

A magic carpet flies and is so incredible that it is, in fact, difficult to believe. A true story, however, is harder to get off the ground. Herein lie stories of white lies, physical courage and the earth's rotation. I heard my mother tell a lie in a bakery when I was five. It was 1946. The only pre-made cake available for my father's birthday was decorated for a war veteran. My father wasn't that. The baker offered to remove it if by any chance it wasn't appropriate. My mother said it was appropriate. I asked my mother about the untruth. She explained she told the baker dad was a veteran so that the baker did not have to go to the trouble of changing the cake decoration. And, she explained that a white lie is "a lie you tell for someone's good or to spare someone some extra work on a cake" and this was fine and dandy. This news sent me reeling, not so much because of its questionable ethics, but because one of obliteration of the rules I needed to steady myself in a chaotic world. This just in: nothing is absolute. The universe isn't based on a binary system. There is no robust taxonomy based on plain text or juxtapositions: no rule of red/green, black/white, good/evil, up/down, inside/outside, big/small, tic/toc. Everything is relative and constantly changing. It suddenly made sense that opposite colors were called complimentary, the idea of them provided some sort of hope for a balance. Here was the cacophony of morality as relative to nothing else, and every citizen on earth was obligated to consider context and circumstances every second and so if I was starving and committed murder for a loaf of bread, yay for me. This state of affairs invoked terror about how I would ever successfully navigate the world. I was in a sense a tiny, ethical prig, but only because my life depended on it. And this new reality was absorbed by witnessing a lie by the one person I was totally dependent on for survival. Uh-Oh. What's more, I couldn't help but recall the taste of Palmolive soap in my mouth, applied when I had simply made a mistake instigated by my big sister. That was the time my sister said my mother would love for me to go up to her and say: "Fuck you mommy." Evidently that was something extremely bad to do, while I took my sister at her word that it was a beautiful gift.

My mother, looking down at her curly-haired bright, small child, had not the slightest interest in my innocence, was too sensitive to have a sense of humor about it, and had no urge to investigate the source. I had no idea that the F word was a very, very, very bad word. This was typical of the fact that my mom, bless her, never had, in addressing or tending to me, a clear idea who she was dealing with: a true innocent with a very literal mind fueled by an abundant imagination. The Palmolive soap lesson, and the hurt for being misunderstood, yanked the clarity rug out from under me again. My flailing would go unnoticed, and if noticed, condemned as hypersensitivity, which may have been close to the truth. I was little, it was hard to reign it in. Why couldn't my mother make the connection that this was the same child who, upon being told that the earth was round and spins a full rotation every twenty-four hours, hit the ground faster than the speed of light, clutching at the yard's daffodils in an attempt to hold on to the ground as the earth spins and rotates beneath her, except that, wait, that meant there was really no such thing as "beneath" or "under" either. Came supptime, I was pried off the planet's surface kicking and screaming. "I will never have bearings," I thought, "because there aren't any." How would I ever navigate a world where nothing was stable in relation to anything else; where any tools for measuring heft and worthiness were relevant only in the taxonomy of the teeny context in which they were useful, but not real, and that human character was a fluid thing floating in an ocean with thousands of currents, not in a battleship on a body of water where we could read the stars to get our bearings. Between the expulsion from Eden and the day we surrender to neural networks for our jurisprudence, how do we know what is right or wrong, or makes for a useful and virtuous life? Everything is subject to interpretation; and those of us who can afford it luxuriate in a lifetime of arguments over centuries of literature about it. It was also a shock to think that there may likely be no relationship between goodness and love. An incredibly evil sibling perpetually indulging in her baser feelings could be loved as well, or even more, than a

virtuous one striving to be good by transcending her baser feelings, one of those feelings being to murder the evil sibling. The evil sibling was favored for her gifts as an actress and because of her daring in lying and breaking rules. Her credo was: "The meek shall inherit the earth, but only after I have moved upscale to another neighborhood." She was an attractive swashbuckler. I was a curious nerd. Equal, but different. Even I, a victim of her nature, could admire her panache in fearlessly lying and manipulating parents, teachers, cousins, aunts, uncles, peers, etc. There was no evidence of an ethical backbone; how weightless and free that must have felt. With all that ensuing drama, life for her was adventurous. However, her absolute conviction she was the central hub of the universe left no margins for an interesting subtext. And I, as a child, indulged in subtexts every waking moment. So, I ask: "Is what constitutes a wonderful person quantifiable?" "Should a register of wonderful people be hierarchical according to classifications of deeds into categories of worth?" I was told that Albert Schweitzer was a sterling useful and virtuous person, and a universal example of goodness and, indeed, won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1952 for his work at Lambaréné. Glowing with goodness as he was purported to be, he also had human flaws that created negative ripples. Rumor has it that in later years he allowed the hospital to decay stating it was good enough, as is, for those patients in the territory in which it was situated. There is no Nobel Prize for the acrobatics of coping with personal angst. My parents made it clear that all men are created equal. But then why was my bringing home a black high school friend for dinner considered an act of teen rebellion? Why was it of comfort to them that "it could have been something much worse?" The vast difference between the rhetoric and the reality of the incident, made it clear that the universal was light years from the particular. Everyone is equal, but not really? My mother kept a kosher home, and changed all the dishes for Passover, but on Saturdays we went out for non-Kosher food. These things were always opaque, to ask questions was an act of treason. They would get defensive; it was a crime to ask questions. I wasn't interested as

much in moral rectitude as I was in trying to get a grip. If a consensus considers someone wonderful, why do their dark sides have to remain hidden if they are only human? Why are their shaded underbellies too horrifying for codified history books to report? Isn't it true that Abraham Lincoln strategized and held his enemies close through the lens of his own flaws? Can two or more wrongs have made the Emancipation Proclamation? Are deceitful actions good if deployed for righteous causes? Is all fair in love and war? Do angels have base impulses and urges that are not benevolent? How are we going to design decision-making machines when pure altruistic instructions are fallible and the wrong combination of two rights could make something go very, very wrong? Everyone isn't wonderful even if they think they are. It's the saddest thing when one of us causes unhappiness in others, and, in spite of irrefutable evidence, sustain a vision that we ourselves are wonderful. Our blind side inhabits an endless territory of self-favoring. What's more puzzling is that anyone who doesn't acutely suffer from psychopathology has conscious redeeming qualities, and, I am really curious as to what may be wonderful about me. If I knew, I would likely be in better shape. It would be something to think about in a positive way. I spend a great deal of time assuaging agoraphobia and other fears. I have internalized my mother's fears for her growing children, as a generic and pervasive fear of everything. This makes it quite difficult to leave my house when so many bad things can happen in an urban environment, particularly during a pandemic. Aging and vulnerable, I fear public transportation, the behavior of the same erratic suspects at loose on the streets that may have, in the past, amused me. I fear my appearance isn't acceptable. I fear traffic. There are tools for coping with all of this. Sometimes I take gummies and call a car service to travel. Once I arrive at a destination, I am relaxed and happy. The company takes my focus from fears as well as the acute physical discomfort of lumbar and cervical stenosis, scary staircases to bathrooms at parties, and the lack of locks on bathroom doors. Other events are actually charmed with safety. I wonder how I could adopt the positive view of me mirrored in someone

else's eyes. At times, good street meets bad avenue. Luckily, I am still awed by faith, and beautiful language. What I am wary of is feeling merged with the flow of the universe as a matter of course, because in my case it doesn't bode well for conducting everyday life and I have not been trained in a discipline that would serve as an armature. Navigating cascades of real-world responsibilities is the acceptable life and the manner in which our economy and culture are constructed. If one is choosing to live on the grid, it's a good idea to look every which way before embarking on anything like crossing a street; because life happenings are like Chatham Square, a cacophonous juncture where Bowery, Worth Street, Park Row, Mott Street, East Broadway, Division Street and Oliver Streets converge. I am a slow processor. I have always done tasks in minute incremental steps, sometimes at an agonizingly slow pace for others to witness. This is one reason why I mostly engage in solitary endeavors. The slow pace was evident when I was very little, and a reasonable explanation as to why my parents' patience ran short if I tried to follow their lead at any task. Outside the home, I fueled my speed with anxiety, and for the most part, it worked. Auditioning for participation in a piano recital at seven, the judge told my mother she had never in her life heard Für Elise played so slowly while simultaneously rendered in perfect tempo. I'm sure I savored each note as much as much as I savored their collective manifestation. At that time, I was still expressive with my entire body, and all my parts were connected in fluidity to enjoy at my own pace. In any case, I wasn't accepted for that concert. As an adult, I wish I could stop my dismay at how long things take me; for it's a longer time than how long it takes others to do the same thing. If pressed to accelerate, I just physically crash; ashen with fatigue. These "shorting out" episodes are problematic; I get pale and droopy. Sometimes, the same slow pace applies to decision-making; because every choice is ground down to the subatomic level. The intensity of my indecision shorts me out. Some malfunction sets off a pendulum which I have no choice but to ride till exhaustion wins. I go back and forth, from "or" to "else." This

becomes exacerbated if I am coming down with a cold. I wish I felt entitled to my own rhythm in real time. It seems luxurious, or too entitled, when it's the only way I know. A thrilled small child may have been a frightening phenomenon to my family members. It wasn't that my behavior aberrant; mostly I would vibrate incandescently. They did risk taking me, over and over again, to several Broadway musicals where my ecstasy always sparked a fever. For some reason, they were willing to deal with this idiosyncrasy. Maybe it was because that manifestation was tangible enough to deal with, it was a fever; not speaking in tongues. Perhaps taking me was cheaper than getting a sitter. We saw *Annie Get Your Gun*, *Oklahoma*, *Carousel*, *Brigadoon*, *Show Boat*, and *South Pacific* with Mary Martin and Ezio Pinza, names only old folks recognize, masters of their craft; inspired performers. Of course, the morals of these stories became my grounding, and I was grateful for it, unrelated to most realities as they were. it could be my parents knew these experiences gave me pleasure, but that never occurred to me because of their annoyance with the fevers, even though the fevers were entirely predictable. It was a rare occurrence that my joy coincided with theirs. Solitude and socializing are at polar opposites for me, ying and yang, either/or, see/saw, all or nothing. I like solitude more than anything, with a sprinkle of seeing lovely friends and family at rare intervals. This means I am not conscientiously networking much. Networking requires a ubiquitous presence at cohort events, whether one likes it or not. I am very self-critical about my lack of tolerance for that. I've likely developed agoraphobia as a way to stay home, period. I can be all dressed to go and not get out the door. I can get sick with a cold or headache or stomach ache so I cannot go. I can decide it's imperative I clean the oven. It's like a kid who acts out not wanting to go to school. Isn't a healthy balance between solitude and socializing unique to each person? Can't we still count on inclusion in a cohort when we rarely show up? It's difficult to navigate several social evenings in one week. I fear that when I say no to someone that's the end of the relationship, that's because, like everyone else, I have

unpleasant experiences saying no to narcissists; they often react with annoyance or dismissal; it becomes evident I have failed to make them happy, and I have been complicit in suffering miserably. Today I am basking in respite from toil and a bit worried about how much I am enjoying it. The idea of sitting still in order to inhale and exhale is quite celebrated. "Who has the time?" has been my faux mantra for decades. I love watching reruns, old movies, napping, and sitting with a device exercising a curious and pluralistic mind-which translates into browsing online and in books in all directions simultaneously. Perhaps there is a psychiatric diagnosis for that. If so, it is a condition which has its advantages. I am finally my own Director and Producer; I shouldn't worry too much about disappointing or shocking anyone else with the way I operate. Everything gets done eventually. Doing tasks in my own slow time allows room for odd desires to come up and surprise me, as I imagine it is for anyone free to sit with their imaginations a certain amount of time each day. I perform so much better when I am safely saturated in imagination. I can always easily find a way to feel bad; as in whenever one does something one could say one is just procrastinating something else. I feel wanton in my choice of tasks. Wanton is likely a euphemism for ADHD. Yesterday was a fairly serene and happy day, but I only did two things, not four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten or more. I did a good drawing and had a lovely dinner with friends, can't ask for more. Or can I? I am experiencing a sense of loss about how many more things I could have done. If I am going to be concerned with progress, why can't I measure it in weeks and months, not hours or days? And why be concerned with it in the first place? Progress may be a paradigm that's outlived its usefulness. Sisyphus: "do you feel you have a happy and useful life? Ageing amplifies slowness, paradoxically, at the same time the amount of time left to do things grows more and more abbreviated. Aging, coupled with ADHD, has its issues. Everyone has their idiosyncrasies. I cannot eat brown rice without falling asleep or intensely craving sweets. It's always the same, a wait at the door for a galloping acquisition of sweets from a one-hour delivery service.

It would be a miracle if I could leave myself alone and stop policing, eliminating punitive thinking and allowing myself the freedom to live and work the most productive way for me without wishing I were somebody else. Anxiety is causing a huge percentage of the short-term memory issue. In my employment life, I was always a round peg performing in a square hole and succeeding at the price of living with extreme discomfort. I am not alone in this; I am just super conscious of it. The effort to do a good job meant that I am not inherently suited to the realm of the real world. Does that sound familiar? Having no safety net, economically and emotionally, I needed to spend an inordinate amount of time and energy emulating someone who does. There must be those other than Libras who apply excessive rumination to the smallest decisions. Each fork in the road brings on a fierce battle with the pendulum. I try to get out of my own way and let what rightfully indicates a plumb line. Negative narratives thrive in my system under the delusion they are antibodies for my own protection against a leap from a tall building convinced I can fly. It takes a superhuman effort to move myself out of my own way, and out of the house for external distraction. I take it in steps: "Now I am putting on my coat and now I am going out the door. It keeps my anxiety at bay to go over and over the pros and cons of an action. What's interesting about being perceived for a time as a pioneer is that at the time one is doing the "groundbreaking" new work, no one notices. It's only much later, out of the blue, that someone sparks when they learn your name, and talks about the work one made two, three, four, decades before. A word at the time would have gone a long way when one is tearing one hair out trying to get tech to work for a "pioneering" project. At a university art department studio visit I was introduced by two different faculty members to the adorable students as a pioneering artist. Later, among faculty, we discussed that to young artists, a "pioneer" might very well be a relic, a dead person walking in a live body, a has-been, a flash-in-pan. It's not a total injury to be called a pioneer; but most of us over a certain age like to think we are still making new and meaningful work and therefore are still relevant



to students in a contemporary way. It still goes towards the rich experience of being deployed in service. This was well taken and discussed. Students were told it was important for them not to have the "art star" paradigm looming over them, but instead to carve out an "art life." That is good and sound advice, but alas it was clear of course that these talented kids were all hell bent on being "art stars" and who can blame them? It's only now, in old age, I prioritize my art "life" over my dreams and hopes. Sad to say, I seldom follow up with networking. It was hard being a child that was a source of emotional discomfort. If you have a mother who actively worries and fears what life can bring, you have a sense of responsibility towards her, occasionally bordering on hysteria for her welfare, and try to spare her from ripples. Just by my existence, I caused my mother acute anxiety because she was by nature, anxious. How would she protect me? What was the reflection on her if she failed? What would the neighbors say? How can she tolerate her child's pain? She may have wondered what would become of me and who wouldn't? I tried to spare my mom as much discomfort as humanly possible. As a child I would battle fiercely to overcome fears in an isolated state, because no familial cheering section was forthcoming, and it burdened them to ask. Having a child who saw, with her eyes open, Bosch and Bruegel creatures milling around her bed must have been very trying; and did furnish the family fable that they never considered a third child after I was born lest they never, ever have a good night's sleep again. We all need to nest an internal benevolent parental voice that gives credence to our special worth; one that encourages and nurtures. I wonder what that's like. Raise your hand if you had this benefit growing up. Hmmm, I thought so. If one is ADHD, then switching tracks and hats during a single day, or hour, is commonplace. That nimbleness is also helpful in figuring out solutions where the problem seems overwhelming. For me, solutions come less in eureka moments than in tiny sparks, and the slow moving and shifting of impediments and possibilities. It doesn't help to be discouraged because it takes so much time. It also depends on what resources one has on hand. Even if all the money in the world

cannot buy happiness, it sure can facilitate solutions to so many problems. With non-extremely limited resources every little thing has to be painstakingly considered; trial and error beyond one's means, even if one throws caution to the wind and risks regrets. Sometimes I think it may be useful to simply behave as if I have unlimited funds and call it forward--but I've never quite put stock in magical thinking in real life. Although, at my poorest, and on welfare, I did somewhat wild things with my credit card, and travelling to see friends for fun at that time gave me hope. Now I am on a fixed income that isn't quite adequate in New York, which, sad to say, is not uncommon. It's lovely that I am in charge of my own domain and the one who has to make the decisions about every object and process here. As annoying as it is, I have to accept that tasks are going to take the time they take, particularly with me at the helm in the time I particularly need to take, and the way I interrupt them to start or take another step in another task. The time it takes seems to be exceedingly slow, patchy, and drawn out. So why not think of each parcel of time as a cog in the machine of art and that each cog is absolutely imperative to get the machine oiled, up and running and that is all I need to know. That makes all tasks equal in a way, and a way to treat each task, mundane as it is, as a meditative process, or a sweet goal, because when its unmasked as drudgery, it's like doing it with heavy weights. We all, at times, seek a blank slate for good karma. I've travelled the New York subway on my own since I was twelve, it was geographically empowering; a second liberating factor matched by my mobility on my blue Schwinn Hornet bicycle. I believed that everyone should be loved equally in real time, and on the subway, I practiced that by sending each fellow passenger, in the order in which they were sitting or standing, radio waves of love; not looks of love which would lend themselves to interpretation. I was brought up with love, but I wasn't brought up with any notion of a God; otherwise I would have delegated this to that deity. I wondered if everyone else was doing the same thing. I didn't know I have a hyperactive and excessive empathy and an intolerance to the idea that someone has not benefitted

from some form of unconditional. The roommate currently living with me has a form of multiple sclerosis. She also has the rankest body odor I have ever experienced. In our initial interview she smelled fine, but, nevertheless, I asked if she was ok with self-care, like laundry, and showering in the shower-in-tub arrangement in her bathroom, not because it even occurred to me there would be lack of hygiene, but because I wasn't concerned for her safety and welfare. She reassured me it was all very do-able, so it's hard to understand her stink, which comes from an obvious lack of bathing or abundance of medications, if any., or both. But then there is also the horrific odor in her room, the food caked into the floor along with the used tampons. I've asked her many times what I can do to facilitate cleanliness. I provide bi-weekly cleaning services, and the cleaning person is close to quitting because her room is so outrageously dirty and unsanitary. I wish my nature was closer to that of the Nuns of the Order of the Missionary of Charities, immune to the terrible odors emanating from the poor, sick and dying. My excessive empathy gene was not present when didn't do too well when I was a guest at the Mother Teresa house at the Vatican; I found myself fleeing at any cost from poverty driven odors, so unnatural to the middle class and up and any other of the undevout. The sickest of the sick and the poorest of the poo were embraced by young nuns like precious cargo. I lacked the ability to be a stellar example of charity; which I wanted badly to be. I asked my friend, who travelled with Mother Teresa, and worked in these houses along with the nuns, why these young women sacrificed so much to do this rank work, and she said, "They are fools for love.". My parents weren't to blame for their flailing in uncertainty. This was evident to me when I was a toddler, one barometer being that they changed their strong opinions quite often—this way or that on a purely subjective basis, and I couldn't keep up. Each contradictory opinion grew fresh on the half-shell. For a wild child longing for boundaries, this raised questions of where I had gotten situated, and why. They inadvertently misunderstood me in the most extreme ways, which unfortunately I experienced as devastating. It was as if when they

looked at me, they saw someone else, someone they wanted to see, but not me. When I stood in front of a full-length mirror, at 2 or 3, transfixed by the fact I had body parts which were duplicates of each other and also opposites, the things that come in twos, arms, hands, legs, nostrils, their interpretation of my behavior was a profound shock. They saw it as vanity; and they pursued a contemptuous conversation about how if I was this vain as a toddler, they dreaded thinking of me as a teenager. Robust emotional antibodies did not come to my rescue. I never had a chance to develop in a straightforward manner from then on. Without having words for it, I knew my heart was broken, and also could see how vulnerable they were because I knew it stemmed from some kind of fear on their parts, or a lack of love. I vowed to always be careful not to upset them further and to protect them from anything their little barbarian, would do. I would have to self-educate as to how to be civilized. I vowed to behave lovingly towards my sister in spite of her persistent vengeful nature. On her deathbed, she said "I really did love you" to me, in a way as if she herself knew that, sad to say, that there wasn't really any evidence of that. I struggled to do that for seven decades until her sad death, and afterwards I created a celebratory book about her for family members celebrating her career as a professional actress, since I was the only living family who had witnessed that. I knew that any hostile act, was not only unproductive, but would just boomerang back because you can't win with someone so arbitrary. Siblings can be spiteful, narcissistic siblings can be relentlessly spiteful, and must be in constant pain themselves to be so cruel that it is excruciating for the victims who love them. Being outnumbered by narcissists, even the charming ones, as a kid may be the reason that, as an adult, I have split selves, not anywhere as extreme as multiple personalities, but each unaware of the other. It is exhausting, riding a pendulum 24/7. While one of my selves is trying to make sense out of my upset, the other is adamant about not listening and pulling the reins in on any inappropriate action. Actually, maybe it's a Trinity, maybe a third self is hurling criticality at the other two for not making peace.

This makes it difficult to develop a deep level of understanding about any particular issue; it keeps one on the surface of things. When a bully intimidates by hurling insults, a good tactic is to not visibly react at all; appear to be listening thoughtfully with one's head tilted to one side in interest. This can cause their invective to cave in on itself in the most surprising ways. An over-stoked motor fueled on its own venom without outside stimulus can soon grind down to a halt. Allergies are a bane. Cells are in revolution. It's exhausting. If medication kicks in, I can go about my day, only slightly drooping. Alternatively, I may have to go back to sleep it off. The worst scenario will be a trip to urgent care. I have enough, but limited, resources. It's funny how people who truly have huge resources constantly complain about being overwhelmed by tasks other people are doing for them. As diminutive as one's resources can be, it becomes difficult to listen to an ongoing litany of deprivation from a financially amply endowed person. However, that is not fair to say either. If someone says they are overwhelmed, one should assume that is how they truly feel and feel empathy, taking them at their word. I am envious of those who have never experienced pedantic and all-too-common hurdles to a joyous life which bring persistent challenges to wit, time and patience and entail more drudgery to the same effect. Of course, they may have other problems. What is my historical worth? There are sixty-five years of my art and art documentation where I live and work. I need help organizing and am not in a position to be wanton about it. I can do my best to get organized up to the point of dividing the tasks into do-able categories. I've decided for now to keep my paintings here and store the stuff I do not need access to but am forced to keep. That basically means the robots. I know I am in a declining and buried alive artistic demographic. On the bright side, old and retired from the job market, I wake up and there is the whole day in front of me. I make wonderful coffee. I can see the sun lighting up the skyline, and that alleviates the depression waking up to such a troubled world. It amplifies a new buoyancy, born of not having to perform any longer as a round peg in a square hole. When I

am on a pendulum swing between despair and buoyancy, or if my preoccupation becomes the fear of the other shoe dropping, then it's time to develop better strategies for living. I still have regular life tasks which overwhelm me, fairly often, where I feel hopeless and apprehensive. I am on a treadmill on Mount Everest and the weather has turned and then I think everyone else can climb Mount Everest in one breath under any conditions because they are younger and have better skills. I imagine I haven't yet found the right medication. Purging material belongings raises a lot of dust, pixie dust, concrete dust, wood dust, fairy dust, chalk dust., dust mite dust, hair dust, textile dust, meteorite dust, paper dust, mineral dust, human skin dust, fugitive dust, road dust. Purging, even at a minor scale, causes upheaval. Making a bigger mess to clear the old mess; shedding, expelling, commands time. effort and expense. Plastic file boxes for packing for storage finally come tomorrow. Once things are discarded or stored, I can close this door for another year. The hope is that when purging part is done, it leaves less limited physical and unlimited mental square footage for real work, whatever it becomes. It feels like moving boulders off the road, requiring superhuman strength to persevere and break down purging and organizing projects into incremental and do-able components. I am so envious of those who are quicker at it, and those can afford to completely delegate. I am slow, and indecisive and it has been this way my entire life. I don't know if it's a lack of confidence or regular resistance to human work or what. In my imagination, purging should be accomplished in a state of exuberant joy and efficiency since it holds such promise for a clear space and a clear head. There is no way to be exempt from drudgery. Either execute the purge myself, or delegate and supervise. The situations I create for myself are overwhelming. Clearing out personal effects and art stuff are arduous projects. When I hire even someone totally unfamiliar with my stuff and its uses, they seem to do it in four hours where it would take me two weeks and a lot of lie-downs with a cold cloth on my head. That may just be the nature of dealing with one's own stuff. Fueled by my own idiosyncratic drama I

can feel that I have failed miserably, whether hiring or not. Purging and reorganizing should leave in its wake only a clean slate, not an exhausted and distraught wreckage of a human who is compelled to start collecting all over again. It would be helpful if I could work in messes. It would be helpful if I was more patient with my own snail's pace. Part of why purging takes so long is my poverty head. I become fearful and cautious. I don't want to replace things that I may need in the future. I have no faith in prosperity. Sure, I have been on public assistance and almost homeless, but that's not now. And then, in addition, there is the digital storage issue. I should examine all my external drives to consolidate backups as if there is some incredible virtue in mediating excessive data duplication when it's closer to the truth that there is safety in duplication. I think if I consolidate, I would sell the extraneous drives and free up some shelf space, but by the time I purge and consolidate, the drives are obsolete. On the other hand, by going through all these drives, and the rest of it, I am getting a sense of my own art history, and that is interesting to me. It seems I don't emerge every day on the half-shell, fully formed, there are precedents. Still, I question not only all my decisions, big and small, as well as my repertoire of methodologies. I have a television set in my head featuring a sitcom with me as the star and I want to match that in real life. Again, In the end, I have no idea if the purge effort is just a detour, a procrastination decked with artificial virtue. I am an introvert as defined as someone who enjoys social encounters but is drained by them. I have always needed ample recovery time, no matter how terrific the social experience has been. I have several outings this week. Panic is seeded and growing. I need those engagements to get out of myself and that's a good thing. On the other hand, I can only hope the panic doesn't spiral out of control. The growing elusiveness of my short-term memory has come to resemble a "Where's Waldo" game. I hope most of it can be attributed to anxiety; otherwise I am in terrible trouble. Yesterday I couldn't remember what the physical connections were between my mac minis and my laptop. Only this morning

did I wake up and realize what I have to figure out is not how to connect them to my computer but how to connect them to a monitor connected to a computer. Now I have to lug out an appropriate monitor, since all this gear is actually obsolete. I am aware there is something I cannot remember. It's unhelpful when I cannot get to what I don't remember because I can't conjure up its name. Purging is taking so long, and I have yet to do tax work and legal documents like a Will and Living Will and Health Proxy and all the other paraphernalia of living and dying. All of that is dreaded work. The easy part was ordering weatherproof storage boxes, so I don't worry about a sprinkler system going off in my storage unit. However, the price of free shipping is that I won't receive them for another week. I just keep on moving; one foot tripping after the other, hoping there will be some closure at some time, but yesterday I lost sight of it. Why does clearing a mess require even creating a worse mess? Each incremental step is agonizing, and I can't seem to skim over anything. This is what happens when one seeks a perfection that doesn't really exist. Each incremental step does not have the same value as another, and I have no faith that things will work themselves out; I will be in the tunnel of purging for eternity. Real life stuff just makes me crazy. It's frightening to think of what will happen as I diminish even more with age. I find it so difficult to part with old tech; it's served so well it's relatively short life. At times, that drives me nuts, and takes up valuable time with indecision. There is only so much digital and physical space for things. I'd like to archive everything but maybe some things just have to go so I can move on. I'll think about it. I'll think about it more and then I will think about it again. The only way to shed old gear is to compartmentalize everything that is overwhelming my space and take one classification at a time. Archiving requires designated spaces plus time—and with the rate of obsolescence, it's a fairly perpetual endeavor. It would be ideal to do both organizing and bookkeeping one day a week. I always feel the most rational solution is the best one; but then I can't execute it, as there is always a conflict going on between ying and yang. Sometimes



the cacophony from that makes me incapable of accomplishing anything. Then I could see the accountant sooner rather than later and not pay a late tax penalty. Preparation involves making spreadsheets and organizing receipts, it's most likely the least favorite thing for many. I'm a natural candidate for doing things in a non-linear way. I can do more in two hours being my divided self than I can in a whole day with a prescribed schedule pretending I am endowed with an exquisite sense of logic. I think it's because I am better when playing cat and mouse with myself than battling resistance. I work well interrupting one task and with another and then recycling back to the first task, and maybe not the same day. Often, I nest one task inside another task and those tasks can be in completely different categories. Working in my own time, in a multi-universal mode, it all gets done. I work best that way. But a super critical super-ego knows its nuts. I worry I will drive someone else crazy when no one else is here to be driven crazy. The superego in the ether says that normal people finish one thing and then go on to the next. I have never had a problem supervising a crew because I understand not everyone is like that and as a professor, I know I have to break a job down to components for students I had and then explain the steps slowly and in detail. I am circumspect and sensitive as a project leader or collaborator. I have co-taught with respect for the other person's *modus operandi*. It is true at times, colleagues who understand me have needed to translate my language so others can comprehend what I am getting at. I don't do opaqueness on purpose. It's my first nature. To get my bearings on the planet, I sometimes gnaw on a subject like a dog with a bone because I'm apprehensive. I am afraid that if I don't, I might, like the reindeer in Lapland, eat the flowers in everyone's garden because those newcomer gardens are in the path of an ancient reindeer route from the mountains down to the sea. I need to not only surrender to what I can't control but also position myself to move forward. I am practiced in trial and error. I am researching productivity techniques. "Without energy management, we are prone to internal sabotage, trying to 'pace ourselves' throughout the day so that we

don't stop working." I've lost track of the cite; but this author proposes we should plan breaks from work so that we can give our all during work sessions without having to worry about pacing, as there is no need to pace yourself if you know a break is forthcoming. Doesn't work well for me. I hired a packer/organizer to help with boxes for a couple of hours. I've been lifting them myself and hurting my back. I weep for the loss of my original strength and grace. I shouldn't be moving heavy boxes. Hiring will expedite the process of getting stuff out of here to storage. I always needed someone to work with besides myself for emotional help for the confusion and overwhelm of deep self-organization, but now it's also physical help. This type of task would send me to bed with the covers over my head at any point in my life. I should commend myself that I've done a lot on my own now by breaking it down into smaller task components. The ability to purge and organize well is a special gift, and sometimes, even those endowed with it, can't do their own stuff. I've done as much as I can on my own. It would really be a big cross-off on my to-do list; and much less of a cross to bear. I keep harping on how old I am with the handyman because I'm frightened we are flirting when there is probably nothing to be nervous about, and he is too nice to make me uncomfortable, and I am really old, so it's just all in my head of course. I can't even accept his niceness without fishing for compliments. I am noticing how I feel and act, and just watching them like a passerby. It's amazing how I resort to self-deprecation as a tool when it really should be on the stockpile of garbage to dispose of. Why do I have a tremendous resistance to incremental progress? This resistance feels bogus and genetic. Mad exertions feed myself and my relatives much more energy. But it results in the elusiveness of steady success because we get worn out from indiscriminate energy. One can't be the aspiring child forever, it's inevitable to finally accept limitations and try to enjoy existing characteristics and be hopeful that they can shine in society. If I misunderstand a problem, I can re-approach it. Why am I apologizing to everyone for everything? Honestly, it's a relief to realize I am not that important. Western

civilizational creatures are so odd. We develop reflexes and habits so quickly, and then forget to draw the line between habit and amplifying them to addiction. Sometimes I wonder if there is a way to have a serene life by rendering worry illegal under threat of corporeal punishment. Considering that at the most I have ten to twenty years left to live if I am lucky, it would be wonderful if I could grant myself all the things I want and not worry. Many nice fortuitous things have happened for my benefit, but still I have no trust in serendipity. If I had had faith, perhaps I wouldn't have bothered with the killer jobs that postponed the life I wanted until I could afford it without compromise, and of course, there was compromise after all. I am glommed to my modus operandi because all of my employment life I had to be stubborn and self-willed to survive. I disliked the practice of making a wish on birthdays, I mean, really, what's the point? I've waited on balconies peering at vistas for Superman or Prince Charming or even a regular Joe to show up to no avail, it feels like I've done that for centuries. I try to believe in wishing well; sometimes when I am in action, I inhale and exhale, and I try to think that's a wish. Wish upon a star, wish upon a penny, wish upon a turd. I never had a religious education, and betrayed and misunderstood so much as a child, I can't afford complete trust, and I don't know why my needs or wishes should be bothered with when there are many needier people, with the world in such a terrible state. I am envious of those who have more ease; but my thinking always circles back to my own responsibility. I try to be proactively empathic to the more financially fortunate who worry out loud about money. I was a child of training by disgust, and so I am imbued with anticipation of responses to me laced with disgust. I take care not to inflict this on anyone else, as I know firsthand how painful this can be. Disgust is not very helpful in developing good characteristics and an open heart. Now grown and out of the familial sphere, I have choices. I can manufacture my own disgust to replace theirs because I see my flaws so clearly. Or I could shed disgust in a cathartic and transformative mold. There are those people in our lives that relate us only in light of a mirror construct of

themselves. That's why some of my family members, in mirroring the glamour of swashbucklers and pirates, have blithely committed fraud, and taken on responsibilities that could unwittingly cause injury or death to others, never being harmed themselves, thank God, but leaving a trail of wreckage in their wake. I say that without rancor. My own gene for blind narcissistic autonomy was gifted to me impaired at half-mast. Actually, just today I feel capable of being very bad. What is the worst thing that could happen if one has a tantrum with a higher power? If one is Jewish, it's not the brimstone and fires of hell, but the guilt. My uglies are usually fueled by being subjected to people serving up abuse. I saw H last night and he glared at me that I am doing administrative and not creative work now. His perception has nothing to do with me. I should never doubt that I am gifted just because I take time out to clean the oven. I have an inner clock about these things that is right for me. But I still am susceptible to criticism, not necessarily because it is merited, but because I think self-criticality and self-denigration keep me safe in some weird way. I deserve better treatment than that. My blood pressure is now slightly elevated. I should put aside my vigilante self, and I won't know if that is a good thing or a bad thing. I don't know if relaxing the grip of my superego is a disaster or I will settle into a gentler vigilance. The person I hired yesterday packed, sealed and labeled all the boxes that have to go to storage. I am so grateful. I have more work to do here and of course I have to spend a day getting all of that moved to the storage facility, but it was worth every penny to hire. I live without a financial net. My pension fund lost fifteen-thousand dollars this week. I ask myself why I don't cherish my environment for the bounty it offers more than the anxiety over my precious and minimal resources. It is fallacious and dangerous to think I will be magically cured of flaws and frailties if I only obey the rules coming from the ether, except there is no bona fide, absolute manual for how to live a good and useful life. There is also no need for self-torture; I see that, but don't believe it. Without self-punitive constructs, and the tools to train others to whip me, all havoc could break loose. The

day is beautiful and precious. And its quality has nothing to do with my good or bad behavior. I shed all responsibility for tasks and will spend the afternoon watching delicious movies. The shorting out I think showcases my lack of rigor may actually be a friend. It breaks me in a way that allows me to regroup. It provides a window of time to stop and think, figure it out, and perhaps if I didn't fight the feeling so much, I would be more productive in flux. Panic and self-denigration lead to bad habits. I need to untether from the scene of overwhelm. Artists have material and equipment storage issues to work out all their lives, tangible or digital – always with anxieties about losing passwords or keys or systems as to where things are. The safeguards to secure and accessible places, become, in themselves, great sources of anxiety. I worried about the location of the key to my current storage for days with that edge of panic and overwhelm before I managed to find it. I think these are built in dramas no matter what levels of organization I attain. I wonder what it's like to be someone whose emotions are tempered with their rationality, so these subjective extremes of feelings seem like they live in a very far country. Imagine experiencing moments of envy only at three on a scale of one to ten, and that only for a fleeting moment. I am in training for that, feeling like I will die from envy isn't anywhere I can see in the Pantheon of sane responses. For six decades, at the start of every new project as a separate entity deserving of individual rearing, I revamp my studio environment, and during that period of preparedness, I focus on clearing out my environment of any debris from projects that came before. I am never sure that is the right thing to do, but I feel compelled to do it. During this purge, I experience a vacant bliss along with a sense of loss. I anticipate what I am going to learn in the next step, which is research into what is moving me to make something new. That's the part where self-doubts are irrelevant because it is so interesting. My psychic location at these times is zero/zero/zero, I erase the magic slate and start over. Percolation seems to be knocking at the door, waiting to overtake the feeling that I will never make anything again. When I left my house

