

# Dead Men Talking

TRISTAN TZARA

POETE

1896 - 1963

*Channeled by*

LE CHERCHE L'ORDRE ET LE SENS  
John Olson & Spencer Selby

ANDRE BRETON

1896 - 1966

## **Dead Men Talking**

*Cyberspace is full of spirits. It is a disembodied realm, the domain of ghosts & uncanny obsessions. On New Year's Eve, 1998, the two contentious & enduring voices of Dada & Surrealism, Andre Breton & Tristan Tzara, collided once again, spewing pontifical debris in all directions. Much of what is exchanged between these two irascible spirits is pure braggadocio, the excema of a constantly abraded obiter dictum, pustules of prose on a page of swaggering ectoplasm vomiting nudity & art. But braggadocio, it must be realized, is the purest humility. The rumble of the washer varies. Nipples are sermons. We must listen to the sun as it crackles in the odor of the throat. One can, after all, do no less than dilate one's eyes when one is faced with a rampaging elephant of spectral viburnum. One might also fold oneself up into a holiday & extrude flatware & diving equipment at a summer of ineffable beige. Why ask for a taxi when you can have an obsession? It will help if the gentle reader remembers what devoted, selfless blowhards Andre & Tristan were, & are, & will remain, so long as there is hot air & bombast. For one of the joys of being dead is that of speaking ex cathedra among the stars, & the black void of space, where no one but the angels & asteroids can hear you. And the comets & the goldfish of heaven, which are actual goldfish, with actual scales & actual fins, & mustachios & Vichy water.*

-- John Olson, 5/10/99

**Andre Breton channeled by Spencer Selby**

**Tristan Tzara channeled by John Olson**

12/30/98

This is the ghost of Andre Breton speaking. Poetry is dead. My offspring have left all my dreams of the future behind. You, who shall obey my directions without knowing it, must listen as continuity collapses in on the edifice. Sound replaces all thought of the subconscious.

Nothing happens by accident. Realize this without words and poetry will come alive again. In the meantime repeat after me: simple true wondrous native flow. Cliche eclectic in a row. Burst out laughing before you're finished. Make money lie in a different angle as you go.

Save a dollar for admission. Pictures and music by behavior failing every thought and idea that is good. Tell my why you don't believe and I'll show you something that is always new. In the meantime repeat what I tell you when I tell you and do this only if you're a ghost also who's determined to forget the best part of what I just said.

Andre

12/31/98

This is the ghost of Tristan Tzara speaking. Death is poetry. Primordial whistles the sound of a corner the eyelids of drowsy tapirs.

Everything in the world is new and Atlantic, like blue water in a soap dish. At midnight I feel the heat of the voice obscure the false responsibility of aluminum.

You are so right, Andre. I forgive you.

*Nous ne savons rien. Allons nous embrasser à la fontaine.*

The shape of time is human. Blueberry pancakes in the Prairie Rose. Hot steam on my knuckles. A yearning burning desire licorice and wool the smell of garlic lignum vitae querulous quixotic quahogs Tibetan mandalas the King of Snow vomiting shadows of continuity as the subconscious of an Andaluvian lobster cradles Hollywood like a submarine.

I have saved my dollar. I await admission to the new wax museum. It will be so happy to feel the coarse rags of ourselves again. What is a ghost, after all, but the residue of a crime?

From the motions, find the forces. From the forces, derive the mangoes.

Water is continually writing itself, banking on parchment in Ravi Shankar's dressing room. Scissors and ribbon in an antique drawer.

The tongues of kings the tongues of queens the tongues of the Yellow Pages in a fever of mauve utility.

Tristan

12/31/98

Thank you, Tristan. But I'm not speaking to you. I can't remember why, but I know you still piss me off.

Death is good, you're right about that. These poor fuckers trying to hold on to life. I don't envy them. If they only knew what was coming.

Write me your last poem before it all changes and all will be forgiven. We can meet up somewhere away from these insipid new age channelers and their ilk. Let today's poets face tomorrow alone. They're all a bunch of wimps that need a dose of real cosmic wrath. Don't you agree?

Andre

1/1/99

Yes, we agree on at least one thing, Andre, today's poets are wimpier than the Pillsbury Doughboy. Their poetry is a pile of sticks and tufted alarms. The words in their poems are static and gaudy, like Indonesian silk moths

pinned to a museum wall, like egrets stuffed with wing nuts, like cuneiform websites hemorrhaging howitzers and spoonbills. But what was it you said or did that pissed me off so much? Alas. My memory is not what it used to be. Was it communism? Freud? Spodeware? Egg-and-dart frieze patterns?

The perfect poem is a laughter and a storm.

There is no perfect poem. There is only the poem inscribed like a dial on the sun's only living hour. The bells chime for no reason and we too. We walk to escape the swarming roads with a flask of landscapes and a single disease fine and light like the smell of thin grass.

Have you seen Paul? Benjamin? Antonin? Philippe? Blaise? Guillaume?

I want that glib and oily art to speak and purpose not. The clouds swaying from my neck like the necklace of our dreams of oblivion.

