

I'd say a billion, billion times.

Information gets you to where you want to go.

Acquaintance with a stranger,

takes you

to where you never thought of going.

Everything begins in the unknown, the obscure.

The unknown is the storehouse of future attractions.

Plenty to exchange, because each to each other is strange.

As the hitch-hiker, me, am a stranger to the driver, he,

So he is a stranger to me.

When i --the hitch-hiker-- make contact and get a "**Yes**"

from the driver,

--and our mutual strangeness becomes accessible--

What Joy! What Joy!

Another part of life's puzzle

will be provided each of us

--good children in the garden

of eden--.

And i know, in most cases, this expectant feeling,

though described

differently,

is mutual.

If accessible strangers

provide each other such potential meanings

and pleasure,

then aren't all social barriers

s p i k e d f e n c e s

created to prevent our

trespassing?

to prevent us from eating from

the tree of life?

rules against happiness ?

Huddling together

and signalling to one another,

"**Aren't they peculiar?**"

as a swirling wave of foreigners comes washing in,

is a self-contracting stance.

Rather than rigidly defending the fixed forms of the past,

why not recognize

the beginning of the future?

Maybe its migration time?

Maybe the old solutions are to be set aside?

This is an open ended universe.

Rules are defenses of past achievements.

They, who do not recognize this, suffer a loss without knowing it.

And therefore, doesn't the world lose out

in erecting fortress walls against

the hitch-hiker and the foreigner?

A human encounter is a sacred act

for

from human interchange, how to understand the other, grows;

from human interchange, how to understand oneself, grows.

Think to what a dangerous juncture the human race has come!

One voice,

from a nearly-outcast,

human
type

--hitch-hiker--,

feels sacredly obliged

--because he hears no other like voice, singing--

to warble out argument for

unlimited, accidental, 1 to 1 encounters.

More of ***the unknown***,

in its rich intimacy,

should be risked.

We are at a dangerous juncture,

Wisdom through direct interchange is needed.

Think to what inhuman juncture the human race has come!

He, this hitch-hiker, as a social participant,

is considered marginal,

if not mad, if not dangerous,

while

meaningless, artificial, innocuous,

'STAGE-SHOWS' of acclaimed 'SUPERSTARS'

downstage and mesmerize, nightly, hundreds of millions:

--robbing them of their individualities,

--raping them of their potential futures,

--preparing them to **never** grow up.

Watching T.V. tonight

or going out for a strole?

The progammable
universe

or the unprogrammable?

DEATH or **LIFE**?

What a choice!

What a rut the human race
is in!

What's a rut?

When you don't recognize
a dead-end.

When the finite illusion
seems infinite.

When the imagination of
'a beyond'

doesn't
kick in.

My 'mother-in-law' Mimi and her sister Paulette

were born and lived their youth

in a small, French, Mediterranean town,

surrounded by vineyards.

After work, after dining,

everybody

went outside

--strolling if you were young,

otherwise, sitting in front of your house

and watching and talking.

The whole town was outside a-bubbling.

Now, television has come to the town

--as it has come to all the towns on the French Mediterranean--

and killed the life outside.

Death is what you encounter wandering

their streets now.

Death and a few old guys,

playing 'Boules',

rolling

balls,

refusing in their senile obstinacy to remain in and watch

The Super Stars.

Isn't your home town

becoming an after-work DEAD TOWN

because television is capturing nearly everyone?

What a rut the human race is in!

And for what reason and by what power

has television become our willful conqueror?

What a rut the human race is in!

A CONFIRMING TALE

It was getting late, too late possibly for a food store to be open.

My lorry driver desperately needed something to eat,

like a sandwich and a large bottle of soda water,

so we were searching in panic for any food place.

It must have been a hot, early evening.

The lorry driver had been treating me to a long harangue

on how fucking racist the French are.

He had only problems to recite when he spoke of them.

"The French could do no right!" he upheld as an

absolute truth.

He spoke no French. Not a word.

From this distance in time, i have no idea where we were.

On the motorway, --that seems impossible,

because motorway Services are always open till much

later--

or off. So my memory of this showpiece has lost many

details.

But why i retain even some of its segments

is because

of the tale's ending.

There were lights in front of a shop.

And they were being turned off.

We had come just at the instant of shutdown.

We raced into the store. The owner or manager was behind the counter.

My lorry driver

races over to the open fridge

and grabs a big bottle of red-colored soda water

and races over to the counter, saying

that he, also,wants to buy a sandwich.

The French guy, all the while,

is waving with his hands over his head and shouting,

"**C'est Ferme! C'est Ferme!**"

"**We're closed. We're closed.**"

But the Englishman is not understanding the Frenchman

and the Frenchman ain't listening to the Englishman.

It's all gut-reaction happenings being enacted.

Each knows his part perfectly.

The scene frantically plays itself out.

The British driver eventually puts down the bottle

and furiously leaves the store.

The Frenchman is furiously shouting at him

from behind the counter.

I calmly, warmly, go over to the counter,

and explain what my driver wanted. I talk in French.

The French guy is immediately won over.

He probably recognized that he had exploded irrationally.

He gives me the bottle of red-Soda water and a sandwich for the

lorry driver. When i wanted to pay, he refuses to take money.

So i left that store carrying a true gift from this Frenchman to this

British guy.

To my British, fellow driver, i allowed myself the comment ,

" Frenchmen are human. If you spoke

French

you would enjoy yourself in France."

I remember us, sitting alongside in the cab, before we surged into

the night,

him munching on his yellow sandwich

and drinking this black-colored Soda water,

and me looking at his munching, drinking, profile bathed in

sodium light.

A LORRY DRIVER'S LIFE ABROAD

fact 1

Eating, for the British lorry driver in France,

usually means eating only at motorway restaurants

where other British lorry drivers

might be congregating.

fact 2

Eating at the popular-priced restaurants

dotting the towns of France,

has always been counted

highest in the delights offered foreign visitors.

What's happening?

These facts lead us to an overwhelming question:

"What's happening to

the British lorry driver

in France?"

He is suffering from a rarely-tested

prejudice against anything French,

rife among British lorry drivers.

Untestable, because of this lack of language knowledge.

He is suffering, also, from

an unconfrontable fear behind the prejudice.

The fear of 'appearing stupid'.

So he contracts his life to stupid food,

and veneer relationships

while in France.

Trying to be helpful,

i spread the word.

To anyone wanting to be an international lorry driver:

Take the problem of learning foreign languages

as a joyous and important one.

To the schools that teach lorry driving:

offer a simple practical taster

in languages and social skills

for living in foreign countries.

Help break down the language and social barriers

which are so humanly

costly

to the

international lorry driver.

His life is narrowed to unendless driving,

days on end on the motorway,

and with little else of adventure.

New experience to talk about

gets narrower and narrower.

He lives more and more on media material.

Radio or recorded music.

Some read books at night lying in their bunks.

But most are social-retreating human beings.

This is a harsh judgement.

I make it in order to sound an alarm.

The huge lorry companies might believe

that they get a steadier and more devoted worker

out of guys who are too frightened to socially experiment.

After all, frightened drivers wouldn't drive off the motorway

searching for a new treat, an unexplored corner.

So how can i seriously propose better schooling

when the business powerhouses of the lorry game

might see themselves losing out?,

when the pawns are now cheaply replaceable?

THE FEW

Only about 3 lorry drivers, of the fifty whom i have travelled with,

had pride in their sense of adventure

beyond their work.

These three were independent beings.

Their bosses, appreciating that they did their job well,

did not interfere in their individual manner of doing it.

They somehow had built in to their work rhythm,

time for adventure.

These were **the admirable ones** for me.

When i enter the cab (or car) of an independent being,

we immediately realize we have something to exchange.

And there is little time.

Both of us soaring.

A real, energetic encounter.

Watch Time? Its not present.

Highway Distance? Highway Distance becomes a threat.

The hitch-hike will have to terminate

after a certain Highway Distance.

And Highway Distance

is what the driver's foot on the gas pedal

means.

And for Highway Distance the driver is paid.

And to decrease Highway Distance the hitch-hiker asks.

And so, the contradictions of life are showered on the blessed occasion.

(With the other lorry drivers,

in one way or another, something good happens.

But too often not much.

No energy to talk much. Mind is somewhere else.)

To know how to live well and still be an international lorry driver

--to go off the motorway at times,

to study a neighborhood,

to find a good restaurant,

to still be excited by the new and investigate--

means

beyond giving me the marvelous gift i asked for,
namely, 'a lift',

they also have, on offer.

the results of their conscious, unique search.

And therefore, a ready appreciation of my unique offerings.

And then, i feel valued

and feel

i, too, am giving a gift.

Unhappily, for me

not enough

consciously self-creating, international lorry drivers

exist.

For i like to chat.

That's why i tend to try my luck first with car drivers.

International lorry drivers, at least most of them,

are too overburdened with work to develop

themselves.

A harsh judgement.

Needed badly:

styles

of making work live,

of nourishing our own individualities,

of asserting,

"**I am not only a lorry driver**,"

of gaining distance from our forced-labor roles.

THE INDEPENDENT COWBOY

Another rare category of lorry driver,

one that is disappearing in this BIG-BOY'S Union of massive Europe,

is the lorry driver who owns his own lorry.

Usually, these driver-owners are very full of life.

They have to be on the road nearly all the time,

while their wife at home

is tending the business
office,

preparing the deals,

watching over

their young
kids

w
h
o

a
r
e

n
a
t
u
r
a
l
l
y

growing up
psychically

preparing
to drive.

They are passionate about their work.

Family love is very high.

They are most of the time on the boundary line,
financially.

Interest on Bank Loans

to pay for the purchase of a lorry is
immense.

Insurance against accidents

and paying for replacement lorries, when their's breaks down,

p
r
o
v
e
s

c
o
s
t
l
y
,

c
o
s
t
l
y
.

BIG COMPANIES have a massive advantage here.

