


THE PILLOW BOOK OF SEI SHŌNAGON

TRANSLATED AND EDITED BY IVAN MORRIS


COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS
NEW YORK

Columbia University Press
New York Chichester, West Sussex
Copyright © 1991 Columbia University Press
All rights reserved

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Sei Shōnagon, db. ca. 967.

[Makura no sōshi. English]

The pillow book of Sei Shōnagon
translated and edited by Ivan Morris.

p. cm.—(Translations from the Asian Classics)

Translation of : Makura no sōshi.

ISBN 0-231-07336-4.

ISBN 0-231-07337-2 (pbk.)

I. Morris, Ivan I.

II. Title.

III. Series.

PL788.6.M3E56 1991

895.6'8107—dc20

91-15757

CIP



Casebound editions of Columbia University Press books are printed on permanent and durable acid-free paper.

Printed in the United States of America

c 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

p 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13

100. *Presumptuous Things*

A child who has nothing particular to recommend him yet is used to being spoilt by people.

Coughing.

One is about to say something to a person who is obviously embarrassed, but then he speaks first – very strange.

A child of about four, whose parents live near by, comes to one's house and behaves mischievously. He picks up one's things, scatters them about the place, and damages them. As a rule he is held in check and cannot do as he wishes, but, when his mother is with him, he feels that he can assert himself. 'Let me see that, Mama,' he says, tugging at her skirts and pointing to some coveted object. The mother tells him that she is talking to grown-up people and pays no more attention to him, whereupon the child manages to take hold of the object by himself, picks it up, and examines it – oh, how hateful! Instead of snatching the thing from him and hiding it, the mother simply says, 'You naughty child!' Then she adds with a smile, 'You mustn't do that. You'll damage it, you know.' The mother is hateful too. Since it would be unseemly to say anything, one has to sit there in silence, anxiously watching the child.

101. *Squalid Things*

The back of a piece of embroidery.

The inside of a cat's ear.

A swarm of mice, who still have no fur, when they come wriggling out of their nest.

The seams of a fur robe that has not yet been lined.

Darkness in a place that does not give the impression of being very clean.

A rather unattractive woman who looks after a large brood of children.

A woman who falls ill and remains unwell for a long time. In the mind of her lover, who is not particularly devoted to her, she must appear rather squalid.

102. *People Who Seem to Suffer*

The nurse looking after a baby who cries at night.

A man with two mistresses who is obliged to see them being bitter and jealous towards each other.

An exorcist who has to deal with an obstinate spirit. He hopes that his incantations will take effect quickly; but often he is disappointed and has to persevere, praying that after all his efforts he will not end up as a laughing-stock.

A woman passionately loved by a man who is absurdly jealous.

The powerful men who serve in the First Place never seem to be at ease though one would imagine that they had a pleasant enough life.

Nervous people.

103. *Enviably People*

One has been learning a sacred text by heart; but, though one has gone over the same passage again and again, one still recites it haltingly and keeps on forgetting words. Meanwhile one hears other people, not only clerics (for whom it is natural) but ordinary men and women, reciting such passages without the slightest effort, and one wonders when one will ever be able to come up to their standard.

When one is ill in bed and hears people walking about, laughing loudly and chatting away as if they did not have a care in the world, how enviable they seem!

The Unabridged Journals of
SYLVIA PLATH

1950-1962

TRANSCRIBED
FROM THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPTS
AT SMITH COLLEGE

EDITED BY KAREN V. KUKIL



ANCHOR BOOKS
A Division of Random House, Inc.
New York

FIRST ANCHOR BOOKS EDITION, OCTOBER 2000

Copyright © 2000 by The Estate of Sylvia Plath
Preface, Notes and Index Copyright © 2000 by Karen V. Kukil

All rights reserved under International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. Published in the United States by Vintage Books, a division of Random House, Inc., New York, and simultaneously in Canada by Random House of Canada Limited, Toronto. Originally published in hardcover in Great Britain by Faber and Faber Limited, London.

Anchor Books and colophon are registered trademarks of Random House, Inc.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Plath, Sylvia.

[Journals of Sylvia Plath, 1950-1962]

The unabridged journals of Sylvia Plath, 1950-1962 / edited by
Karen V. Kukil. — 1st Anchor Books ed.

p. cm.