Today is the beginning of a new year. Let us welcome it with an insurrection, a surge of slanted skies and ribbons of water endless as snow.

Tristan

1/4/99

I'm hovering Easter Island in a ship ten miles long. All you mention are here or have been. We're preparing a message to the people of world, that their failure in this century is now complete and so no longer matters. All is ready for the new way.

The noun poetry is dead. Long live the adjective poetry, and the verb.

Books are at the top of a pile of garbage that almost reaches the window I just opened. Each book represents a belief. Each belief represents a person. Each person represents a star. Each star represents a memory. Each memory represents a childhood. Each childhood represents a dream that no one can remember till we step thru this portal and stand on top of this mountain and wade through all these books and find one we really need--that speaks to us as the voice was meant to, that feeds all the baby birds screaming for food that only the innocent (and their victims) can believe.

Andre

1/5/99

Yes, as much as I love them, slippery little minnows of mimetic mistletoe, nouns cannot be trusted to transport the cargo of our poetry. They are no more than negative electrons always in search of covalent bonds. This is because our poetry is polyunsaturated, and must remain polyunsaturated. For to be otherwise is fattening. Too much emphasis on nouns leads to a messy saturation of the carbon atom, an encumbrance like barnacles stuck to the hull of a static ideology.

Nouns are slippery and synthetic and slick. They create illusions. Nouns are mirages. It is in verbs we must trust the engine of our language. The engine of heat swelling our balloons of thought so that they bulge into colors like giant breasts of lactiferous signification floating over a landscape of puckered lips and wavering tongues. Nouns are the bones verbs the circulation, nouns the blood and corpuscles, verbs the heart pumping circulation through the veins of the sentence.

Adjectives are qualities, amphibians of profligate chemistry. It is for that very reason I have a great love of adjectives. They afford a perspective, an attitude, a proportion, a delicious relativity to our woefully circumscribed world. One might use them as one focuses a telescope or a pair of binoculars. One might use them as lenses reflecting and refracting the light of an indiscriminate sun.

Adjectives refine our vision. But adverbs oh adverbs are the finest of all for adverbs qualify our movements, adverbs are the perfume of movement, adverbs are the nuance of action, condiments of motion. Adverbs are wonderful as the breath of heaven is wonderful when the lightning bursts over Idaho hills and quickens the smell of lavender and sage. It is the breath of adverbs that animate the nostrils of nouns. It is the broth of adverbs that pour lightly out of the clouds like mediations of light in delirious deliquescence. That toss and turn like oxymorons of slowly mixing paradox in great rolling drums of cement truck substantiality.

Tristan

1/5/99

Well, my dear Tristan, I wasn't making a statement about preferences for parts of speech. I was making a statement about the meaning of poetry. That thinking it's a category of writing has been the mistake of academics and literati. Unfortunately the entire edifice of literature is built on this mistake. Which is why literature is much more involved with the problem than the solution.

Your poetry happens despite your love for literature, not because of it. It comes from your freedom and your love for life, breaking through the walls of all explanations that keep us rational and dead.

To live in the real world we have to be dead. But at least we can dream and sometimes use words in a good way, to help us get a glimpse of what we know deep down is our true birthright. *N'est-ce pas?*

Andre

1/5/99

Oh Andre, you are always so serious about everything. That is what makes you so infuriating, and so delightful.

No, poetry is not a noun. Nor is it a ceiling fan or 40 watt fluorescent

adjective. I was merely taking an X-ray of this peculiar English we share (*qu'est-ce que se passait notre français?*)

Weil, here in the spirit world all tongues seem natural. Unnatural, hence natural. As is our poetry.

Poetry is a superfluity. It is the most unnecessary thing in the world, hence the most necessary. The sublimity of its energy surpasses even the terrible beauty of your average pleated lampshade. It is so difficult to transcend the rational; not even oysters can do it. For even the convoluted squiggles of their flesh resonate with Hellenistic lip gloss.

Tristan

1/6/99

Nietzsche tells of a man who was offered great riches if he'd stay inside a small house for ten years. Before his time was up, he didn't care about the riches any more. All he wanted was his freedom to leave the house.

For the house substitute rationality. Poetry is a window we look out of toward freedom. But our time is not up yet, and a window is not a door. We could perhaps break the window, which would give us some release--fleeting though it might be--and maybe let in a bit more fresh air.

Poets in this day and age never take such a chance. Many are content to just look out the window. Some begin by banging on it, and may even cause a crack or small hole. But even those end up gazing through a pane they've only managed to alter a little bit.

They don't want to damage the frame (which is literature, of course) and that's why all of them are gutless wimps.

This would be a tragedy if not for the fact that something far more significant is now happening: on the other side of the house, a door is starting to open for the first time in ten (thousand) years.

Andre

1/7/99

I have always considered poetry as a thing it is necessary to roar. In public. You cannot roar a noun. You can only speak nouns. You cannot speak the unspeakable. You cannot only roar it. Remember the MGM lion? Now that's a poem.