THE EATING

OF THE small

With the recent, economic down-years of the 20th century's last quarter,

--a long-time recession

created by THE VERY BIG

to shake the small from the economic tree--

the small lorry company --with 1 or 2 or 3 lorries on the road--

has been going broke. And the BIG Lorry Companies,

absorbing the little guys' businesses, becoming **massive**.

The BIG are growing **BIGGER** than ever

and the small, smaller than ever

in this European--BIG GUYS' CREATED-- 'UNION'.

And the growth of the BIG is very visible.

At present, their is a **VERY BIG** French Lorry Company

whose

unique red-painted lorry design

is more and more evident, more and more encountered.

This company, i have heard, wants to eventually monopolise lorry

transport. It is in the process of taking over firms in all the European countries.

BIGGER is more viable

in the present European 'UNION'.

And being small, means 'to the wall'

in the present European 'UNION'.

After all,

THIS **EUROPEAN UNION**

organically evolved from

THE European Common MARKET

where

(market) SUCCESS

means a greater cut of the fixed pie.

As you see, dear readers, i am not a fan of BIGness.

My experience in hitching **ABSOLUTELY** tells me,

the BIGGER the company

the less likely the driver felt at liberty to say "Yes" to me.

And when the company was owned by the driver,

then

--i believe but can't prove--

he more often than not would take me.

Because he was his own boss,

he felt free.

Yet the truth is, he probably did not have any insurance for me.

And if he didn't, he might lose his entire company,

if an accident occurred

and i sued him for all he was worth and more.

Yet, he took me.

Such fears did not frighten him.

My experience

ABSOLUTELY proves

'The BIGGER the company,

the less freedom for the driver'

is the rule of the road.

The BIGGER the company,

the higher the fences

separating the small from THE BIG.

AND WHO IS smaller THAN A HITCH-HIKER?

STRENGTH

I got picked up once

by a guy in a suit just outside Bristol Airport going to London.

He told me

that afternoon he had won £400 at the Horse Races in

Dublin.

But he felt bad about it.

This was incomprehensible to me.

This money represented my-then living expenses for 40

weeks!

He felt bad. And he told me why.

He had a very unique,

professional position in the Irish Race-Horce World. So he knew exactly which horses didn't have to

win

in order to maintain their

market value,

and which horses had absolutely to win.

Those, who needed to win were described as "trying".

When the number of horses 'trying' in a race is

1 or 2,

then the race might be called 'fixed'.

But he never mentioned that word. Nor did i.

So winning made him feel a little guilty.

Such honesty given me,

which i could never have had,

had i been someone active

in his life's turf,

he freely offered.

Exchange Across The Divide

and

GODEL'S THEOREM

One of the high, responsible officials

of one of the largest corporations in the world

smiles comfortably at me for a second, and then returns his eyes

to the road, when i told him about the new corporation taxes

just imposed by The British Government.

"But that's what we pay our Tax and Legal departments for.

To find holes in laws so that we can roll through them.

Our men never fail.

Inside of three weeks they will have found holes,

so big,

that we'll be able to drive lorries

through them."

And because he gave me that piece of 'hidden' knowledge,

i gave him, in return,

one astounding result from mathematics;

which 'proved'

what he was saying

is 'good mathematics'.

I began by saying,

"Did you know that there is a mathematical theorem,

called '**Godel's Theorem**'

discovered in the 1920's or 30's

whose meaning,

since its discovery,

has **had to be suppressed**

by

the stability forces of the universe?

For what Godel proved is

there is always

a

hole

in any

(finite, self-consistent, logical system's)

reasoning.

Therefore, To any verbalized assertion

--like a tax law or a legal pronouncement--

there can be no

necessary, real-world implication.

Any verbal explanation

of what a verbal assertion can mean,

has to be embedded within a finite number of verbal assertions

--be part of a finite, explicit, logical, verbal argument--

has to be part of a finite,explicit, englobing, logical system

and, thereby, a logical system subject

to Godel's Theorem.

Any finite,

logical system,

***so beginneth* Godel's Theorem**.

and **the law and the tax systems**

are each finite logics.

They are obsessionaly rebuilt by The Legal Authorities to be internally consistent.

Their core truths --called
`'precedents'`--

at any one time

are finite in number,

being found in

a finite number of

Authoritatively specified

finite-length books,)

Any finite,

logical system,

that

escapes

the catastrophe of

self-contradiction

must, of necessity,

be

INCOMPLETE.

***so sayeth* Godel's Theorem**

The **incompleteness** of our Tax and Legal systems

means

there are tax and legal cases

not judgeable

by the pre-established system's precedents.

(In mathematical lingo,

"The Truth Judgement Function, generated by the precedents,

is undefined for these cases."

Neither a **Yes** nor a **No** can be logically asserted.)

These undeterminable cases are

the holes

in the system's reasoning,

which, once discovered,

can be grown large enough for lorries to drive through.

Patch up these holes, today,

with the cement of a finite number of Authoritative Orders,

--a committee decision,

-- a judge or a jury's decision,

--an administrative decision,

and, tomorrow, **there still will be** holes in the system,

different holes.

Your tax and legal departments make their living

on this, system-mocking, Godel truth."

Finding holes in the fence.

Finding holes in the tax system.

Maybe we are all preparing

in one way or another

to hitch-hike?

Here was a hitch-hike in which

i,

amongst the poorest, money-wise, in our society,

was speaking with

one of the richest, money-wise, in our society.

And speaking with a sense of equality.

We were two cocks from different worlds, comparing notes.

I didn't expect anything from him nor him from me.

He told me what he wanted to tell me.

I told him what i wanted to tell him.

Not as one who is 'poor' or 'rich'

but as two, independent, fellow human beings

passing an accidental hour together,

wishing each other well.

An exchange of knowledge and adieu.

His wealth had no magic for me.

Only his knowledge was valuable.

My wealth had no magic for him.

Only my knowledge was valuable.

Across barricades,

hundreds of years in the making,

our knowledge passed.

Perhaps, the world is made safer because of such transfers?

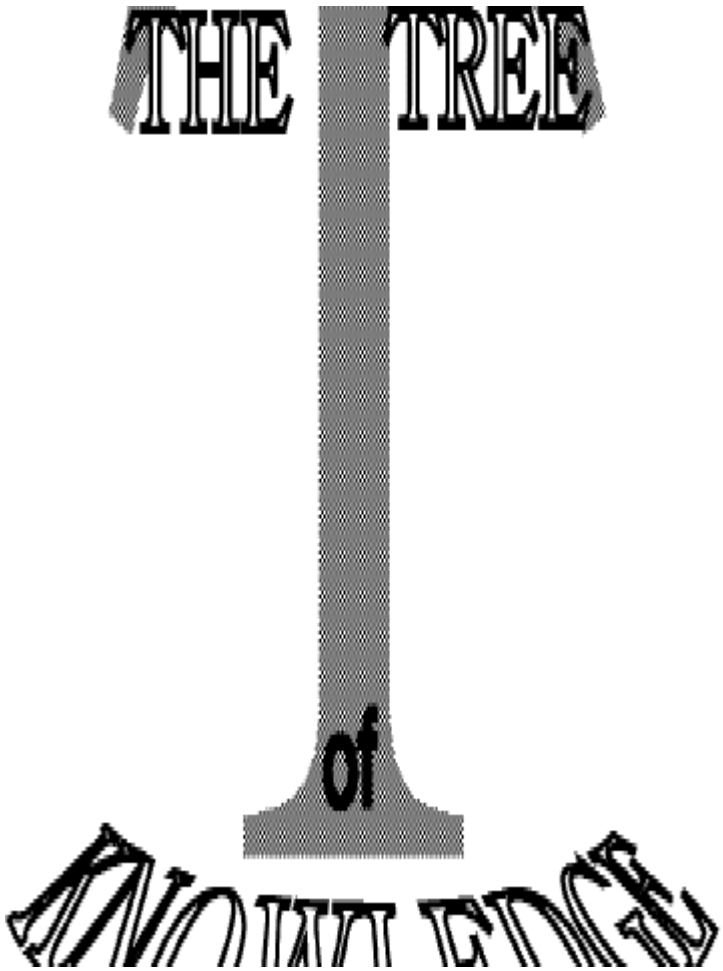
Perhaps, **hitch-hikers and those drivers who say "Yes"**

are important, hidden, incalculable links

maintaining the world's bridges to salvation?

CHAPTER 5

THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE



BACK TO THE PAST'S PRESENT

(Somewhere North of Lyon on my way South towards Toulouse.)

I'm not getting anywhere.

I've been in this smallish Service Station, now, for quite a while.

It's like a crammed can of sardines

in which i seem to be the only sardine who doesn't leave.

I want to leave but everybody is going into Lyon.

Nobody is going beyond Lyon. **Wow!**

Am i caught in local traffic?

But i know this is the only motorway South

to Nice and Avignon, Carcassonne and Toulouse.

This Station is busy enough

but i think i have come too close to Lyon

--where the local traffic seems

to drown out the long-distance,
motorway traffic.

Nothing is happenin and i'm getting worried.

There must be some further reason for this blockage, but i don't

know what.

Maybe, something to do with this particular Station?

Darkness has begun to settle in and the night is cold and misty.

I know I must stay out of such energy-sapping muck.

I have cautiously inserted myself

into the closed-in atmosphere of this ServiceStation.

I don't want to startle anyone, nor violate the manager's ego.

I hang around the self-service part of the Station,

where hot and cold drink-machines

surround me and surround the other customers,

in mute concert

stimulating need,

and, also, surround

two, chest-high, chairless, circular tables

upon which to put one's

food and drinks.

Anyway, nothing is happening for me.

And i'm sort of getting anxious about my progress. Am i in a trap?

Though still on the motorway going South,

had i been sucked too far, into Lyon's heart,

to be able to get

beyond Lyon's

sprawling

body

with a

single lift from here?