tonight it was snowing hard and I was fearful I would slip and fall. In light of my creeping physical diminishment, it's hard to think I will every feel confident in my body again. I try to draw boundaries as to what is safe and unsafe for me to do, and the list is sleepy but definitely growing. Plans are in place that make my environment more comfortable for me and no harm will be done. I shouldn't care how ridiculous they sound; they work out really well, although I feel as if I am going entirely to ruin. What if being "kind" to myself turns out to be the ruination of all my industry? I lament needing so much recovery time whenever I socialize, even if I've had a great time. I've researched this phenomenon before and it's the sign of a particular type of introvert. An introvert doesn't mean a person who isn't vivacious, rather it's someone who replenishes mostly through the self and needs recovery time even from the best of social times. I'm one of those, easily drained and cumbersome to restore to a state of clarity and energy. In any case, today, except for a few errands, I didn't do much of anything. It's funny to be surprised by depletion, when it occurs consistently but incrementally over decades, accelerated when there is serious illness. There is a play I really want to see with a friend. It is so different to do these things without the anxiety of teaching hanging over my head. I can finally live my life here in my hometown. Once again, yet, still, I am shuffling spreadsheets for taxes. My attention span is not what it used to be. Yesterday a pscyo psychotherapist asked me if I ever comb my hair, telling me that I could be more attractive if I tried. At first, I considered whether this was some sort of therapeutic technique. But, that remark, along with other strange and unorthodox behaviors have me thinking he is truly somewhat unbalanced and not very fit for practice. He is late for every session by ten or fifteen minutes and then almost brags about his incompetence in other areas of his practice, for instance, that he never gets his reports in on time. He says he is horribly uncomfortable in his room because there isn't adequate ventilation and so leaves the door open and talks about that through most of the session. He pointed out his own figurative

illustrations of his family members on the walls, elaborating on his ambitions to pursue a career as an illustrator. He talked about "pictorialness". I wondered if his quirks are his idea of charm, but I know it has no inherent benefit for me. I know I will leave this one and look for another. I thought he was traumatized in some way. And I asked around and sure enough, I was told, and sworn to secrecy, that he is suffering the recent loss of a grown son by suicide. I'm surprised he is standing and able to walk, that is so horrific. I am glad I didn't linger in treatment with him to protect his feelings, and I am also glad I didn't explode at him in felony language about his behavior. I was seeking an experienced, analytically oriented therapist. When someone wastes my time or insults me or otherwise abuses me, before I leap into action, I have a habit of always looking to what the cause could be as if bad behavior is all about cause and effect. When I swam laps at the 14<sup>th</sup> Street Y, there was a swimmer who kicked me hard from the next lane whenever he passed. I put a lid on my anger, and gently said "I don't think you are aware you are kicking me with every passing, and it hurts." He said "Oh, sorry, I will try not to." "Try not to" I thought? WTF. Then when he got out of the pool, either he was pretending or it was real that every step he took his left leg kicked out involuntarily, like a whip. "He is disabled," I thought, "and I'm so glad I didn't bite his head off." And for the therapist, he must have been in incredible pain. Pictorialism is something I've used in my work as an emblematic, oxymoronic and mischievous façade. It masks hidden feeling, whether complimentary or contradictory. I had one collector who understood this, but in a strange way, because when their dog, who had been mute, began barking at my painting all night, they saw emanations emerging out of the painting; and concluded the dog was protecting them from an invasion of spectres. This was resolved by their painting the wall behind the painting shocking pink, a color which evidently blocks emanations. The dog quieted and their undisturbed sleep resumed. My parents were in love with my sibling, irregardless of her behavior, which was perpetually awful. They were together in a tangled merger of some sort

and I was on the outside the perimeter. At times I counted my blessings because I would never tolerate being in the tow of the tornado and getting to the eye would likely be the end of me. Chaos reigned. Rules changed according to my sister's behavior. The chaos diminished my opportunities, and I always, even at two, was most effective at anything I did if I did it at my own slower pace than most, and there never was enough time because everything was always in a state of emergency, and all emergencies, whether illness or running out of paper towels, had equal and heavy weight. I never culled the same gaze in my parent's eyes as when they looked at my sibling, even when they were angry with her. I simply didn't matter as much, perhaps because I appeared, even with such slow performance, still to be so capable. On the bright side, I benefitted somewhat from the benign neglect. All the envy I experience could be about my thwarted desire to have my parents, and/or even my sister, in love with me too. My father's last words to me, on his deathbed, were "where is your sister?" I am not sure where the emphasis was meant to be, as to whether it was "why isn't your sister here, and not you?" or "where the fuck is your selfish bitch sister." My mother's last words were bitter; letting me know that I cannot do anything right, including feeding her correctly on what became her deathbed. I have no idea what I did incorrectly. I will never know. This weekend, there is a special spiritual group meeting among friends. Alas, the host has a cat and I guess that signals the end of my spiritual life in regard a presence there, and so goes the barricade a more spiritual life. Bastet and Sekhmet, I shudder. A virtual presence may make the experience of seeking spiritual guidance rather hollow. I lived for so long postponing my real life; I guess my spiritual life will also have to wait. Finally, it is the day I am moving the stuff I've packed up for storage into a facility. It has been a Herculean feat; and very emotional. The purple suitcase is full of robot costumes. Boxes are full of catalogs and other career history stuff. Waking up to snow makes the nostalgia more poignant and painful. had the illusion that being free of stuff, would also free me of guilt and self-torture and I would be weightless in



space, simultaneously exhilarated and slightly sickened because if one lives by guilt and self-torture, and without it one is unmoored. The stress of the move to storage was mitigated by a magical cocktail party for professors in the Temple of Dendur at the Met. If one drinks sparsely most of the time, then getting fairly intoxicated at the right moment in the right place is a really incredible experience. I see what the attraction can be to alcohol and am grateful it is not a problem for me, I have other problems. I truly never before felt so wonderful, every cell a happiness sac in the Temple of Dendur. As self-medication, alcohol certainly has efficacy. It would be truly amazing if I could get my groove back but then it may be asking too much. At Dendur, a friend asked me if I would show her how to use the face makeup I had on and I was so joyful because I wasn't wearing any. Those were the days. I live with huge windows on the nineteenth floor with an expansive view. Seeing the sky every day is a joy. Almost on a par with the joy of movies from the nineteen-thirties and forties seen from a cozy blue velvet couch. In those films members of that population have bodies that aren't underweight or overweight. They aren't voluptuous like sixties' bombshells; they aren't skinny like in the seventies. They just seemingly are how they were born to be, naturally thin and lithe and although they drink alcohol and smoke cigarettes, food doesn't seem to be in the scripts as a focus. They go to nightclubs and focus on conversation and/or dancing. You hardly ever see them chew. They move across the screen like their intake is appropriate to their outtake. I love the fashion in those movies, and the beautiful black and white cinematography and lighting, and the wit and shameless flirtation. The comedies glowingly celebrate the vibrancy of human foibles and the joy of refined affection. Of course, the characters have money, but every moment of every day is depicted as an adventure. The most mundane things become fun. I wish I could be more temperate with work compulsion; I seem to go on till I drop like a house of cards when I could temper it with some down time. I need to discard the perpetual and sometimes irrational notion of making up for lost time and take on one task at a time, in its own time. I

also didn't check on N yesterday; N would call me if there was an emergency I hope and then of course I would respond. There is an article in today's New York Times by two psychiatrists about the use of certain kinds of shame for addiction work. I have to clear up the debris from packing and moving to storage. I would like to take a short walk outside, whatever my asthma can tolerate in the dead of winter. When I was in an artist's residency several summers ago in New Mexico, I had a housemate who treated me like I was a pariah by being very cold to me while in stark contrast, expressing, always in my presence, great warmth and affection for the third housemate, addressing her with a pet name. My secret pet name for this woman was Miss Treatment. We were all strangers to each other, yet she always excluded me from their pairing through no fault of the third roommate, who was not engaged in whatever the drama was. At first, I thought this was only my own projection from childhood and I treated it that way, making allowances. When I got very sick with allergies and she, the only one with a car, made it clear she would not drive me to the doctor, or pick up anything I needed from the pharmacy or grocery store, I realized something was amiss that may have nothing to do with me. It seemed like arbitrary hostility, and I was grateful there were taxis. There was cruelty in her manner, as if I disgusted her. I tried to think of everything I may have done to offend, I was too overwhelmed and sick to ask directly, lest it give her license to attack. I tried to please her. This was the wrong tactic, because it only gave her more opportunity for bad behavior. Meanwhile, she continually asked the roommate, in my presence, and hyper-warmly, if she needed anything at the market, or wanted a lift. Her attitude was so puzzling. She disliked me from the start. I felt desperate to know why. Maybe I was snoring, although not only did we have separate rooms, and I was using my CPAP machine, tested with room sharing with a verdict of no snoring. That is part of what a CPAP machine does-it keep roommates happy. In the evening, this woman had amplified phone calls on the porch right outside my bedroom window, laughing very loud, celebrating her life, and she wouldn't move to another spot even after I mentioned very

politely and regretfully that it was keeping me awake and I was not feeling well. It was a beautiful property and there were many options. Could she have simply been a terrible bitch? There were other slights and abrasions, it seemed incurable so I let it go and just accepted that was the way it was and made my life there elsewhere. She seemed to breathe a sigh of relief when I was leaving, and I certainly was relieved not to be obliged to see her again. It would have had less of an impact if I had not been ill. Looking back, I wonder what was wrong on her end. She presented her life to me in such glowing terms that I felt obligated to her to be terribly jealous even if I wasn't. Any mention of any facet of how I lived she greeted with contempt. I tried to make her feel better by allowing her to denigrate any information I supplied. She was more than willing. Inexplicable emotional brutality and bullying is the saddest thing. It is two years later, and I just emailed and asked her if I had done anything to offend her and that I was sorry if I did. She misinterpreted, either deliberately or thoughtlessly, and said she was too busy with all the wonderful things in her life to keep up with our relationship. This response is completely consistent with her former behavior. If I were jealous of anything, it would be that she lives hard and well. I am an insular curmudgeon by comparison. Working on this text is like examining, ad infinitum, an anatomy of a personality. I add fictive things to it too. It feels thrilling. I'm re-living, and I hope relieving, ancient hurts that were ripe for low self-esteem and my habit of always living for the future and never in the present, always a lady in waiting for the workforce part of my life to be done with. I barely survived the collapse of long-term personal and eventually I just gave up having one. I found those breakups devastating and I have felt more broken with each one. Something was wrong with me in that I could not recover enough to start again. Each breakup sustained more and more a conviction that I would not be cared for enough to stay the course and I suppose that conviction predestines me for just that, being alone. How do I make it up to people for denying them the best part of myself? Am I an aberrant creature in the universe? Is virtue

or striving for it, meaningless? To my knowledge, I haven't harmed anyone no matter how jealous and angry I was, I didn't hurt, maim, deceive or abuse anyone except myself. I was perpetually hurt growing up and vowed from a very young age never to cause hurt in anyone else no matter how I felt because I know how painful the receiving end is. It wasn't virtue, it was acute understanding of how it feels. I've been kind to narcissists. I have asked them to stop certain behavior but never condemned them. Twice as a child I did lose it and tried to crack my sibling's head open when her behavior became more and more unbearable and relentless. I understood early on that any mean act I committed, no matter how much other people get away with it, would just boomerang back on me in a bad way. The only thing I had left that was truly my own, was my striving for good character. It wasn't normal. I get so disappointed that I can't sustain hours and hours of reorganization—I get defeated. It's also disappointing that I won't get further with archiving my work, if I pursue it, I will not do any new work for six months or more. From time to time I may do a little archiving, but I think by the end of this month, it has to take the back burner. I am hibernating like a bear in winter. Celebration is in order in that I am moving from a person suffering badly from agoraphobia and spinal stenosis to someone who can move in the world. My gratitude for that is boundless. It's been extremely hard work to get there, inclusive of physical therapy, orthotics, acupuncture, and the shedding of an extremely toxic job. Who is the relentless muse that drives me without consultation? I don't do anything deliberate with my work except to try and do it exceptionally well. A subterranean muse leads me by the nose. I can't manipulate the muse into letting me be the kind of artist I think I want to be. I sometimes feel lost in obscurity. Getting to real work will tamp down all the wishing I were someone else. There are so many potential projects; I am getting quite crazy as to where to turn. Short breaks beat shorting out. I am uploading past papers to academia.edu because it makes me feel like I am a part of the community to which many of my friends belong. Those are formerly published papers; some in peer review journals, some in

periodicals, some in books. I listened to Leroi Jones argue at a party in the 1960's that if a man steals a loaf of bread for his starving child, he should be commended. He debated with Mack Thomas, who took the opposite stance. Their argument was a tango for two, no one, especially a woman, was allowed to join them on their male mat. The subject should really have been misogyny. One of the benefits of getting older is one's focus on things that mean the most becomes more intense. But one's discretion about what to focus on and how much to focus gets rather shaky in its foundations. Yesterday, I segued into small, unplanned tasks and put aside the written-in-stone day list. As the hours passed, I realized that I was actually succinctly accomplishing tasks and putting them behind me because I went at my own pace. Miraculously, I would meet all my obligations and be much happier because I wouldn't be setting myself up for failure every day by scheduling too much or too rigid an order of tasks for me to complete to the letter. I always wanted freedom to get lost in time! Tasks are endless, one could just get lost in those and never do any work, so a clearer mind for discretion would be great. I felt confident about developing much more discretion about stopping any inappropriate endeavor, like reinventing the wheel or rebuilding the pyramids at Giza. I want to practice engineering, experimental physics, and mathematics, but I am not appropriately trained. Abandoning what I cannot do requires both trust in delegation and trust in play. I don't think its helpful any longer to be my own helicopter parent, paying for the day by trying to pack it. I suppose I don't think I have a right to be alive if I'm not constantly pounding the treadmill. M has put his work first because he can afford it. No need to do his own taxes, selfcare, domain care, hardly bathes or brushes his teeth because it's a waste of his time and someone else can take charge do it for him, yes; all of it. But M not only has more resources than I do, he has a higher tolerance for physical discomfort. He is also happy in every single thing he creates, having criticality has no bearing on gaining venues, in fact it makes work seem more human and vulnerable. Why not choose to be someone who can do no wrong and not

someone who does too little all wrong. Both are self-centered, either can be delusional. It's moot, because I do deal with prescriptions and taxes. I realize in my bones that I cannot help who I am. I have no right to point out anyone else's delusions, especially when I am envious. On occasion, he behaves cruelly, I have spoken with him as gently as I can then. He communicates how his wife, whom he treated so cruelly when she was ill, loves him so much. Now that she is well, she is able to resume the way she served him, which was considerably, and he loves her more than ever. My behavior was compassionate on the phone, but my heart was a huge jellyfish of rage. How does one not feel angry when one talks, over fifty years after the fact, to someone who was in control of the incarceration location you were interred in as a child, and was directly responsible for your tortuous treatment and resulting defenses from which you have been trying to extricate yourself for decades? My rage was only palpable to me and yet it scared me. I can never comprehend how damaged people can behave so atrociously and not suffer any loss of love. I encouraged his children to be patient with him when they feel they have reached their limits. But I can't help but feel privately that it's not very fair. Why do I use every ounce of strength I have not to behave badly when I feel so angry? It's not a matter of being virtuous. I grew up on the other end, subsidiary by five years to this person who had no boundaries and I thought it simply must stop with me. it's just how I was formed. These phone calls mainly consist of an outlet for him, I can hear every single thing that is happening down to what he ate and subsequent bowel movements, in a litany of how he feels, and it's mystifying how he never draws a breath. Most of it is myth skimming the surface of reality, and I listen and appreciate the confidence, till it all becomes a blur at about twenty-five minutes. The compassion I have practiced in the last three years does have an effect in that he will occasionally take a breath and ask me how I am now but his tolerance for any response is Lilliputian. I know that. I should feel only compassion for someone who is so locked up in their heart and mind to a preconceived notion of sheer cruelty that is innate and who cannot

be moved even with so much life experience. How about that? I have committed misdemeanors or social klutziness, but I was treated so badly as a kid, both by overt behavior and benign neglect, that deliberately and knowingly inflicting bad behavior on anyone would be, for me, an absolute perversion unless it is for my literal survival. The sole survivor of a ship destroyed by bombing recently died at ninety-four. When another man couldn't hold on to the floating debris anymore and tried to hold on to him, with his waning strength, he had to push that man away. I can feel the horror for both of them. It's hard to shove off the mood of a drama from debris amplified by an excessive empathy. It's a miracle to see to my own rhythm, since I now, in my eight decade, have that luxury. The studio looks better every day. It's hard to bear the incredulity on the part of an alcoholic who is upset when one doesn't want to drink with them. It's hard to bear the sarcasm and the disdain. I want to be free. Even infinite compassion can start to wear at the edges, become worn, and incite the desire to have something new and fresh, free of fetters. These situations are toxic for me. I take responsibility for feeling so bereft of society and community and outside of everything that I cling to, even to narcissists. The friend I originally had is long gone into the ravages of experience and aging. Now it is a one-way street, and I have to be in a good frame of mind to bear it. I sink thinking how talent and industry signify nothing without collusion in propaganda isms. Fundamentalism, utilitarianism, sensationalism, traditionalism, existentialism, patriotism, fanaticism. Displeasing toxic people deprives one of opportunities; not consorting with avaricious tigers is a disadvantage navigating the jungle; not aligning with powerful narcissists shuts down access to bounty. Keep your enemies close. Steve S. has died. Sad. He owned a wonderland, an art supply store which was a huge part of my life for decades. I worked for his family company at the Brooklyn Museum art Supply store, then called Rosenthals', from 1956 to 1958. As a grownup painter, he gave me an account so I could buy art supplies when I needed them and pay them off later. I could never pay them off within the same month, and

he sometimes got petulant about that—as if a business account means if one is in the art business and should show rational balance sheets. Sometimes that is not possible even if one's passionate intent is to do that. I took umbrage with his annoyance, since I always paid in the end, and I am sure I wasn't alone as an artist needing the time. In spite of his brand of generosity, he had no idea of what it was like to be hand to mouth, and in particular, hand to mouth with art supplies, not to mention rent and food. He didn't know about Wonder Bread for breakfast, lunch and dinners, supplemented at times with canned tuna fish and peanut butter. I designed his store window once with the detritus of my art studio on display and it was fantastic. My Seventh Street house and studio was a great place. Too bad I grew too old to bear the drunk and stoned NYU students keeping me up every night, the four flights of stairs, and the crazy super chasing me with a machete. Nostalgia lays a briny patina on aspects of forty-seven years living in one place. I feel sad about P. We are all entitled to have some unlovely people share our lives. I don't know why I have put up with so much discomfort and I don't know why I didn't trust my own perceptions in the very beginning. Not that I have to know exactly why. I only have to stop resisting my instincts. I knew P, an artist, several decades ago, and I admired her, because of her work, and because she appeared to be so confident and self-contained and I, well, those qualities not my own natural state. Socially, she was very opaque, one couldn't get close to her and was forced to remain distanced, and, I, and everyone except anyone in a position to help her career, were designated to a category of a lesser personage, which then of course I thought I was, so I just thought she was right! She was awesome in her aloofness and I always feel like a scared but playful puppy in social situations. These many years later, I had been thinking about her and lo and behold I run into her this week and in a three-minute interchange where I was evidently very happy to see her and told her so, I could, with age, see her behavior had remained consistent, but this time I read it as unfortunately defensive and dismissive. I was immune and didn't take it personally. I felt sad



and that maybe my friendly nature isn't such a curse after all. Socially, I seek common ground but it's true, if this is a dog eat dog world, someone has to be on top, and she certainly claimed that territory, and made it clear that encounters with me weren't particularly special. In that brief conversation, she did everything dismissive you could think of, like a master, and assumed, since decades had passed, that I was no longer an artist. If only I had the personality to say "Oh, you don't know my work? You must've missed my installation at the Whitney Museum (2001)!" But I just sink into the sadness of the situation, feeling the waste of it acutely. The last thing in the world she would want is to be friends. Or, alternatively, I could acquire in her another friend who has likely been terribly injured. It's amazing I feel sad for someone who seemingly has what I lack, an invincible self-assurance and confidence, even if it comes from some design and construction of an ingenious elitist existence as a defense mechanism. A hibernation phase looms in my studio for beginning new work. It is not in my control. I have to be very still and small to catch the wave. At times it's amorphous and non-locative and sad to say, its form can be beyond my deciphering. A reference which testifies to the existence of a vast network of every living thing's imagination is in a children's story by Salman Rushdie where his character "Iff" describes the Ocean of stories. "He looked into the water and saw that it was made up of a thousand thousand thousand and one different currents, each one a different colour, weaving in and out of one another like a liquid tapestry of breathtaking complexity; and Iff explained that these were the Streams of Story, that each coloured strand represented and contained a single tale. Different parts of the Ocean contained different sorts of stories, and as all the stories that had ever been told and many that were still in the process of being invented could be found here, the Ocean of the Streams of Story was in fact the biggest library in the universe. And because the stories were held here in fluid form, they retained the ability to change, to become new versions of themselves, to join up with other stories and so become yet other stories; so that unlike

a library of books, the Ocean of the Streams of Story was much more than a storeroom of yarns. It was not dead, but alive." Many of those I love were overwhelmed, and some are long gone. Then there is my guide. An Argentinean psychic in Finland, in a trance, told me my guide was blocking his view of my Aura. The psychic suggested I ask my guide to move out of his line of vision. Having no idea what that was or how to do that I still instinctively gave the guide a nudge in my mind and the psychic with closed eyes said "ah, that's better." He went on to astonish me more by describing and even naming the guide, who was a real person in my life that I loved both viscerally and in a manner that was out of this world. I asked the psychic how many other women my guide was guiding in his afterlife, since he was what could quaintly be called a womanizer. My guide had explained this to me when he was alive; he spoke to me about compartmentalization. And since I had another boyfriend at the time, I couldn't justifiably fault him. My guide was thirty-two years older. It was amazingly eerie, to be reconnected by an Argentinian psychic in Lapland, very close to the Arctic Circle—thirty years after my guide's death, and the experience zoned in on an excruciating desire I didn't realize I had, where I would give anything to see him again, in any condition he might be, in any afterlife. I was in tears, and self-shifting. It was so painful, that longed for an exorcism, like being on a playground swing—pushing to take the high road into the ether; but sad to say, anxieties occupy my interior like recalcitrant Buddhas. It is always a tremendous solace in the morning to have a clear view of the sky. Galloping behind the joy of that is anxiety, like a distasteful condiment to an exotic cuisine, that all the new construction will eventually obstruct my view in addition to my hearing. There is a new blight already — a hideous hotel, opaque grey wall with no windows on the side facing me, as if everything on its south side wasn't worth pleasing with a nice facade. All of Chinatown is on its south side. There is no reason to dwell on this today. There is little to be done about anxieties that have been coming up since my birth, when I started worrying about every little tiny thing. Every experience of slings and

arrows is part of a lifelong trip down the birth canal, squished, banged and battered. I know I was distraught coming down the birth canal. I dreamt that as an adult the night after a near-fatal car crash, and it could not have been more real. I wonder if anxiety could be delegated to someone else who would carry it forward like the awkward parcel it is, perhaps someone who loves me and worries for me. Wait, would that constitute a Guide? Or a parent? Sad to say, that didn't work out in the first round with the original family, and that's not unusual. What is unusual is being so exquisitely hypersensitive that one can't help experiencing any slings and arrows down to one's bowels and then knowing it the rest of our lives. Daily radiation and pollution from emissions, is matched by a deluge of anxieties unless one is living in the ice age, which I imagine was more purified. Getting back to work, after a hiatus, is like trying to move a petrified elephant; resistance is so high and strong. I clear space in the studio to clear space in my mind. Now I am living with a stranger and it's necessary, but painful, to lose half of my studio to personal space. As his time to depart comes around, I estimate a month to re-organize and reclaim, and start a new studio life, dividing my days each week between studio work, self-care, business and personal administration. I always say that, and it always goes to hell. And then it's disappointing when my performance does not meet my expectations. I need to remember that everything I set out to do is usually accomplished, even if only in my own slow plodding time. I think the hare is so cool, elegant and efficient, but I am a tortoise that never feels I deserved to win. How grievous is that? I spend quality time with family and friends. I participate in milieu activities. I overcome bouts of severe agoraphobia to do it, prying myself out the door for friends and I usually have a really good time in the end. A great deal of my issues are parked under the umbrella of outpacing my original family in several ways, which is ridiculous since they could do things I couldn't do, and I could do things they couldn't do. We weren't the same people and were members of different generations born in different countries. Besides, it is moot, because

in some ways, as a matter of difference, as first generation American, I surpassed them at birth, in the same way in which every subsequent generation survives the birth canal. But in other ways, certain characteristics got lost in the DNA shuffle. My tolerance for chaos, is nil, something which does not bode well in a first-generation, Jewish-American, Ashkenazai family in a state of media-induced assimilation. Another lack consists of the gates that stop short of morbid empathy. That can make any adult appear to barbaric. If only I could take a step back, or upwards, and attain a more distant view including that person's preferences as to how to be treated in a crisis. That works, of course, only if it isn't a narcissist displaying distress. A paramecium, as a living cell organism, craves irritation to survive. It's daring and risky to divorce oneself from situations that have proven over time to have little to offer other than tangible assets. I tend to hang on to them since they are familiar, even with the frustration they bring. I am leaving the work force, my last foray two decades of academia. I know if you have ever been in academia, you too have navigated duplicity in more abundance than anyone needs for several lifetimes. Giving my attention and focus to things that pain me in oblique ways is no longer necessary, and that merits a huge hallelujah. Somehow, survival necessitated facing demons demanding the most attention front and center. Almost every time I join a group that is supposed to provide a milieu for my art life, I am too uncomfortable to remain for long. Individuals in some of these groups, under the guise of providing a community, are only invested in promoting their work. There is nothing wrong with that, except that masking it under the guise of egalitarian goodwill lacks elegance and models it on advertising in a way that sometimes seems like they are spinning their wheels and it depresses the hell out of me. Some of them make terrific work and they will likely succeed on that basis, which is great. But some of the ways are naïve for mid-career artists. Their modus operandi seems to grow out of desperation and evidences a distorted view of how things happen, and I feel miserable watching them toil at methodologies that no longer have relevance. I hope they

will succeed against all odds. Unbeknownst to me, the group has a rule not to publish information about meetings on their listserv. I posted a query to the listserv asking for precise information as to time and location. A member chided me on the listserv in all caps: "NEVER NEVER, EVER do that." Evidently, it is a form of betrayal to post meeting information, because it is a "by invitation only" organization, which seems overcautious since only members are on the listserv. She advised I should have asked my recommender for information in the future and gave me no time to tell her the sad truth: my recommender actually died last year. These rules and regulations are not published anywhere. Perhaps there is a less troubling way I can have a peer group. At this point it's a tortuous path to a milieu, grappling for every tiny opportunity. This particular group depresses me—the model is to do what they think should be done and I've spent so much of my life doing what I thought I should be doing, banking on safe, tried-and-true methodologies only makes it easy to lose perspective of what is really important and what a given reality has evolved into. I am seeking camaraderie, but I don't think it's going to be with this group. This is not the first group that felt like the wrong fit. Perhaps I should have less morbid motives—this time it was that I am getting older and may not circulate in person much longer, particularly in winter, and I should cling to any milieu I can get. So, I may have chosen the bottom feeder of groups. The search for a solution to feelings of isolation and loss is not enhanced by underestimating one's self. I make art in a cloister, frankly, happy as a clam, but I need to reality check if what I am doing is relevant. Cutting any ties, even wasteful ones, feels painful and risky. Having said that, I have now detached from that peer group, it was too depressing. I hope something else can bring me where I belong. I hope this is what closing a door so another one can open is. Maybe nothing else will ever happen. I usually never ever quit something I've started. I stick to it no matter how uncomfortable I am, or meaningless it appears to be. But that group, with petty squabbles and arbitrary rules, was not healthy. I stuck with my excruciating job for two decades for the sole purpose of a

pension. Academia took a portion of my sanity and physical health, all of which I can hopefully regain now in retirement. To quit early on to save myself was something I couldn't afford, even though in many ways, I couldn't afford not to. Maybe it's my Taurus rising that rescues the Libra; the bull is so heavy; it tilts the scales. Using a Torrent to download a movie as source material for an art project brought a print letter that my action was illegal. It's illegal for artists remix in an age when recombination of elements can emulate alchemy, and they object? Actually, they really don't care; they are simply disowning any liability. What else can they do to enhance the diminishing schism between art and commerce in the worst way. Everyone is just defending their position and not too heavily involved in issues per se. The window of time for being mischievous re-emerges with every new technology. Nothing goes unnoticed. I am addicted to ordering compulsively from my grocery supplier. I should limit replenishing stores to once a week, not every time I run out of just one thing. Food deprivation panic is not justified. A natural demureness where food is concerned is nowhere to be found in my DNA. Last night I did a reading from "Solace and Perpetuity" at NYFA headquarters. It was so lovely that my reading was appreciated. I wonder why there is such a big gap between the literary appreciation of my book, and the dormancy of its sales on Amazon. It's a twenty-first century Book of Hours goddammit! At the reading, I told another author how terrific I thought his story's premise was, and I referred to Oulipo. He was so gratified he handed me his unpublished story as a gift. This kind of exchange is gold. But these friendships need to be cultivated, and it's all anyone can do to sustain the relationships they already have. When things start to implode for me, it's indicative that I need down time whether that down time is ten minutes or all day. I have the option of taking the time while the rest of the working world may not. Yesterday, someone said, "enjoy yourself, calamity could strike at any second" and I totally panicked at the thought of calamity and couldn't enjoy myself at all. I wish things rolled off me more. My new book is not a mainstream project. An email mailing was the extent of my self-

promotion and of course, accepting any reading NYFA invites me to do. I guess I could think of the NYFA grant in lieu of sales, except sales would mean people are actually reading it. After any puff of weed, I see the mask of some holy and terrifying deity. Alcohol is iffy as self-medication, what is a girl to do? Mel Brooks' Moses comes down from the mountain with three tablets, proclaiming "My people, the Lord has given us fifteen..." then drops one tablet which smashes into smithereens. Moses continues: "ahem. TEN Commandments" and why that is so potent a scene both for its hilarity and questions it can raise; for years I've wanted to do a project about Cecil B. DeMille's second version of The Ten Commandments. DeMille, a man in hiding as a Jew, made films of that biblical saga twice at two different times in cinema technology's march of time. The first was a silent film in 1923, made in the California dessert, close to the ocean, for filming the parting of the red sea, with a colossally constructed set, part of which, the two sphinxes, he left there buried in the sand; the rest of the set he destroyed, lest someone else should make use of it. Charlton Heston was not his first choice for Moses for the 1956 Technicolor extravaganza. His first choice was William Boyd and it was a huge disappointment that Boyd, embodying the cowboy Hopalong Cassidy at the time, did not want to compromise his image with his fans. As a child, I often saw these oversaturated, overacted, technicolor, gesture-infected, romantically engorged, incredibly mannerist, "historical" biblical films. I have no conscious idea of what I will do with the Ten Commandments footage. It's none of my business where this might fit in with my oeuvre. Like academia, there evidently is an inner and outer circle, or several of those, all at odds with one another in many organizations. Academia, with some exceptions, was a toxic environment where one had to struggle to stay ethical in a corrupt bureaucratic inner circle. It may be that I just don't do well in groups. I woke up bereft today. As excited as I am about making this new work, there is always this lull before starting where I feel bogus. So instead of dwelling on that as a fact I noted the fact that this is part of a cycle that has happened my whole life, and that soon I

will be happier because work will be in progress and because I will be into it and physically moving more and not sulking. I get so miserable not actually making work. Peter Fischl is giving a talk in New York on a day I have another commitment. I regret I will miss it. I can't understand why I can only do one thing at a time; it seems like quantum physicists should offer other alternatives by now. N is stewing in her own rage and doesn't know it. I understand it. The fear accompanying illness is overwhelming, and her physicality is very diminished from treatment. The illness is over-shadowing her ability to move. It's hard to help someone where the justified angst entitles them to their already-established modus operandi of the chronic enslavement of others. I help her anyway. She refuses to get the professional help she needs because it means sidestepping her drama of getting it from those around her. I get that. And I understand the terror, having been that sick myself. Devils lurk and emerge hastily from unexpected quarters in severe illness, hardly giving a chance for duck and cover. I know about that, having had cancer twice while in two different countries. It's a challenge to find a doctor who will say that exercise is not a good thing for me, that eating chocolates on the couch would be better. The cardiologist thinks the confusion I experienced Monday stirred the blood pressure spike, not the other way around. All this is very frightening. My health concerns did not impede festive plans for the weekend. I spent Sunday embedded with two delicious children, snot included, who, during the course of that evening, developed fevers and it turns out that they alarmingly have full blown pneumonia. It's terrible to see children bewildered by their own stricken state. I saw my friend L yesterday and the family is facing a hard decision—whether to legally remove his wife from life-giving medication since her body is now completely deteriorated in a way that seems more fitting for someone who has already died, or not. I feel very scared for her and for him. What do you do when someone you love is not only very ill, but justifiably delusional, and even in rare moments when they become slightly aware, see that they have no regrets whatsoever about any of their past dubious behavior



when they were well and lucid? It's mostly none of my business. These decisions, even in wellness, are difficult. When I was circumstantially suicidal and trying to restart my life from a very bad place, I got medications from a doctor that saved me, but a friend took every opportunity to express contempt at my weakness in resorting to drugs. M has never been punished for cruel behavior. He leaves trails of damage behind him and never looks back. The anger I feel will be hard to dilute or dissolve. Keeping a distance is the healthiest thing. M is a bitter, angry and suicidal man. Paradoxically, as he declines, he becomes more tender and sweeter. I don't need anyone else to be cruel to me. I grind myself down to the bone every morning. I wish I could be much more secure. I explain my need for privacy on deaf ears. Even nice people tend to take as much as possible. I have always believed that left to my own devices, I would decline into an idle, selfish, sloth. Having taken Valerium Root to get some sleep last night, I overslept and am writing three hours later than usual and trying not to feel like the whole day is already a waste because of a delayed start. In futility, even after counting my blessings, and I mean literally counting, the number one blessing is waking up. Don't like the cup-half-empty feeling of no future or recalling the past as feeble. I need to clear up the tax debris, make some late corrections, file away some of the papers, and then I'm truly done with that till next year. And I need to calm down. There is more to my life than complaints, but the rest is not as amusing. R called and left a message and I haven't responded. The phone call usually turns out to be corrective where I am trying to get off the phone after a while and it's difficult, or where there is gossip, or she becomes intrusive into my business when I haven't been the one to bring it up. I know this is not purposeful, sadly part of her idiosyncratic character is likely due to a stroke she had, but it is frightening to communicate with someone with no boundaries who may be needy but refuses to get help from appropriate sources. She is awesome in so many ways; commands her troops like Quixote commanded the windmills. I feel grieved. I am worried as I thaw in my nether years from hard boiled and scrappy to

mellow and diminished, that I could lose sight of boundaries myself. I would lay down my life to ease my friend's pain, which is dangerous because my friend has no boundaries and would take it. I'll come to my senses and be more helpful if I am rational. Life happening is exhausting; and requires a great deal of recovery time. I need total privacy to work, and total privacy to recover from total privacy. I cannot make art with someone looking over my shoulder; distinct collaborations are a different story. After sixty-five years in the work force, I now have the luxury as to how I spend my days. I lose sight of how incredibly hard I worked all my life in order to get to this place of relative freedom now, even though I am now so old. I think I should spend at least part of today in my mind shedding preconceived notions. I guess that would be meditation. What am I if not the sum of comparisons? It's good to participate in life, even if it's painful. I am still so wary of people spilling over boundaries. I was born into a household where a desire for privacy and mutual respect were considered outrageous offenses. The vernacular of love was intrusion and manipulation. I found it unbearable and ran away as soon as I could. But my emotional antibodies never fully developed. I take reasonable risks and gracefully extricate myself when necessary. I can trust my instincts, but I often don't. Now it's a new day, and I woke up bummed out. I can rule out pathological or clinical depression, this is just a common garden variety sinking. When James Joyce asked Carl Jung about his (Joyce's) daughter Lucia, Joyce said it puzzled him that he withstood his own turmoil and Lucia couldn't survive hers, Jung said "you swim, she sinks." When people have a day off, they can worship or kayak, or both. But "stupor" days may just be useful for getting out of one's own way and letting the good stuff rise to the surface. I'm not sure it's helpful to pummel old, innate scripts, kneading and rolling out the lumpy dough. Maybe it's better to start fresh. Trying to enforce a perfection agenda on myself is truly not possible, nor productive. I put others on a pedestal as accomplishees who have the right "prescription" for success and assume I know nothing, therefore am nothing. That's like someone with my