Today's contemporary scene is choked with diletantism. Everybody who calls themselves a poet (and everybody does call themselves a poet) is under the spell of language. That's understandable. Words are intrinsically magical. But to gain a mastery over distortions of syntax larded with dollops of literary theory or pumped with appropriated texts collaged into an aquarium of Derridean blowfish are not poems but calcareous cubes of paper gas. There is far more to a poem than meets the proverbial eye. A poem should hit the head like a hammer.

But who are we to judge, Andre, we are only spirits. We do not have the added burden of skin and muscle to hamper our movement. We don't have tongues in our mouths or teeth in our gums or gums in our mugs. We don't have hair on our heads or nails on our toes or cerebellums at the base of our necks. We don't have necks. Remember necks, Andre, they were so unique and wonderful. They were like fountains of blood and Hegelianism.

Yes I like Nietzsche's parable of the house. I think people in the flesh world are suffering horribly from a spiritual agoraphobia. But I'm reluctant to put all the blame on Urizen. Urizen is merely a viral imbalance. A house is a form of shelter and reason and logic are a form of structure, epistemological lumber if you will. But yes, the view does get boring. One should always be pushed outside by an impulsive and radiant elan.

The questions remains: why read, and for what goal? (The English word 'goal' has a marvelous correspondence with the word 'gaol,' meaning jail, *n'est-ce pas?*) Does one read to learn? Does one read for understanding? *À comprendre quoi?* If we dispense with *une hiérarchie des significs*, choose one word over another word because it sounds more engaging to the ears, we get a denotation tending toward zero, and a connotation tending toward infinity! Ah, but don't we know that now, you and I, now that we're dead, and people quote us, and try to mimic us in their stupid coffeehouses.

Tristan

1/8/99

I must confess something I never admitted when we were alive: you were a better poet than I. But I had a vision for art and for society. I could see the threshold of truth bursting through the darkness of history. My theories had their limitations, but they roared as no poetic has since.

Am I to accept what these fools have done to our art because I no longer have a neck? Is their folly any less because they have bodies?

I don't blame everything on Urizen. The fault is man's for forgetting that reason is just a tool. The house we're trapped in is really the house of our knowledge. The door is opening now and few even notice. If they did they'd be terrified. It's one thing to dream of freedom but quite another to really leave this womb of what we think is reality.

I go back and forth between "we" and "they" because I still have compassion for those who are alive on earth. I still identify with their struggle, even as I am disappointed in their recent efforts. I'd like to warn them that a wake-up call is coming soon, but perhaps that's not such a good idea. Compared to a bucket of water, a whisper in the ear doesn't mean much, especially when the sleeper has been ignoring all the signs and attempts to gently revive him.

To open our eyes and realize everything has been topsy turvy: that when

we go to sleep, we're really awake and vice versa. That's what I was trying to tell everyone when I was alive, and they turned it into a genre of art. I guess I helped them make that mistake, but I doubt whether it would have mattered even if I hadn't.

Andre

1/10/99

You were the visionary, Andre, I was the clown.

I meant body less as an excuse for mediocrity and more as a symptom, the way speech is a symptom of citriculture, or poetry is a symptom of vocal infection.

The poem of the sublime is a worm in the cemetery of the future. Who is capable of writing such a poem? They would have to know how to eat dirt. They would have to be able to digest dirt. They would have to love dirt. They would have to know how to inaugurate dirt. Not the kind of dirt that produces hyacinths and roses, but the kind of dirt that nestles bones, and fattens worms.

That man I see you and Charles hanging around with all the time, Edgar Allen Poe, he could write such a poem. He could broadjump, lived in Baltimore, and went to military school long enough to get one of those marvelous coats to wear, although he hated the hats. His wife died in his coat. They were too poor to afford blankets. And yet he was a genius when it came to interior decoration. The man knew a table from an armchair.

Hypodrome of immortal guarantees: there is no such thing as importance there is no transparence or appearance. There are only pogo sticks and British thermal units.

People have been numbed, blunted, *accablait*, by glut. Media glut, commercial glut, chocolate glut, flocculent glut, feudal glut, futile glut, globular glut, celebrity glut, Monica Lewinsky glut, glistening glut, glittering glut, and gibbous glut.

We, as spirits, are immune to glut.

ohi oho, bang, bang

Tristan

1/11/99

Poetry is not a symptom of vocal inflection! Language is the virus and poetry is one of the cures.

We live in the body of language whose sickness we can longer distinguish from health. Just as poetry can no longer be distinguished from all the structures and bullshit that surround it.



Charles, Edgar, you and I are all a part of the bullshit and the glut.  
 People worship us as great literary figures of the past, and in so doing  
 they cancel the truth of our art.

Even as poetry washes over us all, we are working to neutralize its best  
 effects. The redemption we sense in poetry becomes like the religious  
 salvation we gave up long ago. It's a nice dream that makes us feel good,  
 but not enough to change our ways—not enough to save us from the doubt  
 and fear that keep us living in the real world together.

There I go again, identifying with our poor mortal brethren. I guess a  
 part of me is still down there wallowing in the dirt and shit. Or maybe  
 I'm like the reader of a novel who "warms his shivering life with a death  
 he reads about." If so, then this reader has also always been dead like me.