"Transcribed from the original manuscripts at Smith College."
Originally published: Journals of Sylvia Plath, 1950-1962. London :
Faber and Faber, 2000.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-385-72025-4

1. Plath, Sylvia—Diaries. 2. Poets, American—20th century—Diaries.

I. Kukil, Karen V.

II. Title.

PS3566.L27 Z469 2000

818'.5403—dc21

[B]

00-042024

www.anchorbooks.com

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3

fools, or the sky will crumble and the forty-day rains begin, falling relentless from the angry heavens. And your car will not save you, nor your tardy repentance. Hush, hush your vile talk, he is being won from you.

And the world goes by creaking at the joints. You, dear, think you are in love with me. Yet you are not lost. There will be a million women. I am glad to be the first, tacking the gay standard as high as I can reach. You can match it, go beyond it someday, Bobby.

Hell, you deserve more than being in the Ladies' Home Journal. If only I could get you in the Atlantic: "The Kid Colossus." I will aim at the highest, too. A plot. Like "Knife-like, Flower-like," only different. To prove what. To begin where, to end where – from what point of view. Oh, I will brood this year to find the form for the content.

Val said: visualize, emotionalize, afterwards. Beginning writers work from the sense impressions, forget cold realistic organization. First get the cold objective plot scene set. Rigid. Then write the damn thing after lying on the couch and visualizing, whipping it to white heat, to life again, the life of the art, the form, not longer formless without frame of reference.

The wind continues by and by, and tomorrow there will be packing and tentative fare wells and Bob and Chuck and Dick – and rest and sleep. Packing, going, sad, glad, lonely for past: moving through so much continuous loveliness, proud to face present uprooting and stoic study program. Eager always still for the promising future which, even if twenty years are gone, is not the final word, nor the stiffening of old uncreative age. Always the promise, the hope, the dream, amid whatever poverty, war, disease and adversity – always persists the credulous human vision, of something better than that which is.

September 4 – 11:30 p.m. Science study program

(149) The first day of rigor being over, I am torn between a multitude of conflicting emotions and insights. There is the grim pleasure that I managed to complete my page quota. There is the hysteric and persistent fear that I do not understand all I read, that my water-level of comprehension is a good deal lower than it would be if I were taking the course slowly, step by step, under the guidance of a competent instructor.

There is the urge to procrastinate, to escape from the rigid cage of study routine I have made for myself. It lures me by a multitude of enchanting distractions; it beckons in the form of magazines, gay colorful stories and pictures; it seeks to simulate hunger, calling me to lose myself in the rationalization of continuous and nervous eating; it comes over the telephone,

through young male voices, asking me, (unknowingly) to come and do delightful things. Everywhere I turn, distraction beckons. It whispers: "How easy, to give up: excuses, you have good excuses. You were working, you were sick. Take a gut, plan to waste 6 hours per week next year. Forget about Phy. Sci. 193" and enjoy these last three weeks before the busy delightful whirl of college again begins."

To hell with you, I say. I have begun to work. My skin is broken out from subconscious anxiety and tension, self-induced. Nothing is more difficult than lashing a vagrant mind suddenly into long self-imposed stints of concentration. But I will learn a few things from this mass of material. I will read and ponder over my 70 page quota per day. That should take 10 days, approximately. I will then allow 5 days for writing, meditating and typing. It shouldn't be as hard as I make it seem, once I get accustomed to the discipline I myself invented. A few evenings a week I will allow myself a date, providing I get my quota done in due schedule.

Today would be an absorbing study if I were good at stream-of-consciousness. My mind tried every trick to elude the prosaic task at hand. I got ideas for stories; the burning desire to revise recent poems and send them out flared bright; I suddenly decided in a spurt of clairvoyance that I would of course marry the other brother, and spent a good deal of time reasoning out pros and cons of one vs. the other. I picked up a magazine, hurtled into a story, rushed through, and came up for air feeling slightly sick and very naughty, getting an almost perverse pleasure when I realized 20 precious minutes were gone. The phone rang and I actually fell downstairs in my eagerness to answer it – symbolically running away from my duties – glad for any reasonably valid excuse.

And so, now, it is almost midnight of the first day, and I have broken my resolution to go to bed early – postponing sleep, and thereby the inevitable waking up in tomorrow. Another device of escape –. It seems that every year I wince and grovel through an obstacle course that looks quite formidable. Remember how tense I was last fall about the driver's license? The Smith Club tea speech? To be sure, I can always sneak out of this, but I won't let myself. It is an absorbing test of will-power – and of the conflicting wills that make up my psyche.