short, rotund physique trying on the clothes of a five-foot-eleven bone thin mannequin and becoming frustrated they don't fit properly. As the day goes on, if I slip a little on the Sisyphean slope for the goals I have set, I become miserable, sinking with the weight of the stone I am trying to roll uphill. Yesterday I visited the Brooklyn Botanical Gardens, my favorite hangout of pre-teen and teen years. I did a long excursion with a too heavy pack with camera gear and am paying the price today. Rationally, I have every right to cut myself some slack. I have just come off eighteen years of a terribly stressful, mostly thankless, full-time job. I thought I would be plunging into endless artmaking asap. Instead I am tidying. I re-organized my space, paid attention to taxes and legal decline-and-death documents. It makes sense I guess that that is what January and February are for. But those "civilian" activities, as opposed to artmaking, loom too large in my mind. But it's consistent. I always needed to get my house in order to set the scene to make art, setting a framework for work, clearing the decks. It's only when worldly responsibilities have been met or at least are somewhat in order that I feel free to work. I do taxes defensively with the potential for any audit in mind. I have been audited twice, so it's not paranoia. Of course, I could do bookkeeping every month, but I hate it so much, instead I bite the bullet for a week or so at the beginning of each year and forget about it for the rest. Of course, now it's a year later and I had to get an extension till October because I couldn't get it done within the deadline. Now I am going over and over and over and over what my instincts tell me to do, which is to take care of business now to the best of my ability. The time at my old haunt, the Brooklyn Botanical Gardens didn't work out well for my intent of photographing electronic detritus in botanical exhibits. There were guards and patrols everywhere, so tampering with plants to embed electronic devices was not going to happen. I sat down on a bench outdoors and internally cried. In my teens the Gardens were my home away from home, a sanctuary. The adjacent Brooklyn Museum had an art school I attended in those years, and my first job ever, at fifteen,

was down the street in the main Brooklyn Public Library branch typing catalogue cards, in the building shaped like a book, seventy-five cents an hour in 1956. The gardens were unattended. One could pretend one was lost in paradise. Salman Rushdie's network of subterranean streams constituting the Ocean of Stories is the closest I have come to a spiritual outlook. Today I had a very painful cortisone shot in the left knee, it will be followed by a series of lubrication shots. I suppose a celebration is in order. I have a feeling that I have lived my life exactly as I should have. I have momentary satisfaction that I have done everything I could do to keep the original endowment inside me alive and kicking. I grieve that that doesn't necessarily mean the gift was relevant to anything else in the world. Reinhardt, always full of praise for me, said I would never win prizes and should prepare myself for that--this said as his highest compliment. He wasn't entirely wrong. The gift was something I could feel happy about in secret and solitude, like any secret garden. I am a willing and happy servant to it. I sent P a photo of my lunch yesterday to encourage her to eat more healthfully, but I forgot what she was like and for the rest of the day she kept asking me for the "recipe" and when I told her how I "assembled" meals she persisted in asking for details and kept breaking it down as if she had never prepared a meal, which isn't the case, her having raised four children without a chef or cook. In addition to concern about her, I see my own faculties diminish from what they call "normal" aging, whatever that is, and it scares the hell out of me to think I may become exceedingly diminished, and maybe that I also will need a recipe to boil an egg. Doctors tell me my forgetfulness is anxiety, which is a relief to hear, till I forget that and panic again. I began this new day reacting poorly to others' successes and amusing myself with thoughts of how much "less" I am than they are. I say "amused" because to be amused is better than grinding down one's soul. Something has affected my eyes, my distance vision is blurred, and I don't know if that is eye strain or a neurological issue, or an allergy. I had my eyes checked two months ago and there was no issue, well I had minor cataracts, but not enough

to cause this. Or I could completely put it out of my mind and hope it self-corrects forgetting that nothing ever self-corrects, it either stays an issue status quo, or deteriorates even more. At the same time so much more medical care is available now than for my poor parents. I appreciate that given I have a combination of both their constitutions and their ailments, Doctor visits are the way it's going to be, perpetually checking things out—this is aging in this country, and the sooner I accept it, give thanks I have medical insurance, and program the maintenance the better. The medical system is bad for doctors in business, who become limited in affording time with their patients, and terrible for patients, in that it is so segmented into body parts, one needs a battery of medical professionals to stay alive, and they rarely communicate with each other so the patient has to strain to keep them informed when they could just as well have an electronic system for that. They seem at times highly resistant to receiving information even though it's digitized. A systemic approach is non-existent, as if all body parts work independently of each other. I do become miserable when I am not working at art or when I am discouraged by rejection. It's just a human foible. Every year I have to bite the bullet on the tax work. I don't think I am the type of person who could go off the grid. But then I am not the type to do data entry into spreadsheets and I am doing that very thing with a great deal of misery trailing along with it. I can anticipate some joy with an appointment to resume work on my Ex Situ prints this afternoon. My blood pressure has been an issue so I had eliminated salt via instructions from my cardiologist and then my primary physician said that I had a salt deficiency and should eat more salt. The cardiologist also says he cannot authorize cardiac rehabilitation because technically the beginnings of aortic disease he sees are from aging, not disease. "Therefore," he said, and he's a very intelligent man, "you are not diseased so I will have to dismiss you from the cardiac clinic." I guess it's rational to grow old and die. Needless to say, I meant to do the rehabilitation on my own even if it means surrendering hours on the couch reading, watching tv and snacking. I

had a dream last night where the cardiologist told me to invest more in narcissistic behavior. I don't have a borderline disorder or, so I've been told but it's not clear if that means I am not over the border in one direction or another. I think my diagnosis would be one of an "ethical narcissist", someone who at times is in a tantrum state but whose demands are tempered with hesitation as to whether or not they are fair and merit expression, or not. Imagine that. One needs to be one hell of a confident narcissist to get anywhere, which means a delusional belief about self and entitlement. It's difficult to serve a narcissist even when they are truly needy. Nothing is enough, they seem entitled to absolute dominion, holding their delusions dear. In a way, I can't think of any reason not to envy that. A ruthless narcissist with unlimited resources being in a supreme position of power is our true daytime nightmare. The trick is not to feel too badly, or frightened, disappointing a narcissist if one is not up to toxins. I've been stalked from entitlement; the sheer entitlement to do crazy. Out of all my friends and family, I am glad that there are only two such injured people in my life like that, because they are disturbing to the core. No matter how clearly I perceive their reality, and no matter glad I am to be of service, and no matter how optimally I construct the encounter, and no matter how well it goes, I still wake up in the middle of that subsequent night wrecked with nightmares. Writing out foibles is a completely precious activity. Not that it eradicates them, but it certainly makes it easier to practice discarding words like "disaster," "catastrophe" or "dilemma." I had a strange and unnecessary phone call from the suffering therapist whose services I surrendered. It can be nice when someone checks up, but not when they seem mentally unbalanced-even when you know something horrible has happened to them justifying the unbalance. Now I must switch hats to tax spreadsheets. Let's exhale all the sadness and rely on a strong inner core. Toxic thoughts float up, and the familiar whiff of being in a defensive state, dukes up, ready for anything. I have no immunity for slings and arrows, and had to build a battleship for coverage, bit by bit. Do I require a metaphorical sterile bubble

of isolation to survive? Can art be made in such a bubble? I live straddling earth and water. Speaking of the devil, a narcissist just messaged—with a demand to be in his world, this minute, where his problems are the only ones in existence. I don't blame him, given the last few years of his experience. But it's difficult to be in a room where all the oxygen is sucked out with someone who is dismissive of anything at all to do with anyone else. I won't be unkind but won't be abused either. I tended to my mother in her last months and I would do the same thing again. But after that, I want to never do it again. I read this afternoon about Cecil B. DeMille and the making of his second Ten Commandments film, so far so good. My usual scenario about such pleasures is that I "collapse" against my will into slothing. Seems like a lot of drama around some pleasurable research! In the past, when I couldn't afford any downtime, I would get sick with colds or flu, always something that merited bed rest because I never rested—and I was always self-critical that I wasn't more robust. Relaxation feels great! The DeMille book is boring, but it does have insights into his roots, and the American theater of his time, and the seeds of Hollywood. It reveals the fact that his mother was Jewish, and he hid that, while, at the same time, he was fairly public about his indulgence in sexual sadism as long as it was conducted most virtuously conducted outside of his marriage. Unfortunately, my reading experience lassoed in compulsive snacking which got out of control and took over the day but did not deprive me of any meals. "This is the devil's sendoff into a downward spiral." Would it be different if I read in an armchair rather than the couch? Wouldn't I slouch and nosh there too? Often, my brain feels like it's going to short out from all cross currents of data. It can be like Niagara and Victoria Falls crashing into each other and causing exponential bursts that drown the planet in its own mix of earth and water. Electricity sparks in the spot just above and between my eyes which then becomes an abyss. Its seven a.m., and its pitch-black outside, no wonder my Finnish friends get depressed. There is zero visibility and I am so fortunate to know that from my window. My windows afford a gorgeous phenomenon, a view

of the city I love, perhaps soon obliterated to be by new construction. I have seen someone dear to me suffer from shingles. So today I had the second shingles shot and now there are unexpected consequences: headache, nausea and fever. So much for prophylactic measures in Western medicine. There is relief in ascertaining from the pharmacists that this defeating condition for the day is considered typical. There was no warning. I can't think straight, or even obliquely, and tomorrow is a big day with out-of-town friends. Con Edison has turned off our heat again because of a "malfunction." My day resonates in loss with a fourth warm and celebratory personal invitation I had to decline this month because there is a cat present. There is no medication I can take that spares me what has always been serious the serious consequences of every cell in my body losing its mind and my lungs filling with fluid. Because of the severity of my allergy, I had a "fellowship" to a new protocol that would have otherwise cost a thousand dollars a month. In my case, shots had no positive effects and the final conclusion was that I "...should not go anywhere near cats or where cats have been." That's was a given for my entire life. I have been accused of hating cats, or that I am not trying hard enough to "get over it." At eighteen, I took in a kitten to "get over it." I likely thought its cuteness would rally my antibodies. And so, I landed in an emergency room. It can be very dangerous to fuck with an allergy. I know I need to face some challenges about going out more even where cats are not an issue. I feel badly about missing experiences, but I also am so content in my studio, looking out at a gorgeous skyline view. It's the kind of thing one could pinch oneself about to make sure it's not a mirage. On the issue of industry. It is scary that today may be a third day doing nothing. I shift outside myself, leaving the planet, and look back and wag my finger in my face that I should see every day as an adventure, no matter how it unfolds. "Doing nothing" is part of the way I calm my system as an antidote to stress. There is no water in the building today; Con Ed is drilling to destroy everyone's brain matter. In addition, there are heavy construction noises in the apartment above me where renovations are going on. All



this, plus the sirens and horns outside—is a cornucopia of cacophony and why do we live here? I enjoy my friends immensely. I tried not to feel embarrassed that I take cars because I am still wiped out and wobbly. I know an alternative to the inevitable slump from negative critique is to refuse to experience it. I always risk critique even when I don't sense friendliness because I think I may get valuable information. It never really helps. I've been making art for over seventy years, and this project is completely consistent with my other bodies of work, which some people think is a problem. Now there will be a meeting at the Residency. I am curious to hear what they have to say and if they say anything useful that would be great. Basically, they are upset that I am not making something that is likely to go viral, nor particularly relevant to industry. If following a deep-core connection I've had since birth is useful in some way, then I live a useful life. I hope that's real. There is no proof possible. I make work according to my given nature. If living a useful life involves large compromises to my work, as much as I would like to please everyone, and go viral, I cannot squeeze all the puzzle out of the piece to make it homogeneously understood, even if I want to. No, I cannot take out the reference to Shakespeare, even though I understand the irrelevance to the audience from your point of view. If I listen to your instructions and follow them, I would be miserable. No matter how much I am seething, what I do is say "that isn't helpful." Except as a kid on several occasions when I lost it and banged my sister's head against the sidewalk, and another where I told off an art dealer who came to my studio drunk and with a basket of insults because he was drunk— I called him a parasite. If I let myself go with dreaming and resting, then I have to separate out that it doesn't extend to grazing; feeding something that will always remain hungry. I have not initiated a twirling around since 1986. Before that time, I would dance every day. But on a specific day in 1986 it was as if all the moxie, hope, and the ability to move spontaneously, came out of me as my mother expressed her last exhale in the world. I was profoundly deflated, flattened. Since that day, not one part of my

body seems connected to any other. It's a mystery as to exactly where my extremities are in space. If one goes to synagogue or church, one has to make sure one's appearance is according to rules "written" or unwritten, and that is for the others, not the higher power, who likely sees us naked whatever we wear. I feel scared, not sorry. I am anxious about the meeting where I'm afraid I will lose my temper at their sheer chutzpah to crush the artist, or say the artist isn't "enough." It may be beyond me to treat them with kindness while holding my ground. I never should have allowed anyone to meddle with me. I erected a stop sign for every time I feel and act like every minute of my life is an emergency. Life or death is my built in, and built up, *modus operandi*, as is rushing to my own rescue before anything has happened. I would like to to feel grateful for the crap detritus of life, regardless of how lubricated other people's lives are. Con Ed has turned off all our water again, with a full twenty minutes notice. Made it just under the wire filling the tub for toilet flushing in the absence of running water for any extended period of time. Yesterday was all other detritus-of-life tasks, and then I hosted a group of engineers, staff people, building manager, and board member to hear for themselves the buzzsaw motorboat noises going through all the line E apartments. I always wanted a regular life, with regular person tasks and concerns and now I have one. I own a co-op apartment and although I have minimal equity in it, I have maximum responsibilities. I sometimes think those responsibilities are crimes against art and humanity. I fell asleep at my desk yesterday, went totally unconscious to the point of waking up and wondering why I was in a chair, what time of day it was, and where I was located. In the evening I watched "8-1/2" again. It's such a gift to watch a film again spanning a period of forty years, having seen it first in the year it was released, and have differently nuanced insights. What resonates is the severe crisis of creativity, and the horrid evils of critiques. To choose sanity, he cancels the film in the film and feel free. I now have a business skype session planned for next week. Why don't I do that too? Cancel I mean. Cancel the project. Skype is good, I can move out of view

every time I'm going to lose my temper. I am tired of saying "I see your point, but . . .?" Some people are brutes with no respect for the multiverse, I'm sure it would throw any alien off to the point of deciding to invade any other planet but this. I learned as much from Harvard Business School's "Getting to Yes" as I learned from Machiavelli. Be there to listen, and then withdraw and do exactly as you please. These people have good qualities, but some are philistines no matter how you look at it. Some of it may be helpful, if I can divorce it from the wrapper of abuse it comes in from this particular distributor. Out of so many jobs I have had, and there were times within those sixty-five years that I managed truly "odd" jobs, like in the summer of 1960. at a missile shipping company on 57<sup>th</sup> Street — Technitron — where I made a serious typo on paperwork for a missile shipment—Iraq, not Iran, or was it Iran not Iraq? And then there was that one semester I left college for the "real" world, and looked for drama and performance possibilities in employment, reading alphabetically past the "clerical" listings, I noticed an ad for a bona fide detective job for Pinkerton. Disguised as a night-shift typist at a firm called Oppenheim, Appel and Payson in the financial district, the job paid one hundred dollars a week in 1959, and that was a lot then. I was hired for in-person, human surveillance by claiming I was twenty-one, which I was not, and swearing with fingers crossed behind my back I could speak French, also not true, and neither of those attributes ever came up in the actual work. My mission, and, as it turned out, their cover story, was to find and identify someone who was stealing a lot of petty cash, then stashing the emptied metal boxes in the paneled ceilings. Each evening I was committed to a check of all the office doors to make sure they were locked and being who I was, I was sure I could hear pressure on the other end of the doorknob. There was a lot of extraneous running down hallways on my part. Another part of this multi-layered story was that the cleaning person was a Russian woman of marked distinction, who came in to work decked in jewels, and, once we became friendly, swore me to secrecy as she showed me newspaper clippings with photos of her and a gentleman decked out

elaborately in a military uniform adorned with medals, both waving to crowds of thousands. The story was, she had been married to a Russian Ambassador to Turkey and he had been assassinated and she had fled to this country. Of course, I told her that the money I was planting all over the office to catch the culprit(s) was treated to turn one's hands blue, in case she was the desperate refugee vying for survival. My own hands, in distributing the bills, were a testimony. A lit light bulb appeared over my head in a cartoon balloon; I began to suspect there was more to this "petty cash" scenario than I was being told. This was amplified when other night shift employees whom I described in my reports as being totally evil, or at least sleazy and beady eyed, with smirking lips, I eventually found playing ping pong in the Pinkerton recreation room when I went to collect my paycheck or be debriefed. Why, if just for petty cash, were there at least five detectives on this detail? I'm afraid I will never know. When that assignment "ended," I was assigned to interview prospective Pinkerton guards at their homes and ran out of my shoes in Red Hook being chased-to-kill, entering the nearest elevated subway shoeless. The Pinkerton experience turned me topsy-turvy, because it appeared that evil, sleazy and sneaky would always prevail in the end. They did investigate me before hiring me, arriving at Hillel on the Brooklyn College campus in trench coats to interview the Rabbi, I think they must have known I was lying about my age, and maybe that I did not speak fluent French, and perhaps my being younger was even better as they, in part, hired me as some sort of bait. After sixty-five years, I am now emancipated from a workforce through hard work and perseverance. The sad thing I didn't count on is not being young when I finally could retire, in fact, I am old. The body moves on its merry way towards decline regardless of the most mindful self-care. I know that some people actually like or love their jobs, and some artists have skills and capabilities to have art-ish jobs. It wasn't the case with me; all training, education and practice led back to something I had no control over. Nowadays, I fear that even after retiring from work, I could get addicted to pleasure doing nothing, having a lovely couch, and

indulging in amusement, or random study, satisfying my indigenous curiosity, hypnotized by looped videos of Pangea coming together and splitting apart again, or deciphering palimpsests. Maybe the burnout from working layers of multiple jobs most of my life—college and jobs, making art and jobs, etc. has made me prone to wanting to do nothing, or very little. I'm also overwhelmed by all the ideas coming up and because I know one doesn't achieve success at anything unless one works very hard. Everything I do generates anxiety that takes a toll. Part of it is self-manufactured. To experience no anxiety, I would have to attempt nothing or surrender enough, or master enough, or just stop the anxiety by some philosophy of life, religion, or drugs. It's really silly and presumptuous to feel sad about everybody else having to go out to work. I'm trying to remember a job I loved, or even liked. Maybe each of them at times, had good characteristics, and some had good comraderie. The best work to do, warts and all, is my own. The only issue is that my polymorphous curiosity sometimes leads to hypnotic stupor. I feel so overwhelmed with joy to be home working in my studio looking out at the snow—a dream come true. I worked towards this freedom, well, sans roommate, being alive, fairly mobile, windows, apartment, studio, coffee, oranges, family and friends. I have never liked housework, even though I have loved my houses. The best breaks are when I do nothing but float. I do need a tougher skin. Concrete criticality is fine. I try to dismiss the current flavor of critique as rational and corporate and not associated to my own realm, but some of can be gold, and that I like but it's entirely up to me to adopt it or not. I am still reeling from the most recent exposure to a cat and it's sad that it completely undermines my immune system. It's difficult when cat owners don not believe understand it's a serious allergy, and not a phobia. I thought maybe a scramble on the stationary bike would perk me up, but it didn't. I still feel very fatigued from breathing problems. Now for another hot shower and medication. Handyman coming back today and tomorrow to paint the studio bathroom. Tasks are actually taking four days, not two. But as always, if done correctly, I won't have to think about them again. No leaky

faucet, no replacing bulbs (now LEDs), and no dirty-walled bathroom. I was a tomboy and did all sorts of daring things. Where is my physical moxie? Can I get it back? Well, obviously, not when I am suffering from severe allergies. Allergic asthma keeps my lungs burning, breath short, lungs expectorating, and my head fuzzy. This may contribute to the fact that I woke up pathologically grouchy. I suppose I should prepare for being mostly a spectator of other people's movements. I had a bad handyman debacle. My tolerance for bad behavior is so low. Maybe I can't tolerate human love, because doesn't it always come with abuse? I fired the handyman, doesn't mean much because he was so late again and was likely not to show up in any case. I hope he has no starving children, actually if he did, he wouldn't likely behave so badly. I can negotiate. But if you have a male worker won't negotiate with women, then firing is the only alternative. I kind of abdicated from "honey, I'm home" a long time ago. I still need wily skills, but I don't need extreme emotion. Yesterday the better handyman finished installing two light fixtures and a new faucet, quickly, effectively and courteously. I'll never understand why some people can say anything they want and get away with it. I've had supervisors at jobs, and art dealers, whose style of manipulation was by belittling. For decades I've been either told to make my work more or that it is too accessible. I've been told by art dealers that my work had too many references. Branding art is the death of it, unless you are Andy Warhol. I just don't speak that language, and love the language I do speak, which is inclusive, even if no one gets that. Blunt people move through life by removing all filters. They do well too. I am still ill from cat. All I want to do is sleep. My mind is foggy with less oxygen. The right way to spend the day is to get life detritus done and it's been one of the best days for that ever, no deep thinking required. Friends with cats think I am saying they are "unclean." I explain over and over (if my voice is still with me) that that is not the case at all. Cats have powerful chemicals in their saliva which permeate everything in the environment after they lick themselves. For me, it is close to lethal. Anticipating dinner guests, I started cooking late and I

panicked, overwhelmed with the mechanics (chopping, slicing, dicing, peeling) as well as the chemistry (searing, baking, sautéing). I tried calling a pro to take over and of course no one was available on such short notice. I sat myself down and told myself that I am not completely devoid of common sense, I had got great ingredients and spices, can take it step by step, enjoy it, don't hurt myself, and improvise. Even the best cooks can dud out and have to fix it. As beginners' luck would have it, it turned out well! My guests were so happy, they kept eating and eating because it was so delicious and wanted the recipes(s)—the best compliment. Now, the day after, I cancelled the dentist to stay home because I'm going out tonight and I want to work today. As a result of doing what I want just because I want it, I may have deprived everyone at the dentist's office of a living for their starving children. Then I remembered that I wanted to check out these strange bumps that have appeared on the inside of my lower lip. Every two years or so, there is a period of time where I am blessed with a lovely type of discretion, which, sad to say, never lasts very long. Even though I truly prepare and am resolved to behave that way every day for the rest of my life, somehow that capability has a life and decline of its own—it bursts into existence, rides the wave, erodes, and eventually evaporates like fireworks in slow motion. I dreamt last night that I had an unidentified disappointment and needed more than anything else in the world to eat tons of chocolate and subsequently found myself rushing to a chocolate retail establishment in my old neighborhood. I was highly compelled to do this in every fiber of my being which isn't so far away from how I usually feel awake. At the same time, I was kind of shocked at what appeared to be my lapse in dainty behavior. In the dream, I stopped short and said to myself "Do you really want to do this? Do you not see that this won't really help the situation?" Turning one's self around when obsessed with a strong compulsion is like trying to swallow while accelerating to the speed of light. I did turn around, but I got so deflated doing it. I am positive that the delusion of sweets helping in a tangible way for disappointments is genetic. I was

angry because any happiness that comes with common sense is delayed and diluted compared to indulgence. Sort of like sleeping next to a gay man and cuddling all night when one really wants to have sex but would not initiate anything that could be interpreted as harassment. Chocolate happiness is immediate and intense for those with a sweet tooth. I haven't changed much since I battled my way down the birth canal—and my trip in particular was a battle, with the umbilical cord wrapped around my neck. I am temporarily gifted with a discretion I adore. So how do I manipulate myself to perpetuate it? I probably can't. So much is at stake in regard to health and well-being. Yet chocolate can rule. Some people have sweets binges and live to one hundred. It's not fair to have Ashkenazi genes, although I know it could be much worse. Particularly considering the people on earth with truly terrible afflictions, I should snap out of this right now. Chocolate for solace is not by any means the worst life choice a person on earth can make. On another subject, it's been quite a ride with the knee shots, although I called the doctor yesterday and it was sort of reassuring to hear that it's normal to be totally incapacitated the day after shots. I was acutely nauseated at the doctor's office from the pain. It was twenty minutes in the restroom before I could leave his office feeling safe about not throwing up. This morning my knees are incredibly stiff and in painful; it's even hard to walk from the bed to the bathroom. My royal slow motion has always been an issue, and this temporary setback sets a new record. It has taken me months into retirement to get my house in the best order I can to start working. Now it's the next day, and my knees are better and off I go to physical therapy. Today I am anticipating art supplies coming into the studio, as just dessert. Fuck the chocolate. It seems the force is still with me, though not without a struggle. The anticipation of the arrival of supplies pervades my whole day in a positive way; art supplies, of any genre, whether mark-making, mechanical or electronic, are something I live for. Having a bad dream or a bad day is in a minor key compared to the fugue states of clinical depression. Last night I had a dream where I barely caught a train and then I got off



at a stop to stretch my legs but was in a total panic about the train starting up without me and taking all my belongings with it. There was a woman on the platform telling me it was okay, that I won't miss the train, but I didn't stop verbalizing the panic till I made her panic too and we both ran for the train even though it really wasn't even beginning to move away. Today I worked hard on what turned out to be a terrible drawing. "What do grownups do when they are frustrated by a dead end?" "They plod on, I guess." Serendipitously, the plexiglass frames for the drawings arrived just then. Once I could frame them, I could step back, and see what was right and what was wrong. The frames served well, because I realized that I may be using the wrong paper—and so I switched. Instinct sometimes works better than the head. It's a lifelong knee-jerk reaction to just go crazy with happiness when I buy art supplies. It's even better when it's with grant money. It doesn't help that, once again, the IRS wants to consider artmaking as a "hobby." It's a miracle I argued my case "like an attorney" and I won. All those years of word-processing for lawyers and watching TV lawyers paid off. I must say I enjoyed my own performance, especially pacing back and forth in front of the Arbitrator, stridently making my points for me and artists everywhere, channeling Perry Mason. "Say I am an actor," I said, "and one year I had a great part in a sitcom, made a fortune, but at the end of the year, they killed my character. Since then, I have been pounding the pavement for auditions. The year passes without any luck for employment, and meanwhile pavement pounding merits consideration for the expenses it entails on my end. Is my career a hobby the year I am earnestly looking for work and unsuccessful?" The Arbitrator could not comprehend the same scenario in terms of a media or visual artist, but it seems that this rhetoric split the dark and stormy skies of bureaucracy enough for the Arbitrator to offer an opportunity to me to write the NYS Tax bureau a letter pleading my case, but a letter abiding by the IRS criteria for a for-profit business, which consists of questions like "do you make a profit?" "Have you ever made a profit in a given year?" "Do you anticipate making a profit?" "Do you have

inventory that would provide for a profit?" The Letter was pure jurisprudence, the tone gathered from all the legal documents I typed as a word processor for practically every major law firm in the city for twenty years. Night shifts at law firms supported warrens of artists, writers, actors, musicians, as word processors or copy editors or proofreaders, all trying to free their days for artmaking and auditions. But I digress. My letter contained optimistic answers to each of the questions, an inventory of work sitting in my studio (uninsured) worth over a million dollars—and that is only the work made up until the 1990s, along with the transcripts of two similar cases which went on to Court: One in the early 2000's and one from forty-five years ago. Both were female artists who made most of their living from teaching in spite of the fact that they were completely dedicated to artmaking, and to exhibiting and selling their work. Both won their cases. I am forever grateful to Susan Kroll, the more recent case, who actually went to court and likely gave a great deal of her focus for two or three years to fighting these "Hobby Laws" from the 1930s. In her case, the Judge thought it was not appropriate to apply The Hobby Laws, originally meant for farmers, to any of the Arts. YAY, Judge. The fact that both of these artists won, and I could make use of that, and their publicly available briefs, in my argument, enabled me to win. Evidently so did my accompanying letter, as the NYS Arbitrator kindly called me shortly after he received it, not only to say that yes, I was a bona fide professional fine artist (eeeek), but that no lawyer at NYS Tax Bureau could write such a good letter. It's hard to know how to react to that. All of this took most of my summer, particularly the bureaucratic processes involved, but I could get back to work with a light heart at the conclusion, relieved that this shut an avenue down for the IRS to follow in NYS footsteps, and for now at least, the problem wouldn't escalate. Carrying on, I ruminated on a title for this body of drawing/writing work and decided on "SEE NO EVIL." For someone who was raised severely urban, almost all creatures in nature can seem monstrous until an education takes place. And then there are decades of representation of the evil "Id" as in "Forbidden

Planet" (1956). What a magic moment that was, the dying astronaut relating in his last breath that the evil "id" destroyed an entire ideal, Utopian alien civilization. God forbid "unconscious psychic energy that works to satisfy basic urges, needs, and desires. The **id** operates based on the pleasure principle, which demands immediate gratification of needs." Tsk. Tsk. Of course, their Id destroyed the Krells the minute its citizens became conscious of being ideal. Sort of like Eve pro-actively taking the apple from the tree. We will never know exactly what her urge was: whether to gain all knowledge, taste the apple, or procreate with Adam. I give myself credit in that I was sadly correct that as a small child I thought my family's collective Id, their desperation and rage, hurt their own purposes. I tried to overcome those traits in myself in order to seek happiness. My mistake was in also seeking fairness. Now I think I've gone too far in the other direction towards self-vigilantism, examining intuition so heavily that it is no longer really intuition by the time it is implemented, but distilled into some distortion or farce of intuition. My poor friend L, obese and suffering, rails against all the remedies that can help her. I understand that tantrum well. L noticed my success in weight loss, she asked me over and over how I was achieving it like a dog after my bone and a claim to the place where I bury it. This is just her way. Of course, I gladly explained the drug I was on, plus the changes it afforded in my lifestyle. Of course, the latter unfortunately involved eating less. I was forthcoming, but careful, because I didn't want my resolve threatened by her contempt. What a world!! I have subsided in desiring love from someone where it is like asking for blood from a stone. Love for an emotionally sick person is always susceptible to their marvelous seduction with a real intent to attack. I spent a good portion of time yesterday looking out my windows, thinking nothing. It scares me. For how long will I do it? What's a sane idea of balance? Will I become addicted? It's more and more clear that what I like to call "slothing" is probably a restorative state, with a beginning and end. I am once again buying project supplies. So ready again to happily lose my art

mind. Yesterday, on the verge of losing my temper instead, I struggled to picture in my mind an XCrossing sign with a crossing guard sporting a lethal weapon. I think that's a good tactic. I never could afford to be in a single present moment before. It's fair to say that being embedded in the workforce was a full-time hardship, which is not uncommon. It's not that one really ever fully escapes, even in "retirement." Some days are totally "business" or "life crap." All one really needs to do is just keep going at whatever it is one is suited for on any given day. I could finetune a project. I could also beat myself with a thorny stick. I had a great deal of empathy for my parents when I was a small child, perhaps because my love was "active", and I was dependent on them for survival. I saw their high anxiety and promised myself every day to cause them no further discomfort particularly since my sibling ferociously stormed through their world. My family is not the first to lack skills to make boundaries for themselves or their children. I couldn't tolerate how perpetually upset they were. And I knew that I would become as overwhelmed as a grownup if I didn't work very hard not to. I was a literal kid. When my mother raised her eyes to the sky and said, "you kids will be the death of me," it scared me silly, while my sister, innately understanding it was hyperbole and drama, would say "good, hurry up and die." This sent me into paroxysms of fear as a child—I believed in black magic, fairy tales, and the power of the word to kill. My resentment of their inability to "see" me still interferes, at times, with my happiness. They are long gone. Is reiterating the drama the only way to hold onto them? Whenever academic conflicts required a paper trail, I would have to do many drafts of my documents because the initial draft would start out wild with rage and fury, and often heavily loaded with invective, particularly when their acts affected disadvantaged students in our care. I wrote and rewrote and rewrote in order to work out the most constructive, forgiving way to address the problem while disarming rancor, rancor simply doesn't work. My side of the paper trail was pristine and professional. I would put forward some possible productive solutions or compromises and make

every attempt to ward off a flame war. Personally, in the case of M, she did one thing for me out of the morass of cruel and heartless actions, or lack thereof. There was never a happy moment because she simply didn't have the capacity for it. Any exposure was an opportunity to diminish me. I understand the pain of her dethronement when I came along. It must have been unbearable. Yet, she never combed my hair or helped me in any other way. As an adult, I understood her lack of compassion to a point where I put aside the rage. Frankly I don't know how anyone can get away with treating people so poorly. She has the sensibility of a terrorist and feels entitled to exercise it. Maybe there is some virtue in being straightforward about it and in finding people who can live with it intimately to enable her having a family. On the other hand, where is the apology for psyche tromping? No one protected me from the emotional abuse, and the core of me was disregarded or misinterpreted, perhaps because my mother's desire to be an artist was thwarted by economics and the loss of her own mother. She could never manifest pride in my accomplishments or in the fact that I created my own economics for anything I wanted from the second I could work for money; in fact, she was fairly disdainful. I don't think she even meant to be. I can understand her. I was living with people I loved and who loved me, but who didn't really like me. Today I did something rather extravagant that made me happy. I decided to frame the drawings using a quaint art supply-old-fashioned plexi-box frames. I love their inelegance. I ordered enough frames to make an array of drawings. I've only done seven drawings so far, but not all are frame-worthy. There will be more. Savings from the most recent grant will support this project for a while. Every time I try to do monstrous work, I produce something lovely. It's irrelevant whether or not I mind that. I used to be so pressured, miserable, and worn down from stress, that even washing a dish felt like too much work. Now I am going out for a walk by the river. This was my favorite thing to do for years and years, and I can resume it to a degree now that my back has recovered some mobility. Since nine/eleven, Park Row has been closed off except to police and city buses. There are two manned

police barricades and every bus driver has to show his credentials twice, once for each end. This is because Park Row passes through Police Plaza—the City’s central Police headquarters. Sometimes the police board the bus with dogs and it’s like crossing the border from Amman into Jerusalem. The drawings are not sourced from the highest altitude of aesthetic endeavor; they are more like a return to blissful and unselfconscious painting and drawing. They are figurative and my abstract painter mentors may be turning over in their graves. I feel deeply compelled to pursue these drawings. The drawings seem to be giving me some sort of information I need. I am carving out a path to something else. In the past, not knowing why I was pursuing something has always led to good things. To my most conscious self, they, to a degree, look like I have lost my mind as an artist. That may be a good thing. Last night I fixed computer glitches till late. I don’t need to know why I woke up feeling so cheerful, it’s just lovely. Sometimes I experience studio paralysis and fear, but it can be very informative. Tucked away in a drawing pad were drawings I did two years ago of imagined birds. I remembered those drawings were made in an outpour of gratitude for both the natural and unnatural. They were in fact self-portraits as birds with the deepest internal connection only known to me. No deciphering was required to get them. One actually looks like me. I could never explore drawing like that while under the yoke of a workforce job I was burned out in. It requires a great deal of still time. It’s just the way I am. I am sure other artists can do things, so close to the kernel, faster and better. I am making one drawing after another and liking the rawness and vulnerability and perpetually trying to make the next one without tripping over my emotions, which proves to be hopeless time and time again, but worth pursuing in seeking an elusive clarity. As I age, health regimens take more and more time every day—of course the cliché to think at this time is “consider the alternative,” the entire physical life is now remedial—two steps forward and one step back for sustaining every function. Give it up and one slides down towards an abyss of unhealth. It’s inevitable that parts wear out, arthritis deepens its hold, and