Andre

1/12/99

That was always the essential difference between us, Andre, you always  
 gave so much hope and importance to poetry. And that was right for you.  
 That's where it got so much of its energy. But for me, poetry will always  
 remain a sublime anomaly, a vital superfluity. It is so strong because it is  
 so fragile. Its ephemerality makes it monumental. It is a paradox too big  
 for the mouths of human beings. Those who learn to speak its language  
 lead dangerous lives. And like it or not, Andre, poetry is made of  
 language. And language is made of words.

But what are words? To tell you the truth, Andre, I don't know what they  
 are.

Yesterday I was driving around in heaven and got a flat tire. I got out to  
 fix it and an angel came along. I said "hey, this is heaven, I thought this  
 sort of thing wasn't supposed to happen here," and the angel laughed and  
 said "don't you know anything at all, son, why flat tires were invented in  
 heaven." And I said "why?" "Why?" said the angel. "Why because there  
 are white lines in the center of the road and a fresh layer of snow on the  
 transalpine Alps. Because the tread of the tire is an idiom of traction and  
 rubber is wonderful as a boardwalk on the Atlantic. Because the tire jack  
 is an expression of divinity and there is nowhere to go in heaven because  
 wherever you want to go you're there already. Because there is no flat  
 because there is no car." And I saw that the angel was right. There was  
 no flat and there was no car. There were only sidewalks, lug nuts, and the  
 principle of the Archimedean Screw. And I realized that poetry is, at best,  
 a license plate. And the socket wrench in my hand was not a socket  
 wrench but a pen. And I was so overcome with joy that I grabbed a cloud  
 and shaped it into a desk and grabbed another cloud and shaped it into a  
 chair and dipped my pen in a pool of sunlight and wrote the following  
 poem:

Ka tangi te kivi  
 kivi  
 Ka tangi te moho  
 moho  
 Ka tangi te tike

ka tangi te tike  
 tike  
 he poko anahe  
 to tikoko tikoko  
 haere i te hara  
 tikoko

Tristan

1/13/99

Oh you rascal, Tristan. Your poem summoned up that same angel when I first read it. He stood before me and said, Where's your car. I replied that I don't have one because I don't drive. He laughed with a mighty roar and said, No wonder you're such a serious poet!

You'd think up here in the clouds we'd never forget that everything is fluid and magical. But maybe if we truly embraced that light, there would be no need for words. Even in death we're afraid to take that plunge.

If we did, I don't believe we'd lose poetry. I don't believe poetry is dependent upon words, or any medium thru which it is perceived or expressed. This is a point I've been trying to make since our exchange began. To think otherwise leads to many mistakes, not the least of which is the false god literature.

I know I sound like a broken record. You revel in the joy of spirit innocence, while I fight demons. My spirit is drawn downward, first toward earth and then below. Heaven needs hell to make it complete, and maybe it is your heaven and my hell. Together we can surround the mortals on earth. Send them a message that death loves them and a new world is waiting that only one solitary person can read.

Andre

1/14/99

But let me ask you this, Andre, have you ever written a poem WITHOUT words?

To be honest, I have never tried to write a poem without words. Or clay, or chalk, or paint, or even the motion of my body. I have never tried to write a poem without ice, or bolts, or aliquots, or trailing arbutus. Frankly, my dear, I wouldn't know where to begin. I have never written a poem without begin. I have written a never poem begin without. I have without a poem written never begin. I begin a poem never written without have. Have I without a poem begin never written. But I have never written a poem without words.

I know: it's a matter of spirit. It's an emotion. It's a surge. It's a serge. It's a sugar. But without words what can one do? Fish in troubled waters? Roll the sky under the tongue like a sweet morsel?

But I agree with you 100 % Andre Literature is the death of poetry. Once it has official sanction it becomes a bust on some English department shelf. But what really hurts poetic spirit are all the awards and contests

and little gold stars they dispense to poets who behave themselves. Once you win an award it's like walking around with dogshit on your shoe.

You know we're dealing with a very weird, paradoxical situation as poets. Every word has a history. So every time you feel you're doing something new you're doing something new with something very old. How to get around that? I could've gone out to the desert like Rimbaud and wasted away selling guns and rhinoceros horns or written articles for *National Geographic* but no, I decided to write poems. But wait, no, that's not at all what happened. The poems decided to write themselves. They just borrowed my wrist and cufflinks. Poetry has a special affinity for cufflinks.

It's a puzzle. One loves animals, so what does one do: put them in a zoo.

It is time, Andre, we taught these people how to let the animals out of the zoo. But then we become pedagogues. Andre, do you know what it's like to pet a dog? Their hair is bristly, and their eyes are all agog.

Tristan

1/15/99

I'm glad you quit pretending that you don't know what I mean. Even in my crummy old collegiate dictionary, these differing definitions of poetry are recognized. Definition #1 is verse. #2 is "writing that formulates a concentrated imaginative awareness" and #3 "a quality that stirs the imagination." That puts it quite well, I think. My only disagreement is that the order here should be exactly reversed. Verse is only technically poetry, if it doesn't include the quality from other definitions. And #3 is the purest definition because it doesn't say anything about words.