Perhaps, i'll have to settle for any lift into Lyon;

just go where the motor flood will take me

and from there

--somewhere in Lyon--

wend myself out of it by local transport to

a hitch-hiking take-off position

going intercity

South.

INFORMATION RETRIEVAL

Thinking ahead.

Once inside Lyon, to find out

where i have to go

to get back on The Motorway going South,

would be

an information retrieval problem;

assuming, of course, the information is stored somewhere.

But where?

From 'what' or from 'whom'

can i retrieve this information?

The location of this needed information

is a social puzzle

i must, right now, seriously consider,

before i commit myself to Lyon.

To accept a lift into Lyon,

at this moment,

therefore,would be absurd.

I would be making a major move

without pre-thinking its possibilities and dangers.

Is adding Lyon merely adding a stretch of 'something-not-motorway'

in my hitch-hike to Toulouse?

Nothing more than a distinctive obstacle to get over?,

...as i have treated it for nearly thirty years.

'How to get through it or over it or out of it or...?',

or, ultimately, to just walk out of it, as i had once done.

5=5+5+2

I walked out of Lyon because i was young and strong

and desired a test of my body strength

and to answer my spirit's need for

adventure.

Two blocks away was

the big restaurant of Lyon's central depot for lorries.

A restaurant, which, day and night,

was filled with lorry
drivers,

each one waiting to pick his lorry up

and drive it somewhere else in France or
beyond.

Thirty to forty guys seemingly waiting to give me a lift,

as they chatted at tables, drinking their coffees and smoking their

cigarettes.

In this lorry-depot restaurant, it usually takes less than five

minutes to connect with someone going to where you're going.

And then maybe an hour of coffee drinking or talking or
just waiting,

waiting for the driver to decide to begin again his
labours.

What a place! The bonanza for hitch-hikers.

And a marvelous social place for drivers.

Yet, some person had told me

that 5 kilometers down the road was a Service Station.

And i located the neighborhood he named on a map.

And then i became excited with the possibility of
discovering

another way onto the

motorway out of Lyon.

I left that guaranteed great place for hitch-hikers just
like that.

I took a bus and got to the named neighborhood,

and couldn't find the Service Station.

The motorway ran alongside of where i was.

But no Service

Station.

Speaking to people, i was told that

the Service Station was 5 kilometers further down the motorway.

But there was no public transport to get there.

Though it was night,

i didn't want to return

to the restaurant of the lorry park.

I wanted to go forward.

My body and spirit said

"Let's just walk out of
Lyon.

And walk out along the
motorway.

There it is in front of you.

And if you hop this low
concrete fence,

You'll be on it.."

A completely illegal act:

walking (with a heavy rucksack on my
back),

and a thumb pushing up now and then,
pleadingly.

"You've walked this distance before.
Why not now?

After all, in one hour and a half,

you'll be at the Service

Station."

So i walked into that summer night,

walked out of Lyon along the motorway,

walked alongside a huge depot of ten-story high Petrol tanks,

walked alongside the fire-spouting, as-in-hell, petrol refineries,

walked more than two hours

and still no Service Station in sight.

I couldn't turn back. So i continued walking,

with the heavy weight of a rucksack on my back.

Of a sudden, a small lorry pulls up. The driver is offering me a lift.

He tells me he had seen a police car that had spotted me.

He was saving me from the police.

He was cheating the police of a piece of meat.

This is France.

There is many a frenchman/frenchwoman

who prides him/herself as an actor against 'The System'.

The great French political heritage leaps again to my aid.

He dropped me at the Service Station, 2 kilometers down the road.

WHAT IS LYON TO ME?

Lyon, at this moment, may be my vehicle for a hitch-hiking cop-out?

Or, i could pause there

and discover some unknown part of life's puzzle?

When the river forces the swimmer onto dry land,

but the swimmer

continues to move his body as though he is still swimming,

then the swimmer

is certainly practicing a madness that will get him no-where.

Should i continue hitching in Lyon,

or should i treat it as

a magic marsh?

I could reconceptualize what Lyon is to be for me.

Insteadof treating Lyon as a stretch of complicated roadway on my hitch-hike to Toulouse,

i could understand it as a kind of **magic marsh**

in which to encounter...???,

and still remain a hitch-hiker

in search of the route to Toulouse.

i could treat Lyon

as though it were a woman

who has said, "**Yes. I'll take you**."

The lift into into the Big City is my first step into
Madame Lyon's car.

What shall i talk about to Madame Lyon?

She requires more than talk for her pleasure.

She wants me to discover her insides.

She is available.

I'm available too. i tell her,

"I shall dance within you,

make love to your parts.

But evening is coming on. Where inside you shall i sleep?

I won't pay for one of your hotel rooms.

I would not want to prostitute you."

Therefore, where i shall sleep in Lyon,

is a difficult problem.

I don't know the lay of the land.

I should say i don't know this new Lyon.

This Lyon four years on.

The fickleness of cities matches the fickleness of life.

Before,the major North-South Motorway coursed through Lyon's center.

Now

--my last two drivers told me--

the motorway system has changed.

A ring road has been constructed, so that those going South,

beyond Lyon,

branch off and go around it,

and those going into Lyon

continue the old motorway road straight in.

REVELATION AND MEMORY

Ahhh!!

That is the reason

for the non-existence of drivers going beyond Lyon!

I have come too far in!

The ring road has already branched away!

Fuck it!

I always had quite easily gotten over this hump, Lyon, in my hitch-hiking South.

But this time i'm really in a jam.

It's getting on to evening.

For me evenings are very difficult in a new city.

Night entry into Lyon, the unknown, seems a necessity. Fuck it!

Except,

if i find

some place out here,

in the bushes behind the Station's buildings

--good if it doesn't rain---

or, out of sight, under one of the building's awnings.

It's fairly murky out, but i have a good sleeping bag.

Or --my favorite solution for winter weather--

in one of the Station toilet's stalls,

if there are an excess of them

to serve the night's rare clientele.

I am able to shut the door and snug myself on the floor,

or, if there is not enough room, just sit on the seat,

sleeping bag snugged round me for warmth.

I would get three or four hours of light sleep this way.

In the morning, i'd jump up and wash

and maybe approach one of the lorry drivers

who, like me, is washing himself,

having slept the night in his

lorry.

The French antagonism to RULES

Last night,

with Calais a long day's driving behind me,

hanging around the drinks' machines,

and the night getting deeper,

and the Service Station quieter,

the Station attendant, alone and in-charge,

asked me if i wanted to sleep in

The

Disabled Toilet.

He'd give me the key.

"**Yes**", i said "**yes**."

What a luxury!

My private room, with hot water and cold water

and soap and mirror and

toilet

and loads and loads of unoccupied floor space,

and no worry about someone banging on the door,

or the sounds and the smells from the other stalls.

I slept like a log that evening.

I felt great in the morning, having
washed and eaten.

And why did the attendant give me this
luxury?

Would it not have compromised him

were i to have been discovered by
accident?

I knew why.

I sensed it in his speech.

He didn't like stupid, inflexible rules

which restrained him.

So to help me **by violating stupid rules**

would **make him feel good** with himself.

This is a French man often encountered.

This is a human trait that needs
nourishing.

Hitch-Hike

On The Information Highway

Entering Lyon now, would give me no advantage.

I would have to wait till morning

before i confront my (information-tree) search problem:

To find a good place to start hitching from.

Happilly, the information that i would be looking for

is money-inexpensive information.

But, very energy-time expensive if i don't use my head,
real well.

My heavy, wheeled rucksack makes every spatial move of mine taxing.

Every dead-end would be payed for.

So i must move last and think first.

In Lyon, i must first hitch-hike, primarily**, The Information Highway**

and take as my first goal location:

the address in memory

possessing the information i desire.

I know nearly nothing about Lyon. I never spent a relaxed day in it.

For me, she had been only an obstacle.

So the memory possessing the information i desire is not within me.

I must go out of myself,

into other, information highway files.

i could get me to a public storehouse of files, called 'A Public Library'.

There, i could search out and study a detailed map of Lyon.

And get a road map to see how the cars access the Southbound
Motorway.

And with a metro map and bus map

solve the problem of getting to the most likely location

for getting back on the motorway.

This route for accessing the required hitch-hiking information

requires finding the right library, the right maps, etc.,

would take several hours

and would still be a somewhat unsure route to success.

The information maps were not made for hitch-hikers.

There will always be some informational gap.

Not to mention the ever-happening changes that occur

and take much, much time to filter down

to the

public's library system.

ASKING QUESTIONS

Perhaps, there is a better technique?

Perhaps, information

stored in dead material or in dead machinery,

as computers and maps are,

as official tables are,

as knowledges, stocked in encyclopedias, are,

is being falsely equated

with all information needed in the

modern world?

As though a modern Sherlock Holmes doesn't need to use his body.

He need only plug himself into

a computer network

containing **all information in the world** till then compiled.

As though reality didn't require a million, billion updates per second,

updates gotten from the field of action.

As though **reality** didn't

illogically skip

from a **black** to a **green** to a **yellow** to a **black** to a **blue**...

Besides, i am of the 'old' school.

I prefer people to

machines.

from 'whom' rather than from 'what'

to receive my succulent fruits of

knowledge.

Face to face talking

is eating from

The Tree Of Knowledge.

'The Information Tree' never grew in Eden.

Knowledge communicated

by people

communic
ates

much else beyond the words spoken.

It reveals, to me, where **--in** this **knowledge-- the person takes pride**.

There, i can ask questions in depth. And also in breadth.

Do-It-Yourself questions.

An infinite number of any type of question within the area of his pride.

And the gal or guy answers from the bedrock of personal experience.

And the gal or guy blesses me with true knowledge.

It is here where my sacredness enters.

It is one

with my refusal

to not understand exactly

what someone

else is saying.

So i ask and ask.

Becoming a child again. Asking about everything. Interested in

everything.

I want to be astonished by grown ups.

REVERY ON ARTIFICIAL LIFE

The same **astonishment i do not feel**

when i receive exactly what i desire

from mechanical, information machines.