all this sounds as depressing as the macabre signage at the Museum of Natural History describing the millions of deaths on the forest floor that are necessary for re-growth. It's great that there are remedies for the depression this creates, joys for the heart and the soul, Eastern and Western. It helps to clear the decks, and the desks. I thanked a friend for clutter clearing support. The recipe for compulsion around clutter, both making it and breaking can be a combination of never having "enough" because of fears of financial destitution. It is impossible to justify clutter; except it's so passionate; being a busy beaver and building a dam out of detritus and then wondering why the natural rush of the stream is blocked up. If you come from an environment where you had to provide everything you need from a young age, and sometimes things everyone else needs, well then there is always a nostalgia for abundance, and it can be delusional. When I got my fulltime teaching job, I purchased three of every household article in small, medium and large sizes—a Trinity of hollow reassurance against being poor again. I was poor before that and being on public assistance was no picnic. Faith? Well, what about it? A friend who required surgery put a religious medal on her afflicted shoulder and prayed for days. Now she doesn't need surgery. That is so impressive! I've only had one faith, faith in an undercurrent that binds us all and likely permeates the multiverse. It is anonymous, and not something to discuss like something we live with every day, even though we do. And there is shame, because in our culture, it's a luxury. It serves me right when I need surgery and end up having it. Yesterday the studio magic was gone, and I tried to behave as if it wasn't, but this wasn't entirely successful. I make sure to hold myself responsible for my own idiosyncrasies as if my claiming responsibility will erase any damage they may cause. In the film *Magnolia*, there is a little boy with a narcissistic and cruel dad, who at the end of the amazing frog apocalypse in the film, says to his dad: "Dad, you have to be kinder to me." His dad dismisses it, but we can only hope the seed of self has been born in the boy, and it is incredibly touching. It is horrible to grow up only as a mirror

in your parents' eyes. Eliminating unnecessary excess at the root of clutter is difficult. I spoke with M and she has indeed started the current pervasive declutter program. She was given a methodology but immediately launched into an avalanche of contempt over how crazy it is. It must seem overwhelming to her. It would be overwhelming to me. I was just relieved that her contempt was delegated to someone she hired to help her rather than me because I had tried to help. I could hear her thinking about what I offered. There are so many things in her life that she might be able to change for the better with slow, very tiny steps. But it's hard for our breed to do that. We want magic. With each small thing I give up to get better, it feels like the end of the world. I haven't changed, but some of my habits have. I have some friends who spend a lot of time reveling in the fact that they know nothing about practical things, and take solace in the luxury of feeling cared-for like a baby. This is where money manages delegation, including filling out the plethora of forms life requires. It's terrific they are so fortunate and can lead such lubricated lives. But pride in being infantilized, when that is what it is, grates me equally as much as actually being infantilized. Most of us struggle through the ten-thousand daily tasks of life. I also need to focus of giving up the deep and bitter turmoil I feel seeing people in my life who are wildly expressive of every thought regardless of the wreckage that expression spews behind. To snap out of it, I turn towards the window to enjoy the view and it's so terrific. I paid the Internal Revenue Service what they were due; what else would a money cushion be for, if not taxes or the dentist? Fits with my striving to be appropriate. Years and years, decades and decades, of trying to be appropriate, it's not a natural state, but it's respectful. That may be part of the grit work most of us have to do. One other thing, M seems serious about my going to her island this summer and I want very much to do so if I can. It is frightening to experience aging and to realize that as I age, I may not have much in the way of resources. I have every insurance policy one can have, but if I go dotty, I won't be able to manage them. Part of my waking-up depression is that I know there is



decline ahead, I can do all the maintenance possible and I will still decline, unless I am an exception to my genes, which doesn't look like the case. Must be nice to not wake up sinking when the day is just beginning. Looking out the windows with good coffee helps, or an orange. Even cutting up the orange is uplifting, every morning it seems like a miraculous object—juicy, sweet, segmented and orange. The art of art business and my continual failure not to comprehend it is troubling. There is only so much I can do about that, and I go over and over a litany of stuff, and only end up going back to making work. I have a friend who is addicted to miracles and treats every aspect of life miraculously, every aspect of living has to be, and is made, special. It must be totally exhausting. Is mocking one's own high maintenance a blood sport? Today I am physically at half-mast, depressed or just terribly tired from Spring allergies. Retired from the workforce, I can take care of myself in a more straightforward manner. My life is getting smaller and smaller. The devil is a great teacher! I take solace in the fact that I am vigilant for my own welfare—it's not punitive, I am just trying to create an environment here where I can cocoon. Every day is a challenge to find gratitude in a morass of my own defensive negativity. Is there midwifery for a personal metamorphosis? The day's agenda is never fruitful if it's arranged as a hierarchy, because all guesses at the duration of tasks are wild ones, and, then, prioritizing promotes anxiety. The level of alarm for wasting half of any given day sleeping is often high drama. Then there is always medication. While out walking I realized it was night and I wasn't afraid. It seems to be one of the benefits of being able to walk well without pain after all those months of that pain rendering me physically unstable, confused, fearful and overwhelmed, which is especially depressing because I have lived in New York all my life, know the streets, transportation system, and have the appropriate location electronics. For months I had no faith in my instinct to navigate streets after dark because all my attention goes to remaining erect and it's hard to see what's around me if I'm white-knuckled looking down to avoid tripping hazards. The discrepancy

between what I think I am capable of and what I actually am capable of may have a large wingspan. A recent date said he did not want to date a busy woman and dumped me when I requested a change in time. I participated in more personal interaction with people in the past week than I have in any given six months before this. Even when I enjoy it, it tires me out and calls for recovery time. If I don't participate, I get lonely. I am trying to build my tolerance—trying to work out a balance. I probably need counseling about this. On the job, I was not only responsible for students, but also colleagues and administrators. One could go crazy from the self-serving hidden agendas that lie beneath every faculty member's recommendation. I make mistakes with things that are really straightforward, but that won't last forever. My head is somewhere else. Even worse, I hate when I feel helpless, I'm sure that's not uncommon. Today, I am in the worst mood ever—bitter and angry, but no one will know, and that too will pass, and I will feel differently. L is texting dreamily about love letters from her spouse early on in their relationship, the very same spouse she treats like crap in a marriage I wasn't built to tolerate for one second, and I am not sorry. Now my stove is broken. It's four years old and out of warranty. Today is my mother's birthday. I am guessing she was born in 1910. She died in 1986 and it's as if it were yesterday. I have visited my parents' coupled graves with my nephew. The graves are emblematic of their presence and I do send a good wish to their memory on this day. Of course, the reality is that if she were alive, my mother would be criticizing me ad infinitum, for my own good of course, and for living a worthless life, it's just part of the culture I was reared in, but still, she was my mother and I loved her immensely. She must have loved me, and I have some of her good characteristics. I am beginning to understand the carousel when new work refers back to older work. I have total freedom not to worry if ageism is going to see me as irrelevant. Some higher power will have to help me, because nothing else, including my own industry, will. It's always a choice between love and approval, joining or working, at least for now. I can fervently wish I were a more generous

and relaxed person but wishing won't make it so and it's a waste of time to continually lament over who I am not. Better to go with what I've got. Sometimes I look in the mirror and at a certain geological depth, I see I connect with everyone and everything in a deep and serious way. It is a fertile, verdant rabbit hole. Trauma from a dire lack of ethics from instrumental people in one's early life can make one jaded. I don't believe anything until I see it, and then, given I only have two-dimensional vision, what I see is slightly different from what the majority of people see. Two-dimensional vision renders everything in flat planes, like a series of stage set flats. I do see chiaroscuro but am left to guess the distance between those flats, measuring it only in my mind's eye by relative scale. It's part of why driving is so hard, even though my brain figures out accommodations for it. My vision is clearer around magic than anything else. My distrust of people is justifiable because of growing up with someone who would offer a hug to a small child occupied with crayons, and, when the child approached to collect, smack them hard across the face and break all the crayons. Of course, my own addictive self repeats that phenomenon and has supplied decades of purgatory navigating real world employment which felt battering through no one else's fault. I sound like I worked the streets; it felt that way. Navigating the work force in academia brought both great success and cancer. I tried too hard. Why I am shocked by bad and irresponsible behavior where, in some cases it should be anticipated? Steeped in a toxic pit, one fights to be exhaled, expunged, extricated, transfused out. I believe I can be innocent again without being a dope, so that's good. Surviving in this condition was a military campaign of devilish strategies to combat the addiction to wariness, and misery. I would wake up with dread on one side of the pillow and misery on the other. Fortunately, it relents once I get moving. It's not unlikely that in all of us a deep and crucial aspect has been sorely injured, and I seek to surrender it. If it's all one knows, it's harder to do, and any joy is tempered with a sense of disbelief when people are genuinely nice as if it could be a trick. Enjoying a lovely gift from family would be sweeter if I

wasn't waiting for the other shoe to drop. Don Quixote had a lot of irrational courage, as does Terry Gilliam, who was as intrepid and eventually did succeed in at least completing the film. It's important to nip resentment in the bud before it infects. Yesterday my roommate left open her door and window, letting me know that she knows her room stinks. Perhaps she was trying to air it out while all it did was contaminate the rest of the apartment. One very sore sight was a glimpse of the food embedded in all the seams between floorboards, a variety of pizza recipe makings included. Where I currently live is my dream apartment—it's a beautiful place with brand new floors. Messiness with clothing and objects in her room is at her discretion, but stink and food mess are another thing. Her actions cause ripples, and it's been benignly discussed over and over again. How does one live with someone who makes creating a toxic environment an art? She is disabled. I asked her again and again if she had physical difficulties picking up after herself and how can I help. She said she was glad I mentioned it because she needs a dust buster and I pointed out to her the dust buster in plain sight, which she is welcome to keep in her room. It still seems as if money for a new mattress will have to come out of her deposit. Perhaps she is on medications that make her smell so bad, or she may find it physically difficult to shower. I have asked her if she would share her difficulties with me so I can be of help figuring things out for her, but she denied there were any, in spite of her leg brace and limp. All this said, if I can still squint, I can see that it's a beautiful day, and I have opted for a luxury experience such as a facial or massage as an antidote for stress, hyper-sensitivity and irritability. The sharp pain in my left eye is from my neck. The blurred vision is from dry eyes, and that introduces a new regimen of drops four times a day. Opting for self-maintenance is the quintessential bottomless pit; I hope I'm doing the right thing. I have guests. Four people living here is too much. But maybe that's my fault. Maybe I don't know how to make it fun. Three people sharing a bathroom is awkward. I declined Martinis after a while. Am I a curmudgeon? Probably. I am not sure which of my

desires are pathology. People, no matter how fabulous they are—and in New York they often are—wear me out. I benefit from, but also need recovery time, from social encounters. I believe one gets more out of life if one can co-mingle more, tolerate more, but at times I have actually gotten ill from the cumulative stress of abundant sustained interaction. As a preteen eager to learn, even going to school every day was incredibly difficult to sustain, and that had nothing to do with my academic performance, which was fine. There is a seesaw of trying to balance social and alone time. I blame my nature. Work on the Ten Commandments project isn't going anywhere for now. I need a video editor, which means I need funding. I also love solitude. I am losing control of self-policing, and that is frightening. Losing the bird's eye view of whether I am behaving stupidly; because without my own perpetual, critical eye, I might be just silly. I made a point of seeing L this morning and the stretch between visits gave me grace to feel completely tender even though it is markedly clear I am only a sounding board for all her troubles. I appreciate the intimacy and the opportunity to be of help. As for most people, there are passages where life is a true circumstantial misery. The seriousness of working in dysfunctional, and therefore toxic, institutions is confirmed by seeing a usually buoyant friend of mine at the college collapsing into a nervous breakdown in situations where he offered to be helpful there and got chewed up and spit out by the system; becoming subject to the vagaries of the College. This colleague and friend seems like a different person than the one I've known for years, sounds different, looks different, destroyed and ill. I am desperate to help him. I have known people whose lives are lubricated by inherited money. They often express disdain of money and this upsets me because they have always had it. I realize that I have no pedigree; no associations; just inherited grit and other fortunate, and unfortunate gifts. No one else's business has anything to do with my own. There was my early drama of "why isn't the baby breathing" (umbilical cord around my neck) subsequent to which I likely screamed my head off. I know that's not uncommon. Now I want to seek help and don't know how. Envy and

sorrow are not the best ingredients for a happy stew. It's hard to meet new people head on when you are older. I try to see it as an adventure, but I often am pathologically scared. I want to cancel engagements all the time. I can only sustain two or three hours of new company, even if it is entirely delightful. In aging, I literally don't speak a common language. I thought something was said about an angora sweater, but it was a discussion about Ankara, Turkey. If I listen hard enough to doctors, I will get the hearing aids. Things may get even more absurd than mishearing. Sometimes, I am positive that my worst enemy is feeling like I am built inside out. That is, the top layer of my psyche is an over-active imagination even under ordinary circumstances. My heart, nerves, and reflexes are on my sleeves. My perceptions require interpolation to what a given reality really is. I am now in Costa Rica, fascinated with the idea of jungle from the veranda, which is my only recourse since I cannot experience it directly without falling over myself. This morning, sipping coffee on the hacienda terrace, I saw a gray mass lumbering out of the jungle that I saw as an elephant. Then I had to backtrack and froth up reality; this is not the jungle of Africa; it is the Costa Rican jungle. Will I ever truly know where I am? Of course, it was a very large gray horse, lumbering down the road. Eventually, I may become one with the universe, but it sometimes is incredibly hard labor to try. As far as the roommate was concerned, I asked her not to do certain things, and now I'm concerned she may be the one going nuts instead of me. No one deserves to go nuts. Plus, it's too long a list, and embarrassing for me to delineate it, mostly having to do with her complete lack of personal hygiene. Confrontation is always difficult, it feels awful to cause discomfort to another human being, ever, whatsoever, under any circumstances, if I can help it. For me, to be annoying is a shameful thing. I expected to make life perfect for her and believed I could make it so. But that sometimes would make me the rag doll in my dog's teeth, my dog is the metaphor for self-vigilantism that is cruel and inhuman. Every time I assert myself, or say what I want, or act on what I want, whether I am perfectly justified in my

feelings or way off base, I feel like I may have caused harm; taking up too much air on the planet. I am not cruel by nature, nor am I a paragon. It would be good to relax about character flaws when they come up and amend them where I can. Self-forgiveness will take practice. Last night the friend I was with found me very annoying, I didn't realize how angry she was until she fled the scene slamming the cab door, I know most of it was her own upset about school (long story) but part of it I think was me, and I apologized after in an email for anything I may have done to upset her, I didn't realize she was getting annoyed at how long we were lingering over dinner when we had somewhere else to go. I was truly oblivious, having a good time. I missed her cues. I guess I should never relax. If I assert myself in a situation of my heart's desire, like the boundaries in my studio for a happy interview about my work, then I have interfered with, and/or protested, the cosmos as it is in its natural state, and I will be punished by the interview coming to nothing. In other words, by caring about it too much, I may very well shoot myself in the foot. It is too bad I don't have enough room with a roommate to confine the viewing of my work to my studio/bedroom which has a closed door. That would be ideal, but the only way I could do that is to lose my painting work wall or make my "viewing" wall right over my bed or stand on my bed to paint. Having a roommate, I am camping out in my studio, and it's worth the money towards the rent for now. I re-read what I wrote her last night, and it was very "light" and kind, but in my mind, I committed a murder. I let a lot pass, the dirty dishes left in the sink for days unless I am the one who puts them in the dishwasher, the drops of liquid and crumbs on the floor when she carries food and drink to her room as soon as the cleaning lady has left, etc. Living with a 23-year old used to maid service (seem to be the only ones who can afford the rent), I can't fight every battle and I can't pretend I have no roommate at all. And this blasts to hell any notion I had that being kind to someone would create harmony. I will have to throw out the mattress when she leaves because of its stink. If I don't lighten up about the small things it would be akin to constant

aggravation. I am lucky in that at least she has so far abided and not plopped herself down on my couch in the off-limits space although yesterday she came close. The truth is, to me it's a business arrangement, and maybe I am cold and weird. I want to be kind, but I don't want her as a daughter or a friend. I suppose that's not normal. Every roommate has presented different issues. With each one, I am more and more explicit before they move in because I understand how to do it better. However, they tend to forget the terms, even when written down in an agreement. So, there is always something wrong and that's just life, I had a lovely visitor today. It turned out she wanted to do an interview for her blog—that was nice. Ordinarily, I will let a roommate know this company is "business," but this was a surprise. The roommate decided to join the interview because of a reason that made sense to her—she knew Latin and she overheard my new friend speaking French and Italian. As it turns out, the roommate was intrusive and distracting and somewhat impeded the interview process by translating to Latin out loud. It's not that this was a career changer at all, and shit happens. But at one point, she asked if she should continue "translating" and I said, "no please, it's fine." And she said, "oh I will stick around anyway." At that point I felt like she completely understood my discomfort and wanted to exacerbate it. I had a really bad feeling about it. Like she would do it again, and deliberately, to annoy me. Plus, she smelled so badly from body odor. So later I said that I know she meant well and of course she can use the kitchen and everything she is entitled to if I have company, and I will always introduce her, but to not assertively "join" me and my company again like that unless she is invited because it could be business, and then I have to focus. I feel like a bad person for drawing that line, especially when her response was so contemptuous "oh dear, sorry if I stepped on your boundaries." I have to think seriously about not having a roommate down the line. This may truly be my fault, the way I am. I think this is all indicative of the fact that I need the whole place to myself to work. This would take an enormous amount of faith that I could sell work and make up some of



the difference. It's not realistic. In regard to the topic of aging I called a female cousin who is several years younger, recently widowed, and has three children who will never let her go homeless. I keep tabs on her because it's been only a year since her loss and she of course is grieving enormously and will be for quite a while. How amazing to have kids who will see to it that you are cared for. I forfeited that by not having any, and of course, even if I had, you never know who they will become. I say all that having been very close to being homeless—when I was sick, injured, and on Welfare and Disability. Luckily, I could pay the rent on credit cards, but it wasn't great because I didn't know how I would pay it back. A saving grace was, I was so depressed, I almost didn't care. My cousin has a lot of common sense and a good nature. I didn't speak to her for two decades because she abandoned me in business in 1969, but now we are old and it doesn't seem relevant. I am quite fond of her. She is a kind person, and very funny. In any case, her philosophy was expressly that between seventy to eighty we should totally enjoy ourselves while we still have mobility. I was getting disastrous \$20 haircuts, and I miss the excellence and aura of the expensive haircut, the cup of herbal tea, the Ipad at each station, the luxurious head massage, the attention to every wisp of hair, the Zen environment, the admiration for my particular natural gray hair color and curls—all the stuff that comes with spending too much money on a haircut. My cousin, who understands limited funds well herself, has a YOU GO GIRL attitude I really liked! I DO watch myself every minute. I sit counting—five bad haircuts a year at twenty dollars = one hundred dollars vs. a good haircut four times a year at \$200 = \$800. That's a difference of \$700 for the year. The expensive gym has a saltwater pool (there are papers on chlorine and bladder cancer, which I have had) and is sparkling clean. The nearest gym equipped with a pool offers chlorine, is fairly clean, although I don't shower there, I come home and shower because its only "fairly" clean. I go on and on and on like this adding up everything cent, policing myself as if I were already destitute. Ironically, I am sitting on at least a million dollars' worth of my art, and that's

only what I made up to 1990, but in the real world of course it could be worthless. So many artists have these inventories. It's no longer the 1980's, where working with art consultants offered terrific placements and a fast check in the mail. Now, nothing can be done cold calling. I can't totally disregard worries about aging, the fact is, I am already aged. Sometimes, another's conversation inadvertently emphasizes my limitations. The talker's intent was not to be thoughtless, and it is a compliment that they don't think of me as diminished as I am. It's stark situation; my peak has passed, and coping with the decline is all there is, if one is lucky enough to have the opportunity to do that. Thank goodness younger people, if healthy, are spared the visceral understanding of what this is like; direct evidence of the avalanche of aging, unless they have the misfortune to be ill or disabled, which is so tragic. All that being said, I have hit bottom so many times in my life. I've learned that there is something good that follows after contemplating and rejecting suicide as an appealing and quick end to a torturous situation. I sat on a bus despairing and said to myself—"well, let's see, what's good about this?" I can think like that because I am not bitter. My dream for my old age (before I knew of course what aging was really like) was to be surrounded by my books and make the art I am compelled to make fulltime in a conducive environment without thought to anything or anyone else. Except for some life glitches, I have successfully managed to position myself there. Then of course I wonder if this a "be careful what you wish for" scenario. Even without great resources, I do have my own atelier, where I can create what I want to my heart's desire within my physical, mental, and financial limitations. I can stop worrying about whether it will be stupid, aged, elderly, demented work. And of course, what if it is dismissed as the doddering product of an old artist. What if, after being a "pioneer," I am now irrelevant. Isn't there some comfort in there with the lack of pressure, and the knowledge that younger artists can take over the visible positions of power? I have the option of never showing the work, and in a weird way, if I can control my ego, that may be a

relief. I am experiencing great relief not being interfered with. It's like an oasis here. Despair comes partly from only being able to do only one or two things each day, and knowing that that too, will decline. A physical therapy workout and the appointment with my accountant for taxes sufficed for one day. I used to do ten things or more. Between those two appointments and the travel to and from them, I was done in for the day. I also know that I am elderly because of my high level of irritability. I was apoplectic in the streets again—I, who has lived here in New York all of my life, six decades of those in Manhattan, had issues navigating the sidewalks on 34<sup>th</sup> street, because of all the rushing people of whom I am no longer one because I cannot afford to be for fear of falling. I am more fragile, more cautious, and more enraged. I give dirty looks to young people sitting on the subway in order to get a seat (I have shrunk to 4'11" with two torn rotator cuffs and arthritis commensurate with my age, in my knees, my neck, my back, my shoulders, my hips, and very little coordination for balance and I cannot hold on to high bars or straps. I need a seat to be safe on the subway. It works, I get a seat, usually not because someone is shamed, but because they are nice, and they understand the distress. I feel like a beggar. I admire Tina Fey's character in 30 Rock, who leaves work in rush hour dressed in rags, applies as many bad odors as possible, and gets at least three seats on the subway. Yesterday I worked all day doing research for a project of mine that may never materialize because I have no idea of its viability on any level. Initiating projects can be a risky business for any artist. I need to step back and just let the subterranean run free. Doubts should become moot in the pleasure of investigation. The remedy for shakiness is to build up physical and mental strength to have more than one project running, so one can provide relief of frustrations from the other. And that's what I have been setting up my studio to do. I am going to keep trying to focus away from my electric head and turn to my breath or vocalization and I understand why one would use a one-syllable mantra. It's to keep the focus off complexity, which keeps me very busy correcting and honing and sometimes, literally painting

myself into a corner. I have to watch my language, I mean I have to watch it not as it streams but before it leaves my mouth, which means pre-editing, not watching. Catastrophic language, even as a joke, can amplify anxiety in others. I won't be as amusing, but I will be nicer. The next time I make a written agreement with a tenant it's not going to be just about time and money, I'm going to cover every single detail of daily living; should have done that in the first place. This includes all the things irking me in the common spaces translating into "I am not a mommy. I am not in charge of garbage-duty, of keeping the sink clear of dishes other than my own, this is not a hotel, and a plethora of other things which I thought would be self-evident; underestimating the moral fiber of someone sharing a living space. The last two months have been incredibly annoying and perhaps a more detailed agreement would have prevented at least some of this aggravation on both sides. I don't like the current situation. I try hard not to be annoyed, but yesterday I went into the living room and my roommate, the fifth in a succession of roommates, had wet clothing hanging on the chairs to dry. The living room is now his clothesline—water dripping on the beautiful furniture and flooring. I am so tired of trying to reason with him, he rides right over my concerns with millennial iron-clad, bullyish arguments. It's clear he is in business. Actually, re-insurance. I simply sent a message that said, "It's not allowed." After a while he messaged back "ok." But I know there will be an outburst down the line. I never know what else he will think of to demonstrate that he is the man of the house. Actually, I wish he was, in terms of helpfulness, but he is lazy and quite disrespectful. He is perpetually taking over parts of the house that are not our contractual territories, which were clear in our written agreement. He is still furious because I moved his suitcases out of my studio storage; insisting he put them in his room (no agreement was made for storage, much less massive storage, and he put them there when I was out), and that I said "no piled up dirty socks" on the apartment vestibule coat rack. It's as if he is acting out like a teenager and refuses to comprehend that his actions are inappropriate.

If he were my boyfriend, or nephew, or brother or cousin or friend, I would be curious about it, and more engaged. As it stands now, this is bad business. The last time I went into the ocean I was thrown down by every wave because I couldn't deal with balance and coordination and I had trouble getting up each time and kept losing my balance and falling down, scraping my knees. I watched kids throw their bodies into the waves and I wanted to do that too. I felt like a raging toddler, even though it was a perfect day, I was enjoying the company, the ocean, the sky and people-watching, the walks on the beach, and the bonus Margarita! Yesterday, I read an article on a new theory about how the universe works. It was so inspiring, I decided to re-learn algebra so I can eventually learn calculus, in order to really understand physics. Considering I can't even remember the name of the new theory this plan may be far-fetched. My fondest wish is to learn and deploy what I learn in my work, even if I am exploiting it as metaphorical, Greek plays, Napoleon in Egypt, Medieval Cartography, all have been subjects, and when I want to understand something, I prefer to gain, if at all possible with my limitations of time and brain power, deep and experiential knowledge. The wish may be overblown, but it makes me happy to take any step towards it. My whole oeuvre is about storytelling, the history of narcissistic tyrants and technology are the glue I use to bind all my disparate projects under one umbrella. The British Library published my talk on medieval mapping and cyberspace in a scholarly book, and I was invited to speak at the Hereford Cathedral. This was Nirvana, it is where the Hereford Mappa Mundi resides and I was privileged to see it out of its frame along with David Woodward, because we were both "W" s. We used a back entrance, hidden under foliage like The Secret Garden and were ushered silently through the chained libraries. A stepladder was provided to get up close to see the top (its diameter is five feet). The Canon of the Hereford Cathedral said, "please if you fall, fall backwards." This experience was one where I was vibrating so much with joy, I was so relieved that my vibrating isn't visible. I pictured my retirement as being finally free to do as I please. And then out comes a self-

contempt, and I see instead only a desiccated cliché of a talented crone. Not fun. Anxiety also seeks its own level. When I wake up happy smelling the coffee, feeling my freedom for the day, and high gratitude, I think I should balance it out with an upsetting issue that will bring me back to my "normal" self-vigilance, bursting the bubble before someone else does. And then the first thing I do is seek solutions to aggravating life problems, which means a focus on aggravation. My motive isn't entirely negative; it's like doing an inventory each morning to try and keep my side of the street clean. But it's wearing, brings me down and postpones anything sublime. I saw my primary doctor yesterday for a checkup and reported to her that I had some heart issues but after the next one-year checkup, I will be dismissed from the cardiology clinic at Sloan Kettering because I am not diseased, but only aging. Considering my primary physician is a geriatric specialist, I told her I am hoping not to die soon and scrambling to incorporate regimens that let me live as long as possible. If we have here a degenerating heart as a normal sign of aging, then the medical profession lets everyone die of "natural causes" when an individual may not want to die at that particular time. I know they have their hands full, of course. They don't have the resources, or time, to "fight" normal aging, their first priority is disease. It's interesting how society consider a "natural" death an ideal thing, when, at the same time ageism rears its head. I wish well for any diseased person who will live longer than I will because their issues are addressed as diseased, and mine, merely deterioration due to aging, are not. What about quality of life—for both diseased and not diseased? Perhaps I would be happier if I reconciled to the fact that natural decline and death should take their own course according to genes, disposition and environment. Our culture is sort of in denial, and so am I. What's the use of the regimens? Many people ignore regimens, but different people have different degrees of robustness. I ward off the inevitable like the devil, but perhaps it's a Sisyphean task. I am exhausted from the effort. I should make a chart that indicates which regimens make me feel better now and discard

the ones that may only offer a couple of months of a longer life. I have a date with a friend I have wanted to spend personal time with for the longest time. We have a date tomorrow, and I know I may have to indulge in taxis even for short distances because of issues walking and breathing. Once again, I am taking medication for pain, performing leg and back stretches, wearing sensible shoes and dousing anxieties about stairs and immersive installations with uneven floors with common sense solutions. This is one way not to crawl under the covers and face something a little challenging but possibly rewarding. It's not my first choice of art to see, but I know that if I cannot speak to it, I can always listen. I'm wondering what my life would be like if I gave up on small challenges, and the high anxiety they induce, and just didn't do the things which, on a ration of 1 to 10 for anxiety, scale 5 or over. I'd likely become even more challenged, and these things would get even more difficult, and so, doing less; doesn't seem fodder for a happy, active life. Indeed, there was a huge analogue immersive installation that was pioneering work and important to see. And yes, a disclaimer was outside about how it had precarious stairs and deliberately uneven floors. I declined to go inside it, feeling shame and humiliation about that. I felt that anyone else who is challenged would have done it anyway because their sense of adventure would win them over, but they would also require so much attention because the safety hazards would require helpers. I declined. The shame lasted about ten minutes and left. My mother always used to chide me on being hypersensitive and she was absolutely right, but it was internally ingrown, and she just didn't know how to help me learn to blossom out of it. I bet that was because she, herself, was hypersensitive. It almost seems genetic, if not physically, then psychically. Looking back, I see it in women in the family who cry in public at the drop of a hat. My sister, if she was subject to sensitivity, acted out proactively by destroying everything in her path, most of her interactions and plans were vengeful. As a victim of that, I learned coping mechanisms, but those coping mechanisms put insult and injury front and center rather than diminishing them. I

learned to understand where people might be coming from, but I also tended to insult myself before anyone else could—always armed with the worst opinion of myself as a shield. No one could have felt worse about me than I do. Ended up yesterday extremely sad and pained over never having had a life where I could say ordinary things like “who is taking out the dog” or “pick up your socks” or “do we have to have the Archie Leaches over again for dinner?” or... I texted my cousin to say I was miserable at my lack of engagement with others in daily life, and lo and behold, he did a rescue; he simply invited me out to join him at the beach. I have that to look forward to, and that helps enormously. Dating sites likely depress the hell out of most people. In my case, since so many available men either have cats, or just don’t seem to be menschen, it would take kissing a lot of frogs, a great deal of work. Working on taxes is work enough, I can see that I won’t even be able to do my own data entry much longer. It gets harder and harder each year. I look at the data and by the time my eyes go back to the keyboard to type it I have forgotten what it is, and my patience with having to go back and forth from screen to screen or paper to screen repeatedly for the same information is waning. Doing it may be a good way to practice combating decline, but another sign of decline is that I’m losing tolerance for doing things I hate so much to do, I was much stronger about it in the past, I could will myself to do things I dreaded with all my will power. Now it’s something more like consideration of the fact that the work makes my eyes miserable, period. Two or three hours in and my vision gets blurred, in spite of the aggressive use of eyedrops, warm compresses and small breaks. Someone else will have to do it for me, unless I go completely off the grid. Today I woke up full of raw fear that the way I used my life is and was a big mistake, not useful, not wise. It won’t be hard to seek a cohort of like-minded people, if that’s what would bring me comfort. The waste is in the fact that life is messy, and I’ve wasted time struggling to keep it neat; the price to pay for having encrusted defenses. My expectations were excessive, but they have to be to be an artist. One has to be somewhat delusional. I dreamt



I was in a midwestern city, at an art conference with other artists. I was out on an errand, navigating the city by bus and foot because that was the only source of adventure in that city (says the native New Yorker). It was though, the only true way to experience the city. On my way back, I noticed people were rushing around in an extraordinary way and I looked up and saw a tornado forming far off. I thought I'd better rush back to the conference building, a municipal building twenty-three stories high and see where to go for safety with the others. At that point there was no way to get access to a taxi or public transportation. There was only transport chaos and I didn't know the subway system, so I opted for walking fast. I could feel the winds coming up from the tornado, but the air was fresh and clean, and I was half scared and half exhilarated. I made it to the building and the top floor where we were headquartered. The only person there was a woman who was oblivious to the danger, working away at her station. Everyone else had sought shelter but without leaving a note regarding where they went for safety. Through a large window covering the whole front of our building I could see the tornado coming and it took off parts of the buildings across the street. The winds and noise were immense. Some buildings collapsed. I felt our building tremble badly, thought "there is no time to save ourselves" and grabbed a chair to hang on to for comfort alone, and said "this is it. I can't escape." Then I said to myself "but I can try." I grabbed the girl and dragged her to the elevator. The elevator went three floors down and stopped and I remembered then that the rule was never to use an elevator in a crisis and prayed it had stopped at a floor and not in between and I pried open the door and it was at a floor and I got out pulling her with me and we took to the stairs. We actually made it out of the building and found a place for shelter and survived while that part of the city was decimated. I felt grief for all those who might not have survived, but I felt happy that I had not only managed to survive and saved someone else's life. She was still oblivious, or in shock, that I was a terrible bully for dragging her around. I knew she would never speak to me again and would always tell the story that

way. Since it was a dream, I couldn't help but wonder if the tornado the "id." Just like in Forbidden Planet where unconscious forces caused to the destruction and obliteration of entire civilizations, the Krells. I actually did a "rescue" like that in waking life. I was on Third Avenue, years before 9/11, when I heard an explosion and then small parts of buildings were falling around me. At first, I turned to go towards the source of the explosion so as to be helpful, but I almost immediately saw so many ambulances and fire trucks and police cars heading towards it and decided, since I had no idea what it was, to move away fast. A young girl was rushing towards it and I caught and restrained her. She was also concerned about the people who may be hurt, and I said "we don't know what happened, or if it's over and there won't be another episode; we don't know if it's safe to approach. Let the rescue teams do their jobs." I pointed out several ambulances and some fire trucks within a block headed there and reassured her the right help was on the way to anyone who may have been stricken. I commiserated about how hard it is not to follow the impulse to join in the rescue. I felt like her mother would have been grateful that I stopped her since we didn't know what had "exploded" and it was still raining debris. I wish I was privy to the Talmud as a guide to moral and ethical behavior, and where I could confer with fellow Talmudic students, and indulge in delicious bickering about where responsibilities begin and end while the entire world falls down around us. Mid-debate, we are so caught up in interpretations, figuring out what God wants, that we become oblivious to what was really going on around us. Perhaps that was the real purpose of study, to be circumstantially oblivious. Dreaming I was in a movie theater with several childhood friends. I could not see the screen well from where we sat. I realized that there were at least four sections to the theater where the movie was shown facing different directions and I could easily get a better seat in another section. I kept running between the Mezzanine, Balcony, and two orchestra sections to see where I could get a good seat. The lobby of the theater was a mix of an old ornate movie theater and a fancy hotel. My friends were pissed

that I didn't stay with them, but I didn't want to waste the experience since we'd all looked forward to seeing this movie. "I can reunite with them later" I thought, "I don't want to sit behind a post." None of the seats were perfect, one section showed the film at the wrong aspect ratio: 4:3; one didn't have audio. I became enamored of showing different versions of the film simultaneously even though it was frustrating to run around but that was happening mostly because of my own indecision as to which conditions to accept. Perhaps the dream reflects the stress of trying to see family when it's difficult for them to plan a time to assemble and then it affects my whole day not to know if and when something is happening because it's two hours of travel each way—my pleasure to do when there's a plan. They are all in the same area, so for them impulse gathering is just fine. My life is getting smaller and smaller due to my limitations, and although this has some truth in it, on the other hand, there are new challenges around me where I pick up the gauntlet. At times, I am a hibernating caterpillar who won't emerge from its cocoon because it won't give up the cozy protection. Other caterpillars find it stifling, but not this one. A caterpillar is much more vulnerable than a butterfly because it cannot fly. Sometimes, sorrow flies out of nowhere about not doing better with my parents. I remembered my mother travelled on her own all the way to Brooklyn College to see my work in a student exhibition. I don't remember the circumstances, but I didn't even try to meet up with her. How could I have done that? I feel terrible. With all the therapy I was having, why wasn't I a kinder, less-threatened young adult by then? Then I was a student in a new class. I was excited about the class but had to go to the bathroom just when a new teacher dispensed an "all-prior-knowledge" test on the subject; the subject was never specified in the dream, but I knew I wanted it. I excused myself, went to the bathroom and then could not find the classroom again because the school was a maze and it was my first time there. I berated myself on presuming that I would be able to find the classroom again and I got incredibly anxious. I asked for help and was unintentionally misled a couple of times as to its location. By the

time I found it, the class was over. I emailed the teacher to ask if I could submit the test for the next class and she said "sure, don't worry." There was another artist in the class who made great things, and I was happy for her. Two beautiful hemp book covers were lying there, and I wondered if they belonged to anyone or were available to take. I showed them to the other artist, and she grabbed one without hesitation while I went back and forth about the ethics of taking the other one, finally taking it for myself hoping it didn't belong to anyone else. Viewing a phantasmagoric play on the art world last night wasn't helpful. My main negative mantra is "everyone else finds their way, or their way finds them." Agonizing and gnawing takes so much energy. After the last grueling ecstasy of agony, I slept ten hours just to recover from wrestling with the self-installed scales of justice. With a choice between doing two juicy tasks, I never approve of choosing what I want to do over what think I should do. But then, I become angry and anxious when I choose what I should do over what I want to do. This is definitely a first world problem; having choices is a first world problem. I am helpful to X and I am glad. He is changing, and taking risks, and I am experienced with those particular kinds of risks, and it's wonderful if my experience is really helpful to someone else. I have a host of other feelings that are not particularly nice, but I dispatch them to stand in the corner and, then metaphorically, to write on the blackboard one-hundred times "keep those feelings to yourself, they are nobody else's business." Humans are so complex. It's hard to keep up with the processing. Yesterday I drew an elephant, seashells, coral, and started a lizard. Who am I? Where have I gone? Actually, when I think about the projects, I have done involving Darwin, it's not such a departure. My family is filled with charming bombasts and adorable frauds. In order to be heard, I should be a crook hell bent on getting away with everything I can, but I am such a vigilante, so that is never going to happen. I'm much more boring than my colorful family. I ran away from home at sixteen—not for sex, drugs, or rock and roll, but for freedom to read a book in peace without the cacophony of our daily familial dramas!