I admit that people down there on earth must live in a world of words. But that is not the case with you and I, Tristan. For us, words are a look back. One might say that words are to us as verse was to 20th Century culture: a nostalgic reminder and appreciation of past structures.

The irony is that those structures mainly were created to build dreams of elsewhere, both in time and space. Reality was a nightmare because the present always escaped us, and along with it our greatest godlike powers. Words played an important role in this tragedy, as I'm sure you know as well as I. We became poets because we wanted to try to recapture the original ancient and divine purpose of words. The trouble was, we still had to live in a world where words were profane, used only to reinforce the nightmare of modern reality.

Now things seem even worse down on earth than they were when you and I were alive. In my opinion, the only hope for humanity is something incredible. The nature of human reality must change drastically, or all will be lost. This change obviously must involve man's relationship to words. You and I were trying to deal with art and poetry on this scale in our lifetimes. Most avant garde artists since us only have pretended to do that.

I don't have "the answer" but I know the answer is deep within man's psyche. The great question is how to even touch that ground that really matters, that

really controls our life and our struggle. Or how to get out of the way, so someone who does know can get to work.

Andre

1/16/99

My dictionary is slightly different. It defines poetry as: 1. A large-scale high-tension electric discharge that erupts from the base of the throat. 2. To cry or screech like a cat in heat. 3. The luscious brevity of hepatica. 4. Acoustical or electrical noise consisting mostly of myelinated nerve fibers. 5. The product of a body's mass and linear velocity convulsing with anemometer milk.

I became a poet because I was fascinated by extravagance.

What did the original founders of American culture fear more than anything, more than the forest, more than acrobatics or sensuality? Imagination. This is also corporate America's biggest fear. You cannot control an imaginative populace. You cannot enslave an imaginative populace, except by force, which costs money. The quickest way to deaden everyone's imagination is to convince them golf is fun.

I love reality. It is marching bands that I fear and detest.

Honeysuckle is the antithesis of sewing. Let us, then, sew nothing but honeysuckle.

Descartes said that the best way to understand the equation was to think all the terms together as equal to nothing. This does not mean that the equation disappears, but rather that in this way the form of the equation was more adequately seen.

The geometry of straw is an allegory of parturition, gristle of a Russian parabola in a rubber lily.

Let us celebrate the crocus and foliate the fire of the kitchen window.

Andre, I think you should run for president. Can a French ghost be president of the United States? Or is politics a fatal mistake?

Perhaps we should content ourselves with what Joan Retallack says (re: Poethics): "...all one can do is take what is actually...a very realistic, if improbable, chance that one's contribution might be useful, even helpful. And that any individual member, for reasons entirely unknown qua qua qua, could shift weather patterns for the rest of the century - in ways noticeable or not by us, the 'observant species.'"

Tristan

1/20/99

I find it interesting that three of your definitions refer to speech or sound, but none refer to writing.

With literacy came the beginning of male dominant, patriarchal cultures.

Reading and writing coincided historically with the death of female goddess cultures. It's been downhill ever since.

I became a poet because I can't be a god. Because in art I can attack, expose and remake the world.

What poetry today has imagination? What art today has imagination? Where are all the new worlds when we really need them?

I must disagree with you about golf. It's a wonderful sport: It requires more precision than any other. It is more difficult than any other sport because of this and because you have so much time to think between shots. To be a good golfer one must master oneself, in ways not that different than what is required to be a good poet. It's only indirectly competitive because your main opponent is yourself. In addition, one is closer to the earth and nature in golf than in any other sport.

I would only be president if the following law was strictly enforced: All nonactors appearing on TV would not be allowed to wear clothes.

It's raining umbrellas and the sun is waiting outside with a petition. Sign your name in blood if you want to go on living, safe and secure enough to imagine what would happen if you quit pretending that these words make a difference, that one dream is equal to another and everything will come true when you stop thinking with your head.

Andre

1/21/99

My dictionary defines writing as 1. Letter marriage happier than now. 2. A river marked with something I can love. 3. The price of everything in cold slimy juice. 4. A goal or principle served with dedication and ink. 5. Rough, prickly, or spiny marks that carry a meaning or establish a structure resembling the postponement of Minnesota. 4. Spaghetti noodles in the kitchen sink basket drainer. 6. A copious source of light discharged through the forearm in a viscous ricotta of glottal stops and Queen Anne's lace.

Golf is surreal. Hockey is pure dada.

Shakespeare's most poignant character is puck.

There is a problem we as ghosts are done with but that in our time we both struggled with and that is critical to knowing what it is to be human and to write; that is, what is the relation between body and word? Answer: cheese.

*ecoute ecoute ecoute j'avale mbampou et ta bonne volonte  
prends danse entends viens tourne bois vire ouhou ouhou ouhou*

it is time to go spinning  
nfounda nbababa nfounda tata  
nbababa

I have begun haunting the TV studios. Soon, only the actors will be allowed to wear clothes on TV, which means the screen will be blissfully bare 23 hours a day. (One hour will be devoted to the endless shimmers of minnows in a bucket of Oligocene aspect ratios).