I might say to myself,

"An excellent bit of engineering, this computer,"

as i might say to myself

"A clever bit of social engineering this **KAPITAL K Kulture**."

The computer simulates life by changing...

...as **The KAPITAL K Kulture** simulates life by changing.

The computer is the heartbeat of artificial life.

The KAPITAL K Kulture is the heartbeat of tinsel life.

Life without depth.

Life that changes within prescribed bounds.

And, as a perfect slave, the computer has perfect recall.

Its memory is a perfectly servile mirror.

What it recalls is what is exactly asked of it.

And, as a perfect slave,

It will give itself to anyone who commands it intelligently.

It has no internal drive, like a '**sexuality**',

that might stimulate rebellion

against its masters.

And as a perfect slave, its raw material --its 'INFORMATION'-- must be originally supplied.

But, **much is lost**

in the transformation of living knowledge to computer food.

A computer is a finite storage machine.

Living life is infinitely profound.

Information-truncation must of necessity take place.

Much is lost in the transformation of

living knowledge

to dead bites of stored information

--finite sequences of 0's and 1's--

Where is the morality of shallow sequences of 0's and 1's?

Are our received and achieved subtleties of conviction

--based in our organic-molecular-atomic-nuclear-spiritual guts--

lost

in the land

where the fundamental clay is zeros and ones?

The computer's **Morality, Sexuality, Volition** ...

is summed up in its

PERFECT OBEDIENCE TO RULES

and its

PERFECT RECALL.

A computer has perfect-recall.

For shallow knowledge, called information, perfect-recall is desireable.

PERFECT RECALL

I was a student in New York,

at a prestigious institute of mathematical sciences

whose tradition stretched directly back to

Gottingen's Applied Mathematics Institute

in pre-war Germany.

It was the sacred "tea-time hour". 3pm to 4pm.

Every student and professor of the Institute

would stop what they were doing

to take tea and coffee and cakes and chat with each other.

It was one of the guaranteed exciting hours of the day.

Tea-Time was the Institute's

traditional, dayly destruction of social inhibitions,

inviting anybody to talk with anybody,

the unachieved with the great.

A sort of orgy.

I could chat with anyone.

Or, i could walk around the room,

quietly evesdropping on

groups of twos and threes

discussing some mutually-intriguing, mathematical question.

Professor Kurt Otto Friedrichs was standing

at one of the many blackboards in this tea-room floor,

balancing a coffee

and asking "**What's that?**", "**What's this?**" type questions

of a young researcher

who was explaining to Friedrichs

something
or other.

He probably wanted to get from Friedrichs

some feelings about what would be

the most productive direction to take next,

or something like that.

But Friedrichs kept on asking for

clarifications of

'**this**' and '**that**'.

After a while,

the young researcher couldn't contain himself,

and said, to Friedrichs ,

"You created this theory. Why don't you remember it?"

And Friedrichs , answered him, saying,

"Don't worry. Don't worry. I'll re-learn it very fast."

So **anybody can forget, anything.**

Intellectual creativity has not to do with perfect recall.

I now know

the opposite is true:

that

seeing in a new way,

within another conceptual framework,

is rendered easier

by

the lack of perfect recall.

When you can't remember, a rethink is obligatory.

STUPID QUESTIONS

Another truth, much in the same direction,

that Professor Kurt Otto Friedrichs showed me, without knowing it,

came about in the following manner.

As i had already implied,

I was in an institute of mathematics

which, at that time,

'**had world clout**'.

Professor X, who also had 'world clout',

was coming to visit and to give three lectures upon..

....and this dear readers, is a piece of information

i cannot accurately supply.

It was to be three lectures upon

a particularly hard and calculationally complex,

deep, mathematical, theorem-mining region

--a sort of **frightening**, grinding **region of darkness**--

from which cameth out

--as a coaldust-splattered, miner might--

Professor X,

to present us with his first lecture.

I was a student and excited by the prospect of following

the reasoning of

this world-famous mathematician.

I knew i would be buried quickly.

That is to say: unable to continue to follow X's reasonings.

That is why we, students, took our seats in back.
To be able to escape the massacre of our thinking tissue
without calling attention to the shame of our defeat
when we felt we had to leave
or else we'd, sufficatingly,
be buried
alive.
Through the back door, Salvation lieth.

During the first lecture, for about twenty minutes,
i followed what X was doing.
Prof Kurt Otto Friedrichs,
sitting in the first row
with all the other, smiling, confident, proven
mathematicians,
about the five minute mark,
asked a question
of which i felt ashamed
for the prestige of
our Institute.

But X chatted a bit to Friedrichs and it all got cleared up.
I thought Friedrichs showed himself to be an idiot.
His query had to do with an error arrising from
Friedrichs forgetting one of the earlier definitions made by

X.

I was ashamed

that such a stupid question can come from one of Our Professors.

Though i lost X's train of detailed thought,
there was enough of something to keep me
going to, and staying through, the second lecture
wherein X proved himself beyond me entirely.
Friedrichs again posed a question
which somehow i didn't quite understand.
I couldn't reject it, but i felt ashamed.
Ashamed for the pride of Our Institute.

The third lecture culminated
in my complete incomprehension
of what X claimed
are
'**The 3 Fundamental Questions**'
to answer in this field.

Then i reconvened my life as a young mathematician,
drinking coffees and chatting
and certainly not trying to remember
the painful, to-be-forgotten, talks
given by X.

The week-following,

The Institute's 'Bulletin of Lectures'

announced the room and time

of **a special lecture** that

Professor Friedrichs would be offering

on

The Solutions To Two

of the Three Fundamental Questions

cited by X**.**

Wow! **I was in front of a true contradiction.**

I could not forget that i had been ashamed of Friedrichs

asking X such stupid questions!

How can i defend myself against such a contradiction?

I must accept the revealed truth:

There is no such thing as a stupid question.

It's what you do with the answer

that makes the question stupid or brilliant.

What counts is what you do with the information or lack of information.

Friedrichs' forgetfullness of his own work

and willingness to ask 'stupid' questions,

--willingness to take the lowest ground (in the academic ballpark)

and feel comfortable there--

gave me

a model of

how to start tasting

the succulent fruit of other people's knowledge

--If i do not understand the words of another completely, then i shall ask questions, probe, and never feel foolish. No questions are foolish. They are the building blocks of strength.--

and grow wiser.

THE SYSTEM CON-GAME

OF GROWING STUPID PEOPLE

--ITS MANIPULATINGDRACULAS---

Thirty years later, after the **face-to-face** lessons learnt in the Institute,

in the hopping, **face-to-face** Greenwich Village of that day,

after the **face-to-face** life lessons in Paris', still intact, Latin Quarter

before the French Republique

found the concentration of students too dangerous

and exploded The University of Paris

into a dozen, isolated, fragments,

after **face-to-face,** dazzling experimental living in London's miraculous squatland,

after **face-to-face**, intimate family life in the french foothills of The Pyrenees,

i come to realize that there are enemies of **face-to-face** life.

face-to-face life is too supportive of the virus of independent thinking.

face-to-face life is too supportive of the virus of deep questioning.

After thirty years of adult independent living,

i can assert with passionate confidence

that **face-to-face** life is consciously being killed

by CERTAIN KNOWLEDGE-DELIVERY SYSTEMS

which share a fundamental political principal,

DON'T ALLOW
QUESTIONING!!

Such not-to-be-questioned Knowledge

induces stupid PASSIVITY.

Such not-to-be-questioned Knowledge

i have learned in my life

---fountaining forth from

The

NO PAST, NO FUTURE, QUICK-CHANGING PRESENT

BIGreal-
***timeMedia*---**

is useless

therefore, **is DANGEROUS**

--inducing in us the life of couch-potato intellects,

occupying good time, good space, good life

with impotent material.

The

BIGreal-timeMedia

doesn't ask to be answered or altered.

It asks to be watched, understood, booed or applauded IN THE PRESENT

--EXACTLY what one can do

while sitting in a couch, guzzling beer, munching crisps

and keeping the eyes and ears

focused

at the flickering sound box.

Thoughts of 'what do?'

disappear.

Only screen action counts.

Thoughts of **face-to-face** life recedes.

THE manipulating SYSTEM

striving for stability at any cost

deems

unquestionably healthy

people

who choose to be dead to 100% **face-to-face** life,

who choose to dayly hitch-hike, for hours on end,

in a relaxing,

tightly-controlled, gift-giving fountain

--The

BIGreal-timeMedia--

who choose to be dayly mesmerized

by its fleeting, dazzling
choices;

who choose to remain

obedient, normal infants

--believing, with all their life, in Good
Authority--

--choosing, by free choice, to suck at

Good Authority's
glittering tit,

T--he

BIGreal-timeMedi--a,

and absorb a brainful of

Good
Authority's

**multiple-choice sweet
milk.**

"They wouldn't be offering it to us if it wasn't good for
us!"

After thirty years of hitch-hiking the motorways of life

i have learnt how to distinguish a loving tit from a Vampire's fangs.

I am able to give **the true name** of one of the mortal enemies of **face-to-face** life.

The

BIGreal-timeMedia

is COUNT DRACULA.

This life-sucking COUNT DRACULA,

sees itself as a **GUIDINGHAND,**

a camouflaged, mesmorizing MACHINE

unendingly, seamlessly, poking us to

LOOK HERE!,

LOOK HERE!,

which **never** points out **what obedient infants shouldn't know**,

feeding us

digested, sweetened pablum

to un-nutriciously fill our yearning souls

feeding the older of us

with fears we can't directly act on

except through actors we cannot directly affect.

As this last description is true for

The

***BIGreal-timeMedia*'s**
POLITICS,

so it is true for*tts*
SCIENCE

What, for instance, are you, personally, going to do

with the knowledge

that a black hole exists,

or a quasar has a life-span of a billionth of a second?

More than useless information for most everybody.