Eureka! It seems Bluetooth will work in the jungle; and so, it follows that my robots will work in Costa Rica. Now let us hope I can work in the jungle as well. Today would be my dad's one-hundred-and-twelfth birthday. April Fool's Day was the birth date he had an opportunity to choose at Ellis Island, that is, if he knew what it signified. It's a perfect match for his nature. He was so imbued with mischief and fond of creating surprises, some of them closer to shocks than surprises. Their novelty made him a glamorous creature for small children, as nothing was ordinary in his presence. No adult was safe from his mischief in any moment of any hour of any day of any month of any year. It was glorious fun, if you were a kid, but it wasn't easy, if you were an adult. I inherited his wildness, but alas, along my mother's counter-balancing streak of a more demure nature; in that I hesitate to cross the line from mischief to mayhem. He would take it, no holds barred. My mother was a more poetic voice of reason and my dad was a churning manufacturer of ideas to make life more interesting by turning it upside down, taking risks, and revealing its underbelly of irony, and then, on occasion, where he hadn't burned all his bridges, turning it right side up with a new twist. It was like living on an animated mobius strip in endless motion. Turning upside down, inside out, and around in space, you would never know where you were. My dad knew very well the difference between delusion and reality, he just didn't think the distinction was worthy of a way of life. I think the acute sense of irony in my family is genetic, a thread weaving its way downstream, or upstream, because I am not the only relative imbued with it. It was true that he was born in Kapulya, or Kopyl, southwest of Minsk, Russia, in the shtetl, not the town, to a family that farmed and owned a pottery. He told how travel on foot, from one town to another, was too dangerous - hostile Cossacks appeared out of nowhere. The only safe way to travel was to climb a tree and walk from town to town branch to branch, treetop to treetop, on the forest canopy as a safe route. My paternal grandfather, having preceded his wife and five children in coming to America, had taken up residence with another woman in New York, rumored to be the madam of a lower

east side Yiddish whorehouse. My grandfather was pressured to send for his Russian family. The story is that he sent them money for the ship's passage from Antwerp to New York, but not the money to get from Kapulya to Antwerp, and that his wife and five children walked for months from the shtetl to the ship. They left Kapulya hidden in a hay wagon, with Cossacks attacking the hay with bayonets and they thanked the Lord in Heaven that no one was hurt. My dad, even through his final decline, conducted his life as a similar adventure. Above all irony should rule, whether intentional or not, at whatever cost to himself, or cost in dignity to anyone around him. My dad also had Menières Disease, a disease of the inner ear which deprives its victims of any sense of balance, causing intense vertigo. He would fall in the street and passers-by would think he was drunk, and finally when he got to our door, he wouldn't be able to use his key, but would bang on the door, sometimes by mistake, the neighbors', and my mother would look through the keyhole, and immediately open the door and he would spin inside like a top and then fall in the vestibule like a sack of potatoes. A couple of times he'd been robbed and stabbed in his retail store at Columbus Circle, at that time a very dangerous neighborhood; and then, when he fell in the door, we saw blood all over his shirt from the stab wound. He had reported the robbery to the police in his coat, the whole time saying his wound was "nothing" and then taken the subway home. His falling in the doorway was always a shock whatever the reason. I feel anguished talking about it, he must have had such high hopes for that new store, and eventually had to close it because of the state of Columbus Circle in the 1960's. Having arrived in New York in 1921 at the age of fourteen, speaking Russian, Yiddish and Hebrew, he was delegated to a class of fourth graders because he didn't speak any English. That would have been an unbearable humiliation for my dad, placed in a class with nine-year-old children when he himself was fourteen. He quit school and started a life as an entrepreneur by selling Hershey bars under the elevated subway at Chatham Square. From my windows where I live now in Chinatown, I can see that very spot, minus the elevated subway of course, it's almost consecrated ground

to me. All three boys in the family hung out near their apartment on the Lower East Side, mostly at the Henry Street Settlement, sometimes sleeping under the pool table, rather than going home. I'm not sure which home, because my grandfather set his wife and children up in an apartment on the lower east side and remained with his American "wife" until his death. He left his family to fend for themselves, economically, and emotionally. I can't imagine what my grandmother, who I am named after, must have endured. Uprooted from the Shtetl and brought to the Lower East Side only to be abandoned with six children by her husband from the Shtetl. A new country, a new language, a new culture, I wish I knew what she thought and how she coped. Sadly, she didn't cope for very long, I don't know when she died, but her heart gave out at some point, and the children were on their own. I don't know if they were still children or young adults by then. I remember my paternal grandfather as man who was used to being treated as the center of the universe, who sat at table and ate first. I only knew him until I was nine, maybe my view would have broadened if he had lived until I became a grownup. I sometimes feel in need of rescue from my own history. it's a wonder not to turn to self-medication. Decades ago, I went to a class on how to grow sprouts. One of the things the instructor said was "wait until your stomach is empty before you eat again". As a tubby veteran of so many weight loss programs, I raised my hand and asked, "how do you know when your stomach is empty?" Looks of horror pervaded the room. Everyone else seemed to know what that was innately, and no one could really explain it or perhaps explaining it meant admitting having experienced the same bottomless pit syndrome I suffered from. It seemed like they all knew how to experience hunger and I hadn't a clue. I was too frightened about where the next meal was coming from to be so cool. And then, I was reared in a city of too many choices so that getting a hamburger is an existential crisis: hamburger, cheeseburger, Philly burger, bacon burger, turkey burger, chili burger, steak burger, barbecue burger, California burger, rare, medium-rare, medium, well-done, plain or deluxe with coleslaw and French fries or sweet potato fries. Sprout

people evidently can be elitists. They could have been nicer. The sneers made me wanted to shout, "eat some meat and sugar!" Yes, this particular group's tolerance for newbies to the sprout world went the way of their tolerance for people who eat red meat and bear claws, which would be me. At the present time, I am trying to trust my instincts on how to spend my days. It is not surprising that at this stage of life, I enjoy them when I do things as I please. It's a fairly new phenomenon entirely made possible by retirement from the work force. This morning I woke up and immediately launched into an opaque bookkeeping software. It's not very intuitive and I have no native intuition where any aspect of money handling is concerned. I was easily frustrated. I'm having buyer's remorse about that software; also, because it seems to record and store all my expenditures on their server. I managed to get product help from someone in Tel Aviv whose family of (sounded-like-ten) was having a screaming altercation in the background—I could hardly hear what he was saying. A former residency wrote me saying that they liked my project and asked for documentation. A positive interest goes a long way with me. Yesterday, I broke two exercise bands at physical therapy, likely because they were worn-out from use, but everyone applauded, and I took the time to pose for cliché snaps with clenched biceps. I work so well under supervision; I become an instrument to the master, I am a good robot, eager for programming. My own sense of what is orderly is so eclectic, my natural state is to be industrious but at times there is a disconnect. If there is one thing that really feels great, it is setting my own schedule of tasks. Part of a work process is true trial and error. I haven't had time for too much of that before retirement. I only had the time to do what was required as soon as possible. Ideally, I want to be sane and grownup but with the bliss of kindergarten finger-painting. I am drawing self-portraits as objects from a Cabinet of Curiosities. I've wanted to try this for ages and never thought it was possible. Kindergarten was the most blissful time of my life, with all the encouragement, all the paint and paper supplies, a designated seat and desk by a window where I could see clouds and sky. I need to



defend the desire to go there as not being regression. Folded into the bliss with the perspective, knowledge and expertise of the experienced adult artist I am now, will still require criticality and methodical, hard work. Last night I made an inedible dinner: a paper mâché-like omelet I ate it. It was a bit punitive, as I don't like to eat paper! Why don't I realize that if I can't save a meal with spices or condiments, I am entitled to dispatch it to the trash and start again with something else simple and fresh. I ended up drawing at midnight for a while, and now this morning I overslept. I have options. If a day has a bad start, there is no tradition that says it has to continue that way. Bookkeeping is on the agenda, however, and it's daunting. Taxes are hard to do when they must be done defensively, as the IRS takes particular interests in artists who do not routinely show a profit. They cite the "Hobby Laws" from the 1930s. Defensive bookkeeping constitutes bookkeeping that evidences an artist's meticulous records, and fervent attempts to make a profit. I don't want to think about my death and incapacitation documents, but I will have to. There is an article in today's New York Times on the tradition and benefits of *dorveille*-segmented sleep. Perhaps my military vigilance about how sleep must be conducted can somewhat relax and I can lean a bit on my natural preferences as to when, and how long, I really want to sleep. I can't tell if my rhythmic inclinations are natural or unnatural, but does it matter? I am also addicted to playing Solitaire on my phone and use it to segue into a meditative state which leads to sleep, it's repetitive, like a mantra, nothing real is ever gained or lost, so it lulls. I wish I had natural self-satisfaction; the kind that feels warm all over working on new work. Some artists do, but for me the norm is to be dis-satisfied with every new work at first. It helps to wait a bit and then show them to myself; having gained some distance. Then the pendulum swings and, if I am lucky, I think "I can't believe I made that!" At Brooklyn College, Alfred Russell once told me that if I wanted to do "anti-art," I could. This was because I had spent that entire semester drawing the corner of an empty room where the floor and two walls congressed; the ceiling

was out of the picture. Three lines meeting and minimal shading, period. I think he was actually appalled, albeit he didn't say so. When my work is about to change, I always do a highly personal series to lead to the next thing. I tend to forget that and think I've gone mad. It is always a time fraught with doubt and fear, but excitement too, and I am used to it. In an age where deviation from abstraction was disapproved, it seemed important to touch base with my roots from the Brooklyn Museum Art School. My favorite College professor came by my studio during that time; he was a sublime abstract painter. I was showing him a series of 5' x 5' Adam and Eve paintings, which I had completed after breaking up with a long-term boyfriend. "Oh," he said with twinkling irony, "Commissions?" It's not easy to explain how hilarious, ironic, and affectionate that comment was. It was a handicap to grow up in a family where every action came with an equally apportioned anticipation of disaster. Worst possible disasters scenarios were planned for meticulously, inordinate amounts of time devoted to how to avoid it, or cope with the inevitable, which rendered the family unprepared for any possibility less than the worst possible outcome. Still crazy after all these years: I have some internal bad stuff going on. My friend's event was in an old house which looked musty and I was frightened that I would react to mold or mildew, as I usually do. That can translate into three to four weeks of illness. So, I declined the invitation, feeling very sad. There is a lot of shame around the inability to control things that are not in my control, like allergies, and disappointing friends. Aiming for perfection at any price, from a bird's eye view, is rather comical. Sometimes, I am frightened out of my wits, the fear is like a spell. So today is fairly devoted to physical care, and comfort, especially after a bout of new anti-allergy shots that would ordinarily cost a thousand dollars a pop, but I got a fellowship because of my record-breaking degree of susceptibility to cats. It's a strange getting center stage because you have the worst possible allergy. Hidden like Where's Waldo in episodes of circumstantial depression, there is sometimes a camouflaged door about to open if one can hold out to

greet it. There are no guarantees of that. Working well helps; working at all helps. It is none of my business if I have lost my mind in more ways than one. I am creating a "gallery of monsters" in drawings, trying not to drive with my foot on the brake. As eager as I am to do them, I become apprehensive when the direction I am going towards is murky. What matters is stepping on the gas like the pedal is a divine instrument. It's not fun to have a petulant roommate. Her lack of personal hygiene is partially responsible for my addiction to solitaire on my phone. Solitaire is a vapid activity; but it drains me of rage, likely because I win so much and so quickly, as meaningless as that is. Solitaire is also a good segue from one type of activity to another. It is hard to fathom why historical emotional pain rears its head and is so close in degree to the original infliction of decades ago. The other day it was so powerful, it made me physically stiffened, like a petrified tree. I asked myself: "why are we gifted with original wounds that just never quite heal?" Depression and pain take a tornado to reset on a positive path. Tornadoes are dangerous. So, what if dragons know my name. And what if an avalanche begins with a snowball? If a narcissist commits a murder, can they feel remorse? Sometimes I think that the stupider I think something I've created is, the better it likely is. When I was small, I woke up all hopeful every day as if that day would surely be the first day that I wouldn't be tortured. It was a daily disappointment. If one's only recourse for survival is to become as invisible as possible in the presence of a monster, when that monster is vanquished by the passage of time, how come the invisibility perpetuates? A friend, who happens to be a therapist, once addressed my fears around exhibiting my work by recommending I look at my childhood for clues of not being seen. Born to a family with a sibling sadist-in-residence, whom I also loved, how could I develop normal antibodies? Being ingenious at invisibility was logical when someone you live with turned on you every second of her conscious day, and then some. No making up for what would be normal sibling aggression, no tender moments, just pure unadulterated cruelty and a total lack of interference from the parents. And this is why

any bump in the road can become disproportionately painful for me. I am not as invisible as I would like to be. Late on a freezing and blizzarding night, in a taxi, I stopped to give a lift to a neighbor I saw waiting for the M103 bus. I wasn't thinking then about how no good deed goes unpunished; but maybe I should have been. She began ringing my doorbell asking for money; at first five, then ten, then twenty, then forty dollars, with a final request for two-thousand dollars. It was clear that she was in more than one kind of difficulty. I wrote to a neighbor expressing concern for this woman. The neighbor knew her for many years and concurs that her behavior is aberrant. She knows the family and called the woman's daughter in Chicago. Sadly, the daughter was alienated and determined to have nothing to do with her. Everyone who suffers mental illness is likely to have a history. L's husband, many years ago, had jumped out of one of our prize-winning mullion-less windows. L has been randomly knocking on doors and borrowing money from all the neighbors. This led to a consultation with both the building management and her Church to see how to help her, which then led to her being forgiven most of her maintenance fee by some NYC/NYS program for destitute elders. Somehow between that program and her Church she is no longer asking for money, and I see her hanging out now in the Lobby at all hours, drooping and smelling very badly. The doormen treat her so respectfully, it's quite commendable, putting aside that guests coming into a Lobby that reeks of uncleanness, may be repelled by a bag lady camping out there who is not Tina Fey in disguise. Her children have abandoned her. An Ashkenazi person could handle excessive nagging, many others from other countries cannot. I am enjoying making the drawings now; tracing the basic outline and then going at it in any way it takes me. Do I have to refer to the camera obscura here for any sort of credibility for tracing? I wish I had been Vermeer in a former life. The drawings are becoming one work now; my own form of a cabinet of curiosities; self-portraits as creatures that render so appealingly at times. I hate thinking there are benefits to emotionally painful experiences. It's upsetting to feel infected with "uglies." But kept a secret, I

let it surge forward privately in horrid invectives; that reduces its power to a right size after a while. The conflict is in the fact that I still treat crazy people as if they were sane, because I can understand the universe, they live in. With L, I tell myself her behavior is just idiosyncratic. Sad to say, that's a euphemism, maybe even a lie. It's hard to pray for the well-being of someone who considers you prey. But if I can do that, I feel a great distance and relief. It gives me permission not to have to try and decipher each message as if it were coming from a reasonable source, because I consider the reasonableness of their constructed world, and I can stop feeling inadequate at my inability to decode it. I can say they are entitled to their privacy. There is a reason there is distance between planets. It is the only way they can survive. It's not necessary, in most cases, to estrange, and never merited to be hurtful or hostile. I only have to do absolutely nothing. I have another friend who calls me saying it's an emergency when he is out of scotch tape. I know it really is an emergency to them. People with narcissistic injuries don't distinguish helpful actions from slavery, but how they see it is really none of my business. I have tried to be helpful; it only ventures more forward to a bottomless pit. To be helpful, to share experiences, with a narcissistic means mostly being subject to their contempt. That's child's play. Narcissistic people will scoop up all there is in the world. I try to sustain a kind of tender aloofness. I am envious of a friend's success, although it's gratifying that the work looks so great. It actually dispels the misery to participate in the moment and attend the opening. I am doing grunt work preparatory to making more drawings. I feel impatient. I want to get to the good part, which is actually drawing, but that is always preceded by necessary, relatively boring steps. It is gratifying to have the supplies. My dad said I'd piss my money away—I think what he meant was that I "re-invest" it in art supplies. I have been working and paying for my art supplies since I was fifteen. And I still feel guilty about it because people on earth are starving. Last night I had a heart-wrenching dreams. I wondered what I ate before bed as a child

because every night I woke up and saw monsters in my room and, for the first two years, cried out for my plagued mother to turn on the lights and chase them away. But then, fully awake and still hallucinating, eventually neither that light nor my mother's rescue attempts erased the spectres. Those monsters were there to stay, at least until I woke again after dawn. I became sure it was best to keep my cool and not bother my mother, who began to tell relatives I was the reason they weren't going to have a third child because they never slept. I have a high irritability level today—I lag behind my expectations. Serenity has been the one luxury I never felt I could afford while forcing myself every day to perform my day job. Would that have been the case had I had a different personality, one of entitlement, and made the job overcome its aversion to me? The daughter of someone I loved dearly is someone I cared for when she was seventeen and came to New York. She is in her early fifties now, the mother of two grown children, and recently remarried very happily, a cause for a celebration in which I was not included. I was friends with, and loved her dad, and haven't processed his loss yet. I miss him personally and I miss his presence in the world. In spite of losses, I don't understand why I'm not jubilant every day. I should be reveling in being alive and free. The event I am going to tonight is for a friend whose life has changed enormously for the better. The evening should resonate with smiles. Perhaps it's better to give up on any preconceived notions about what's available in life and just live it without such a struggle. Maybe something I cannot conceive of now may happen and it could be wonderful and outside the realm of what I dictate in my imagination. Am I not a spoiled and privileged person? For the first time, out of social fear, I stopped in a bar for a drink solo; a cultural phenomenon. I ordered a vodka "neat" having no idea what it was, and when it arrived, I put my head in my hands and said to the bartender "OMG, neat means no ice?" He, wise and experienced at the bar, understood that I had tried to be sophisticated about entering a bar and ordering a drink and had failed miserably. Luckily, he was charmed, supplied me with ice and soda (and a straw) and told

me the story of his life, which I loved because it was a happy story and I know bartenders are supposed to be the repository of their customers' stories, so I felt honored. After my drink had boosted my courage, I went on to the opening and behaved benignly to another artist who had once asked me for a project proposal to submit to a residency on my behalf, but then submitted my proposal as his and was successful. One drink can do miracles. I guess my self-confidence muscles are slack and withered, life has happened with some glad and some sad results, and I suppose most of my misery, aside from grievous losses, was enduring jobs I hated but tolerated because there were no alternatives for me economically in my particular time. My nature required a forceful will to appear as if I were someone else, otherwise I couldn't have held the jobs available to me. I'm glad it seems different now for new generations, at least I hope that it is, the job market looks to me like a cornucopia of great opportunities for young people. I smell my roommate's stench from the living room, something that may be worth documenting in a scientific journal. I asked her when she is leaving in the hope that it would be before May 31 so I can prepare the room for a new tenant. She may be staying in New York and asked to stay here. In a way, that's an easy option because it would involve no change, but I find it too difficult to live with the lack of cleanliness and sanitation. I told her I was so sorry, but I already committed to a new tenant which was true. She had a backup place. I asked her to tell me in a week what date works for her departure. I am grateful to have a beautiful, elegant gray polish on my nails. It makes me feel like a female Mad Woman. L has created a lovely dynasty with her husband, children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren. These are all the things she wanted; I hope. Her abominable behavior goes on and on. She has worked out her life. As for her husband, she won't visit him in the hospital or rehab after a life-threatening surgery, because she is angry, he required attention simultaneously when she did. Why is there narcissistic abuse in the world? For what purpose? To circumvent boredom? Still, her husband adores her. How fortunate it is that they found each other. Yesterday

I had an acute meltdown in the jealousy department. These "attacks" must be messages, if only I could decipher their purpose. My mistake, caught off guard, I answered a phone call from M. There I was, Red Riding Hood, giving credence to the wolf. Everyone knows the havoc a hungry wolf can cause. When lost in the woods, and encountered by a furry beast, be polite, but always wear protective gear. It isn't just Red Riding Hood, but also Hansel and Gretel, Snow White and all the others. M's litany is a bedrock catalogue of new dramas for him to exploit. He praised adult coloring books, pointing out their therapeutic benefits. Suddenly I felt acute nausea, enough so that I had to go out and sit on a stoop. I couldn't think of anyone I could call. Soon, I gained perspective to laugh about it by working. Maybe I need my drawings more than they need me. I seem very compelled to let them take me where they are going, maybe that's therapeutic; even if in the end I am just exorcising personal demons. Last night I had a dream about living in two universes. And having to travel between them through an excruciatingly narrow cave in a mountain (ahem-birth canal that is a two-way street, anyone?) in order to reach a green and verdant place. I am living in art. I am also living with good friends. This morning I hope for the other shoe to not drop, that my own weaker nature would not rise up and swallow me, so I am once again flailing inside the belly of the whale. I to be helpful to many, in the hope it won't be the same nightmare as being helpful to G, which is a Sisyphean endeavor. There are no boundaries there. He cannot prioritize, it's an equal emergency if he falls and cannot get up or if he runs out of olive oil. And then he always resents my help in any case; becomes irritable and nuts, partially because he is understandably anxious and panicked, partially because, it is a bottomless pit. To help G with something, in his mind, is to become entirely his instrument. It's just the way it is. Whatever he thinks is his own business, not mine. My business is to be appropriately helpful and that is work. It is so complex with narcissists. It's another world with a bizarre topography and navigating it can be daunting. I thought that I was defective because I didn't trust them



and now, I realize, without rancor, that some people are not trustworthy in exactly the way I intuited. By trustworthy I mean a human attribute where one person can see where they end, and another person begins. I mean that they can be empathetic and that they are willing to recognize boundaries that are fair, just, and respectful, and work within those where they want to behave ethically. By ethics I mean the rules in terms of something akin to the ten commandments (or 15 according to Mel Brooks). Then again, no one wants to live in a society without a sense of humor, or without the ability to flex, grow and change for the better. Only a religious zealot, or a misogynist, would want to live in Abbot's Flatland, with each two-dimensional entity assigned to its role and not allowed a smidgeon of trespass to others, which kind of narrows down things to a fixed deck of possibilities for each class of creature. Actually, I'm getting alarmed, because that's beginning to sound very familiar. It's a new day and I am greeting it cranky and tired and trying to ward off depression. I have a friend who is lazy, lazier than I am in any sense I can think of. One tiny manifestation is that she relies on me to search for restaurants every time we meet for dinner. It's presented under the guise of wanting me to be happy with the food, but I'm notoriously happy with any fresh food, so I know it's her not wanting to do the work of looking. Perhaps our dinner catchups are over. I directly asked her to work out the logistics this time and said that I was looking forward to it. She couldn't or wouldn't do it. I cancelled. It's too much work. There are enough social things on the agenda today, both day and night, so it's important not to allow anxiety to kill the joy. Still wavering between light and dark; but on a slightly elevated plateau. Probably due to the Spring weather—I can turn from cup half empty and to cup half full. I hate when anyone sees my work-in-progress. It's one of my idiosyncrasies. As nice as it is that my friends liked my drawings, one friend liked a particular drawing and now I think all the other ones are shit and I made two very bad drawings yesterday because I showed work prematurely and I am tripping all over myself. The level of vulnerability is incredible.

With a roommate, there isn't enough room here to block off the studio so people who use the bathroom or want to see the view will inevitably see the work on the work wall. And I need to keep it up on the wall for me to process the project and continue. It's not helpful for me to hide it, and it's not helpful for me to make it visible. And it's not helpful for me to imagine hordes of people coming through here, when I so rarely have visitors. Leave it to me to invent a hypothetical situation that makes me anxious, one that is so unlikely to occur. Like everything else, whatever path I take, it's a matter of working my way through it to the other side. I am grateful it doesn't stop me from working at all. Hopefully, I won't destroy the "bad" ones asap, because sometimes, over time, I really am wrong about them. Maybe because I am a bit allergy-congested, or because I've been more active, or because two vodkas last night were really too much, but I was extremely tired today. Someone is drilling on the outside of the building and it sounds exactly like a wolf in terrible pain howling. In spite of that I finished off a grant application, a very speculative one, but nevertheless, it got done. That felt good. I was grateful that depression didn't enter into it. My knee pain diminished with exercise. How many times have I lectured myself that it's much better to work through the pain than stay immobile? Ad infinitum. Today I am having what will be a delightful lunch with my Finnish friends, and then working to get the house clean. I am being circumspect about losing my temper with my roommate. I speak in measured tones, because she is handicapped and because I know I don't want a roommate at all, and I have to remove that feeling from the equation. Although it's hard to imagine being a landlord and behaving prudently in regard to filth and lack of sanitation. Zooming back from a bird's eye view, my life is so good from not having a toxic job that I should not take issue with anything else. Yesterday morning I took some time to focus on my breathing. It was thrilling to ride on my breath. Before this, I could never even catch my breath. Now sometimes it's running with me like David and I ran with the deer in the Grand Canyon wilderness, yes, not "after" the deer, but "with" the deer. Sublime moment. I

lament being very slowed down and remedial now, but it may be partly just the way normal people live—according to what they can tolerate and I may be learning what I can really tolerate—it's an incredible luxury to be in a position to learn that. I remind myself that if someone doesn't comment on something, it doesn't necessarily mean that they disapprove. Riding on the breath is likely a good start towards sanity. Close to the effects of swimming laps. Sliding into the pool I was always fearful and anxious about everything and I would swim slowly and rhythmically till my breathing calmed down from my regular short and heavy breaths and fell into a calmer rhythm. This took a minimum of thirty minutes. It was the primary mission in swimming and I always used to joke that swimming must be akin to attending services in a faith one really believed in. I did it year-round for fifteen years, three times a week for forty-five minutes, twenty-five years ago. Now my rotator cuffs are torn, and bladder cancer may be linked to chlorine in swimming pools, although the oncologist says it's fine to swim in chlorine pools, so that just leaves the two rotator cuffs. If I don't stop the worrying, the worrying always stops me. Some days, I feel whiny and pathetic. I should move on. I think disregarding my own feelings when they bog me down is necessary. Sometimes I am very frightened of being oblivious and hurting someone's feelings. I worry about my own narcissistic tendencies because I see G and others behaving so badly and never really relating to others because of the way they are built. Although their worlds are very narrow because they refuse to let go of their central positions, they achieve more within that width because they have no scruples, only scenarios. I am so afraid I may be like that, at times. It must take a lot of work to sustain the Ptolemaic ideal and keep the universe in orbit around one's self. I get very anxious about socializing; I'm sure many people do. I cling to anxiety and see myself as an aging sailor in a raft which is steadily deflating, tossed in a turbulent liquid expanse overpopulated with carnivorous sharks—is that really where I live? It's frightening to be happy in the moment without anticipating an ill wind. I've always been braced for the worst; I am exhausted from all

the frantic navigation and dire anticipation. It doesn't help to experience acute jealousy of younger artists whose personal partners do the grunt work on a voluntary basis on their installations. The only path is to just let the jealousy run through my psyche and exit through the gift shop, exhibiting only generosity and encouragement. I'm taking lots of turns in my work, which I think is fine, since the materials aren't particularly costly. I just need to keep going. It's like Talmudic study, there may not be a "right" answer, only the process of rumination and consideration deployed in making things. Focus is so intense; I get very tired after just a couple of hours. I try to extend it a bit each time. It is not helpful at the moment that allergies are a handicap. I am congested and concerned about a cough, and I get short of breath prematurely. I know from experience; it is all allergy. My breathing device is very helpful. It is a rattle to blow into that loosens mucus before it petrifies into mucus plugs and I love that it's called an Acapella device. I should probably live somewhere else that's less allergy prone, but I like my life right here and retired, I can freely take advantage of New York on weekday nights. That is, when I'm not embedded in my own nano-goo, or nano-poo. It's such a pleasure when one artist speaks to another about another artist's work and then puts those two artists together. It's a gift when one has hope of a more open life, with nice peers who reach out to each other. I feel ashamed to say that I had a liquid dinner last night. At the last minute I got very cold feet about going out but thought I was saved by arranging to meet a friend. Then, I misinterpreted her text and thought she wasn't coming and actually burst into tears—now that is admittedly very weird, even for me. I had a vodka and took a car to get there. The event provided an additional abundance of alcohol. So that was dinner except for fruit and cheese when I returned home at ten p.m. It is what it is. As usual, I had a really good time once I got there, as did my friend. One cannot assume everyone wants an open life where love conquers all. In instances when my knee-jerk reaction is agonizing jealousy, I take myself aside as I would a toddler and become gentle; without chiding

or threatening punitive action, like my bewildered mother who instructed me to blame myself for my own unhappiness, nothing in the world was unfair or unjust, I was just intrinsically bad, even at two. Of course, I behave benevolently to any source of jealousy. Spreading the love instead of the venom feels better. As for going out in general, here in New York a multiplicity of great events is happening every day and night. There is pressure. It should be part of the art job to go to most events around the arts. I usually play it by ear. It takes time for me to recover from social events, both good and bad. Studio practices are so intense, recovery from socializing can take its toll. What I'm trying to say is, the greatest gift I could give myself is clear and unfettered studio time. So much dream time is required around studio work, it's not straightforward, and if I have my superego perched at a bird's eye view, it makes things so much more difficult, because the state of dreamtime resembles a lot of negative things, like sloth, uncertainty, amateurism. It takes faith to put stock in it unless it's in the guise of solitary swimming or meditation. I would be better off doing solitary swimming rather than socializing. Or meditating if I could stop the kaleidoscope in my head from simultaneously spinning and orbiting. I am months into retirement from teaching, why is that seasonal dread of pre-semester times still hanging over my head? I can't tell you how many times a day I wish my nature was different than it is. That I had more antibodies, more toned emotional fiber, more physical stamina. What is it like to feel adequate? Can acting "as if" bring it on? The drawings are choked by the same resistance to being natural that the rest of me has by thrashing around trying to do everything myself. Right now, I hate them, which likely means they are right on the mark—and entirely mine. Who bypasses this luxury of having tantrums about their work now and then? Post-tantrum, I feel incredibly sleepy and that's nothing new. It's exhausting to self-flagellate. Sometimes I spend all day fighting the urge to sleep. I don't think anything is particularly wrong with me physically. It's part of the psychic battle. I have always needed time off the planet to get back to myself and sleep is one way to do

that. Meditation would be a short cut but it's so difficult to do. If I am never going to "heal," then I have to make friends with my original injury. I have no idea how to get over the hump. I thought I was withholding extra kindness from my roommate. She hasn't even noticed. I never instructed her in how to use household machines because she is so careless with her own things and cannot seem to focus. I taught her how to use the stovetop and she still can't turn on the burners without releasing a burst of gas. It's kind of sad, but understandable if she has never had to do these things herself. I've found some remedies for my lack of engagement. I would rather make extra coffee every day, so she has coffee in the pot than show her how to do it. This must be the way my mother felt when at any point as a small child I ached to help her in the kitchen. In the here and now, with a roommate I expected a nice, pleasant business arrangement, probably that's expecting too much from a kid, but they seem to be the only ones with parents who can afford to pay this rent while their duckling attends school. I am spending the day going from one small task to another, that makes the day enjoyable. I am only doing small ordinary tasks, like laundry, and not artmaking. Birds are so moving; the small ones break your heart. But back to pathology, what about the weeds that choke the life out of plants struggling to reach for access to light and air? And then all the poor species rendered, and being rendered, extinct. Why aren't evil people going extinct? Is a higher power like a crazed family member? I need ten hours of sleep. There are pros and cons to making all decisions for one's self. Yesterday, a friend, coming close to her fiftieth wedding anniversary talked about having a hard time when her husband's preferences conflicted with her own welfare. He is a bit of a verbal bully. I envy her tolerance. Living in the moment seems impossible. I am going to suspend myself in the day like a jellyfish in jelly and see what happens. I love alone time. I may even be meditating in some way at times, only I don't think it's the correct way. One of my strangest fears is my fear of, and discomfort in, Central Park, because it reveals so much of the underbelly of the planet in the form of

exposed schist. Schist in the act of surging up out of the ground is a frightening sign of the earth's volatility. I ran into a man who grabbed me and held me so close up to his face I couldn't see who he was. Craning backwards, I could see he was L, an ex-boyfriend, and he was overjoyed to see me and couldn't let me go. We started talking, each in each other's face. He said he would give me a lift to where I was going. He had a limo. "Ah," I thought "this is how I should be treated." I was so happy, and he was hugging and hugging me. I was afraid to ask if he was married because if he was, I might have to get out of the limo. We were going over a bridge from Brooklyn to Manhattan. He began to tell me about himself, he was quite unhappy. I asked him if he liked to walk. I described my favorite walk; in Brooklyn—one walks down Ocean Parkway towards the beaches, and once near the beach walk west to find an almost hidden entry, an arch of blossoms masking an opening into the loveliest massive garden where the world went from ordinary color to extraordinary color, and a stream ran through it. Yesterday, I wondered if I should dye my hair and have plastic surgery just to get better treatment from middle-aged salesmen at Home Depot. Young salesmen still remember their mothers and grandmothers, older salesmen can be more empathic, but in the middle range there is almost a sadistic desire, no matter how organized and bright the old woman is, and I was very organized with a precise list with SKU numbers; yet they were relentlessly dismissive and rude. On the other hand, I could dress and smell like a stereotypical crone, and maybe get directly to their underlying fear of death and decay, rather than have them whip me with their fears. I believe in paths. Maybe it's a multiverse and I am choosing the right paths in another universe. Meanwhile, I had the gift of a happy and productive evening at home. I put off hiring someone to clean the insides of the worst kitchen cabinets because I kept saying it wasn't a priority and my priorities should be art-related not homebody-ing, but dirt repels me and the mildew and moisture under the sink have made a mess of mold. I relented, and someone is cleaning up as I write; it is one of those hard things I don't do well. I am so happy it will be clean. I ordered

what seemed like an interesting fragrance-free "non-soap," an expensive product made from essential oils. This turned out to be one of those disappointments that have to be considered laughable. It was pretty, it lathered gorgeously, was extremely mild, but it sustained a wholly repulsive odor; like the smell of a mouse that's died in a wall after about three weeks, at an acute stage. A friend was more accurate in identifying it more lucidly, to her it definitely reeked of rancid oil, which makes perfect sense since soap was made of oils. I've emailed a gracious argument for refund. Of course, they are incredulous. They are telling me I am wrong. It couldn't be. I've sent them the soap to smell for themselves. Madness always wins, especially when there are too many voices not heard for too long, who are sick of politics and instead opt for a non-political, but strategic madman, and are duped by veneer and outrageousness. "Oh, there's a daring Zorro who could deliver us" and then it's like Castro, Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin, all together, except without the brain, and it takes so long for the smoke to clear for some people to see the folly and by then so much damage has been done, maybe even genocide. I grew up with a personal despot my parents enabled; I know how it works on a small familiar scale. And then there was my academic job, where I was a double agent navigating Caligula's Cabinet. No wonder I isolate myself. Today I was thinking about Camouflage Town, my story forming the basis of my 2001 piece for Data Dynamics, at the Whitney Museum of American Art, as follows. Camouflage Town was a decoy town constructed for the practice of military maneuvers, war, and other scenarios of high drama. During periods when the population feels invincible, Camouflage Town serves as the official battlefield to which it lures its enemies with rumors of new treasures and tools, keeping Original Town intact. What's odd about this, was that images in the piece depicted parts of downtown New York as the town, just two months shy of the grievous 9/11. Kiru, the robot which roamed the Whitney for two months, was the Camouflage Town Librarian of Juxtapositions in all their degrees, the Master of Opposites. He and he alone was responsible for the tracking and recording of extremes.