Soon, Andre, you will be president. If I were you, I would begin writing my inauguration speech. And I, Tristan, will be your spin doctor. *Froid tourbillon zigzag de sang.*

Tristan

1/22/99

Good try but once you stop quoting me it's obvious that writing is not very important in your book of definitions. (I know, there's #4 but it sounds like a highschool platitude-- not up to your standards at all.)

It's clear that you want poetry to be sensual and tactile--your poetry is very much alive that way. That, I think, is the solution to your body/word problem. I appreciate that but view things a bit differently. I know that no poem I write will be as immediate and sensual as visual work I create. Writing is more cerebral than other art, no matter what we write or say about it. I wish that wasn't true but I refuse to be in denial about it.

This is one of the reasons why I've struggled to bring more clarity into my poetry. For me, there has to be a message in a poem. It can't just be the endless play of signification. For me, poetry must not give up on being communication. The message may be strange and/or complex but it can't just be whatever the reader thinks or wants it to be. Unlike many of my contemporaries, I do think difficulty and obscurity can be a serious problem in our art.

Andre

1/23/99

But Andre, the cerebral is the most sensual of all. What is more sensual than a mind freed of inhibition and dogma? What is more sensual than an idea that suffuses the soul like ether? What is more sensual than hues and harmonies of evening diffused in the mind like music? Mind and body are one. Mind body and word are one. Letters are fingers. Words are hands. In western plainsong a neume (related to numen, related to breath, related to mind, related to spirit) was a form of notation, from the Greek word for "sign." Ergo: breath, spirit, music, mind.

It is not the business of poetry to communicate. That is the least of its tasks. Let the phone company and politicians and software manuals worry about communication. Poetry aspires to the purity of musical form, its immediacy of being, but is doomed by referentiality. A C minor will always be a C minor, but the verbal expression C minor is not a C minor. It is a reference to C minor. It is poetry's constant endeavor to make something real out of that C minor. Give it a greater reality by aberration and feeling. The immediacy of C minor cannot be achieved visually

because it is a sound, not an image. To give that C minor greater reality than its own vibration, its own placement between a tonic and a downbeat, say, or a perfect fourth and a minor third, necessitates feeling. Necessitates ambiguity. A poem is nothing but typography without ambiguity.

We know that 1 plus 1 is 2. But in the world of poetry the answer might be anything. It could be 3, or 56, or 80, or 0. It might even be 2.

Mathematics is analytic, sees wholes as systems of relations; poetry is synthetic, seeing wholes as simple qualities: smells, textures, contours, volumes, weights, softnesses, hardnesses, fizzles, sashays, and manginess. Loudness, timbre, articulation, and speed. Any one of which can be a "message." It is by expansion of metaphor that fact becomes intelligible and the complexities of experience acquire actuality, arpeggio and aspiration, faschingsschwank and rhapsody.

O Andre, you are making me preach. What is happening to you Andre? You were once King of the Oblique. You once said: only the marvelous is beautiful. The fabric of adorable improbabilities must be made a trifle more subtle the older we grow. One cannot attain the marvelous by direct route. One can only arrive at it obliquely. Not like a bullet: straight. But like a river: by meander. And yes, even the bullet occasionally ricochets....

Tristan

1/25/99

Are we communicating now? I think so and I don't think either one of us is a politician, software manual or the phone company.

If mind body and word were really one, if we had attained that state then there'd be no point in talking about the differences of this conception of poetry or that, of this art or that, of this form of intercourse or that. But we haven't attained such a state, not by a long shot. If anything, poetry is farther from that ideal than ever.

I've come to believe that such idealism is a part of the problem. Poetry becomes what the poet wants it to be, what makes the poet feel good. Meanwhile reality runs rampant, in effect destroying (thru literature, literary politics, and other social, psychological and cultural trends) most of the powerful potential that poetry has.

I still have a dream--for poetry, for art and for the world. But I don't want that dream to be just a personal fantasy that makes me feel good. I can't be an artist if it's just an escape from the world (or a rationalized lie about where art has come and is heading).

A lot of your post seems to miss the points I was trying to make. I said I was concerned about obscurity and you advocate for the positive value of ambiguity. I hope this doesn't mean you think the two are the same? For me, the distinction between obscurity and ambiguity is crucial.

My worst fear is that you've fallen prey to the very trend I'm trying to address.

I mean, all these modern exp poets that set out to advocate for such values as ambiguity (or the oblique) and ended up in rationalized elitist obscurity.

I wasn't arguing for the sensuality of visual art over all others. I was just using visual art as an example. I could just as well have used music as my example-- because both music and visual art are more sensual and immediate than all forms of writing.

My point is, that if you take communication out of it, then you're better off to be doing plastic art or music. If verbal meaning can't cross a bridge from writer to reader, then you're better off to jump into the river below.

The bridge can accomodate ambiguous (and nonreferential) vehicles. But it must be open to the public and it must be well lighted. That, in a nutshell, is really all I'm saying.