(150) As for the husband: how cold, how material and objective I am. Also, how hypothetical! The hypothesis being that I could have either if I chose: and I actually believe I could convince either! I began with the youngest: a time of tender idealism, serious conversation. I believe I have kissed him

28 AUGUST 1957 – 14 OCTOBER 1958

should start writing it in November. Among other penetrating observations, Pan said I should write on the poem-subject 'Lorelei' because they are my 'Own Kin'. So today, for fun, I did so, remembering the plaintive German song mother used to play & sing to us beginning "Ich weiss nicht was soll es bedenten . . ." "The subject appealed to me doubly (or triply): the German legend of the Rhine sirens, the Sea-Childhood symbol, and the death-wish involved in the song's beauty. The poem devoured my day, but I feel it is a book poem & am pleased with it. Must agonizingly begin prose – an irony, this paralysis, while day by day I do poems – and also other reading – or I will be unable to speak human speech, lost as I am in my inner wordless Sargasso.

Monday: July 7: I am evidently going through a stage in beginning writing similar to my two months of hysteria in beginning teaching last fall. A sickness, frenzy of resentment at everything, but myself at the bottom. I lie wakeful at night, wake exhausted with that sense of razor-shaved nerves. I must be my own doctor. I must cure this very destructive paralysis & ruinous brooding & daydreaming. If I want to write, this is hardly the way to behave – in horror of it, frozen by it. The ghost of the unborn novel is a Medusa-head. Witty or simply observant character notes come to me. But I have no idea how to begin. I shall, perhaps, just begin. I am somewhere in me sure I should write a good 'book poem' a day – but that is nonsense – I go wild when I spend a day writing a bad twelve lines – as I did yesterday. My danger, partly, I think, is becoming too dependent on Ted. He is didactic, fanatic – this last I see most when we are with other people who can judge him in a more balanced way than I – such as Leonard Baskin, for example. It is as if I were sucked into a tempting but disastrous whirlpool. Between us there are no barriers – it is rather as if neither of us – or especially myself – had any skin, or one skin between us & kept bumping into and abrading each other. I enjoy it when Ted is off for a bit. I can build up my own inner life, my own thoughts, without his continuous 'What are you thinking? What are you going to do now?' which makes me promptly & recalcitrantly stop thinking and doing. We are amazingly compatible. But I must be myself – make myself & not let myself be made by him. He gives orders – mutually exclusive: read ballads an hour, read Shakespeare an hour, read history an hour, think an hour & then 'you read nothing in hour-bits, read things straight through'. His fanaticism & complete lack of balance & moderation is illustrated by his stiff neck got from his 'exercises' – which evidently are strenuous enough to disable him.

THE JOURNALS OF SYLVIA PLATH

Also several on "The Return". Use Baskin. Ho ho. Everyone here. Aaron's cocktail party. S———, James & Joan triangle. From whose point of view? Think, Think. Study sympathy point of view – emotional center –

Saturday: July 12: I feel a change in my life: of rhythm & expectancy, and now, at 11 in the morning, tired, very, yet steady after our great talk last night. A change has come: will it tell, a month from now, a year from now? It is, I think, not a false start. But a revision of an old, crippling delusion into a sturdy-shoed, slow-plodding common sense program. Yesterday was the nadir. All day I had been sitting at an abstract poem about mirrors & identity which I hated, felt chilled, desperate, about, my month's momentum (over 10 poems in that time) run down, a rejection from The Kenyon sealing hopelessness. I began, realizing poetry was an excuse & escape from writing prose. I looked at my sentence notes for stories, much like the notes jotted here on the opposite page: I picked the most 'promising' subject – the secretary returning on the ship from Europe, her dreams tested & shattered. She was not gorgeous, wealthy, but small, almost stodgy, with few good features & a poor temperament. The slicks leaned over me: demanding romance, romance – should she be gorgeous? Should Mrs. Aldrich, so normal & plodding & good with her seven children, have an affair with young, sweet Mr. Cruikshank" across the street? I ran through my experience for ready-made 'big' themes: there were none: E——'s abortion? Marty's lack of a child? Sue Weller's weepy courtship with Whitney? All paled, palled – a glassy coverlid getting in the way of my touching them. Too undramatic. Or was my outlook too undramatic? Where was life? It dissipated, vanished into thin air, & my life stood weighed & found wanting because it had no ready-made novel plot, because I couldn't simply sit down at the typewriter & by sheer genius & will power begin a novel dense & fascinating today & finish next month. Where, how, with what & for what to begin? No incident in my life seemed ready to stand up for even a 20 page story. I sat paralyzed, feeling no person in the world to speak to, but off totally from humanity in a self-induced vacuum. I felt sicker & sicker. I couldn't happily be anything but a writer & I couldn't be a writer: I couldn't even set down one sentence: I was paralyzed with fear, with deadly hysteria. I sat in the hot kitchen, unable to blame lack of time, the sultry July weather, anything but myself. The white hardboiled egg, the green head of lettuce, the two suave pink veal chops dared me to do anything with them, to make a meal out of them, to alter their single, leaden identity into a digestible meal. I had been living in an idle dream of being a writer. And here stupid housewives & people with