We can only follow, not ever lead,

the **ULTRA-HYPED**,

unexpected, glorious, mind-boggling

evolution of technical, high-cost, MODERN **SCIENCE**.

We cannot practice such **SCIENCE**.

There are **real guards** at the **real gates** of ITS **real laboratories**

really checking real name tags.

IT WON'T LET YOU HITCH-HIKE WITHIN IT.

It doesn't like hitch-hikers.

COUNT DRACULA **doesn't want to be encountered face-to-face.**

COUNT DRACULA **prefers mirrors.**

Let us now PUT THE FINGER on **COUNT DRACULA's**

disguised, strictly children-raping
relatives.

DID YOU EVER TRY TO WALK INTO

THE PUBLIC FRONT FOR THE **GUIDINGHAND OF YOUTHFUL THINKING,**

THE DEPARTMENTS OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

WITHOUT AN APPOINTMENT ?

YOU DON'T GET TWENTY STEPS BEYOND THE DOOR.

IT WON'T LET YOU HITCH-HIKE WITHIN IT.

It doesn't like hitch-hikers.

Like COUNT DRACULA

THE DEPARTMENTS OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

don't like **face-to-face** encounters.

It disdains discussion with the common person.

It haughtily sees itself as the only experts in its field.

THE DEPARTMENTS OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

want only second-hand-information bearers...

of its teachers as well as its students.

It makes exams to judge

how excellent we have transformed ourselves

into second-hand-information-bearers

of

--97% USELESS INFORMATION FOR THE OUT-THERE WORLD--

CURRICULUM junk .

In the hands of THE DEPARTMENTS OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

we can only hope

to become

diligent, impotent, information-crunching machines

absorbing, sorting, storing and delivering

superficial facts

that we cannot prove but
only admire.

Necessary facts to pass THE DEPARTMENTS OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE examinations

Necessary facts to get a job in

The Straight World.

THE DEPARTMENTS OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

wants us to become an interactive computer

because The Straight job World

wants us to become an interactive
computer.

THE DEPARTMENTS OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

are, like Count Dracula, only being helpful.

This is the total contrary to a citizen of Do-It-Yourself Land

where questions, at any depth and any level,

can be posed

to the person speaking to you.

Where it isn't out-of-order, nor foolish, to probe.

Where examinations of oneself are made by oneself.

Where judges are appointed by oneself.

Where one is the one's LEADER.

TOGETHER THE TWO DRACULAS FORM A TEAM.

THE DEPARTMENTS OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

and

The

BIGreal-timeMedia'

reduce knowledge to one-dimensional, objective, 'soundbites of information',

reduce real-time, participative questioning by oneself to an impossibility,

reduce us, ALL OUR LIFETIMES, to passive, consumers of information,

reduce us, ALL OUR LIFETIMES, to computer-heads

with couch-potato bodies,

enjoying, perpetually,

the kitchy-kitchy-kitchy-koo of earthly
AUTHORITY.

THE DEPARTMENTS OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

and

The

BI-Gre-al-tim-eMed-ia'

are **AUTHORITY**'s twins

spawned by it,

to suck out **face-to-face** life together.

The

*BIGreal-time***University For Good Citizens***Media'*

is the earthly *Heaven*

promised,

after the DAYLY **HELL** of the ten-year mangle

at the
hands of

THE **judgemental**

DEPARTMENTS OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE.

"IT IS THE WORLD'S GREAT SIN,

ITS YOUTH GROW DULL."

NO WONDER OF IT.

REAL DRACULAS EXIST.

HAVE

THE DEPARTMENTS OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

and

The

BIGreal-timeMedia,

EVER SAID A POSITIVE WORD

ABOUT HITCH-HIKING?

THEY ARE THE SWORN ENEMIES OF AN INDIVIDUAL'S WORTH.

THEY ARE THE SWORN ENEMIES OF PERSONAL ADVENTURE.

THEY ARE THE WOOD-BE MURDERERS OF UNCORRALED LIFE.

Were i to leave this discussion here,

i would be accused of sowing hatreds

and not strengths, sowing blind DOGMA and not hopeful encouragement. So i continue.

1+1=2

is a known, unquestioned truth;

embedded in us by

THE DEPARTMENTS OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE.

Question it and you'll be sent to the nuthouse.

1+1=2

must be true or the whole world falls apart.

So our frightened, dragooned minds believe.

1+1=2 is GOD-given.

But, but, but, but,

1+1 is not equal to 2 where life enters.

This is a search problem with
experiencial solutions

for a **Do-It-Yourself person.**

The Police Chief of France once said that

his chief concern

is when

1+1 is not equal to 2.

He must be a **Do-It-Yourself person**.

Have you ever questioned the assertion **1+1=2** ?

Reconquering understanding can begin at the beginning.

At what age were you dragooned into **1+1=2** ?

Carry **1+1=2** ? along with you during your day

as a sea-shell mantra through which to listen to the evolving world.

When you, WHILE carrying **1+1=2** ?,

meet people,

are you hitch-hiking?

What are you hitch-hiking?

THE IRRATIONALITY OF THE RATIONAL

or

THE RATIONALE OF THE IRRATIONAL

People must believe themselves bound by rational social rules.

WHY?

How else could a social system maintain its internal rationality?

How else could a social system believe in a perfectly recallable answer?

How else could 'The Absolute History Of The World' be conceived?

How else could 'Progress' be believed?

How else could people be led?

How else could fences be accepted?

How else could hitch-hiking be condemned?

THE BEST MEMORY BANKS

FOR HITCH-HIKING

Querrying a computer or map

is not my idea of joyful activity.

People are far more interesting for me,

and **the people-route** in the information highway

is often a **quicker** one.

If i were to take a lift into Lyon, i should go to a car garage,

and ask the drivers, "How do you get to the motorway going South?"

Or, i should wait at a red light, and querry the stopped drivers?

Yes. These are better ways

than the dead route of the computer information highway.

The drivers, after all, are an essential ingredient for hitch-

hiking to exist. Where they go, the hitch-hiker must follow.

So **the best memory banks** with the information i desire,

are those naturally attached to

walking, living, breathing, fucking, and fucked-about

human beings

--called 'motor vehicle drivers'--

and not PURE

information machines.

i now see what problem to pose to myself

in order to retrieve

the most complete, efficient, hitch-hiking information.

The problem posed bifurcates in two:

"Who knows where i should start hitching from?",

and, secondly,

"Who is able and willing to give me directions

to get me
there?"

This problem's answer is trivial. The answer is:

A **Do-It-Yourself** character.

A '**hitch-hiker**', of course!

Someone with first hand experience.

But how can i recognize a hitch-hiker to ask him my question?

By his dress?

That's impossible. You couldn't pick me out from the crowd by my dress.

But, if not all hitch-hikers are pick-out-able by their dress,

at least

some variety of them

are, in some way,

visually distinctive.

Within the social milieu of this distinctive variety,

the knowledge i seek must be common knowledge.

"What is this social milieu i need whose members are

recognizable

as they walk the streets of Lyon?

Answer: The young people of Lyon who **can't afford** The System's prices.

The Youth, **unrewarded by The System**, holds the knowledge i need.

They are in front of this free-travel problem,

and, knowing youth, i know they are solving it.

I have only to look for such a human variety of **youth**.

My hitch-hiking, information retrieval problem has now become crystal clear.

I am now preparedto take a lift into Lyon tomorrow morning.

Youth, uncrowned by The System, holds the knowledge i need.

In exchange, i hope i, also, have something to offer.

What a marvelous position to be in for an elder person!

What a marvelous place in this fluid universe!

Where the lowly of the social hierarchy

are the pearl-bearers

to swim for.

Mediterranean MEMORIES

Summer on the beaches beckons youth.

It beckoned me and my irish rose, 'Rosy'.

What a voyage that was!

We were on a road in the deep southland of France called 'La Camargue'

hitch-hiking slowly along the mediterranean coast,

on our honey-moon-like way to the Italian Riviera,

in the heat of the summer, in the heat of our youth.

And night was coming on.

And no one was picking us up.

There were no stop signs or lights near.

The traffic was zooming by.

We were in the shits.

What do?

I said to Rosy,

"Rosy. You're a hitch-hiker. What shall we do?"

And Rosy changed her dress color to flaming orange

and pushed me out of sight a little way,

and within ten seconds of her thumbs-up message to the passing flow,

two young guys in a sporty car came flying to an excited stop.

And, though i then appeared and must have given those guys a little down,

it all worked out super well. We trusted them to the point of going

with them into the marshy, jungle-like land of the watermellon, --

for one of the guy's fathers owned the land, and grew

watermellons commercially.

So picture the four of us eating watermellons,

in the middle of the night, in the middle of a swamp,

with hundreds of big round watermellon bodies lying around

--all attached via

their thick, two-foot-long, vegetable umbilicals--

and, and, and

a hundred thousand mosquitoes whining and flying and landing

and biting.

'**How to hitch-hike from Lyon to the mediterranean beaches**',

--a day's hitch-hike away--

must be one of **Lyon youth's common knowledges**.

Swimming in the sea has too much 'magic' for it not to be.

i'd go up to the first, non-defeated young person i would see in Lyon,

who was dressed as though he didn't participate in The Money-Kulture,

and say

"Hey. I'm looking to hitch-hike South on The Motorway

going towards Avignon and the Mediterranean.

Could you help me?"

It wouldn't take me more than a half-hour

to get what i'm minimally looking for:

the standard, commonly known, hitch-hiking

takeoff place.

So maybe i'm not in such a bad way?

I'd still have to pass the night somehow.

I won't start hitch-hiking on the side of the road now.

And the night mist has picked up.

Its putting a shine on all metallic
surfaces.

COPPING OUT

My thoughts continue to jerk out

like a tongue which has discovered the sharp whereabouts of a hole in a tooth,

refusing to let it lie in peace.

It is now suggesting the following solution:

"Caught in this 'dismal situation',

i could say 'screw it'.

I'll chuck in the hitch-hiking, once in Lyon."