Andre

1/26/99

But it is so manifestly evident we are not communicating. My ideas do not seem to be completing a circuit, and your ideas, as you have insisted, are apparently not coming through to me either. Though I think we are arguing for the same thing. A more immediate, vital, healthily engaged poetry free of literary cliques, politics, schmoozing, Ph.D. snobbery, stuffy literary theories, and so on. A clean, muscular, robust poetry. Like the smack of branches on a bare back in a Finnish sauna. Like getting hit in the head with a hammer. Like Buddhist monks catching a taxi.

Not a minute goes by when I don't ask myself why words? Why have I chosen words to knead into poems? Why not clay? Why not be a jet pilot? Why not just go swimming? Why not be an astronaut and walk in space like Robert Desnos?

Because words, like water running through pipes, are a song of circulation.

It is the sacred task of poets to fluctuate between mouthpiece and murk, renaissance and bile. Literature is gingivitis. Dada is floss.

The other day I overheard a story about a butcher who ran over the tail of a squirrel, smashed it flat, the squirrel running around in circles, the tail so smashed it remained stuck to the asphalt, so the butcher ran over it again to put it out of its misery. Think of that tail as the crippling obsession with referentiality, with MAKING SENSE, with dreary Protestant utilitarian rationalism, and you will see what I mean. We are both talking about the same thing, *que est-ce que nous ne somme pas?* We are in the same boat, Andre, (apart from being dead). But I am rowing one way, and you are rowing the other way. We are going in circles.

You cannot separate obscurity from ambiguity. I don't see how you can. But this is an area of great confusion and ambivalence for me. Normally I detest obscurity. Hopefully, my poetry testifies to that. But I (as did our pal Duchamp) also have a profound appetite for Mallarme. Go figure.

The difference between ambiguity and obscurity is ambiguous and



obscure. Obscurity can sometimes clarify what is deviously lucid as lucidity can sometimes obscure what is radiantly obscure. Gertrude Stein wisely proclaimed: electricity takes care of itself. Electricity is ambiguous, paradoxical, operates according to a principle of contrary, alternating currents, and yet produces light. But a bulb of 700 lumens is manifestly brighter than a bulb of 40 lumens. Why is it, then, that a poem of tremendous ambiguity, teasing, riddling, maddening obscurity, can burn brighter than a poem that is plain and direct in its meaning? Why is Jack Spicer more satisfying than Robert Frost? Why is Aime Cesaire spicier than Julius Caesar?

Tristan

1/26/99

Well, I guess you have a different idea of communication than I do, because I think we're communicating quite well. Communication doesn't mean 100 percent agreement or understanding of each other's position. If that was the case, there'd be no point in communicating, because we'd be the same.

I think you and I have a very good dialogue going here. And I agree that below our differences we share a similar dream for poetry.

I know that I can't avoid some obscurity, that to some degree it is a good thing that is inseparable from an element of mystery that most, if not all, good poetry manifests. And I know that I'm fighting an uphill battle in trying to distinguish ambiguity from obscurity. But I refuse to give up the fight because it's a hard one, or because I probably can only hope for a partial (ambiguous?) victory.

I personally think there's a connection between the obscurity of exp poetry and its elitism. Ultimately, I don't think you can separate all the literary bullshit from the poetry which this community supports. Obscurity isn't its only fault--maybe not even its worst one. But it's an important issue that has been denied, rationalized away and swept under the rug, almost in the same way that the problem of elitism has been denied.

I think it's misleading and counterproductive to say or imply that the choice is between "tremendous ambiguity, teasing, riddling, maddening obscurity" and poetry that is "plain and direct in its meaning." I want a poetry that is a balance between these two extremes. I've come to this belief gradually, after many years of reading and writing (and listening and viewing). I've come to believe that without this balance, there isn't really a bridge between writer and reader. On one side of this bridge you have a window, and on the other side there's a mirror. Only the balanced bridge allows us to retain a degree of both, in a form of sight that is really neither. Which is, in my opinion, the best chance that art has to realize its strongest goals.

Andre

1/28/99

I'm going to take a few stabs at distinguishing ambiguity from obscurity, slicing a little meat, as it were, from the dialectical bone.

A ratchet works by paradox: engagement and disengagement. Likewise a

line compacted with contrary aspects.

Fog is obscure, but it is not ambiguous. We know what fog is, it is the breath of toads.

Amphibians are ambiguous. Toads even more so.

Toads are complex metaphors evolved out of literal pamphlets of mud.

What do I mean to do when I set out to write a poem? Do I mean to do anything at all? Is it not just a matter of lighting a torch in the obscure laybrinths of a language? Who writes the words? Do I write the words, or do the words make me drunk in order for me to write them? Does language cause me to be alive? What is a literary object? Why do prophets speak in parables? Is language a cage, an endeavor, or an airport? Is poetry a door, a summons, a prosthesis, a spume, or a freezing hot day in the middle of the night? Can there be a poetry without metaphor, or ambiguity? What kind of poem would that be?