28 AUGUST 1957 – 14 OCTOBER 1958

polio were getting their stories into the Satevepost. I went into Ted, utterly shattered, & asked him to tackle the veal chops. And burst into tears. Useless, goodfornothing. We talked it out, analyzed it. I felt the lead tons of the world lift. I have been spoiled, so spoiled by my early success with Seventeen, with Harper's & Mademoiselle, I figured if I ever worked over a story & it didn't sell, or wrote a piece for practise & couldn't market it, something was wrong. I was gifted, talented – oh, all the editors said so – so why couldn't I expect big returns for every minute of writing. A cracking good story a week? I demanded a 20-page plot about a top-of-the-head subject that didn't engage me. Now, every day, I am writing 5 pages, about 1,500 words on a small vignette, a scene charged with emotion, conflict & that is that: to make these small bits of life, which I discarded as trivial, not serious 'plot material'. I cannot correct faults in rhythm, in realization – in thin air. I spend 3 hours & shall from now on, in writing, not letting a bad or slight subject engulf the day. I began with a woman menaced by a dog this morning. I bite off what I can chew. The first try is awkward, gets little mood, but it begins. Nora Marple is the sort of woman dogs growl at. Here life begins. Out of 30 exercises, perhaps a character: out of 100, perhaps the seed of a story. I shall doggedly work, wait & expect the minimum.

Thursday: June 17:" After two days of no-schedule, disrupted by our seeing Baskins, Rodman" & the intolerable stuffy lazy Clark's with their mean, mealy-mouthed Quakerism, I sit down on a clear cold sunny day with nothing to beef at except the slick sick feeling which won't leave. It comes & goes. I feel I could crack open mines of life – in my daily writing sketches, in my reading & planning, if only I could get rid of my absolutist panic. I have, continually, the sense that this time is invaluable, & the opposite sense that I am paralyzed to use it: or will use it wastefully & blindly. I have all the world's reading on my back, instead of a possible book a day. I must discipline myself to concentrate on certain authors, certain fields, lest I welter, knowing nothing and everything. Across the street there is the chink, chunk of hammers on nails, the tap of hammers on wood. Men are on the scaffolding. I am neither a no-nothing nor a bohemian, but I find myself wishing, wishing, to have a corner of my own: something I can know about, write about well. All I have ever read thins and vanishes: I do not amass, remember. I shall this year work for steady small growth, nothing spectacular, & the ridding of this panic. The windows shake in their sockets from some unheard detonation. Ted says they are breaking the sound barrier. Somewhere I have a vision, not of thwarting, of meanness, but of fulness, of a

The POET'S NOTEBOOK

*Excerpts from the Notebooks of
Contemporary American Poets*

EDITED BY

Stephen Kuusisto

Deborah Tall

David Weiss



W. W. NORTON & COMPANY
New York London

Copyright © 1995 by Stephen Kuusisto,
Deborah Tall, and David Weiss
All rights reserved
Printed in the United States of America
First Edition

The text of this book is composed in Electra with cursive
with the display set in Mistral and Atrax.
Composition by PennSet, Inc.
Manufacturing by Courier Companies, Inc.
Book design by Charlotte Staub

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

The poet's notebook / [edited by] Stephen Kuusisto,
Deborah Tall, and David Weiss.

p. cm.