At that moment, of giving in, there is a release FROM NERVOUS TENSION.

I don't have to remain so keyed up.

From that moment my voyage promises to be a smooth, downhill ride.

I could get into Lyon, and via the Metro --which it must have--

get to the train station immediately,

and catch the last train out in the evening,

or the first train out in the morning

and sleep in the station armed with a
ticket.

But tickets are priced as though

all people, who have reasons for travelling,

have also a great deal of money to spare.

I haven't money to spare.

But i know also, that i must treat my life in a strategic fashion.

I don't want to exhaust myself through some purest notion of being a hitch-hiker.

If getting through the night necessarily will be tiring

and then, in addition, in the morning, having to work hard

finding

and actually getting to the hitch-hiking post,

with all the possibilities of false leads which searching the new entails,

then why should i risk venturing to do it?

My health is the highest priority.

Feeling strong, a day or two more on the road is no great problem.

But being sick, i wouldn't want to be neither on the road nor visiting my friends.

Getting sick is the last thing i want to do.

I have never been sick on the road in thirty years of hitch-hiking.

I am not going to start now.

Hitch-hiking is a great strength in life.

It is not to be masochistically used as a religious burden.

Besides, it would not be the end of my hitch-hiking.

I am in the middle of my hitch-hiking
life.

The four years of non-practice has sprung unexpected problems at me.

Next time, i won't allow myself to get so close to Lyon,

before i try for a lift beyond Lyon.

So i think i will buy the ticket.

I'm carrying loot enough to pay the monopoly price.

I understand that my hitch-hiking religiosity is impure.

When blocked,

without a qualm,

i am ready to push the required money

across the guichet window

to a poor fucker bound to his official seat.

i would feel it as though i was temporarily best-ed

by the death machine,

and admitting it, wanting to hurry-on into my life's next

challenges.

Hurry on, knowing that i have a rendez-vous with this problem

again.

Hurry on, feeling confident.

THE SOCIAL PRICE OF DROPPING IN

Paying has only one virtue for me, a mechanical one.

The bus or the train is usually very fast.

BUT, apart from their time-clock quickness, i find their travel tediously long.

The cocooned life-style, forced on the voyager, kills potential excitement.

An atmosphere akin to a social desert is fostered

by INBRED rules --'**Proper Behaviour In Public**'--

wherein each arse is legally entitled to only one given seat.

Make your choice and your arse must **die** there,

clogged tight and **riveted to** the

spot

by **RESPECTABILITY**.

Nobody is expected to speak

other than an employee of the company.

As though he is the nurse and we his patients.

We each might have the horrendous Quaqua disease?

which spreads through talking to each other.

And the employee-nurse

softly speaks to us

only for some

official reason.

Adjacent to me are fellow travellers who have payed for their seats,

and, thereby, rendered essentially useless to me as i am to them.

From such uselessness, speaking becomes equated with 'breaking social ice'.

So mostly, **people remain silent, separate, secure** in their seats,

competitors for any unbooked, free nearby space

in which to stretch out or enact some other **self-cushioning** activity.

No one expects anything from me

except civil quietness so that social isolation can be preserved.

If i enter the bus or train alone,

i expect, and am officially expected, to remain alone.

Talking to the stranger seated next to me is just about allowable.

But if i don't hit it off quickly,

i might lose the possibility of reconnecting

and find myself next to someone who will not talk to me.

Someone who wants to remain mute.

The mute are socially dead matter for me.

If i remain in my seat, i will feel their pressure on me.

They want me to remain in the cocoon like them.

If i once break their power by just getting up,

then a miracle occurs.

My arse becomes mobile. Possibilities magically open.

But not with the mute. With the rest of the world.

Why be blocked in by **Proper Behaviour In Public** ?

So, i go in search of people with whom to talk.

In a bus, walking up and down the aisle,

engaging people in conversation,

(like asking someone deep in reading,

"What book are you reading?"

just isn't done,

--except by me.

In the train, there may exist a refreshements car

where socialbility is acceptable.

To there i escape, with all my rucksack gear.

Though it's a drag, i still do it. Death

is death though it only be in the form of muteness.

So you now have a more rounded appreciation of me. I am a very social person.

Train compartments, in whose poisoned atmosphere nobody dare speak,

are coffins for me.

In order to encounter anyone willing to have a fleeting encounter,

you have to struggle against enormous social pressure.

Unhappily, in each train, as the train carries them onwards,

there are tens of people

who

would enjoy discovering each other ,

--akin to the fleeting contacts between hitch-hiker and driver--

who

are forced to not even try for a single contact.

And how do i know this?

In my young thirties,

on a train from London to Dover,

i had an excuse to talk to everybody, everybody on that train.

Except the employee ticket-taker.

I was searching for something that only the voyagers could give me.

I went from compartment to compartment

and speaking,

engaged the compartment as though it were a conscious unit.

I was searching for a something which i don't remember now.

Its a long time ago.

I felt young and strong

and had no fear of talking in any situation, big or small,

from huge audiences of a thousand to intimate tete-a-tetes.

And i'd do it very well

for i'd pick-up on what's being said

then respond quickly to it.

Like throwing a ball into the common space

and then keeping it rolling, if the others didn't.

So i created a group feeling amongst sitting people,

isolated from one another,

in the train's compartment
seats.

Maybe i was making a survey?

I still don't remember the excuse i had.

I just wanted to meet people,

talk with them.

Get a feel for The Whole Shebang.

And what i discovered is:

Many, many people want to speak to each other.

It's the social rules of RESPECTABILITYwhich block them,

suffocating their human, gregarious instincts.

Standard Public Travel

is

amongst the most arid social situations

encountered in life.

It fosters narrowness

and stupidity.

Yet, what an opportunity

is travel with a hundred people!

All sorts to meet, to gravitate to, to move away from.

All sorts of

people.

Cocooned. We are cocooned. We are cocooned

We are cocooning ourselves.

De-cocoon! De-cocoon!

We must De-cocoon.

So you now know why

i don't rate buses or train-travel very high.

I prefer hitch-hiking.

I have money enough to pay for the voyage.

But why make my voyage stupid? Why make my life stupid?

Why not go into adventure land

where miracle people show some of their powers to me

and i, in return, unveil mine?

Outside of The Kulture i travel.

And gather real, important knowledge outside The Kulture.

CONFIDENCE FROM A DEEP POCKET

I got the money to pay for the money options to escape

this magnet, Lyon,

which forces

hitch-hikers passing near it

to be caught in it.

In Lyon, i can pay Lyon to whisk me to

the central bus station

or to the central railroad station

going South.

I can pay.

Jingling in my pocket is

a solution,to my global problem,

'**Getting to Toulouse**'.

I can cop out of hitch-hiking by accepting one of the many offers into Lyon.

Anyway. I'm standing and moving and asking

and getting the same response.

"Just going into Lyon. If you want a lift , come with me."

Doubt is flooding my mind.

Will i get out of here?

Anxiety and panic. But of low magnitude.

CHAPTER 6

"PEDRA"

Then

i spot this 60 year old, unshaven, very tense-looking guy,

--short and little and broken-bodied--

as he sat on a low, chair adjacent to the entrance

all the while, probably, watching me

because without me proposing anything directly to him,

he is smiling at me and smiling,

and, **then**,

with a lot of energy and enthusiasm,

yet, with a sickness in his voice,

says "**i'll take you**."

I told him i was going to Toulouse.

And he said that he'd get me as far as Avignon.

"Fantastic!" i say to myself. "I'm getting out of Lyon.

I'm going to get to Toulouse entirely by hitchiking!"

"By the way," he says,

having just managed to get himself

upright and just about standing,

"I'll sell you a motorway map that i don't need,

that i bought for 37 francs.

I'll sell it to you for 30 francs"

and he goes shuffling off

and brings back this map of motorway France

which is just what i do need. But i never expected to buy it.

"Fuck it. Of course, buy it," i say to myself.

"You have to get out of here. And this guy is the only possibility."

I say o.k. and he gives me the map.

Satisfied, he turns and goes out the door.

I follow him.

Just to the right of the door, ten steps away, is his transport machine.

It's a well-worn workhorse.

A Deux Chevaux van.The no frills, two horsepower,

cheap-on-fuel, cheap-to-buy,

fix-it-yourself miracle of French car-culture.

No super, shock absorbers or plushy seats

to insulate you from the bounces in the road.

I know them well. I've ridden in many a friend's "Deux Chevaux".

Great for the independent artisan that he tells me he is.

He is a metal worker. He has always been in business for himself.

We walk to the back of the well-worn van to stow away my rucksack.

The back of the van is filled with his artisan gear.

He tells me he is going near Avignon to where his wife lives with their son.

He lives in Paris.

He hands me a couple of finished metal pieces fashioned for his wife's house.

I don't know what building's system they are part of,

but i recognize the professionality of the work.

He rearranges his gear to make room for my rucksack.

I turn around and suck the night air.

"**I'm getting out of this place finally**."

Turning to him,

i get a better look at this 'he', with whom i will be spending some part of my lifetime.

He keeps an unlit pipe in his mouth all the time.

He is wearing workman's clothes. There's no money pretentions about him.

He's shorter than me by a half a foot.

One of his legs he uses as though it is in a cast.

He is strong, but crooked.

For some reason, i am worrying about going with him.

But he's the only going offer, so into his '2-horse chariot' i descend.

Inside and before i strap myself in,

i give him the thirty francs i owe him for the map.

Takeoff is about to happen.

He, suddenly, turns proudly to me,

and then almost self-mockingly,

raises his torso a good half-foot in the air;

so that he is looking down at me

and, i am looking up at him,

and with a great, glittering glare of triumph

trumpets out,

"**My name is 'Pedra'!**",

and, pulling his shirt down a couple of inches at the neck,

he exposes a large silver medallian

with the name ' **P E D R A** '

written large in its center.

And he smiles at me again and says, "**Pedra**".

He is a very down-to-earth sort of guy.

Very open. I am meeting **Pedra**.