He was chosen because of his ability to withstand the stress of contradictions. Walking up and down the lanes with bark and pen, Kiru solicited contributions from everyone he met. hot/cold, benign/lethal, inside/outside. The people's reverence for words as sacred symbols affected every aspect of their culture. Any issue that presented itself in a state of perfect mirroring was subsequently rendered as an epic by their literators. Many, many stories seeded their epics. There was the story of Kiru's ancestor rueDay, who approached the river where it turned and formed a small shallow pool. There he could see fish swarming, their eyes hopelessly struggling to focus stereoscopically on either side of their heads. rueDay decided a fish in the river might make an interesting dinner. With this in mind he climbed a tree and cut a branch from which he carefully pared outgrowing twigs. He attached a reed to one end to which he added a tidbit. He hoisted up the branch and threw the line into the river. All these steps taken one by one in their appropriate order enabled him to catch a fish. rueDay's joy in seeing the fish go for the bait turned to alarm when it suddenly occurred to him that the fish, with an oddly identical urge to his own to appease a growling stomach, had taken similar appropriate and logical steps to find its fate at the end of the hook. To rueDay it was portentous that the fish had grabbed the hook, anticipating dinner, while the hook was floating on the surface of the water. It was there, where air and water meet, at the crossroads of the elements, that there was a meeting of minds. rueDay, fearful of his own demise as some other creature's dinner, released the fish, and that is why, to this day, the main staple of the tribe's diet remains papaya. The population being troubled by the fact that words could be false, conducted all their judicial procedures entirely in mime. This included the reenactment of crimes for those who were judging, as well as the offering of plaintiffs to implicate other people as a barter for reducing punishment. Use of the spoken word for conducting justice was unthinkable. There were many written laws about the word as spoken: one such law, roughly translated, said that "trouble begins when a quality is applied to the name of a color". The occurrence of an

attributed characteristic to a color was discussed at length in council, i.e.: "Was the characteristic a true qualifier of the color, or a separate quality deserving of its own name as a color?" In rulings on these distinctions, they were fierce. Behind the hills along the shore was the most beautiful field of flowers. The flowers were strange because each of them was unique and one-of-a-kind. There were a thousand-and-one characteristics of shape, color and textures and millions of ways in which they could combine their pollens. For the petals: some would be lily-like, or iris-like, or rose-like in color, form and texture. Some might have two or more of one kind of petals, some were bald-all pistil. These gardens were cultivated by voice. Ancestors noticed that the blossom, originally of one kind, had begun to mutate, turning into something brown and ugly, bearing a poisonous fruit. Several members of the tribe had died from this fruit. The scent of these strange plants growing over the hills made many of the tribe sick with a ghastly form of lethargy. Their ancestors had gathered at the edges of this vegetation and prayed in chants and they found that if at the time of pollination, the tribe formed four groups - each one at another end of the field covering all directions, and chanted in rounds, they would affect a new and beneficial kind of cross pollination. The vibrations of their voices freed the blossoms and sent them aloft, loaded with the pollen of their parent plants. In time, the songs differentiated. There was a song for sending the pollen-laden blossoms south, another for east, for west, for north. Human ears would hear the sublime chorus of voices in counterpoint, and would see were thousands of multicolored blossoms lift off their parent plants, hover for a moment, and then take leave, floating over the field towards new and refreshing receptors, to perpetuate themselves in an ever and ever more glorious and differentiated state. On the rare occasion when a mutant or sick plant occurred, the others surrounding it would lean in towards it forming a shield, both for the plant and for an unsuspecting walker thru the fields, so either would not be affected. The joy in their voices reflected their faith in this process; the tribe was using art to enhance nature. When

writing specifically about them, I have had to change their names. They believe that if they are named, they are seen and discovered as existing and once discovered, they lose their tangible reality and only exist in the eyes of their discoverer. A glimpse of themselves in the mirror renders them into a deep state of unmitigated grief. They never acknowledge the existence of reflections in the water, even when they fish. They say the reflection "is the fish's way of warding off capture, to acknowledge it would be to succumb to our capture by the fish." Naming them in any other existence but their own (outside the company of themselves for the purpose of relating this story for instance) is a heinous and threatening concept. Even the substitution of names I have used in my reports is frightening to them. Subterfuge is bound to prove a source of irritation to their higher powers-for in using false names, the names represent others who do not want to be named. They have suggested I use their word for vacant space "audvak" along with serial numbers, or other signs or symbols identified with numbers but I explained to them that although it would make them happy it would conceptualize this story to such a degree that it would be confusing for all those who can read. I knew, in that case, no one would walk away with a true understanding of their nature. I would try to name them in code, but they fear that codes can be deciphered and, in that process, reveal more than just the name, but expose the very soul. They feel their survival depends upon their anonymity. I will do my best to protect them, short of never speaking of them at all. Most of the expedition took place deep in the jungles of Hathlak territory. In order to gain carte blanche to travel from the governing powers of the outlying areas, we constructed the cover story that we were there to collect data on the flora and fauna of the Klostak Valley, a valley barely visible even to the infrequent air traffic that passed over the mountains and recorded what they could of the high terrain. But our real mission was to search for remains of husky-tusked elephants believed to have inhabited this isolated valley in the Pleistocene period just preceding the Ice Age, that cold and still encroachment which rendered that, and other species,

extinct. A large tusk, covered with markings and traces of paint, had been brought in by a trader to Asinque, intended to be of value for the ivory. Much to the trader's astonishment, it was worth much more as an artifact of antiquity, and subsequently, was purchased and carbon-dated by scientists at Riawat. The unique markings on the tusks created a spiraling excitement in archaeological, ethnological and anthropological circles. Theories flew forward that these marks were not inflicted by a force of nature but were manmade communicative calligraphy. Arguments ensued that these creatures and their enormous tusks served as the carrier pigeons of their time, bearing messages back and forth thru the Pleistocene jungles. Some scientists, researchers and scientific journalists had gone so far as to suggest that the elephants were educated to be linguistically cognizant of the content of these message. The most valued quality was not the size of their tusks relative to size of the messages they were capable of carrying, but how well they learned to roar or gesture, and make emphasis for these messages to enhance their points of view or sales pitch, or to amplify messages of loss, urgency or celebration. Others felt the idea that elephants could be cognizant of the content of the messages they carried was absurd; they were simply imitating their trainers. If indeed the markings were messages, it would indicate that in that incredibly distant past, man and elephant were cognizant of writing, art and commerce, and exercising mental powers as well as appropriate skills for expressing these ideas, long before anyone had thought possible. And that "primitive" man in particular was a being who was greatly underestimated, even infantilized, so that we, living in what we think is the future, can revel in the idea that we are being processed in chronology - improved in every way through time; and that our evolution was an uphill process. We dream that, once becoming upright and moving on two legs rather than four, we never ceased soaring. This only known set of tusks sourced different "handwritings;" markings which by their shape and slope were evidently made by different individuals. They seemed structured in alternating order, as if they were ritualistic question and answer ritualistic

"writing" where different "authors" take turns; whether for secular or religious reasons was not clear. If these markings were not only the conveyors of messages related to commerce, they might be part of organized religion or high art, as intricate, and multileveled as any found in our academic literature today. The prospect of finding additional tusks might furnish us with clues to decipherment — in particular, additional tusks of prior or subsequent generations might lead to a tusk that helped us break the code: a "Rosetta" tusk. which would resurrect a long-dead and unknown culture and revolutionize our idea of the capabilities and depth of mind of Paleolithic man. I had no idea how tangential our goals were going to get, nor that we would end up struggling just to survive with our lives, and our virtue, intact. A Search-for-Tusks party was formed. We ascended Mount Juif with great difficulty. The descent down its far side was less taxing. it was maddening to repeatedly follow trails that climaxed in dead ends. Nature had created a labyrinth, perhaps to discourage entrance into the very valley we were set to explore, and possibly excavate. Or were these ancient detours manmade by deliberation? Finally, hacking thru the jungle base at the foot of the mountain, we succeeded in entering the valley. We found an astonishing ancient causeway; a wide path of packed earth mixed with a yellow clay. Looking upwards left and right at the mountain ridges, I thought I could see the shadows of indentations, indicative of cave dwellings, as well as shadows of structures built out from the cliffs; which appeared to be strategic sentinel stations. Seven or eight miles down the causeway, it became evident that the ground was earth mixed with shards of broken pottery. In the distance we saw a crossroad and much to our surprise it was inhabited by people moving left and right going about their business with industry. As we drew closer and closer, about a half a mile from this crossroads, we saw breaking through the crowd what appeared to be an approaching group organized as troops, armed with spears. Pointing the spears at us and their index fingers at themselves, as if announcing themselves to us. "Mleebu", Mleebu, they seemed to be saying. Our guides and bearers instantly fled in fear,

along with their payloads along with them. We held our ground and became stranded, surrounded by this population. This part of the territory was thought to be uninhabited, even in legend, and no one outside of their own circle had ever passed the mountain and laid eyes on them, and vice versa. The guides had thought they were evil spirits, or spirits of the dead. A group, arranged in a military mien and armed with weapons, was a formidable sight. I addressed the personage who seemed to be the leader of the group, by noting how MacLuanesque this situation was, for though I could say I was truly not frightened by them in themselves, I was terrified by the sight of their weapons which were an extension of themselves. A title for my next book emerged: "how far is the weapon from its bearer and his heart of hearts." I imparted this to the first of them along with my credentials; it appears I was lost in hysterical chatter. They lived were very happy to show us their village. In time, they taught us how to pick, scrape and press the muckboos-berries growing in the region-small rosy plums-sour to the taste-but when pressed and the juice processed with a vinegary ooze they make out of starch and heated with fresh zzkjk leaves-it served up a hot drink as pungent as it was potent. Later I was to learn the zzkj leaves had many healing powers when dampened with different substances (honey for burns, oil for fevers and blisters). And mashed into a paste and applied to the genital areas of men and women it became a powerful enhancer of sexual feeling. Chopped into cubes and floating in liquid which is then sprayed thru a rhinoceros's horn on the eyelids it afforded many a powerful vision and more than a few psychological breakthroughs. Mashed into a garlic herb and dusted with pepper it served as a marvelous decongestant when eaten. Spread on a jedu leaf that has been heated between hot stones and pressed on the chest it served as a prophylactic for pneumonia. They taught me how to render the bark of the limpslo tree into a sort of cloth-like paper that could be sewn with caribou gut or glued with animal fat into clothing. I, in turn, was able to introduce into their culture some original couture ideas; pleats for instance, which they regarded as rather magical in their

ability to make a garment expand and contract. They tended to wear them deflated or inflated with insertable hoops to indicate their state of mind to others in the tribe. They said that doing this improved their social relations and they were very grateful to me. Those with deflated garments tended to be approached with grace and understanding, and were not told bad news; those with inflated garments you avoided if you hadn't had such a good day or, alternatively, sought them out if you were ready to offer congratulations and good wishes. Each day I tried to interest myself in a new process and ingratiate myself into the group partly because I knew this was a fantastic opportunity to gather data which might very well lead to funding, and also because I was afraid that they would kill me. Some of the younger ones were openly hostile and I had to stand my ground with them to avoid bullying, or worse. Being female, I was considered competition for the women in pursuit of men. That is as dangerous as it was flattering. Sometimes, in their language they would express something I could barely decipher after a week's time like "you bland uncolored pasty-faced bitch". Ordinarily, this kind of remark would only be humorous, but here, my life hung in the balance. I had to be strong and in fact I was gaining strength in many ways. There were miles and miles of walking every day to pick muckboos and zzjks and to carry back the caribou the men had speared during the early morning hours. No woman was allowed to touch a spear. The implications of this in terms of the spear's association to male genitals were lost upon them. I was grateful one of the older women had told me this law; for one of the younger women had, in spite, suggested I take up spearing as a hobby in my spare time, it was a great way, she said, of getting rid of that extra loose flesh in the upper arm. That was Manga, who later, after her wedding, became one of my best friends. I fainted when the women skinned and dismembered the caribou. Testicles were a special treat for the women who had washed the most Kimskims that week. Kimskims were the sacrificial loincloths worn by the men at their prayers. The hardest physical thing in these first few weeks was walking where nothing was perpendicular to anything else. Their spoken

language, used in every-day life, is constructed to express their wishes and the high side of things. Their mimed jurisprudence was conducted with a judge, and a jury of peers, with advocates for both sides. Offenses and crimes were reenacted in mime for the jury. Perhaps they were right in their contention that words are a potent vehicle for bad magic. Bad magic meant black lies. I expressed concern that the outcome of a trial could rest on how good a mimer one was over another, they asked me how it was done in my own territory and were appalled; a methodology using language was such a verdant bed for lies and manipulation of the jury. Finally, they were persuaded to take me to their holiest place. To my joy, it turned out to be the Cave of Tusks. Situated in an earth-packed, pyramid-shaped mountain called Plucke, one entered via a spiraling passage opening into a vast chamber filled with tusks layered discrete piles. It didn't take long to see that the tusks were in some order as if catalogued, and, indeed, were an organized library of written tusks. The walls were covered with similar markings to the tusks, and, as well, with painted images. These images seemed to be a communally painted Cabinet of Curiosities, a painted encyclopedic record of everything they knew. I looked forward to a long period of research and recording. Back in New York, I wondered if it was all a dream except for the fact that I had my thesis material. This morning I assembled breakfast, left for five minutes, and now I'm back and cannot find the breakfast. This could be perceived as an ingenious weight loss plan: prepare the food and then misplace it. However, I am concerned it may be rotting somewhere in the house and in the future the next tenants will be made aware of it through a super stink. Decades ago, I was leaving a studio of many years due to gentrification, and the landlord held me responsible for removal of an old broken piano. The studio was one flight up from my apartment, and in such decrepit shape; it was unlivable, which is why I was able to rent it as is. The piano was irretrievably damaged. I broke down its extremities into smaller parts, but when it came to its guts, the mass of strings and tuning pins, the bridges and soundboards, all were too large for me to maneuver down three sets of narrow spiral stairs,



and too beautiful to smash. So, I cut a vertical pass in a very damaged wall that had a hollow spot, slid the piano innards into it and patched up the wall so it wasn't really noticeable amongst the other decrepit walls. Ten years after I lost that studio, my living space being directly below it, that apartment was being renovated more thoroughly, and one day I heard a loud crash and a harp-like chord accompanied by a loud "what the fuck." The instrument innards were rediscovered; a fossil from a former life. There are losses, and then there are losses. Today's breakfast turned up as a plate of crumbs, which is frightening on many levels. Since I am the only critter here, it's evident that I had already eaten it and had total loss of recall. That is quite an achievement in unmindful eating and what happens when eating is a part of multitasking. What shines through the morass of alarm was a feeling that it was none of my business to judge my own lapses. My sole business is to follow through with what I am compelled to do. Dispensing of judgment all around is a very good idea. This extends to R, who I suddenly saw as someone resisting the idea that in suffering from a massive serious illness and coping with the medication and emotional depression that goes with it, he stays in bed all day, which is, at this point, not the best physical thing for him. All of this is understandable. I succumbed to a nap. I am so acutely debilitated from allergies I guess it's understandable. It's either allergies or a very bad cold. I'm trying not to be frightened by the pain in my groin, if it persists, I will have to see the urologist. When a bladder cancer survivor has groin pain, it reverberates through the internal memory palace chambers and emerges as a high cumulative fever of fear. Anyone who has been diagnosed with cancer understands so viscerally the idea of their life changing on a dime. Okay, so I maybe that was the pushpin in my pocket, I feel lucky and giddy. After denying it, how prone to hysteria can someone be? R's long-time therapist died in hospice of cancer yesterday. It's terribly sad and frightening with his own cancer battle going on, like the entire world coming to an end. I had two bowls of chicken noodle vegetable soup for lunch, then a salad for dinner with three glasses of orange juice,

and a hot toddy before bed in the hope I could cure my cold or allergies. I still went to the panel discussion but left soon after partly to stop picking at the buffet. Buffets make all the foods of delight perpetually available; it's an orgy that comes with the time and atmosphere to eat it all. Sometimes availability begets an unfortunate excess. It would be wonderful not to care what I ate at all. Instead of thinking of "new" foods to relieve monotony, why not think instead of "new thoughts and actions" to chew over. Fat chance! I have more faith in gluttony than in philosophy of mind. Considering the sickened state I was in at my job, because of so many battles every day, the lack of ethics or decency, the secret and corrupt agendas, that I did think perhaps it may really take longer than a year to recover after eighteen years of it. When anyone else I know has a big change, I tell them that it's a process, and to be kind to themselves. But everyone, myself included, wants to master themselves. And, of course, I am sometimes chronically disappointed—I think I should be doing this, I should be doing that, I should be thin, tall, blond, athletic, and coupled. If I am a luminous child of a deity, I should be capable of surrendering addictions. That I need "remedial" time for recovery is shameful. I had a picture of how retirement from academia should be and I'm not matching it. How cruel is that? If I cut myself some slack, I am actually doing well. It may take a long time, but I will grow into my real skin and not sustain the epidermis I had to sustain in the persona of an acadmic. I am even beginning to feel different at odd times, although I cannot define the difference. It's a sense. It's possible that everything is taking the time it should, and I am flailing around for naught. Today I took time to write a faux appeal to an Advisory Board for approval to pursue my PhD degree thesis fieldwork through a time travel system in the School of Psycho-Dynamitry. The thesis subject was the Seen and Unseen in Napoleon Bonaparte's Egyptian Campaign. I am applying for Experiential Practice using the Holodeck as an additive system to conduct the research from which I will gather data in defense of my thesis. Holodeck offers a pitch-perfect experiential platform on which to

build a that defense. The written part of my thesis will also meet the standards of knowledge-gathering on its own merits. The holodeck offers unlimited options for scenario design testing. This candidate will be the designer. Hypothetical outcomes will be assessed with identical criteria and the paths to those outcomes plotted out from native to terminal stages. Holodeck is particularly well-suited to creative disciplines, the study of its methodologies, useful paradigms for scientific experimentation, and enlightenment because of the advantage of simultaneously providing perspectives of foresight and hindsight. The Holodeck eliminates constraints for the investigation of psycho-dynamitries under stress. At the Think Tank we all had such a good time that no one wanted to leave. Today, I need to start working on the pension process, so my attention will be on a morass of forms and decisions. And so, I am out of sorts, anxious about some things that merit anxiety and other things that don't because they will likely just work themselves out. I don't have a good coping technique for the emotionally distraught bubbles generated by the sudsy moments of research and writing. It's a downswing where I am trying to pump up for a more aerial view. It wasn't reassuring to miss a panel last night that was indelibly noted on my calendar and I just didn't look. Nobody's perfect. I remember the distinct moment when my first serotonin uplifter kicked in, in 1990, and I could "distance" from despair for the first time. It wasn't eradicated, it was simply delegated to its place as if I had a high score as an emotionally intelligent human and I suddenly could achieve a cool bird's-eye view floating above seemingly cataclysmic feelings. I could hear myself participate in discussions like a competent with the underlying current of weeping despair undetectable to those around me. That drug taught me to embody the white lie and got me off the throne of sobbing into the life of graduate school. That grief had been exacerbated by a very bad decade of personal losses. It gave me the power to shift my internal position, from sitting to standing, or left to right. It would be good if one can actually go into physical motion whenever one is derailed by emotional extremes. P is sometimes very persistent

in seeking telephone time. She needs to release a verbal stream of consciousness in a way that obliterates the listener. I can't detect her catching a breath, and so they are not real conversations, they are streaming litanies. I don't discuss it with her both because I can't get a word in and because I don't want to hurt her feelings. Sometimes I can distract her with kindness and divert her attention to something else entirely, before it starts up again. I do realize how privileged I really am. Sunday is also going to be a heavy load workday with deadlines—I felt like writing a thank-you letter to my long-deceased mom. That may invoke a lot of sadness; it will be a working out session through writing, not a bullet list, pardon the expression. I extricated myself from current Mother's Day celebrations. The family isn't making plans till the morning of, so no one knows if there is a gathering or not and for me it's two hours of travel each way, so it's hard not to know ahead of time, although I understand that from their point of view is easier not to know. Our medical system is so askew, body parts are treated as isolated entities and it's scary that what is allowed under Medicare does not consider the body as a network. My weekend is full. I have the option of attending the Creative Tech closing party, but you know, I shouldn't beat myself up if I don't make it. It's of much more comfort right now to be home. I would rather stay in and recharge. I wish I was someone who could socialize every night. New York is such a verdant town, but I never was a party girl and tonight may not be the night to start. My renewing resolution every year is that I will be more active in attending events. Today I am taking one task at a time, prioritizing for deadlines of course. I enjoy it if I can do each one well in its own time. No one will make me crazy except myself, and that kind of appropriate timing to tasks is a luxury I could only dream of for decades. Twenty years ago, by now at 10 a.m., I would have done all the laundry, correspondence, exercise, cleaning, but at this advanced age, the daily agendas have shrunk. I do have privileges I did not have then, like opportunities for daydream time. I am still in recovery from bludgeoning academic life; just a few

months into retirement. It's amazing how someone could be so miserable while doing good work. Maintaining some form of dignity in a wild and bewildering world was difficult on a daily grind basis. Art I saw this week included a Last Supper depicting popular culture personae in animation—including Kim Kardashian's mural-sized ass with shit pouring out of it and then some other famous person depicted reaching in to pull more out. The depiction matched the material in its style, but it seemed so predictable. I don't plan down time and sometimes, like today, exhaustion or stress reaches critical mass and down time just takes over. It does have a beginning and an end, so it likely serves its purpose. I wait till I short out mentally or physically. I want sixteen hours of energy out of every day and am always bewildered that in my eight decade it's no longer possible. I should be grateful for what I do get. I'm ashamed to schedule down time, although that might be a smarter thing to do. When M is moving forward in her own way, fallout to others can be incredible. And in a way, being ill, it is somewhat justified. Even her vengefulness is understandable. She may be someone to have compassion for on many levels, but her will presides, regardless of the impact on others. In spite of being besotted in love with family members, I never fit in. I was into adventure, but not chaos. The price for the nature I was born with was being always outside the circle, participating as much as I could till insanity accelerated, and then stepping out of the chaos, cruelty and spite. I know this isn't only my story, my parents really bonded to my sibling because she was so good at their drama. I was an anomaly, and even though I may have been special in some abstract way; my specialness served to make them uncomfortable. I feel so sad when I think of it. I know I would even be chastised for performing down time incorrectly. To conduct my day according to my own rhythm is luxury I worked hard to provide myself with for decades. I can find my own, independent, ways to feel like part of the human race. I spent two hours at the College for retirement administration and it's clear I have PTSD. The correct destination office had a sign up redirecting to another office. I couldn't get into my college email and so to

reset my password I was logged in with a temp password, a new password could not be set from the temp password as directed. I was seeking out the help desk and had to go through two different people there till it worked, each treating me like a moron when the cause was the system. The staff ladies' room has the faucet that goes on automatically for two seconds, but it also works when the door to the bathroom is opened; the door creates a slight draft which the faucet interprets as a human trying to use it, so any attempt to conserve water is moot. It became clear that the person I had the retirement document appointment with was doing her best, but the forms, the paperwork, the permissions, the hierarchy was so dysfunctional, curling back on itself in weird ways, that I felt sorry for her. It would be a miracle if it all works out. That I am starting the process so early on is a point in my favor. I should be benefitting from the experience of thousands of retirees who have moved through this process. But the slate of history in a large bureaucratic institution is always re-started from scratch – no palimpsest here. I am the first retiree ever in the history of the University. It's a Kafkaesque bureaucracy where each step is dependent on another step in another department, each in turn dependent upon a breaking down of compartments, forms, and approval of several sub-branch departments and so on and so forth. I had sent my Chairperson a form that I received from Human Resources signed and dated; he has to sign it and then the Provost has to sign and then the HR Director. In each of those places it could, and likely will, get lost, or dismissed, or farmed out for even more infinitesimal sub-clusters of sub-approval, so I will have to check and double check and check again, and that is just one of twenty paper forms travelling to six to eight different places through the university. I break each process into steps, but there is only so far one can go before the steps become multiplied by a much higher power than dictated. I have made it off the standby list into a workshop on virtual worlds. It is the kind of event filled with lovely young people born into programming and already familiar with 3D structures, things I have a rudimentary knowledge of, and

certainly no direct experience. Plus, I am by birth endowed with eyes that cannot fuse stereoscopically to see 3D. I never knew that until I was in my twenties and had it checked because I was so constantly misjudging the distance between things. It explained so much. The workshop I attended was a good way to gauge if a technology's appeal as a tool and learn enough to direct others who practice the technology to realize an idea. Funding is also required. It's very exciting to witness the underbelly of every new manifestation of technology, even if it only is new for 15 minutes. I am eager to make another film. I have to spend the day prior to the workshop updating my system and installing software, during which both my excitement and my trepidations will grow. To learn what I want to know in any given instance is well worth any humiliation born of my lack of 3D vision and slow processing. The shame in being a beginner will always persist. It's surely far from the worst of American problems, but in our culture, to those in their twenties, someone in their seventies seems ancient and useless, and hello, here I am. Today I read an obit in The New York Times of an elderly female character actress who took up acting in her sixties and was extremely successful playing character parts and loved her work. Good story. Physical therapy workouts are beneficial. I continue to graduate up to heavier weights and pulleys. PT is one of the few things I do where I am in the moment because I have to be to stay safe. I still have pain, persistent arthritis, but I am moving better. I oversleep every time I have an appointment pertaining to end-of-life documents. Last night I arrived at a friend's house and found him shaking like a leaf, having taken ill. It was difficult not to abandon thoughts of his perpetual lifetime lack of self-care rendering him into emergency states where everyone else is responsible for extricating him from the corner he himself has painted himself into. Of course, I cared for him with compassion and empathy; no one should ever be sick. I cleaned him up, helped him change, rinsed out his soiled clothes and laundered them. Brought him a ginger ale and left him comfortable and recovering. The issue of his living alone and how much I've expressed to him and his family how it's not really

safe is not within the scope of my control. I expressed my concern and can only help in the instances where I can. I know this will become a chronic occurrence. Learning to meditate is an incremental trial and error process. It's not easy when one engages in battle at the same time as one embraces it. One should be able to go right to mindlessness like flicking a switch without forty years of experience and struggle as a prerequisite. Memory and meditation get undermined by anxiety in any case. The roommate came back from her weekend and the house is stinking up again. Three more weeks before she leaves for good and soon I have to bring up the subject of holding back money from her deposit for fumigating and sanitizing. Such is life. I just moved my whole pension into relatively safe funds because there is no room for risk tolerance now; at this age there is no recovery time when the market fluctuates. I have shifted several decades of effort into a safer place; well, a relatively safer place, so relative it may be meaningless. As I discharge these responsibilities and make the irrevocable decisions, I will feel relief simply because those decisions are behind me. I am following my instincts which look towards the bright side. Today I am attending another workshop for demystification of creating virtual worlds at this time, at least for the next three months, before it all changes again. I am nervous and apprehensive because instead of focusing on the work at hand, I am focusing on my own inadequacies, or at least my anticipation of them. Luckily, I can override that because of my high level of curiosity. Panic ensued when the instructor sent us some "homework" late last night, which I should do this morning. It will all get done. Yesterday I met with my lovely financial advisor. It seems that there is cause for concern that I may run out of money when I am ninety. I wonder how that sounds to someone under fifty, I know how it would have sounded to me. And so, I began to hyperventilate because it signifies that I do not have the financial security I hoped for because I am staying in New York in my apartment. Fantasies about a life in rural utopia put aside, I don't want to leave. He wants me to feel confident that my retirement is taken care of, so running out of money at ninety



is the "worst" case scenario and it's his job to point these things out. Meanwhile, it made me a wreck. Starting so late in life, in my early fifties, to face economics and, at that time, not having a pot to piss in, was a huge turn-around. Now, after only two decades of planning as opposed to the five or six I could've/should've had, there is no way to make the pension bigger than it is without the type of risk I cannot afford. I did my best to make it as huge as possible. I have never ever not worked in the workforce before, and not working is what I want so I can do my own work. I also want to live without a roommate. All this is stressful because moving the whole pension into the funds that are non-risk does have a finality that feels a bit dismal. Well, one consolation, it's irrevocable--there is no way I can do my Libra wavering and weighing after today. I had consulted three different financial advisors with three different agendas, and they all said this is the way to go, and I, with my limited and sometimes perverse, intuitive, non-expertise about money, agree with them. I will be more nervous if I don't do it, because then the funds will be much more at the whim of the stock market. I should stop picking on it like a dog with a bone, many more decisions like this are imminent. I tried meditating again this morning for an entire two seconds. This process will accrete, I hope. The best thing about yesterday was that I was able to walk to the workshop and back. It was only ten to twelve blocks, but when I think that a year ago, I would have had to take a car, both because of stenosis and agoraphobia, I am very grateful. It may very well be that every question I asked there was stupid, but older women tend to get marginalized in any case, even if its unconscious on the part of the person doing it. It's great that when I am curious about something, I don't hesitate to ask, even if the young male instructor was always distracted answering my questions while cheerfully greeting questions from the adorable young woman next to me. If I am thwarted, I just get more persistent with whatever questions I have in an obnoxiously cheerful way. I smile broadly, because the alternative is to be sullen, silent and angry and learn nothing. I am one of the one-hundred jurors for a non-profit venue's

shows—the jurying requires scoring fifty proposals, five-hundred words each. All in a day's work. Speaking of community, a friend was disappointed I wouldn't work on her community project. I'm happy to consult or brainstorm, but I don't want a work commitment. I need all the studio time I can get, having been meddled with in academia for two decades. It's interesting how much alone time making things requires. Today is my beautiful niece's birthday! She is a grown woman, married with children, but I still wish her happy birthday like she was four years old. I'm sure I enjoy that more than she does. Becoming impervious to other, troubled relationships is hard work. R is eagerly beckoning me to tell me his latest art news. I'll spend a few minutes. It's annoying because persistently, with pressure, he tries to comprehend I have a separate life but really that is forced and not really within his skillsets. His litany of complaints is about people who don't pay enough attention to him; they pay a lot of attention to him, but sad to say, it's never enough. He also tries to make the habits he has with his wife exist between him and me. Small gestures. It's creepy. I have empathy, and I hope I can keep myself intact. One should always be in the mood to hear the good news of others, even if they are more privileged and have a bombarding delivery. I try to think of myself as robust and flexible, where I can do service, because my raw, inner barbaric life is my business and no one else's. There is no excuse for expressed coveting. Privately held coveting, seen from a bird's eye view, is fine. I ran into a neighbor in the elevator who volunteered that she cannot wait to move out of this building because the air is so bad, the vents are filthy etc. Got me panicked. She is probably right. I was hoping it was fine because even though the windows don't open in a conventional way, they do open, and I am on the nineteenth floor. It was bad news that she was on the twenty-fifth. It could be why my allergies have gotten much worse over the last few years. Today included a nap, all the cooking for the week, a residency application, catching up with friends, and drawing. I did a good try at meditation for ten minutes. I know it wasn't entirely efficacious, but I thought ten minutes was encouraging. I sorely need

a day of rest and decompression. It's about switching hats – civilian to artist, artist to civilian, and it's nothing new. Turning off the phone is a blessing, but difficult. I enjoy being distracted interacting with people, and I wonder if it's okay once in a while to have a "sabbath" and just leave the planet. Actually, I enjoy that more. It's like moving forward in a flow instead of always putting pressure on the brakes for the impediments of duty. My day got flavored by an intense relaxation mode. I drew, I napped, then watched two positively delicious old movies and now I'm drawing once again. It's a great life. I have no history of "relaxing". I can see how doing what comes naturally may work well. Unless everything external is in order, it's hard to give free reign to doing what I desire, and I have to realize that things are never going to be in perfect order, it's just the nature of the beast, and now is the time to seize the moment and have as much pleasure as possible. Every time I do one action, I think of something else I should be doing; this is not entirely helpful when relentless. Everything feels like physical therapy, where one has to work against one's own resistance to get better. Looking forward later today to a visit from a super nice friend to say goodbye. He is returning to his home country. I need to start prep for meeting with the lawyer this week on end-of-life documents. This person cannot be a parent, he is going to be a lawyer. I need to act like a responsible adult. I've always felt a lot of shame about how much of a struggle it is to be responsible for myself in the real world; a responsibility I assumed very early on in an environment where the authorities felt a bit unsafe. I feel negatively affected by a sinus headache this morning. I am reporting this only because I'm never sure what's actually operating in my head, sinus or PTSD, or both. Only the unravelling of the day will tell. I know I am in a low-level depression. While I'm grateful that it's low-level, I don't want it to sink into something more insidious. I had a bad dream of unrequited friendship for a friend who died two years ago. This morning I wrote him an unmailable letter, I am sorry I wasn't more helpful, even though he resisted. In the dream he ignored me completely, and it was very

painful. I admired him. And I loved him as a friend, he could be generous, and then completely withholding. I am part of a coterie of about fifty people who cared so much for him. It was serious suffering to the end, and he hung on as long as he could tolerate it. My plan of action where art is concerned has always been is to just keep going. It's never as simple and straightforward as it sounds. Some of these drawings will have to be re-rendered as I gain knowledge of what I want. When my allergies are bad, I am literally not getting enough oxygen and get lethargic and sleepy and then, subsequently, depressed. It's like trying to function underwater and water weighs so much more than air. I am working with very funky genetics. It's very physically stressful to move when every cell in my body is busy fighting off allergies and wants to sleep. I remember many years ago an allergist told me he didn't know how I was walking around at all, because my immune system is always engaged in such a fierce battle with allergens. Anyway, it's not a new story, as a kid I spent every summer ill in the countryside I loved, and now I'm not moving to wherever it is I'm supposed to move, if there is any place left on this planet that's allergy-free, at least not yet. I was sad to find that in New Mexico, a glorious place. I wonder how high, or low, I would score on an emotional intelligence test. I see quite clearly when my emotions are distorted or exaggerated, but the effort to behave properly, which is an ingrained priority, leaves me desiccated. I can create and abide by the code to mingle properly or get the job done, but I pay a very high price. I suppose it would be an even higher price if I didn't behave. I'm not one of the ones who can get away with murder. My visit to the new lawyer had an excellent outcome of immeasurable, priceless, peace of mind. All my negative instincts about the lawyer I had before him were totally right. Now I have with all the information I need. My nerves are kind of shot after several years of living with one stranger after another here. It's certainly not the worst problem in the world, and it does provide much-needed financial help. It's another instance where I bear something my character finds unbearable, in order to sustain myself. A visit to Dirtcandy was interesting. It is

a vegetarian/vegan restaurant. It's quite annoyingly elitist and reservations are required months in advance, and it is very expensive, particularly if alcohol is consumed. On the other, it is a cornucopia of invention about vegetables, and their cookbook for sale is in the form of a graphic novel. Each dish is exquisitely wrought. It's equally inspiring and dismaying. Rutabaga! Quite a bit of pain in my knees and back today, but I think this will be how it is, arthritis is arthritis. I can ice, medicate, meditate or exercise it out to some degree. I wish it was all really holding on to resentment as if it was a life raft in torrential rapids, but that is not what the MRI indicated. It's true, if, when forming, your parents cannot meet the needs of your character, and your sibling has a developed practice with a five-year edge of wanting you dead twenty-four/seven, and is allowed to act it out with absolutely no reprieve, what else can you do but cling to the one structure that keeps you safe, that is: becoming the guarded, self-deprecating Don Quixote who is perpetually fighting the windmills. I'm not little any longer, but that pattern is etched on an internal etching plate and supports my lack of faith that I can be cared for properly. I know that some internal kernel, would care for me much better than my conscious self can; my conscious self being that poor twisted thing like the ferociously deranged "Id" in Forbidden Planet. Meditating can put one in touch with an inner chord, but I can only do it when I am safe in bed self-tucked under the covers with an eye shade and ear plugs. I wonder if I surrendered to it as a practice if I could work backwards to consciousness from that state of suspension that meditation brings on, it is likely too good a prospect to be true. I am not kind to myself when I withdraw and isolate. I harbor resentment against people who can't help themselves in how they behave. It's unreasonable to feel angry with G because he simply cannot listen. He cuts off every sentence I begin and although I've pointed it out and said it is frustrating and rude, he cannot help himself. I see it as a form of obliteration, even if unintended. There is no conversation, so I know if I see him, I don't exist in his eyes except as a mirror. I also do like listening a lot.