1. American poetry—20th century—History and criticism—
Theory, etc. 2. Poetry—Authorship. 3. Notebooks. 4. Poetics.
I. Kuusisto, Stephen. II. Tall, Deborah. III. Weiss, David.

PS325.P63 1995

811'.509—dc20 95-1827

ISBN 0-393-03866-1

W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.
500 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10110

W. W. Norton & Company Ltd.
10 Coptic Street, London WC1A 1PU

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

Susan Mitchell

I keep many different notebooks, so many, it's possible I have a notebook fetish. The notebook I take with me everywhere is narrow ruled and $7\frac{3}{4}$ by 5: it fits easily into my pocketbook. In this notebook, I jot down lines for poems, ideas for essays, and thoughts that occur to me during the day. I have three other notebooks identical to this one. *Nuts & Bolts* is a very technical notebook where I write down my thoughts on craft and technique, along with lines from poems that I admire. In the notebook called *Gradus Ad Parnassum*, I set exercises for myself. Then there is the *Commonplace Book*, in which I copy out passages from books that have particularly impressed me. Besides these, I keep notebooks that accompany special projects—translations, a long poem, a heavily researched essay. The project notebooks are leather bound, looseleaf, and measure $8\frac{1}{2}$ by 11. The excerpts that follow are largely from the $7\frac{3}{4}$ by 5 notebook that is always with me. Most of the entries I have chosen are from 1992, but after a while these run into dated entries which record the beginnings of the poem "Music," included in this anthology.



1992

It would take tremendous energy to be the first person not to die, the first person to live forever, simply because no one had ever done

this before. If no one thinks it is possible, then no one is going to try to figure out how to put eternity together like an airplane or a submarine or a rocket. Doing it the first time without a plan, without any manual of instructions would be the hardest, but after a while, it would get easier. Begin by imagining the impossible. A hummingbird trapped in a screened-in porch darts through the mesh. At the precise moment of passing through, it folds its wings, pulling them in tight against its body. It does this too quickly for anyone to notice. It is not possible to witness such events with the eye. But I remember a momentary break in the sound its wings had been beating. As if a song had passed through the eye of a needle. That break is a knot of silence no bigger than a drop of blood.

*

Last night around eleven, I went outside to have a look at the boats in the canal. Hearing something behind me, I swung around and took it by surprise, the glare of my flashlight in its face. Caught off guard, the darkness reared up like a horse. Within the circle the flashlight made, everything was ordinary. Beyond that circle, the darkness was chased further and further into itself. I had never seen darkness so clearly. It outlined the boats. It outlined the creaking of the ropes as the boats pulled against their moorings.

*

For my epitaph: "ready to be anything in the ecstasy of being ever."
—Sir Thomas Browne

*

"She said flawless so often, it sounded like worthless."

This line remembered from a dream in which I was looking through a book. The book consisted of drawings and maps, as well as writings. The maps resembled old-fashioned watches, the kind that men pull from their pockets on long gold chains. There were many intricate parts to the watches, or rather, to the maps. The maps journeyed in on themselves, delineating interiors not visible, but somehow present. The book impressed me, and I wished I had made it.

On waking, I thought: Well, I have made it since I dreamed it. But not really. It's the difference between the first mental draft of a poem and the written poem.

*

Originally, the word *site* suggests a place in which everything comes together, is concentrated. The site gathers unto itself, supremely and in the extreme. Its gathering power penetrates and pervades everything. The site, the gathering power, gathers in and preserves all it has gathered, not like an encapsulating shell but rather by penetrating with its light all it has gathered, and only thus releasing it into its own nature.

—Martin Heidegger

I know that the poems I am writing are going to make a book when I feel that they are all breaking off from the same site. The site is not any one of the poems taken by itself. And the site cannot become a poem. The book of poems is the site. Or it is a map that allows the reader to create the site in his or her imagination. For a long time, there was a poem I kept trying to write, but each time I tried, I ended up writing a different poem. At last I understood that the poem I could not write was the site. The site was nonverbal. When I imagined it intensely, I wrote poems that were broken off from it. I could point to images that made up that site, but it would be best not to point. Even gesture would begin to disturb a silence that needs to be preserved. I need to keep secrets from myself, perhaps? Or, I need the site to remain visual if it is going to have the power to generate language.

Whenever a book of poems is very powerful, it creates a site that other poets begin to draw on. Instead of working from their own sites, these other parasitic poets feed off this Ur-site. So a curious kind of theft takes place, the theft of a power source in the imagination.