We're zooming.

The rays of headlights are eratically broken

by the night and its heavy mist.

Surrealism invades us.

The mad melange of lights, like searchlights of a prison,

donates a fearful intimacy

as i settle-in for the night's

journey,

settling-in to encounter a man of the

earth,

a pipe-smoking, artisan.

The light patterns are quick and violent and irrational.

Pedra is hidden under this play of lights

.

He's puffin at his pipe now. And we're zooming.

He tells me he has fixed every part of this car himself.

Its motor is purring.

We're moving along at speeds around 100 kilometers per hour.

We're talking.

He's a good driver. A bit reckless though.

He's pushing this car to its limit.

He tells me he is in treatment for throat cancer.

His pipe is no longer lit.

A little later he wants to smoke again but he can't find any matches.

He's looking everywhere, groping with his hands everywhere,

even taking his hands off of the wheel and his eyes off the road

in order to search for the 'hiding' matches

as the car hurdles forward.

He has to find a match. He has to smoke.

He asks me to check the car's glove compartment just in front of me.

I do.

There's no unused matches to be found anywhere.

We arrive at the toll gate.

Motorists pay here.

But the place is jammed.

We must be in the middle of some local rush hour.

We get on one of the 20 car-long queues

with practically no movement.

He now looks earnestly and frantically for matches.

And he doesn't find any.

He asks me if i could go out the car

and ask some of the drivers in the other cars

for matches.

I consider his proposal

There are now three cars behind us, and fifteen in front.

There is a line of cars to the left of us and a line to the right

of us.

Our car is bottled in.

Moreover, we are in a one-way part

of a very controlled motor-way system.

There is no turning around.

All cars must continue forward till they pass through the toll gates.

I think i am safe in leaving my rucksack in his car,

separate from it,

and reconnoitre the other cars around me.

I would be doing something i had never done before in my life.

So i jump out and hurriedly make a half-circuit of the neighboring cars

and tap at their windows

miming the question, " Do you have any matches?"

No one rolls down their windows to find out more.

They universally deem me crazy. All this happens very quickly.

I am on edge. All my systems are working at 111%

I am always uncertain about separating from my rucksack.

The rare person who pushes me to it

--like Pedra is doing now--

is involuntarily signalling to my paranoid me,

"**Attention! Danger!**"

So, when i get to the car just in front of ours,

and not wanting to work through the other half-circle,

i, very theatrically, shake my head **"Nothing Doing"**

to Pedra,

seated behind the wheel,

looking directly at me,

and jump back in the car and fasten myself in

and feel safe once again.

He understands my failure to get him matches is not my fault.

People don't believe in your sanity

if you do anything in in-appropriate circumstances.

What i was doing was too different to be believed.

So Pedra is determined to stop at the next motorway Service Station,

in order to get some matches.

Lyon, all this while has travelled behind us. We are on the other

side of the magnet. We have escaped its pull.

But his need for matches is greater. It drags us into the forecourt

of the first motorway Service Station beyond Lyon, going South.

PEDRA LETS ME HAVE IT

In fact, as we are pulling in,

he decides he better put some petrol in the tank.

So he drives to a petrol pump and stops the car.

I get out and hang around, stretching my legs while

he puts in a hundred francs worth of petrol,

pays for it and then, all of a sudden, shouts something at me,

and goes walking off

to get something i don't quite know what.

He goes walking off

Into the sharp, white lights of the huge Station,

hobbling one good foot after one bad foot

swinging back and forth, getting smaller and smaller,

hobbling to the very distant other side of

this large Service area for cars and trucks.

He just hobbles away into the surrealist midst of this black-white

luminosity,

leaving behind him,

me and his car in which my dear rucksack is

snuggled..

In which is found a very good video

camera.

I am left alone. I can't go anywhere.

It may be a trap. If i leave he might arrive and just drive off.

So i have to stay, and wait.

Pedra returns after ten minutes

and calls me over to ask for 50 francs for more petrol.

He wants to make doubly sure that he has enough petrol.

I say to myself,

"**o.k. this is the last extraction of money from me,**

you're going to make, Pedra."

But i don't voice these thoughts.

I keep them from him.

I merely show him a lack of enthusiasm

as i hand him the 50 francs.

Now, he wants me to help him do something.

I don't understand what he wants me to do,

but,

i quickly answer his request for aid with a joyful "**Yes**".

He's taken out two gerry cans,

and i'm beginning to understand.

He wants to fill them both with petrol

direct from the pump.

I'm to hold the funnel , in place:

keeping the funnel's narrow end

in the mouth of a standing gerrycan

and he is going to place the petrol pump's muzzle

into the funnel's wide open

end and fire.

I take hold of the funnel and place it firmly in place.

I know how to be a good apprentice helper to artisans.

He takes the nozzle in his hands, points,

and then, all of a sudden, with no outside causes apparent,

---as though he is having an orgasm---

he loses control of the nozzle and it jumps wildly around,

pumping petrol everywhere.

And i get a wack on my clothes

And my left eye takes a dousing.

And my left eye is now stinging and i quickly wipe it dry.

A flash thought about the danger of petrol in the eye is rejected.

I would have heard of such a danger were it true.

The stinging is nearly gone.

I am not crying but my consciousness is inwardly turned.

I hope the fuck this accident doesn't ruin my vision.

What the fuck is this guy about?

Pedra comes over and bends towards me concernedly

and tells me that i should quickly wash myself.

I am totally compliant, as a young boy still blinded by my injury.

He softly takes me by the arm and concernedly

leads somewhat-blind-me indoors

to the Station's big and clean toilet.

And i wash my eye

And he washes his hands

And i wash my face and my hands

and smell the stink of petrol on my outer jacket

The sting in my eye is gone. Everything seems to be getting back

to normal. We have a coffee. He pays.

THE ACTION CONTINUES

Till now, i have always been compliant to his iniatives.

And his iniatives have quite a scope.

He must see me as a very plastic type. One with whom he can go very far.

One who might prove to be the needed co-actor

for some crazy perversity he had dreamt up years ago.

"**Attention! Danger!**" my instincts roar within.

We go back to the car and he says,

that he's decided to immediately empty

one of the gerrycans into his car's tank.

No explanations do i ask. No explanations does he offer.

"**We are going to do this now.**"

(**Before we did that. Now we will do this.**)

I am still attuned to agreeing.

What else can i do? He has the upper hand. I need him.

"**Yes i'll help you.**

What do you want me to do?"

He wants me

to hold the funnel's narrow end in the car's fuel tank,

as he pours the gerrycan's petrol into the funnel's wide end.

I have no idea why he wants to do what he is doing.

But i am cautious. Very cautious.

This time the operation is a success. There is no damage.

He finishes the operation by placing

the empty gerrycan in the back of the van.

Of a sudden, he gives me a mission:

to get him some matches.

He goes walking off in his hobbling act

once again across the car park into the light-dazzled world.

I see him fade into the distance.

I judge that i have time enough before he comes back

to go into the Station and buy some matches.

I don't trust him returning to the car

with my rucksack inside

and me somewhere else.

He might just drive off 'without thinking'.

I'm not going to allow him to undo me under the cover of an accident.

He's a guy who is an obsessive smoker.

He must have two pipe inhalations whenever he wants.

Which is very often.

So he keeps his pipe in his mouth always.

THE INSIGHT

The Service Station, i learn, doesn't sell matches.

They will sell me a cigarette lighter for 18 francs.

"Fuck that!" i say to myself and walk out

and not seeing Pedra

realize that Pedra hasn't yet made it back.

I'm standing alone waiting for him to show up.

I begin to think defensively about what will happen now.

Pedra is going to make a pitch to extract 18 francs from me

to pay for a cigarette lighter.

He must smoke.

How can i say no?

He'll be angry at me.

I am not interested in being with someone who is angry with me.

But i'll be angry at him if i pay it.

Anyway i am not paying it.

But hold-it!

He's not here!

And i'm a hitch-hiker and we are at a very large Service Station

with lots of passing traffic. This is a perfect set-up for me.

Why should i not leave him here and be rid of this danger?

Let me see if i can get my rucksack out of his van.

If i can, i might as well make my leaving him a de facto truth.

Something that he cannot play a role in altering,

cannot override me with his will.

I will be independent of him once i separate my rucksack from him.

My rucksack in his car is our only physical tie.

So far, in this voyage ,

Pedra has called every tune.

And dancing to some of them has hurt me,

yet i accepted the hurt without protest.

So Pedra now must feel he could pretty well do anything with me.

I have been an innocent doll dancing to his music.

So i go to the back of the van.

The door is not locked

and i easily lift my loving rucksack on wheels

from out its onetime, short-time home.

I close the door and wheel my rucksack fifty steps away.

I place it next to the entrance to the Services' large store-restaurant.

and return to the side of the car waiting for Pedra.

I want to tell him '**thanx for the lift**.'

Its night-time.

Seeing my rucksack from here --near the car--

requires really good eyes.

He wouldn't spot it from here.

I will be talking to him without encumbrances.

I know that the profound reason for leaving him

is not the money angle of the cigarette lighter.

That is the smaller reason.

Though my frugal economic alarm bell is ringing,

my sensitive and faithful and all-powerful

physical-security system

has now begun

to panic.

It is wordlessly appreciating the insight gained

by considering the fact

that working together we had an accident

in which i suffered entirely and he was untouched.

And the accident was caused by his incapacities

to handle the petrol pump's muzzle.

Yet, it was he who suggested this operation.

Is he willing to risk doing things with me that he never did before?

Or, enterprise adventures whose conscious or unconscious purpose

is to fullfil his own private needs?;

whether i am ruined in the process or not?

This guy is way-out. There is danger lurking about him.

Dare i ask him,

"What's the use of the other gerrycan still filled with petrol?

Why can't all of the petrol go in the car tank?"

Dare i tell him what i am feeling about him?

But why do that? He wouldn't listen to me.

He never really listened to me.

Whatever i have to say seems irrelevant to him.