But I haven't seen him for weeks because I'm not up to being talked at without any exchange. I often stop him when she interrupts me and say "STOP. But it's really compulsive and he goes right on doing it. It's rather pathological that someone with such a good heart can be so incredibly rude. It often feels like abuse. His calls and visits are litanies, like this one, only freely inflicted on others with no remorse. What was clear, and instructive for me, was that in the few minutes I listened, I heard nothing but lies. These are things he truly believes—as to how he perceives things. Lies about his place in the world. It's a good thing that he hasn't a clue; it spares him some horrible realizations. All I could think about was that I had better get on with doing anything and everything I can to stay afloat in the lying world, because it is a world that is so narrow and so full of theatrics. I suppose it can be addictive and, disguised as something to make one feel better, it makes one feel much worse, like one is avidly and perpetually chasing one's tail. A purgatory. He isn't processing things in the real world, and I can empathize. I certainly envy his chutzpah in acting it out. I was emotionally greedy like that at one time, believing my own high anxiety and with friends on the phone at times, I wonder how I've kept those friends from that time. I hope they had benefits in the friendship. As my external world gets narrower, I would like my internal life and the relationships I have to flourish, and I hope I can stop from situating on a platform of lies. M has lived through raising three children and suffering two bouts of cancer without realizing that the earth is not flat. In checking with the College as to whether my geographical presence the week of retirement matters, it turns out the paperwork that was started is already lost, and likely must be restarted. This is not unusual. I can tolerate this drama until mid-august—I just have to bear it. I hope it will be over by then. Some bureaucracies are constantly making messes out of good things, where everything is torture as a way with dealing with some real practicalities and then freaking out about others. I have definitely been invited to Italy for the second half of August. This means, if I can leave for the week I am officially

retiring, for the period August 18–August 31. For Procida one flies to Naples and takes a boat. I thought of going to Rome to photograph in the wondrous Vatican Hall of Maps, and in doing so I began to make the trip so difficult and complex, that I didn't want to go at all. I am now high maintenance—distilled water for the sleep apnea machine, no cooking skills, I worry my hosts will think I am lazy. I could anticipate this trip only as a source of constant anxiety in a heartbeat. Nothing to wear, no comfortable bathing suit. Stone steps everywhere that I cannot navigate. That is sad. They are lovely people, and the area looks so super beautiful. For the practicalities, I'm not on my own; these lovely people are usually helpful. Going to a peaceful place in Italy like this has been a dream for so long. It's a gift. Why did I have a nightmare last night which left me feeling anguished and fearful? I guess I am thinking of my own lack of resilience. In situations where I have to be vigilant, there is an art to sanely and kindly sustaining boundaries. Sometimes I take the liberty of not answering the phone and it saves me. My College did indeed lose the first retirement paperwork, which meant I spent the whole morning yesterday writing the necessary emails and phone calls to track it. Eventually it was located, which has the feeling of a small miracle. I can handle everything the process brings—it's how I grew up—in total chaos. But it reminded me that a psychiatrist once diagnosed me as bipolar on evidence of "hyper-vigilance". I don't think that psychiatrist ever worked in academia, or grew up in an Ashkenazi first-generation family. Those two things are connected in their intense allegiance to chaos. I am doing the best I can, which I am afraid is not good enough. One of the tools of doing a good job is pretending one knows enough to do a good job, even if it's not a superlative job. The need to push myself is fine, but the extreme of it in every aspect of my life is wasteful. I may at times have feelings that are unrealistic and can only predict negative outcomes, and I should treat myself kindly at those times, like I would treat anyone else, and not bash myself endlessly because my seams are showing; or because I am feeling like a lost child who has been bypassed for the team's picks.

For today's visit from a collector, I diverted my own crazies in two ways, I'm not sure if the second one was right to do, but it feels right. First, yesterday I focused on eliminating anxiety about today which allowed excitement to shine through. Secondly--- I temporarily took down the wall of new drawings because I know I will torture myself if they are seen too soon. It makes sense about the wall, because he is seeing two finished bodies of work here, so "works in progress" aren't everyone's cup of tea, but so what- they are mine. I would be encouraged if he is positive, but terribly upset if it confuses him. G may accompany him. I think at one point in time it was truly sharing, but not collaboration, just sharing and G thinks that kind of sharing is a wonderful thing, that it's "dialogue," not plagiarism. I think there is a lack of boundaries with G where unfinished works are concerned. I know I could be viewed as not sporting, petty and small minded, but here I am and, why not just follow my instincts and make things easier for myself? I don't want to inhibit what I am doing when it is now beginning to go so well after a long struggle. I plan to show him those works when the wall is finished, and I haven't quite gotten there yet. I may miss opportunities by keeping things close to the vest, but why not do things in my own time, the way I am comfortable doing them? Where is that cited as a crime? Well maybe it's not a crime, but it may be bad judgment. Most of my morning was taken up by working with the handyman. I finally have clean air vents with all the dead flies from the fly plague below me vacuumed out, which is great for breathing, not to mention morale. The price I pay for this extra work from the handyman is staying with him and chatting, and handing him the screwdriver. Actually, I don't mind, he is a really sweet guy, and I care about his welfare as a person, and there are things I can no longer do myself, like working with tools on a ladder. So, after four incredibly unpleasant and unhealthy fumigations in my house it turned out the neighbor beneath me was breeding thousands of flies, having stored her garbage in her house for months and denied entry to anyone who wanted to help. Finally gaining entry, they found that she herself was covered with flies. When she opened her mouth to



speaking, the flies flew in and occupied it. Her family was called, she was taken away and the apartment, which had to be professionally de-infested, fumigated and cleaned, was put up for sale. I feel pity for the woman. But it is a source of anger that the building staff never told me they suspected this and kept asking me if I had pets or plants or god-knows-what as if the flies were generating in my house. Yesterday I vented out loud to myself about it. I should allow that to happen more often to get over things that aren't fair, I seldom actually vent like that to anyone else. On occasion when I have been a recipient of a vent, particularly with G, I instinctively wait for her torrent to subside and then respond to her about how I hope she feels better, with anything I could think of as a helpful suggestion. I'm sure this makes her angry, because I'm not answering each text individually enabling a flame war, but it's the best I can do. Is happiness the same as gratitude when it is circumstantial, and dependent upon receiving good news? A collector just bought a small print on aluminum, large enough to pay for my ticket to and from Procida. I have H to thank for this, and I did, profusely. Artists are maniacs, at least I am, but now I am wondering if I should be grateful for the fact that I can behave well. Wouldn't it be nice if I found the niche where my nature worked well for me? Where is that? Under what rock? Meridiana Airlines is run by Air Italy and has the only nonstop and cheapest flights on the dates I want. But it's sometimes tardy and the planes are old. It has no amenities which is not a concern for me. Now when I fly, the only fear I experience is not fear of flying, but fear of animals I am allergic to in the cabin. It has happened to the point of farce. Friends I am hosting tomorrow night for dinner are taking their cat in the cabin back to Finland on Monday. So glad I am not on that flight. There will be three people here tomorrow who have four cats between them. I will medicate as if it were helpful. It really isn't. They were all here once before and nothing happened to me, I seem to have deteriorated since. That allergy is very unfortunate. Anyway, I want to take the leap and just buy the ticket before I lose my nerve or, especially, the seat, mainly because

it's a rare nonstop. And no airline is immune from tardiness, domestic or international. I am taking actions and then building muscle to forget the action I have taken so I'm not preoccupied with its possible risks. My Finnish friends depart on Monday. I will miss them so much. Alcohol is such a lovely poison in moderation. It's so seductive and merry. Three cheers for self-medication and temporary elation. I have a full and rich itinerary this weekend, work and play. Ugh, oh yes, the end-of-life documents need attention. We can learn so much from naturalists; the value of empiricism for one thing. *Chrysalis* is the title of a biography of Maria Sibylla Merian. "Merian was one of the first to study insects in their habitats, and *Chrysalis* puts her pioneering life in historical perspective... [Merian's] obsession with metamorphosis led her to a book of stunning paintings and huge strides for the fledgling field of entomology." —BUST Magazine. Also, a marvelous, enigmatic quote from a 17<sup>th</sup> century study of bees, "*The Life of the Bee*" by Maurice Maeterlinck (Dodd, Mead & Company, New York — 1958) from the Chapter titled "On the Threshold of the Hive:" "The real history of the bee begins in the seventeenth century, with the discoveries of the great Dutch savant Swammerdam. It is well, however, to add this detail, but little known: before Swammerdam a Flemish naturalist named Clutius had arrived at certain important truths, such as the sole maternity of the queen and her possession of the attributes of both sexes, but he had left these unproved. Swammerdam found the true methods of scientific investigation; he invented the microscope, contrived injections to ward off decay, was the first to dissect the bees, and by the discovery of the ovaries and the oviduct definitely fixed the sex of the queen, hitherto looked upon as a king, and threw the whole political scheme of the hive into most unexpected light by basing it upon maternity." I have a food hangover. I was very hungry at lunch, and added much too much to what was already prepared. Part of the hunger was anxiety. I failed the leap to the high road for mindful eating, ate too fast and then fell asleep for a long, overfed nap which I could have taken without overeating. Had a small dinner but still woke up this morning with a food hangover. The gobbling

behavior perpetuates hunger. I just wolfed down breakfast and still feel hungry. Some days I am in a perpetual digestive tantrum. It's rather sad. It's likely I was unable to properly process the terrible twos. Now that I have bought the ticket, reserved transportation to and from the airport and checked out phone usage in Italy, I need to put the trip out of my mind lest I spend all my time obsessed about it; with so many other things to do; an exercise to shelve compulsive worry. I am still worrying that I am a pain in the ass and my host is sorry he invited me. Why is that important? It's not. And it's not likely either. Hello, where am I? Dinner tonight to look forward to with four great female friends. I made a new friend at an event and she is also coming over. Quite lovely. She wanted to continue a conversation we had about archiving digital art and it turns out one of my Finnish friends is working on digital archiving with the Finnish Arts Council. This is the kind of serendipity I like; I love connecting people. Here comes eleven days on a tiny island off the coast of Italy. So far, this whole morning has been about love among friends, super heartwarming. I admire those who can do things in a heartbeat that take me hours to do. Or at least I have made up that myth about them, or me. They sustain excellence, I sustain effort. I thought that if I want to accomplish anything at all, I should pick someone to idolize and then follow their example, which may be the only way I can take risks outside of my comfort zone. However, I didn't factor in the consequences not being able to keep up with them, so that makes a case for feeling perpetually inadequate. The problem of origin is that my mom never let me do things, nor taught me how to do them, because she wanted total excellence in caring for the household, and I was small and over literal about doing tasks even then. There was a plus side that she didn't engage me in housework; leaving me indeterminate amounts of time to daydream, this child's favorite occupation. My mother was a stellar housekeeper who washed the walls. She couldn't tolerate the required patience for a small child who might fumble when she could do them perfectly. I likely wanted to do everything, but I was, and am, very slow in action. I hardly have the patience for myself

sometimes. I have since learned there is a diagnosis for what ailed me and many other children—it is called “Slow Processing.” My issue is not so much to do it perfectly, but to do it with grace, and to think about doing things, a form of which people before me have likely done for centuries. And then there is my sensitivity, being corrected with care would have been fine, but being corrected with disgust was not the ticket to self-confidence. If my education with her was upsetting and it was obvious I was hurt, there was additional disgust and annoyance. So there seldom was a phase where this child was imbued with confidence to take correction. I’m better at it now, but only if criticality is unbiased and not expressed in disgust. I knew eventually I had to overcome the sensitivity in order to learn, and I did. She gifted me with a desk peg set. I sat at it and put colored pegs in holes—she could leave me there at 9 a.m. serve me lunch, and pick me up at 5 p.m. I was out of her hair all day, and free to float in my element. But what was I doing? Making and unmaking patterns? At that age? It’s true, I was always a fan of abstraction. Feeling incompetent at times, coupled with a contradictory innate joy in doing things as well as possible, makes me start off at the most complicated point of departure for the simplest tasks. Although I think that is my nature and will always be my first impulse. Sometimes I feel like I’ve failed if I reassess the complexity and make it easier on myself. And in some cases, that’s the right feeling accompanying the right decision. In some cases, extreme complexity and effort aren’t really what’s required. Chatham Square forms a sound vortex for sound. Sirens, horns, garbage trucks, and traffic in general sound situated in my apartment and it never stops. The only charming thing I hear is the rumbling of the subway going over the Manhattan Bridge. I still feel wondrous about the MTA subway travelling over bridges or on the land ridge in Jamaica Bay so it looks like one is travelling on water. At times I cannot talk on the phone in my apartment because of the cacophony outside. One reason I look forward to summers is because the AC, when working, allows me to keep the windows closed. Closed windows somewhat diminish the level of noise of the rest of the year. G left a phone

message last night, saying she must "chat." I really don't want to. But when I think of what she is going through, the cancer and treatment, and how she doesn't really know how to take care of herself because she is understandably frightened out of her wits, I wonder if I am supposed to give her what she thinks she wants. But there is no doubt that her phone calls are also abusive, and maybe I am not doing her any favors by taking them. Certainly, they upset me in that I wish she could listen for her own benefit without prejudice, but I know she doesn't want to, or can't. Mainly, she just wants to be listened to, which I suppose is reasonable. She always has gone on without drawing a breath without end. If you put the phone down and come back half an hour later (I don't), it wouldn't be noticed or make a difference. But the paramount reality is that she is very ill. I haven't been outside for two days, but I feel fine. It's when I go out that I freak out. This apartment is like being outside, it has large windows open to the sky, and that could be both a blessing and a detriment to ever going out, the views are so beautiful. I have guests come over to share it with, so I am not isolating. I love it here! And, except for the street noise, I can do retreats right here in my own home and feel entitled to them. I will be vigilant not to get strange and lose touch with the world entirely. I have confidence that I will do that. How can one know what the best one can be, if one makes up stories all the time that may be either grandiose or understated, so that one has no idea what one is or isn't capable of? Although grandiosity has its good uses; it enables ambition and encourages plans to work on what one wants. I did years of gym training always forlornly saying to physical trainers "oh no, I can't do that" while I was actually doing it. I suppose this is where meditation comes in. If one "resets," one can re-evaluate capabilities much more clearly and work out small steps to succeed. Calming down and taking one tiny step at a time is gold. No matter how sensible one is, an equal amount of doubt is always in the mix because common sense doesn't account for everything. I have the privilege here of waking up to see what still is quaintly called the "sunrise," even though it's the

earth trying to behave itself in its wobbly rotation, spinning and orbiting at the same time. A perpetual rubbing of one's tummy in a circle while simultaneously patting oneself on the head, on a galactic scale. The planet struggles around the sun all year. The sun gets all the credit, as if it rises and sets, but that is not the case. Outside, Con Edison is drilling day and drilling night. They are supposedly "refreshing" New York's infrastructure, while no one in the area can get a refreshing sleep. If the workers are up, so are we. Once upon a time, I knew a small boy, small even for his age, which was five. His curiosity was so acute, it forced his face to slowly swing back and forth like a pendulum between his left shoulder and his right as he perpetually scanned the wondrous universe, looking this way and that. This motion slowed when he became lost in thought about a particularly riveting sight. He had come to the Museum of Natural History with his parents, but they took so much time in the giftshop gathering birthday and holiday presents for family members that he had left them there and wandered off and they had not noticed him slipping out. Just yesterday he had seen three dead dogs floating in the east river. He had asked a policeman if the harbor patrol could fish them out so they could be used for the Museum of Natural History in a diorama display. The policeman seemed irritated, maybe by the heat of the day. Drug dogs, the policeman said, guard dogs for a dealer, likely each shot with a bullet through the head in a drug dispute; perhaps the dealer was in the river too. He hadn't mentioned this encounter to his parents. They seemed uncomfortable when he mentioned certain things he had seen or asked them questions about things that seemed like out of the ordinary experiences to them. He had the feeling he was supposed to compartmentalize his curiosity into what they could handle, he called what was permissible "daily talk" and tried to suppress anything that had a layer of complexity leaning into somber thinking. He instinctively knew that he was an instrument in preserving his parents' particular bird's eye views of their lives as they saw it, and he was of a benign and sweet temperament, and tried not to upset them. From the Museum giftshop he went past the elevators into the diorama

sections, starting with geological history and climate. The signage made him fearful. "(a) a long time ago a huge sheet of ice slid down from the north pole and covered all of New York. The Empire State Building was covered up by ice. He assumed everyone went somewhere else till it was over, like a fire drill at school, only ice, not fire." Then, "spiders, ants, worms and beetles who look as big as houses to each other live on the ground in the forest so even though it looks like a dead heap of trash, it really has lots of things living in it. A square foot of dirt in a forest holds four times as many dead insects and animals as how many humans there are on all of the earth." Continuing, "So all the time, all kinds of leaves, flowers, fruits, twigs and dead animals fall on the forest floor. If the pile just grew and grew the forest wouldn't get any light and air and everything would die. This is called the Cycle of Nutrition and Decay." He realized that the chipmunk gets trapped in the winter under the ground and has to sleep through all of this. He wondered if chipmunks dream and if they did, he wondered what they dreamt of. The Sea World exhibit has sharks and whales and porpoises and seals in different kinds of waters from all over the world. He thought how he always colors the Pacific dark blue and the Caribbean turquoise. At first there was the Pacific and then the sun put some yellow in to make the Caribbean. The Sea World Hall also has an exhibit of divers diving for pearls. He knew it was in the Caribbean because the water is colored turquoise. The two divers are in an underwater cave. One is swimming down headfirst to pick up an oyster and put it in his basket; the other is standing on the ocean floor looking for pearls. The child said: "I know the Museum had to have pearl divers for the pearl divers' diorama, but I wonder what their families think when they see them here on exhibit. I wonder if they ever asked the guards to fish them out." Suddenly I realized that this child had carried logic to its rightful conclusion. Since the armature of the Museum's collection were animals deliberately hunted and killed for dioramas, the child thought these humans had met the same fate, and at this point, this child burst into sobs, and I turned to my friend and said "why do they ever let children

in here?" We found his parents and they were able to reassure him that the humans in the tank were mannequins. My own transference to everyone I know is slowly evaporating and subsequently, I feel like I almost have no reason to live. Without transference, we are all who we are, a genre-type rendering of ourselves. And as if that wasn't enough to bear, the years of my nose to the grindstone in psychoanalysis has rendered me as someone who feels all of my feelings simultaneously. Do you know what that signifies? A rich and varied imagination, stewing in a sea of exhaustion eager to rise up and form substance on its own but sinking at its peak of stretch back into the sea from the sheer weight. It's made more difficult when anyone living in an urban environment has been on an up escalator where a cop is in front of them leaning against the moving railing so that his gun was positioned in one's face. Putting the unsexiness of this aside, anyone could grab the gun out of his holster, unless the holster has a lock, and he would never be able to turn around in time to prevent someone behind him from opting out of aging. I do think most people my age know what I am talking about, even if they are more discreet than I am, and their moral fiber demands they not dwell on it so much. Alternatively, I went on with what turned out to be a miserable day. I know that is important—to go on with one's miserable days; and that not every day is like that, even with chronic pain. I told my therapist that the reason I didn't take the gun was that I actually don't know how to work it and fumbling in that instance would be embarrassing, plus if I succeeded, it would traumatize everyone who witnessed it. Eventually I arrived home and binged watched anything that presented a façade of make-believe, even if unintended. I have an incredible talent for making things worse. I feel I will die like a dog in the street with no support or advocacy, I'm sure that's not uncommon for single people unless they are born again. I am trying to find other ways to supply myself with the help I may need. By the way, all this despair and grief may be a prelude to acceptance of it all and then a wonderful decade ahead—I can say that even though I can't feel it now because I've been through real life despair and hit bottom before and rose,



slowly and with effort, not quite like a phoenix. , more like a baby bird struggling out of the eggshell, but I was younger then, and I don't know how many metamorphoses each person is allotted, or if it is a finite number like nine with cats. Cats can kill me, just one exposure and I can be dead once and for all. Suicide by cat would be a horrible way to exit. In the case of G, she is bewildered by so many things, I wish I could put my life on hold and try to fix things for her. She is the one person that would disconnect me from life support in a heartbeat, but it doesn't seem to matter, the point, at this point, would be to be of service. Vertigo can be incredibly debilitating. I have had varied experiences with it over the years. After falling last week (heavy and genderless wind swept me off my feet), I finally relented and went for testing and treatment for vertigo at the Ear Institute. Seems I am walking around with full blown vertigo, which surprised me because the "spinning" has been very mild with no projectile vomiting. My condition is usually the worst-case scenario in terms of where crystals in the inner ear tube can migrate; they are very restless and ambitious. Vestibular therapy consists of maneuvers where the therapist twists my head and body while my head is equipped with a headset and goggles, and a screen displays eye movements accompanying attacks. The technician showed me that my eyes were moving back and forth in their sockets faster than the speed of light. Spinning and nausea are acute. I had postponed embarking on treatment again, because it's torture. After the first treatment, I was nauseated and loopy for a whole week. It's a gamble, because any one treatment might clear it up by knocking the crystals into the right tube. Quality of life is abundantly better without this issue. When I confided my condition to the nice taxi driver, he was highly motivated to provide me with a vomit bag; stocking them in his cab. When I question my moxie, I should never forget surviving twenty years of a very sour, incompetent and bureaucratic academia, travelling into adventures in other countries on my own, dealing with my first cancer diagnosis and treatment in a country other than my own, luckily Switzerland, barely surviving deep losses, successfully

achieving an MFA thirty years after undergraduate school, giving public lectures to large audiences while suffering acute stage fright, enduring being on the dole when incapacitated, excruciating exposure of my work to the public. None of these trials are unique to me; sadly, others share them. But it is true that slings and arrows which roll off someone else, are pulverizing to me. I try to stay active and kind. But at times, I just can't live up to my own agendas. Yesterday, I ended up on the couch binging Law and Order and then slept ten hours through the night. I feel recovered today, buoyant. It doesn't seem like I can afford that many hours for rest and sleep, or maybe I can't afford to be without them. Perhaps, if I could successfully meditate twenty minutes a day, I could avoid these long stretches of rest, delicious as they are, on the couch. I am trying my best to beat myself up about the down time and it's not working. My week was stressful. I had medical appointments four days out of five, plus family shitstorms—ordinary life stuff, not catastrophic. I know I am not who I was before I am who I am. Do I really think, that like a paramecium, that the more I irritate myself, the more I will get done? There is a festival I should, and want to, submit my film to. Applying will likely take me most of the day. I am so slow at it. I am not bitter about rejections, just disappointed, and so usually I am willing to make the effort. I cannot do everything on my agenda in one day, but I have never conceded that doing the best I can do is enough. I accepted an invitation from close friends for dinner at their house, it's a reunion of very old friends. I want so much to go, the issue being my colossal and dangerous allergy to cats. Their cat has been dead a year. And their house is regularly cleaned. But I know that one old speck of cat saliva left over can send me into an attack even if I do not sit on upholstery. There is a chemical in cat saliva which permeates everything any part of their body touches, and I can die from it. I am several months into retirement from academia now, and whatever I accomplish without that burden, it isn't enough. Being relieved of the imposed regimens and deadly deadlines that pumped against my blood flow every day might work against me. It has reduced my anxiety so

much that it produces a new phenomenon, relaxing, or "down time." This feline kind of mental and physical stretching, reclining, and curling up, is so new and enjoyable, that I wonder sometimes if I am ill. I have been told that a large part of the population takes evenings and weekend days off, even if I don't know who they are in particular. It is my own addiction for complexity that is an impediment, and the standards I set. I am convinced the best thing to emulate is a machine. Of course, now I am a machine on the verge of obsolescence, with failing parts, but nevertheless, a machine. I could have finished work where I set quantitative goals that have nothing to do with art. They have to do with completing projects which have developed quantitative aspects, like three-hundred-and-sixty-five pages of text with the same number of drawings. Some days I dream I will wake up tall and thin and blonde with a passion for jazz and sports. If you knew me, you would know that was a delusional wish for what I imagine is most desired in the world; and provides the best defense never to be bullied, dismissed or disparaged. All signals for rest and relaxation were switched off and stored for decades, and now are turned on seeking their due, with no regulator. How many times have I said that I should have more faith in my instincts? Perhaps this is the month where things come to fruition and I move ahead with more alacrity. It may take an era to reverse the downward spiral of PTSD from my teaching job and if that is the case, I've come a long way. Emerging out of a centrifuge, how do I find bearings without my inner organs still colliding into each other. Each day I make an agenda and each day at some point I veer off. I love the couch, not just because it's blue velvet, but it's in my first proper living room (as the bedroom is my first proper bedroom with a door). "Camping out" for decades is not of tragic proportions, but it is a guilty thrill to have this bounty. The researched stages of retirement are the honeymoon, then disillusionment, and then restructuring or reorientation. I am sinking a bit even with the advantage that there is something I love to do. It would help enormously if I was easier on myself about the lounging I crave. Instead, I feel like it is depraved and that everyone else

in the workforce would want to kill me, and deservedly so. Sixty-five years in the workforce, always with the dream I could get out. I did it, but I am older than I hoped, it's sort of like a kind of revenge, by whom I haven't a clue, to be somewhat limited by the time I actually achieved it. Yesterday, I had surgery on a toe. I was a big baby about it (I asked for local anesthesia, and nitrous oxide—the latter was not available), feeling like a scaredy-cat. Other driven people have fears too. I keep providing myself with challenges, otherwise I would be perfectly happy collapsing into myself and daydreaming all the time, safe in withdrawal. I respond to people in a methodology to keep myself intact and still be active and kind. I sent off the revision of the genealogy chart to my niece and nephew, stated it would be in the back of the book I am making to honor my sister, recently deceased, and said that I hoped it was more palatable. I am reeling from the fact that now I know my niece and nephews will not likely be at my bedside through any misfortune and they will likely fade off into their lives now that my sister is gone. It's better to face those facts, and keep the people I love blameless in light of their seeking out their own best lives. My daily life has no structure (a good thing), I have no place to be (a good thing), no chronic suffering from academic life (an even better thing), and I can provide myself with enough sleep time, which is an amazing luxury. On the other hand, I am aging. In the old days I would have already been to the gym by nine. I thought when I could retire from the work force to make art, I would always be physically middle-aged, I was desperate to believe that being seventy-five was the new forty. For me, with my genes, it's far from it. Perhaps I am tired from all the retirement bureaucratic paperwork and processes, where the College, the University, the Pension organization and the Union each have their own rules and requirements, often contradictory, and simultaneously redundant. I'm very unsettled about the process even though I have "rehearsed" it so many times in so many meetings and readings. Calendar diligence notwithstanding, I wish there was a person, not Siri, to remind me of each of the many due dates for documents. My own nature rules me, sometimes not a pretty

picture. Everything takes so much time and focus; even banking online eats up time. I should be grateful I am still be able to do these things. I need to remember to slow down according to my limitations. Maj has died. When I think of all the fantastic times we had as a friend family, and how strangely it ended, it's so incredibly sad. The friend with whom I shared those experiences, who I would have mourned with, also died several months ago. K is orphaned, and suffering loss. I am still obsessing over details. The pendulum is stuck at a 45-degree angle. If nothing else, it promotes an impulse for action. It's not a bad thing to let some time lapse a bit before action when I have an impulse of any kind on any subject. If I think about it a bit, and still feel the same way, then I move ahead. A problem arises when dwelling on a subject becomes gnawing over a possible action. All that energy expended, to end up exactly where I was before on a Sisyphean slope. There are two kinds of thinking on actions. One is a true developmental path, where it is worked out, and the other is the treadmill syndrome. On the treadmill, I always think I need more time and information. This can be a pitfall. I dreamt that my apartment flooded. The dream generated fear. Meanwhile, in the dream, Phillip Seymour Hoffman was alive and well. Freshening up on interpretations of flood dreams, they indicate anticipation of paramount disaster and I began to feel really weird if this was all about sex. I'm old enough to not get into too much trouble. My sense of adventure does not match my circumstances, it's way out of line. I'm not only venturing to a small island in the Mediterranean, and then I am going to Naples for a few days because there is so much history to see. I get manipulated by my own desires to do everything, and everything doesn't mean the same thing as it did in days of yore. A friend has contacted me that I wouldn't care if I didn't hear from again. We had a friendship, but I could no longer handle his extreme and perpetual hysteria fueled by alcohol. He isn't incredibly likeable. I know I can handle this on a high road on another day; respond with love and affection without suggesting a date. He does not keep dates well. There is always the hope he may have changed. Hello, how about mindful living for today?

I have chores—and I get overwhelmed if I consider them all at once and short out doing nothing but trying to calm down. It is likely true that anyone else could do them then faster and better. I keep many articles of clothing and tech I no longer use—they should be discarded to clear clutter and make room for new. In terms of the tech, I am so fond of each tech—a-tech object. At first, a new tech is a rare toy, then eventually becomes ubiquitous, and lastly obsolete, vanishing as junk, but hopefully leaving behind it a new and better version of itself. There is an article in the New York Times today about high and low self-monitors of their own behavior. It speaks to the virtues of high monitoring for the exterior world, while being “authentic” or “sincere” for family and friends. Watch this rabbit come out of a hat! The New York Times gets more like Facebook every day. I’m afraid to write about why I am doing the SEE NO EVIL drawings, which I feel a huge compulsion to do. All the acid free paper inside the frames of my drawings is wrinkling from humidity. I will iron them. Should have gone for the most synthetic toxic paper and saved the trees. Eureka: I just found the switch to turn off self-criticality, like one turns off any switch in a bipolar state. I am so capable of cooking up frustration, anxiety and depression, I must be hungry for it. Although yesterday I had the best, most productive, day. I felt so positive and kept going from eight a.m. to eleven p.m., a long day just like old times. Did many things in a fluid way, and it was topped off by a great visit from a friend. My friend loved the new drawings and the new prints. Since I have been going from one project to the next in disparate media in disparate projects, I make it hard to write a sensible and brief mega-narrative. I constantly have to reinvent the wheel for different requirements, everyone has to, so that means a review of all my history of grant applications, and honing it down to a paragraph or two of what is the most meaningful thread. I spent hours last week trying to reconfigure my new prints booklet for a different self-publisher so the books will be cheaper. It was incredibly frustrating because of my state of mind and I plowed through it. The hours I spent yesterday to complete that job were gratifying

because I had laid all the foundation for it doing the grunt work the day before. The lower price will enable me to distribute them more lavishly. I dwell on the fact that someone else could have done it in a much shorter time. It is hard to focus on grunt work of high detail at this age, at a certain point there is brain fog, but I can do it, just not as fluidly as twenty years ago. There is nothing to bitch about. I have global worries, but if I work moment by moment and I don't inflict dire thoughts on myself, or anyone else, it works out. Nice shape my life is in for today. Calm and steady troubleshooting is everything. My initial panic at the first sign of dilemma is distracting, but I do have the temperament to calm down and apply a rational course towards a methodical solution. That's not where magical thinking is helpful. One day this week is physical therapy and lunch with old friends. Then picking up my camera lens from the repair shop. That's a good day!! I want to be more concise, write less and live more, but sometimes it feels imperative to note what I am doing and where I am at. Today is a work-at-home day, troubleshooting and working, it's an inside day as opposed to an outside day. In order to overcome disappointment, humiliation and anger and move on, I want to pull in the reins a little on my friendly nature and try to be more circumspect in my behavior. Fat chance! Anytime I mingle with rarely seen people, there are terribly awkward moments that worry me. The visitors from California want to see me a third time. It's nice that they want to, but I am more than satisfied with two encounters: the dinner I made last night, and the Sunday afternoon gathering. All I think about is what kind of creature am I that I don't want to spend more time with these nice people and how can I get out of it. Any other adult would know exactly how to do that and suffer very little angst about it. I have purchased little presents for the hosts' three grandchildren and found out last night that eight more children are coming. There is no time to get more gifts. I could quietly pass a shopping bag of presents to the hosts (the grandparents) and ask them to distribute them after the party so the other children don't feel bad. All these issues become upsettingly out of proportion because I

am nuts, it's kind of sad really, the eagerness for real-life normalcy. I often feel generous. G had a biopsy yesterday. I pray it is ok. I hope I have become adept at separating things out so I can be of service in a self-protective way. Emails and phone calls come very often with demands for immediate attention, and I want to attend to her out of love and care. Aging is an avalanche of debilitation, and inevitable, and our medical system is so far from holistic. There is a specialist for every body part, and not just the general parts, but individual parts of the body broken down into its components, and then conditions for that component. I have four eye doctors: one for cataracts, one for dry eyes, one for vision, and one for surgery around the eye, not in it—that's another doctor. And then there is the oncologist for every body part and one could take care of oneself and be stricken out of the blue by cancer—my fate twice in two different body parts. I think part of why I stayed in Europe to be treated for the first cancer was to avoid complications of relatives all in their own scenarios who just are not capable of clear service. I was so utterly grateful to anyone who could be both caring and rational. Now I am having a terrible and debilitating allergy episode. My whole body feels like it's under attack, sneezing, dripping, and malaise; it's war. I was like this as a child for the duration of every single summer. Fortification and recovery require a great deal of downtime. Who else do I know that would be white knuckled with determination to have a good day? I medicated for allergies and am getting back into bed to doze until it's time to dress for the party I do not absolutely have to appear at but feel drawn to. Three family fathers will be at this Fathers' Day party. They are not my fathers. And their children will be more than nice to them, which is a relief. I will bring food or wine. It's okay to throw out flowers I am allergic to if I can't find a way to give them away. I tend to have bad dreams when at half-mast. I had a very bad nightmare about a colleague dying. I was at the funeral and G was giving the eulogy. It was horribly grievous. I just hope it's about the corpse of addiction to anxiety. Conjuring anxieties kept me safe, but it's exhausting. My academic job made it



necessary on a daily basis—so many were desperately treacherous, sometimes out of incompetence. I hear from still-active colleagues that it's still going on. It's strange that a personality change with so many benefits is accompanied by feelings of a deep personal loss. I have the utmost respect for H in so many ways, but I can't stand being collateral damage in the wake of his chronic hysteria. He has issues making definite plans because he wants to do everything at once and it's just not possible. I feel sad for him. But I can't take a day that's rushed and disjointed and almost unmindful in its pace. I guess it's because I never had small children of my own. I am very warm to him, but I avoid any special plans with him alone. As for our blowup, I was really physically impaired and longed to hang out with him as planned. At the last minute he wanted to go to a show and I completely understand that he is a visitor to the City and wants to have fun. If he had told me that a day before, it would have been fine. But that's not a possible character trait. It was just that I was pitifully waiting for him to arrive when he called to cancel, and I was so disappointed, and also very guilty that I was such a drag because I wasn't feeling well enough to go out. We tried to talk about it, but he just kept crying and carrying on because I got mad at him. He cannot help himself, but I cannot help being really upset by the use, even inadvertently, of hysterics for manipulation. He cries when he is thwarted, it's not confined to personal things. I felt humiliated and unloved by the tyranny of his emotions and I sort of told him. Not too tactfully. However, it's always a drama, and it is always exhausting. There is no room for a safe, warm conversation. I didn't know what else he wanted that I could supply to stop the crying, it seemed like he wanted me dragged down into the pit of hysteria for a reconciliation and I won't do reconciliation on that basis for anyone. I am not even angry anymore, I love him, but I just don't want to be subject to the drama. It's always been like this with my family, it's why I ran away from home at sixteen, and how I managed to wait that long I will never know. I couldn't find the time or place to read a book in peace. The familial chaos was ravaging. On one of his visits,