*

Whenever I read Walter Benjamin's "A Berlin Chronicle," I experience the world of his childhood through my knowledge of what will happen to him later in life. I read his chronicle through those losses still in the future: what will happen to him as a Jew when Hitler comes into power. So I am always reading this essay differently from the way Benjamin intended. I read it through the tragedy of his suicide. Could I learn to read it in a more innocent way? Or will Benjamin's Berlin always be a ruin for me? But doesn't this also happen when I reread a novel or a poem and know how it ends? If the work

ends tragically, then when I reread it, its end is always present for me in its beginning.

There is a kind of love that always contains loss—as premonition and as remembrance of the past.

*

Why is it that pain can wipe out all memory of pleasure while in pleasure there is often some intimation of loss, however vague? Is there pleasure that abolishes all memory of pain for extended periods, not just the few seconds of orgasm? For me, this would have to be sleep, a dreamless sleep, but with remembrance on waking that I had been drifting into deeper and deeper sleep, dropping from one level of sleep to the next like a boat going through locks in a canal. Maybe it's odd to think of sleep as pleasure, but on waking from deep sleep, I feel as if I were actually separating myself from something physical that I had been intertwined with, something luxurious and soft and intoxicating.

*

Understand: to stand under, so as to take what streams directly into the mouth, the water from a waterfall, the drip of icicles melting

Über Berg und Tal
Ist ein Wasserfall

*

a noise of birds
a roof of birds taking off like tar paper
the birds (starlings?)
the roofs across the plaza, the
palm trees are overflowing
many have only the air to inhabit

Construct a life to provide for the idleness of sustained effort

*

It surprises me that so many people think of transforming themselves only after they have had a traumatic experience. So and so has left them so they feel pressured to change. But why can't self-transformation be a response to one's work? The work needs me to

change, so I will. For the work to become better, I have to become other than what I am. In a way, writing is trauma—sustained, ongoing, chronic trauma. Can I feel more, can I laugh more, can I go deeper?—this is what my work demands day after day. If I can't change, then my work will grow bored with me.

*

It is possible to enlarge a photograph of the face until it appears to be a blossom and further, until the blossom has stairways and pulpits. Who could have guessed all our possibilities?

*

If music had its way with us, language would become a thing of the past.

*

Sometimes there is a clitoral intensity to seeing, as if an optometrist kept adding more and more lenses, turning them this way and that. *Is this better? Or is it better this way?* Sharper and sharper until it almost hurts. Those drops Milton has the angel put in Adam's eyes until Adam swoons from seeing.

*

That feeling I had for a long time after surgery, that the universe was empty, flat, that I was pressed up against a wall, the wall the end of the universe, the limit against which: bare, blank, cold—that feeling is finally gone. The universe is full again, exciting, achingly so. What seemed like a terrible revelation no longer has meaning. Is either view correct? Are both views correct? Neither? Niels Bohr says, "The opposite of a shallow truth is false. But the opposite of a deep truth is also true." And happiness is not thinking about any of this. Probably, it was pain that led to the invention of language. Pleasure is pure immersion.

*

When I am certain that I have nothing in common with a person, I tell myself that we both know what water tastes like, and neither of us can describe that taste.

*

It was late afternoon when we entered the church by the side door. We had stopped for tea first, and Odette had poured milk into my

cup and then the steaming Lapsang Souchong, a smoked tea I have loved ever since. The tea room was very warm, and the babble of French around us made me drowsy. The French Odette spoke seemed heavily outlined because she spoke slowly for my benefit. Odette kept her hat on. The hat was a dark color indistinguishable from the color of her coat and her dress. *ide*, it was almost dusk, the streetlamps, the headlights of cars already on. We had come to the Isle Saint Louis because Odette had wanted me to see a painting by George de la Tour that was in the Eglise Saint Louis, that splendid Baroque church Le Vau designed. Today when I wanted to verify the name of the painting, I could not find any mention of it in the five Paris guides I consulted. Perhaps the church sold it. I know, though, that it was there in 1963. When we entered the church, the lights were off. There was only a faint glow around the altar where candles were lit. Odette asked the priest if we could use one of the altar candles to illuminate the painting, and in response to something he mumbled, she dropped a coin in the box and dipped a candle in flame. When she held the candle up to the painting, light jumped out at us. The candle that George de la Tour had painted seemed to take fire from ours. I even thought I heard that flap of wind when flame catches and flares up. In the painting, a girl with bowed head sat before a candle. There must have been more, but that's all I remember of it now. That and the sound of one candle catching fire from the other. The painting made me forget momentarily Odette's philandering husband and something she always said when we passed his photo in her living room—*Mon Ange!* and then to me in English, *Never marry for love.*