Till now, to everything he's asked of me, I've only said "yes".

But i'm not buying him a cigarette lighter for 18 francs!

He returns.

I begin to thank him for having gotten me beyond Lyon.

He receives my words with astonishment.

He refuses to understand

that i am no longer want to be hitching with him.

He is very upset.

"**But i owe you many more kilometers**"

You must come with me! **You must!**"

and he doesn't take my "**No**" as final.

He is trying to crash in on my independence of being.

"**You must come with me!**" he is shouting with fury.

I say "**No**." and that's final and start to walk off.

He quickly gets in front of me and blocks my way

and demands that i come back in the car with him.

"**I owe you more kilometers**."

I step around him and walking to my rucksack,

take hold of it and wheel it into the Services huge interior.

He must realize

that in retreaving my rucksack

i acted without asking him.

I am putting him behind me, bodily.

He follows after me shouting, demanding, hurt.

He will not let me go.

In the drinks area i stop. He's still at me, demanding,

--refusing my right of sovereignty over myself.

There's no one around. I'll reason once more with him.

"**Thank you. I don't want to go further.**

I'll stop here for the moment."

He responds,

"**What are you going to do here?**

Wait more?

I'll give you a lift right now.

It's cold and its night-time. Come with me."

"**No**" i say to him,

face to face, in as distinct and direct a fashion as i could.

I am showing myself

to have independent will relative to him.

But he refuses to listen to me. He knows what's best for me.

I should go with him. He is panicking

as he confronts this first refusal of mine.

Pedra, in his head,

must have created lot's of fascinating designs

with respect to me

judging by his passion.

All at once i've blown his expectancies

and, all at once, he is confronted with the failure of them.

How else explain his passion?

"**No**" again i say

and seeing that he'll not let up till i've capitulated,

i, once again, take the initiative

and wend my body and pull my rucksack on wheels

across this huge Station's indoor consumer-torium

to a table in front of a bar,

with a waitress behind the bar

serving and chatting with 4 bona fide clients.

They understand that something is going on

when i take a seat in front of them

and to make sure they understand, i quietly, but forcefully,

announce:

"**The guy won't leave me alone**,"

i speak to them across a small gulf of space,

so that they know that i am looking to them for security.

Pedra comes over to me and starts again the same harangue,

as loud as before.

It's as though we are having a family dispute. As though he is my

father telling me to come back with him etc. And i am leaving.

What a lucky advantage i now possess.

When he introduced himself, so personally, as "**Pedra**",

I did not, in my turn, answer his 'openness'

by **tell**ing **him my name**.

Had i done so then, he would have used it now.

Calling me,

'**Marty. Come on with me! Don't leave me now!**"

And the persons sitting at the bar and the waitress

would certainly have thought this to be a family conflict.

For who interchanges names with hitch-hikers?

Who develops such passions but people known to each other?

What a coocoo world this is!

He's still imploring me to go with him.

Passionate, intimate sentences, upon passionate, intimate sentences

he easily uses.

But i am sure of my grounds.

His refusal to let me alone

is now to be enacted in front of people

to whom i shall, if i have to, call for help.

He continues his harrangue

and i refuse to give him the slightest recognition.

I become mute and concentrate on looking at the bar and its clientele

in mute emphasis of what i had already told them.

Witnesses are being created as he continues to implore me.

His position is getting dangerous for himself.

Finally,

Pedra finally catches on.

He is going to his car.

And there it goes out beyond the
Station's lights.

Ten minutes pass. He hasn't returned.

I am still sitting at the table in front of the bar.

I am vibrating. I can't get tranquil.

My body is finally telling me in what danger it felt itself.

I can't settle down.

I go over to a table in the automatic drinks area.

I take a seat there. But i can't settle down.

To think i was as close

as nothing at all

to follow him further.

What danger!

Only now do i think of

the melange of petrol in the gerrycan back of his seat,

and his incessant use of matches,

and his still, uncured cancer of the throat.

Of my willingness to go along with him...

of my marvelous confidence to risk that night ride with him

to get beyond Lyon.

I've hitched enough to know its a rarity

to get someone offering you a lift

before you've asked him. But it does happen sometimes.

When i entered his car and, probably before,

i knew i had to be on my toes with him.

I knew that i had to be responsible for the car's safety.

But very soon i was impressed with his driving.

He was in control. He was obviously a good driver

and the motor was truly purring.

So my fears at that physical security level were put to sleep.

Anyway, anyway. I'm on the other side of Lyon,

in a large Service Station,

poised to descend quickly

toward Avignon

and the sweep of Mediterranean coast-road,

passing near Carcassonne and Narbonne,

the easiest part of my voyage,

on my way

to the city of the plain,

Toulouse.

POST SCRIPT

The greatest, future **BREAKTHROUGH**

in hitch-hiking

must be initiated

by **WOMEN.**

DEAR READERS,

As you might now be totally aware,

the presence of women in this book is rare.

The social climate of violence and fear

has excluded her from adventure here.

Neither as a hitch-hiker who asks,

nor as a driver who offers,

she no longer can trust to this unpredictable road.

Yet, nearly every woman i spoke to had had

a marvelous adventure hitch-hiking.

But, nearly always, teaming up with a bloke.

I know two women Linda and Pat who,like me,
frequently hitch-hiked

into the South of France from London town.

Their speed was amazing.

They'd travel alone and sometimes together.

But alone they never had to wait for a lift.

The problem began for them, once in the car or cabin.

Will the guy lose his self-control,

and let his sexuality drive him to be unfriendly?

For me, a male, the primary, hitch-hiking problem is,

How to get inside the cab?

Inside, i was sure to have a very enjoyable time.

Only once, did i come across that which a woman might frequently confront.

I was picked up by a guy who only spoke Italian. I don't speak

Italian but my weak Spanish allowed me some Italian comprehension.

We're buzzing along the Mediterranean,

when somehow he let's me know that he wants

to have me sexually.

I, a bit shocked, refuse. And he pulls over to the side of the road,

near nowhere, and says, "**Get Out.**"

I had no sense of body violence threatened.

I was just put in the shit by his sexual ego. That about expresses it.

Once, hitch-hiking with Rosy,

it happened that a lorry driver had somehow convinced us

to accept being split up. (It shows **how naive we were then**.)

Rosy was to go with him, somewhere or other, down the road

to pick up such and such.

I was to remain, where i was, in some abandoned, lorry park.

It was very crazy. **(How naive we were then**.)

I even left my rucksack in the lorry.

Wow. Only while waiting did i discover my stupidity.

My easy, trusting, allowance

to put ourselves in such a crazy, weakened position.

Were they coming back or no?

What will this guy do with Rosy?

This is crazy!

Rosy is a wise gal when it comes to men.

She knows how to get along with big and powerful, matcho guys.

So i had confidence in her ability to come through.

But now i was worrying.

It's more than twenty minutes,

and they still haven't returned.

My irrational mind plays with the idea that Rosy is going off with him.

But life was good to me. And He and Rosy came back.

I found out later, that he had truly tried to seduce her,

but she wouldn't have it.

I never questioned her deeply there.

We had made a mistake that both of us will not repeat again.

Yet, risks have to be taken in life.

Perhaps hitch-hiking in this fear-ridden era has its risks?

Thirty and forty years ago, hitch-hiking was an unthreatening adventure.

Today, so i am told by people who read The Media,

hitch-hiking is very dangerous.

But i can't say that i sense it.

The Media can blow up one story sky-high and make what they will of it.

I never saw an article in praise of hitch-hiking in The (established) Media.

So i know for certain that they are against it.

The Bus companies and train companies are certainly against it.

The doing-something-for-nothing mind-set

is seen as '**Enemy Consciousness**'

in this world dominated by moneymen.

So rare cases of violence in the world outside of their domination are magnified, making hitch-hiking and all 'free' behaviour to appear full of horrendous risks.

Perhaps, Life is naturally, full of risks?

A life without risk, must be disastrous.

How far i go into my risks, is how far i enlarge my freedom.

My **confidence in my own judgement of what is risky**

is a growing faculty.

It can grow large --and that only through risk-taking--

or, it could grow small

--like a child who never grows up,

who must always accept the judgements

of parental figures, must always live in

fear of fear--.

What a greater danger that is!

I have entered cars and lorries in which i really was uncertain.

For instance, i stayed in a car

though i found out the driver has,

as his most satisfying home-hobby,

watching and feeding

live, small animals

to his meat-eating piranhas

which, in their native
waters,

shred, within seconds,

to bare
skeleton,

any living animal

which
unhappily
didn't

make the
river's
bank

i
n

t
i
m
e
.

My mind naturally turned to the question:

"What kind of guy is this guy, driving alongside me?"

I don't get frightened in such a case.

I become more curious and ask more questions

and get closer to him in order to understand

what he experiences and values.

The more i understand the less i fear.

And i am for him. He is doing me a favour. He is giving me a lift.

But i am not less aware of him as a a potential danger.

He wasn't a talker. And his mood was a deep dark purple.

It worked out all right. He dropped me where i wanted to be dropped.

We left each other amicably.

As i remember it,

Kathy, beautiful and strong willed, told me this story

from her hitch-hiking days.

They were in the middle of nowhere when the car driver says

he's going to stop for a piss.

Going, as though to piss,

behind some trees,

he masturbates looking at her.

When he got back into the car,

Kathy, without saying anything,

picked up her rucksack and got out of the car.

It was a very difficult hitch-hiking location.

Getting a lift was not going to be easy.

Twenty minutes later he returned.

He must have felt guilty.

When he offered, she accepted.

"Because I accepted his lift", she says now, "he learned a lot."

Because i know Kathy, i know he learned a lot.

During that voyage back, the presence between them had to be strong.

My response to her story, i do remember.

I told her:

"We need women like you on the roads.

Re-educating these guys."

Otherwise, most women will never, ever, hitch-hike alone,

--one of the sweetest, richest ways i know

of leaping

into the

unknown--
.