I organized a small party he would enjoy, and that worked out nicely. In spite of my explicit explanation, I know he doesn't understand, and constructs what's happened as an entire drama of rejection, all about him. He will create a drama as a victim, whereas he could share responsibility as a co-friend. I do consider that I am too hard on people in my life who cannot help who they are. My pet peeve is when no effort is made at all to transcend strong arbitrary feelings and divert them to good behavior, instead of behaving any way they like. But then I am jealous too, of their freedom to be who they think they are. Also, when someone is chiding me, I go wild too. Chiding feels derogatory, and has a slant on the see-saw where "they" are up and you are down. I am also at a disadvantage being hypersensitive to underestimation. Everyone should be loved and nurtured in order to be "cured." Yesterday I saw my cardiologist and he told me he was sorry to say this but although he knows I may think I'm doing something about my weight, it's really hopeless for someone my age when the weight has been there for decades because brain chemistry is set to keep it on and that is why he keeps recommending bariatric surgery—because surgery resets metabolism in the brain as well as shrinking the stomach. I think technically he is right. That doesn't mean I would do surgery, at least not yet. He was just telling me his reality—that if I want a better quality of life, in his opinion I should be half my weight and my brain chemistry won't ever let that happen. He also said that I would have to starve to lose it myself. I got so depressed, naturally that called for dessert and a vodka. When I was seeing a cognitive behavioral therapist, I was doing a cognitive therapy workbook, which worked a lot on changing one's "language." Unfortunately, it wasn't nurturing any sense of irony, for language subject to taxonomy leaves no chance to express something accidental or beautiful which requires a loose cannon to do it. As someone once advised Leonard Cohen as an art mentor, "just be sure you are doing the wrong thing." I usually spend the first two hours each morning clearing the decks, both personal and business tasks. Aside from it being the "safe" thing to do, not to get in trouble with the IRS for

instance by neglecting them. I do very much like the aftermath of feeling free for artmaking with small tasks already checked off. I have all sorts of ideas of what I should be doing at any given moment, and they are good ideas, but going from sleep right to exercise or drinking water makes me feel sick, and I'm not sure that would change with new habits. But this is about something else—chronic dissatisfaction. if I am on the exercise bicycle, I think I should be walking. If I am walking, I think I should be swimming. Ideally, one should deploy a different set of muscles every day; that's close to perfection, but the alternative is not doing nothing. This kind of busyness gnawing at the trees and missing a view of the forest makes me want to go back to bed. Tree bark is not tasty, nor is it nourishing for humans. The stronger one becomes physically, the more one can serve one's self and others. My joints are weakened, if nothing else, then by this self-agitation and pressure. And, according, to my cardiologist, all this effort is for nothing. Then on top of it, I think I am a lesser artist because I did two hours of tasks on pension papers and medical stuff. A true artist would ignore those things to get in the studio, and just let trouble happen. I find "trouble" is more trouble than taking care of the business. I am happy I got these things done and out of the way. Getting answers to major questions assuages much anxiety on those subjects and eventually I move into the studio with a mind cleared of life detritus for the day. I should be satisfied. *I am learning*, when a general anxiety waits in the wings, to occupy the airspace above it. Historically, I think with incredulity, how someone can expect my empathic ear after years of treating me cruelly. It's impossible to fix this, all I could every do for self-defense in those days was to move out of the way at the last minute, like a Matador, albeit there were a few times, when I had grown a bit, where I focused on breaking the skull belonging to the source of torture on the sidewalk. Today, I ended up walking a little after dinner, it was very fast walking for only a few minutes. This morning I woke up pulling a rabbit out of a hat. Instead of looking at something someone did as negative, I looked at it as the

best thing he or she could have done given the circumstances. Maybe I should find another cardiologist. I am jealous of how some people can tolerate mold and mildew and cats. I cannot join them for certain celebrations because of my allergies. It might be helpful to me if I learned to tell white lies. I reveal too much to people at times when they ask nosy questions, either because I think they may have a solution for me or because I think it's helpful for them, and, of course, because I am likely feeling starved for their interest, which is not a sterling aspect of anyone's character. I likely have the delusion that everyone is in the world to improve themselves, but that is likely none of my business whatsoever. Took my Monday back. At least, I will have had a day off from mingling that will make me less irritable. I stand fearful of being gentle to myself, without the usual watchdog flagellation. Twice in my life I spent time with different Santa Clauses, one on the subway and the "real" one at the North Pole or as close as one can get to it in northern Finland. In both cases I was in a state of blissful thinking, fairies were with me, and in the case of the subway Santa, my list of desires was alliterated, like "baby blue Bentley." It just felt wonderful to feel so entitled to wish fulfillment, and that particular Santa did ask for my phone number. Again, there is a delay with the making of my prints, this time it's having run out of a particular ink—it is worrisome when delays are repetitive. I have changed other appointments three times to accommodate this printer and then he cancelled. That's how it is. I will tell a lie rather than lose my composure. The point is to know I am enraged but yet to proceed reasonably. I have lost my temper only a handful of times. It's unusual because usually I opt for moral fortitude. If I forget all my super-ego self-training, I could be capable of havoc with really bad ripples. And I am never forgiven for it, I see others loved and cared for in the face of their abominable behavior. It's often said it's only human. Somehow, I am not that fortunate. My lovely place, my relatively warm day with family yesterday, an exceptional day with no hideousness for anyone, makes me feel content. My sister and brother-in-law were not fierce-fighting

in company, there was no scenario of sustained flinging hate. And there is beautiful June weather. I always feel like an anomaly in my family, as if I have roots somewhere else. I think Wortzel means root in German. I wish I felt grounded. I saved face by white lying. No harm done. I'm fine with it. This person made assumptions about me which were embarrassing. The lie was benign, satisfied her, and situated me in a safe place. People with no boundaries are very powerful and scary as hell. I wish I was more social, but without the solitude I need, I get irritable and discombobulated, and disjointed. One cannot beat being alive. My disproportionate angst around daily decisions takes a toll. Having more than one positive option can be a trial. Being in charge of all the mundane aspects of life, taxes, food, cleaning, medical appointments, like an ordinary person my age, I take some pride that I can care for myself in that way, I feel shame about it only when I am with someone who disdains it as not art worthy—which of course it isn't and then why am I accepting that critique as the last word on this subject, why not accept my own reality as my standard, and opt out of shame completely; opt for peace with myself without recriminations or regrets, Today I am scheduled to go to an event and then to dinner. It sounds wonderful, and any other time I would welcome it. I don't want to go because I have spent so many consecutive days with family and friends and as lovely as it can be, social interaction always leaves me depleted. I reconnect with myself only in solitude, and that is a shame! A day "reconnecting" followed by a day of studio work is the perfect medicine and I think I need it now. No one will care or be offended. On the other hand, it's a rare occasion to get together but I know, given my mood, it could be a disaster where I don't speak to anyone and eat and especially drink too much. Do I force myself to go into a state of agitation and self-deprecation, when the recovery from that is so close at hand if I only commit to it? Again, if I follow my own nature and do what makes me happy and well, I think I am sabotaging myself, that the more I force myself to feel sick by complying with arbitrary and self-imposed standards and expectations, the better I will be because I feel like

my given nature is a handicap I should overcome. Last night I willingly performed service by spending the evening with a sick friend and providing dinner. Seeing her was of consolation to her, for which I am grateful. I don't get too many chances to feel useful in a real-world way. I'm trying to say that I'm not isolating, I'm just worn out from even good experiences. I suppose it's called being an introvert. I didn't go to Woodstock and the World's Fair. It's the Dybbuk of presence with people, even those I love to see. I would have to take drugs or alcohol to be sociable today when every fiber of my being wants to be alone to calm down. It's my own rhythm. I suppose I would never have been capable of having a family; I would have loved them but gone totally nuts. I think lack of tolerance for anxiety and frustration is a big defect. At the same time, I am realizing the folly and waste of comparisons. When I do socialize, I am too friendly and too accessible. Surprised that people seem to enjoy it, or at least they make a point of telling me that and I don't get it. I want to act more aloof; more staid. Instead, I remain incredibly friendly and inclusive. That is a very vulnerable position to be in, at least when living in New York. After all the fuss, I am ashamed to say that I went to those events yesterday and I enjoyed it. Grateful for my friends who encouraged me to go. I ended up staying both for the event and dinner and had a really nice time. My friend G is in a constant quest for complete attention. I resent the entitlement he feels to be a bottomless pit with no discretion. At the same time, I realize that it is impossible for him to keep it under control. I am disappointed that patience and love have no power with narcissists. But in the end, it's my own perpetual conflict about wanting love, not blood, from a stone. He has been incredibly helpful and generous, that is partially love and partially manipulative seduction. Whatever one gives to him is never enough and everything is an equal emergency, whether it's running out of dish detergent or having cancer. One of my delusions may be that I think only narcissists get what they want in the world, and, without a streak of shamelessness. While the rest of us remain invisible and unheard. I would love to be wrong. Being vigilant about

one's fair behavior is like hopping steppingstones in a torrential river where one has to keep moving or lose one's balance and fall in and drown. I need a break. I need a break in renting my bedroom. I need to reclaim my whole apartment at huge expense when I should continue to rent a room to be financially stable. Reclaiming has been my plan all along when I switch to pension income, and my fervent hope for the past two years that it's possible. I have artwork to do that needs more space. Advantages of having the whole apartment are both personal, professional and long planned. But now the matrix of academic structure is clearing with retirement and I am frightened at my own hubris. So much to do, and I have been waiting so long to be able to do it in my own time and space. Signing retirement papers, with irrevocable decisions, is a culmination of twenty-one years of grueling labor. If I could get my emotional priorities straight, I could have a happy life. I am in mid-level depression. Realization means one can try to distance from a depression, but then there would be no depression and no need to distance from it. I can see that it will pass, and I am questioning why it should rule my actions. It's hard to step back. I hope to remove it along with my actions that prolong it and help me towards better actions taking the high road. I may be liberated in more ways than one when my retirement papers are signed at the end of this week. It's a giant milestone. I should celebrate. Maybe I'll go to a museum. I wish museums were more like they were when I was growing up; no one was there except the guards, who were usually artists, especially at MOMA. One could drift from one work to another for hours, not a sound was heard, focus was such an intense luxury. How else could I have had the opportunity to pass out cold from an encounter with a particularly evocative De Kooning. I had a bad experience last night with an intoxicated narcissist. I left abruptly. I have infantile expectations. You love your parents so passionately when you aren't quite conscious in the world yet and you are the center of theirs. That is not a primary set of circumstances in the outside world. The printer delivered my prints unannounced. Glad to finally have them, but have no idea what would have happened

if I wasn't home. With some people, it would be a blessing not to deal with bureaucracy ever again. Yesterday I was at the college with forms; today and tomorrow I deal with Social Security. Have you ever cared about someone who is constantly putting himself in the worst possible position? Diminishing contact is hard because he always makes sure he is in real trouble. This involves this person refusing help to curtail the damage, refusing any other remedies or treatment. I am quite worn out by the emergencies born of his refusal to take care of himself. He seems addicted to desperate phone calls at the eleventh hour. I am very sorry I am so resentful because I know the root cause of his behavior and empathize. But yet, even with boundaries, I feel ensnared. The expectation of being on call twenty-four/seven is so disruptive. He has so many loving options. When you exist in another person's mind as part of their parade, they have difficulty comprehending boundaries. As things are, he may call someone else to help him and then go on and on about the tender care he received out of spite, which only makes me happy he was cared for. He will often stonewall me then, when I call to ask how he is. This is his way. We all have ways. I, for instance, dreamt I was Cinderella; I hate when I dream in clichés. Nevertheless, the Prince was expected with the glass slipper, which I knew would fit only my foot. I knew this from historical records. I began hyperventilating thinking about the significance of this; how it would change my life. And so, I sat down and wrote a pre-nup, with limitations to the duties and public appearances I would be required to make as Queen, plus a detailed spec sheet for the dimensions of my required, large studio, with one wall of windows facing north and the rest of the walls optimized for handling and wall work. I added the number of assistants required and their skills, an allowance for fabrication, etc. The dream ended with my heart filled with love and gratitude. I emitted a gaze to gently infuse him with those considerations. I don't know how it worked out. At four years of age, I gave up on all direct forms of communication with those around me. I had exhausted all my prayers to go back to wherever I came from, wherever that was; plus, I didn't look forward



to a reverse trip up the birth canal. But, yes, things were that bad for me; I suppose I was hypersensitive. Any joy was risky, and everything I said or did was misinterpreted. Not their fault, if anything was at fault, it was the way I was built, oversensitive for life outside the womb. At sixteen, following a year of study at the Brooklyn Museum Art School, I enrolled at Brooklyn College as a freshman English Major in order not to contaminate my art with academia. I also loved Shakespeare and ancient Greek plays. I had the best teacher/scholars for those courses. Every work of the Iliad (in English) was gold to me, because these wonderful professors rigorized my knowledge. I have no idea what combination of genetic flavors formed me. I do know there were predecessors. At the end of the first year, at the prompting of someone I was dating who was a budding artist like me, I visited Brooklyn College's Fine Arts Department and watched a man in blue overalls install an exhibition of student work, painstakingly "thinking through" the paintings in order to install them in their best relationship to themselves and each other. Congratulating him on his exquisite discretion, I confessed that I was surprised to find so much aesthetic sensitivity in a municipal janitor. He thanked me for the compliment. My friend was horrified, and explained he was not the janitor, he was Ad Reinhardt, a famous painter. I changed my major from English to Fine Arts, in order to study painting with him, as well as Jimmy Ernst, Burgoyne Diller, drawing with Bauhaus Alum Stamos Papadakis, sculpture with Louise Bourgeois, and others. It was a treasure trove of an art department. Reinhardt said, after that day I mistook him for the janitor, he never again wore overalls to teach, and opted instead for a blue suit. How dismayed might he be now, when I have so many other interests seeping into my work like storytelling, medieval cartography, Napoleon's Egyptian campaign, autonomy versus control, questing towards the location where cognition sparks like Don Quixote chasing windmills, concrete juxtapositions, language and its fragmentation and demise. This might upset him. Medieval western European cartographers mapped the world ideologically (the map was the message), with only an

incidental interest as to the shape and location of territories. The world was the territory of biblical events, how creatures looked on the periphery of a drawn flat world. Simultaneously, cartographers in Islam were more intent on empirical geography in order not to lose their cargo ships. Seeing the Hereford Mappa Mundi out of its case, in its natural state, and available to such close scrutiny, just a few inches from its face, up, that long before Shakespeare, all the world was a stage. We are all actors, and inventors. Some of us, are in love with the poetics of the process. Marconi only hoped the "ether" existed and that radio waves would follow the curve of the earth within the earth's atmosphere. He travelled back and forth between Nova Scotia and his base in Europe many times trying to figure out why the signal wasn't crossing the ocean. On one of these trips, after eight months of failure, he suggested reversing the signal, sending it one way instead of another. It worked. I have a great deal of nostalgia about virtual avatars and bringing them into clumpy, robotic physical presence. The robot I have used as characters have always had an autonomous component of its own history and personality, which it becomes robbed of when suddenly control is taken over by somebody out there with access to its controls. I have a bit of agoraphobia. I want more than anything to stay home and watch Law and Order SVU ad infinitum. When I get wherever I am going, I feel fine and usually have a great time. I suppose it's unbecoming in someone my age, but I still flirt. Riding the subway to Brooklyn College in the 1960s, one often arrived in class with a semen deposit on one's dirndl skirt. The style then had so many crinolines, I didn't feel a thing. It's been forty-five years since I impulsively leapt onto a Santa's lap in the subway, telling him everything I wanted for Xmas. I was very poor at the time, living on Wonder Bread, tuna fish, and art. Another dream: My father has moved back into our Brooklyn apartment on Lefferts Avenue, and my mother, since they were estranged in the dream, is furious and moves out. This leaves me in charge of two children, an eighteen-month old boy and a seven-year old girl. I am doing a bad job because I am balancing their care with a life, a job and a vocation

(art). But being small, and quite attached to me, if I leave them for two seconds, the older one fills up the bathroom tub and I find them there—both totally underwater. I tell the seven-year old she should know better, but they are children, and this is their tantrum, lobbying for my presence at all times. I surrender. I love them and they need my care. So now I belong to two cancer clubs: bladder and breast, the latter just recently. So why do I feel lucky? Because both were so early, the breast cancer so small no one, not even the surgeon could feel it; the surgery was not horrific, with no need for chemotherapy or radiation. I wish they had another word for lumpectomy, it's so unglamorous. Six centimeters, stage one, and the margins perfectly clear of cancer. How lucky can one get? There is an option of radiation to reduce the percentage of recurrence from 5% to 3%, which I am not going to take. I am being treated at one of the best cancer facilities in this country and I know they will be vigilant if I am. My case is a true argument for annual imaging for everyone, particularly ultrasound. If it wasn't for that testing, and the comparison to last year, when this tiny evil kernel wasn't there, it would have remained undetected. My surgeon was a woman, the anesthesiologist was a woman, all the nurses and technicians were women; I know it's sexist to say, but an all-women team provided an incredible feeling of comfort, confidence and optimism. And they coped so well with a surprise idiosyncrasy. One minute I was talking away lying on the table, and the next I was unconscious with my jaw clamped shut so tightly they couldn't open it to administer oxygen. The anesthesiologist performed a "maneuver" to pry open my jaw and then clamp it open. I wondered why one of the aftereffects of surgery was that my face was swollen and my jawline painful to the touch. As it is, I sleep at night with a tooth guard, the sleep apnea machine, a neck brace, the wedge pillow and varied vaginal suppositories, not a pretty picture. I love my life, but I live in an environment I react adversely to, or perhaps some of us live too long for how our bodies' are engineered and require all these props to sustain any quality of life as we age, at least for those of us lucky enough to live a privileged life; with health

insurance, medications, acupuncture, fresh non-irradiated food, more than adequate shelter, and a slew of regimens in an attempt to slow the decay. I see trouble for me in paradise because I can't tolerate the feverishly exuberant postings to the Eden as dystopian as the original, of social media. It doesn't matter whether the content is about cats or righteous causes. I imagine sometimes these posts are like mutually polishing the veneer of a cup overflowing like a cornucopia in seeking a Capra-esque life. This is social joy; not to be confused with epiphany even when it adopts that tone. Why in the world should this be offensive? I don't post personally because I am afraid of inviting attack at my most benign, that's fine, that's my business. But just looking at social media has the potential to jettison me into agonizing envy, not so much about specifics, but about the ability to practice putting oneself on the upside, the light side, the side of "it's all more than okay." I go there because I want to keep track of my friends, but sometimes it flings me off kilter. I had a lovely day today in a different way than I intended. The days I manage slings and arrows immunity and float on good will are the days I celebrate. For every condition he has, my friend refuses all or any regimens. It takes a village to support him in his lack of supporting himself and thank goodness he has it. So many people go out of their way with care, including me. I am sour today, and I don't know how lucky I am. I need to remember what kind of creature I am. NYC Dept of Finance has called me to tell me that they know I exist and that I filed a claim, but my paperwork is lost. I offered replacements, but they said to wait, they are still looking for it. More follow-up is in store. Odd they called to tell me that, very unusual. I'm used to bureaucratic nightmares, but I sure wish my part was fait accompli and the application was simply under consideration at this point. It's funny to be grateful that at least they are aware they lost it. I guess that's something? I feel badly for civil servants; they shouldn't call it that. I feel bad for the position the medical system has put practitioners in. My new gynecologist told me her peers are fleeing their jobs as doctors because the system is so bad in so many ways.

They are making career changes in midlife because of it; all the good motivations that drove them to become doctors have been made impossible by the medical system. The world is changing and growing but creating so much great waste in its wake. "Wake," unfortunately, may be an appropriate word. It takes so much death on the forest floor—everything must seasonally decay for regrowth. Suddenly, simple things like going to the paint store to pick out interior house paint seem overwhelming. But if I delegate everything I have to do, I would become helpless. I don't want to make myself more decrepit than I have to be. In the old days, I would be painting the room myself, but I have vetoed working off a ladder, and then there are the two torn rotator cuffs. I want to do it, but it's risky. Except maybe for taxes, and medical forms, I need to allow pleasure in all the things I have to do. I know most of us feel like we are constantly shooting down targets only to have them pop up again, like at a shooting range or a shooting gallery. Dealing with life detritus is like living in a shooting gallery. It is simultaneously wearisome and humorous. Should I be with a trainer who gets angry as part of his pedagogy? I don't think so. I'll see if I can train him. Train your dragon. Kind criticality is ok, anger with insult has always been a negative methodology for me. There are many tasks and errands I can do today off screen if I can stay away. I provided myself with an education, against my parents' wishes, they wanted me to work and contribute to the household, I wanted to work and pay for an education, and it was so hard to accomplish but I am forever grateful I did it. I know how broad or limited my birds' eye view on anything is. I know what I don't know. I know how to get where I want to go. If I could just stop lamenting where I cannot go, things would be better. My bucket list is dwindling from sheer rationality of my aging state. I'm not going to be an astronaut, ever. I'm not likely to get to Antarctica because at this point walking on ice evidences a death wish. Nor are the Galapagos likely to see my shining, reverent face. I'm not likely to learn algebra in depth so I can learn calculus so I can become an astrophysicist. I wonder if, at this point, I could even manage collaboration with one. Yesterday, I was painfully

marginalized at Home Depot. I stood my ground and got my task done but I am not as good as I used to be at enduring a hardware store salesperson without feeling like crying. It doesn't even matter anymore what tactic I take, moxie woman or old helpless lady, or old crone, or outraged: "you wouldn't want your mother treated like this. Ageism and even social elder abuse are real things. Is it worth dying my hair and having extreme plastic surgery just to ward off abuse from middle-aged retail salesmen? "Men" and "middle-aged" are the operative words here, young ones still remember their mothers and grandmothers and older ones can be empathic. I am in my late seventies. It will only get worse. I don't know why that makes me think of my dad, who threatened to break both legs of an art dealer who was withholding my profits. Money at stake made my dad talk in my defense. Supposedly, we are all luminous children of a higher power but sales guys in hardware stores don't seem able to recognize that. Perhaps it's a truly miserable, underpaid job. An old woman, even smiling broadly and wearing red lipstick, is a terrific scapegoat for daily frustrations. I was glad I arranged to have dinner with a friend afterwards. Venting with good sparkly wine helps. My wall paint and supplies just arrived. I feel better because the delivery guy was polite and nice and now I can hire a painter. The roommate hasn't returned from Europe as expected. That's not a bad thing. It's just that I need to know when he is moving. It's going to be a grindstone day, I think. I don't feel very well. I am leaving a big financial struggle behind me for how I live and praying I'm not sick; my life has changed on a dime before, I know the drill. Tonight is a friend's birthday dinner. I look forward to it. I hope life-changing plans don't exclude my already made plans for moving back into my bedroom next week. In an ideal world I should give my bedroom gratis to a homeless person. Change one other person's life for the better. Roommate confirmed he will be gone by the end of the day on Sunday. He keeps drinking my fresh-squeezed orange juice, which means he is going into my refrigerator when he has his own. He has done this before and then "confessed" after the fact. He has tons of his flavored seltzers here, a lot of recycling. Maybe there is

something that he wants from me that I am not giving him, so he just takes what he can. It fits with his bullying entitlement mode. There seems to be a discrepancy in the hospital portal about what I'm scheduled for on Friday. I will try to take it on faith they know what they are doing, and this is just a clerical error, a cancerous clerical error. Is it just an illusion that civilization is fragmenting? Our medical system has a different doctor for every body part and every bodily function, which means that each specialist is more expert at what they do. If only they would communicate with each other. It's like a medical ark. Of the genus urologist I have three species, bladder health, incontinence and oncology. Of the genus pulmonary I have one asthma and one for sleep apnea, and so on. Well-being in aging requires vigilance. My dear friends walked over an iced lake in the country last weekend; one skated. I have had so many adventures, and I am so happy for all of theirs, but I wish I could have one like that again, although I would also be happy walking the lake perimeter, if that didn't pose a danger of falling. As for the Galapagos, the travel sites describe the terrain as rocky and slippery-my heart and head are in the right place, but my body is long past those possibilities even with the best of care and practice. Still, really, the cup is half full, not half empty. I am here, riding the waves of the crests and pitfalls of aging. Today I read an article about a woman who is genetically incapable of experiencing high emotion or physical pain. Childbirth was just a little uncomfortable. How she is built allows her to deal matter-of-factly with things the rest of us reel from. Of course, pain is also supposed to be our friend, to signal us when we or someone else is hurting us, and being as oblivious as I am, that comes in handy. The article resonated because I am so genetically sensitive. I can watch myself from a bird's eye view experience minor events with adrenaline pumping like a bucking bronco. Did Ashkenazi Neanderthals go after bison in the wilderness? Is that why I am like this? AKA, I can recognize excessive emotion while simultaneously experiencing it as real. Gratefully, I have a great friend meeting me today for the biopsy. Uh-oh. Last night I dreamt

about two deceased people close to me. In the first dream, my first boyfriend came around to be with me, and then once again, withdrew. What else could be new? In the dream I told my friend that nothing changes, that I knew I would love him dearly forever/Diamonds and Rust. Then, convinced I was awake, a young woman in a black and white maid's uniform (black dress, white apron) stood by my bed and in a deadened, monotone voice said, "please forgive me." I was unmoved. I assumed it was my sister in some form of her costume as Gigi. I am so eager for my roommate to move out tonight that I am guilty of unnecessary angst because he is waiting for the very last minute to pack; hasn't even unpacked any of his packing cartons. All of that is none of my business, he said he will be out by end of today, and that is that. I am opting for the high road- assuming he is keeping his word for a change. He's likely as anxious to move as I am for him to move. I feel sorry for him too. He is moving through life right now by trying to bend the world to his will, and we know how that goes over time, unless you happen to be a psychopathic prodigy of Roy Cohn with the initials DT. Meanwhile, my insecurities make every small impediment a huge impediment to getting anywhere about anything; the little train that could eventually finds itself on a treadmill with a Sisyphean incline. The prospect of illness, however, obliterates anxiety about those things. Illness can momentarily cultivate more optimism, because the still frame of the moment becomes so precious. There is an aspect of fake virtue in feeling we have to work incessantly. Except for a two-block trip to the post office, I haven't been out once this beautiful weekend. I think I need to work; I want to work. Actually, I also need to walk, even if it's around and around the block for twenty minutes. Our beautiful landscaped plaza, which is private and closed to traffic and a perfect place to walk, has been closed for months for building repairs that haven't even begun. It is one of the instances where another person's dysfunction has a real dystopian effect on one's own life. When I am upset, I tell myself lies. I wish I could leave town with the ease in which I used to. Even for two days, I need two suitcases because of my regimen machines and



medication, and that's only because of trying to slightly slow aging and disease. I suppose it's hostile to inquire if there is a genetic pull towards the inner-space black holes of what matters among Ashkenazi Jews? Family members have it and also have no filters, and, in some cases, no ethics. Maybe I made sure I have something to feel bad about because I was afraid I would become as reckless as they are without it. And what is the alternative? Feeling incredibly helpless. On his first day, the bedroom painter scraped all the old paint off one large wall because he claimed it was flaking off. The fact that it may cost over nine-hundred dollars to paint a ten by fourteen-foot room with eight-foot ceilings is very upsetting to me. However, the real black cloud is my being encumbered with breast cancer and facing surgery and worried about living like an invalid for a time, feeling sick in each day if I need chemotherapy or radiation. Still, things could be worse. The tumor is tiny, a not-very-volatile cancer, at stage one, meriting only a lumpectomy, which is now an outpatient procedure. If I am lucky, I will have had breast cancer this round like one has a cold. The prep that falls to my responsibility is a series of tasks over the course of a week. I can handle it. But leave it to me to find a really good trainer who is verbally abusive; and cannot help himself about it. In my case, it becomes close to elder abuse. I have always been slow at developing body memory for exercises and dance moves; that is, I understand them in my head but to get them into my body as indelible, natural moves, takes more practice than it does with many other people, which I am willing to do. If I am working with a trainer, it requires patience and understanding on their part, repeating instructions may become a bit tiring. I tell them this up front. Over the few weeks I have worked with a trainer where I have improved tremendously. But because his M.O. is so vehemently verbally abusive, and I couldn't take it well, I had to end it. I was trying to do that non-fault, but nonetheless receiving a long text rant from him, concluding with a list of all my faults, even that I am hard to work with because of my difficulties with focus and lack of body memory, and an admonition, even though I didn't criticize him, that I

should look to my own faults, which I promised him I would just to stop the possibility of provoking further conversation. I had to fire another hire for a habit of being two to three hours late at the last minute chronically, likely because she is juggling jobs, which I understand, but still, it bodes badly for me. I likely waited too long to take action. She also pushed to take over tasks that I can still do very well, and expressed annoyance when I declined her help, because I don't want to become addicted to helplessness. On that subject, it's possible she was feeling concern for ME, but the last thing I need is an overestimation of my degree of elderliness. I can see how a helper can inadvertently produce unnecessary helplessness in someone and I am not into it-yet. This seems to be a slew of firings in my life. There was the carpenter too who also lost his temper. I spark so much volatility, it calls to meditation and vacation. This place is a mess. The painter didn't put the shelves or hardware back in the closet. The helper who came yesterday and finished for him painted my closet doors shut; considering the whole story, that's almost funny. I try to break things down, so they aren't so overwhelming. But then there is such a thing as too intense a focus on details and perfection and one gets all bogged down in a descending spiral. Nothing is ever really finished. I am capable of fixating so hard on each particle of something like it was the end of the world, putting myself in a position where the slightest obstacle throws all the chicks out of their nest; while I stand there gnawing on the bark. Is bark nourishing? The goal is to once again revamp my studio so I can expand on projects and, in doing so, clear a path for projects. The steps are a bit overwhelming, because I used to do it all myself and now, I am dependent on help for certain aspects. There is an underlying reality causing anxiety. Early and tiny as it is, I have cancer and face surgery. I am grateful for that scenario in that it couldn't be better if one has to have a cancer scenario, to have this one. I have a lot of objections to my own dramas. And now I'm going to have a wider repertoire of self-pity because I'm a bit scared about this illness. Hoping for no surprises with surgery. I reached out to my

friend B, who is going to pick me up after surgery, because I realized at the eleventh hour that I will also need someone to go with me to the surgery. There is a lot of waiting time and I know from experience that I can barely hold it together because I am frightened even though I am looking forward to the magic moment when the anesthesia takes effect. In any case, she has taken the day off from work so she can do that. It's amazing and fantastic and I am so grateful. I will pay it forward for her or someone else who needs that. This morning I applied busyness to anxiety like a salve. Yesterday I went to a friend's opening in spite of shakiness and agoraphobia. Being present was about our friendship, and cherishing it. It is not totally crazy to be afraid to be on the streets at night. It's an old person's fear to zoom in and out of agoraphobia. At seventy-eight, I am much more susceptible to falling when jostled, and sensitive to hostile ageism. I still have some moxie, but what I don't have is the sturdy physicality I used to have. That is a handicap; I am lucky to have had so many decades of agility prior to this. But it does bring home that when I am out, I need to take it step by step, carefully. I was particularly shaky last night. Will I be able to endure aging or consider the deliberate alternative? It's never boring; evidencing an ailment or two every day rears its head. The decision is made to try and be accepting. Fortunately, the next three days are writing and nesting; days for calming down and staying comfortable. I wish I was a person who found solace in socializing and running around. I was adversely affected by the Chinatown fire. No one was injured, but the whole next day the neighborhood air was filled with black smoke. It was an historically archival building and very sad for Chinese New York heritage. As a result, I have a sore throat and coughed. I was afraid that my lungs may be affected, and surgery will have to be postponed. Now, a day later, I am off to an ER to get definitive information about what's wrong with me since the Chinatown fire. I need to know if I'm sick or it's just smoke irritation. Plus, something bit my hand in my sleep and this morning it was all swollen and one of my fingers was out of commission. Con Ed has turned off our heat

and hot water. They say I have some sort of sinus irritation from the smoke. I was hoping that was true but am afraid that wasn't all of it because today I have a 102-degree fever. I'm trying to distract myself by alternating chores with rest periods. I was never one to be able to work with fever. Is it criminal to just remove the pressures of who I am not, just to ease my mind? Now I'm definitively coughing up cadmium yellow with a bit of burnt umber yes, which would indicate a full-blown sinus infection and no wonder I feel like shit. It's normal to be a bit frightened about how things can turn on a dime. Quanta says that mathematicians have proven the Universal Law of Turbulence. I love the English language; each phrase sits on one context pleat of an endlessly pleated material. "Mathematicians prove Universal Law of Turbulence by exploiting randomness" is so elegant, but not as elegant as the actual mathematical solution, I am sure. I wonder if they have read Salman Rushdie's description of Iff's Ocean of Stories—a body of water where water runs in all directions simultaneously, not unruly, but constrained to a law so subtle we can't see it, it's out of the range of our sensation. However, some mathematicians can. In Eleuthera there is a place called The Glass Window where the Caribbean meets the Atlantic and creates a breathtaking whirlpool of turquoise mixing with a deep royal blue. I come from a family where it is obligatory to deny any connections between inexplicable or wondrous impulses. Try stopping your pulse and remaining alive. I understand it, first generation, poor and fearful, desiring assimilation and invisibility. Their motivation isn't so much envy of the freedom and opportunity they have provided for their children, but fear that their children should endanger themselves by going beyond certain boundaries that will keep them safe. It is difficult to be the same if one is intrinsically different. I am always negotiating poorly with myself. How does one negotiate successfully if one lives in a multiverse? Lawyers don't usually work both sides of a case. In my case, I have obstacles to overcome, and require a great deal of good fortune to do it. I could vanquish the enemy, develop a blind side, and see only one side. But now, I'm beginning to wonder if one is just dealt a

destiny. Perhaps I should have stayed at my original home and done battle with them. Perhaps I would be stronger, even if I lost, and be a "have" instead of a half of a have and half of a have-not. Let's say the world is divided into two different kinds of people: those who one hundred percent want what they want and those who want what they want and want to be safe. I can see how the former go farther in getting to goals. People can be insensitive even when they know something they want is going to make others suffer. On the other hand, they can have excessive empathy and thwart their intensity. To witness someone who doesn't care about others, are fearless about retribution, and suffer no guilt or remorse, is something both horrifying and awesome. Maybe it's more pathological not to go all out for what one wants because one considers all the ripples of one's actions, and when they are negative to others, one opts out. On rare occasions when support and care came forward from my original family, it came with the information that it was a tremendous burden on them to do that and that this kind of thing is not offered outside in the world without some terrible price to be overpaid—that everything is an eye for an eye; and that most people, like them, do not like to see other people have happiness or success and are dangerous. Happiness or success, or even being special in any way, is a hostile betrayal of others, so excelling is an attack, regardless of talent, hard work, or a combination of those and good luck. However, if you succeed by luck, bravado, or winging it (things thought very highly of on my father's side); well then that's not your fault. You are loved and the sun shines and you had nothing to do with it. In the bosom of my family, no one has any business being happy or productive in the first place; and if they do, they had best hide the evidence, lest monstrous forces strip away the source of their happiness, in order to bring them back to the fold of the family. It felt like each family member tried to teach me to lace my feelings with a code of jealousy, creating fear and helplessness at the mercy of an irrational force that may strike out and destroy me; coupled with guilt that I should have made anyone so pained with my good fortune that they are reduced to some lower

state of being. The issue of negotiation comes up when there is something I want badly that I cannot get all on my own. As a child, before I could even be in the proximity of real-world problems about acquisition, I needed to enter the fight ring of battling the internalized restrictions instilled by the original family. Before I can get anywhere near fulfilling a desire, all the impediments, real and fantastic, appear at once in their highest degree. There is something helpful in denial. I envy it. Ask the Wright Brothers if you can, whose wives, I imagine, washing up in the kitchen, lamented the demise of their bicycle shop as a steady, respectable, business. T says I go around "doing anything I want all the time," and says it as if I deserve to die, and perhaps she is right. On the other hand, I loved my family members so much, and admired specific qualities in them that I thought were beautiful; and I think that even that ability of mine to feel such deep appreciation was probably abused. They saw my helplessness in the face of this admiration as a way to have power over me, as a personal surrender to their power instead of as "art" or at least as a beautiful thing. I had to work against those feelings, and dis-arm the external thing I loved the most. That meant taking myself more seriously than I had to, because something was broken that could be a serious impediment to becoming an adult. I'd like to think I was, in a perverse way, treated so poorly for my own protection, to toughen me up, but in T's case it was always a toughening up for the kill. How sad. On her deathbed, going in and out of consciousness, she said, "I really love you, Adrienne" and it was the strangest and most ambiguous declaration of love I ever heard; my only thought was "but there is no evidence!" There it was, love where abuse was the measure of its sustained negative intensity. Only that was available. Sad.