Why did I suddenly think of this today? Why remember something I have not thought of in years? Now that I have remembered, I am obsessed with it, especially with that sound of the flame flaring up. There's a glaze over the memory, the kind of glaze that Van Eyck used. Even the obscure, smoky places in the memory, even what I don't see clearly is highly glazed and shines as if a candle were held to it. Even that sound, that flap of air, breath catching—shines.

*

Today in Liberties Bookstore I began to hear the tinkle of the little silver bell my aunt would ring when she wanted the next course brought to the dinner table. As I turned pages of books, the bell kept

ringing. When I got home, I napped for a while and dreamed that I called my mother to ask her if she still had the bell. *Do you want to hear it?* she said to me. When she rang the bell, it sounded more tinkly than I remembered, but I think that was because my mother let the bell dangle from her fingers. My aunt rang it with more force—from her wrist and with a specific purpose in mind. The slight difference in tone makes me think of something that Artur Schnabel wrote in his edition of Beethoven's piano sonatas: "The key which is touched by the third finger should produce a tone hovering between reality and imagination—but must be heard, none the less."

*

August 17, 1992

MEMORIZING THE SONATA OF KINGDOM COME

Which is a sonata yet to be written and listening
to the ———, I know the one most likely
to compose this is not yet born

I want to learn this by heart which will be
like learning another heart

This is the unbound sonata, not yet scrolled, the time
not yet decided with imbecile signatures

A bigness unending

it had broken off from, and what it had
broken from could still be felt

August 21, 1992

How anemic the eye that looks outward
immersed in blur and bludgeon. Give me visions
that whirl the optic nerve

December 25, 1992

The bird cracking the same note, smashing
it against rock,
lashing at it, splitting

it down the center
where inside another note just like it,
the same DNA, the same three notes
streaming out of one
or a note like a fig
its many seeds
filling the ear
lodged in the ear
buckshot

April 15, 1993

JOSEPH BEUYS AT MOMA

· · ·
s/c/ore 2/ implement—to score
to keep score
musical composition
scorch
arch
to score = to cut, incise, notch
to get revenge

August 9, 1993

"MUSIC"

The rose closes on it
the rose closes its mouth
on it
so the thumb can
almost taste itself
tasted
singability
dolphin clicks

the rib cage

February 25, 1994

and those things for which I haven't
a name

The Notebooks of
**MARTHA
GRAHAM**

Copyright © 1973 by Martha Graham
Introduction copyright © 1973 by Nancy Wilson Ross

All rights reserved. No part of this publication
may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or
by any means, electronic or mechanical, including
photocopy, recording, or any information storage
and retrieval system, without permission in
writing from the publisher.

Printed in the United States of America

Excerpts from these Notebooks first appeared in *The American Scholar*.

“Consort of the bull”
Campbell

The Labyrinth is a symbol of life — when an offering is made to
“The Lady of the Labyrinth” such as a “jar of honey,” it is made to
life itself in all its glory and pain —

Perhaps the dance is an ecstatic offering on all levels of experience
to the act of life —
“The Dark Door” —

One enters & is swept into a highly stepped-up experience of living —

“The Sibylline oracles . . . pieced together by Jewish editors; . . . in
which the sibyl is made a witness to the coming life & work of Jesus
Christ” (Webster Dict.)

Before prophecy — the mating with an animal —
all in semi-darkness — so very little is visible.

“The main object of the Jewish Sibyllists is to maintain the unity &
sovereignty of God. God is one Being, invisible, self-sprung,
without beginning or end.” Pseudepigrapha (374)

Prophecys —
Disaster
War
Love
Crowning happiness

{ why
whence
wherefor

The Sibyl —
Perhaps Emily Dickinson as she was possessed by the Sibyl — the
Muse —
The entry into the Sibyl area — the ancient time — as Emily — a
Victorian figure —

The Dark Door —
The Poet
(Emily Dickinson in period dress)
(Letter to the World II)

The Sibyl —
like ancestral figure