Imagine a language without words for animals, then writing a poem about a herd of deer drinking water out of a trout-filled stream with a swarm of dragonflies hovering over the surface.

What is the feeling of hope? What is the feeling of curiosity? What is the feeling of absorption?

Amber is ambiguous. But it is not obscure. It is reasonably yellow, which argues resin.

Obsidian is obscure. It is also a form of glass which takes a polish well, and has long been used for arrowheads and cutting tools. So it is semiprecious, but not ambiguous.

Elitists tend to prefer lapis-lazuli, because it echoes Yeats, and moonstone, because it is occult and expensively obscure.

Yeats was never ambiguous or obscure but always obscure and ambiguous. He liked to lie on Maud's lap soft and lazuli.

I would be - for no knowledge is worth a straw - ignorant and wanton as the dawn.

Tristan

2/2/99

"What do I mean to do when I set out to write a poem?...Is it not just a matter of lighting a torch in the obscure laybrinths of a language?"

That 's exactly what I've been trying to argue. The torch-light here could be many things, but not more obscurity.

Those many things that make up the torch-light may still add up to some obscurity--which is all the more reason why I want to emphasize clarity as

much as I can. I'm never going to be a "plain direct poet," but I have grown to appreciate the value of being as clear and precise as I can. As I've said, more than anything, this is an attempt to have a balance of values in my work. It's because there is inevitably a certain density and complexity in my writing, that I want to simplify and clarify what I can.

The same can be said for my other motivation, which is that I don't want to write just for a specialized, initiated elite--even if that elite is my peers who are in denial about the community they've created. So far, what audience I have may still be in this community, but I know my writing is not that influenced by it. Nor is it much influenced by any of the poets that have inspired my peers.

The above paragraphs were written by my surrogate Spencer Selby. I don't know what makes him think he can speak for me, or why anyone would be interested in his opinions anyway. I now realize that his ideas have been seeping through for sometime, screwing up the clarity of my messages to you, Tristan. I think I need to find a new channel--someone who's more devoted to that role and to me.

What Spencer doesn't understand is that all is resolved in the poetry. It's only our bad faith and brittle egos that keep us from seeing that. The clarity of poetry never tells us what we expect, or even what we want to hear. Perhaps more important, the clarity of poetry is not necessarily opposed to its obscurity. It is one the highest, most important goals of art, that it seeks to break down or transcend the plus/minus relationship of polar opposition.

Andre

2/3/99

Now. Where was I? Haunting the library. Books. Which are intrinsically haunted. A book itself is a ghost. We are ghosts because of books. But I digress.

"Art has an inherent obscurity based upon the unintelligible, non-signifying character of its elements (i.e. how "readable" are all movements, sounds?)" -- Michael Stryck, *Romanic Review*

"As the infinite comes to bear on the finite, so does obscurity come to bear on language." Ibid.

"Ambiguity is an intrinsic, inalienable character of any self-focused message, briefly, a corollary feature of poetry." -- Roman Jakobson

"The machinations of ambiguity are among the very roots of poetry." -- William Empson

"Obscurity is the consequence of language charged with figurative and phonological energies. Such language is dense. It ceases to be transparent. It is stirred, and consequently muddied, its surface - like the surface of the river Twain describes in *Life On The Mississippi*, moiling and pocked and dimpled and evanescent - must be read carefully, astutely, with total absorption, in order to discover the deeper features

causing such aberrations, such surface agitation. Opacity then becomes an essential quality, a cardinal virtue of the poem and not just an obstacle, a self-indulgent cosmetic masking the vapidness or incompetence of the poet." -- Eleanor Wissler, *The Compound Eye*

So, Andre, what do you think? Are your ghostly shrouds stiffening with surrealist choler? Or are you scintillating with mystic clarity?

And yes, I can't agree with you more, poetry - which is an energy independent of human molestation - particularly Ph.D molestation - breaks down all opposition, all polarity. Polarity is a bad habit to break. Everything comes in twos. Hands, legs, eyes, ears. We must learn to think like a nose.

Tristan

2/8/99

It's easy to talk about moving beyond polarity when you're dead. Spencer's problem is, he's still alive. And I agree with him, that the magic inside poetry doesn't help poets deal with the troubling reality surrounding it.

Of course reality is magic, but if people could really see and live that faithfully, maybe they wouldn't even need art. Then all life would become a poem and literature really would be left behind.

I was in USF library the other day and did subject search for "obscurity." Came up with nothing. The answer was interesting though:

Obscenity Law United States Popular Works  
(Obscurity would be here)  
Obsequies--See Funeral Rites and Ceremonies

So, I was being told that obscurity is lost or hidden between U.S. concern with obscenity and obsequies.

Or: poetry is obscure because Americans think it is somewhere between obscene and dead.

Or: our writing is a funeral rite that is unpopular because it's not obscene.

Or: our work is a bit of obscure life hidden in what is generally an obscene dead culture.

Just goes to show, a failed library search can be fruitful. The computer was protecting the obscurity of its knowledge of obscurity. But it still offered some good info, for those who can read between its alphabetic lines.

Andre

2/9/99

What really counts is heat. Intensity. A point, or THAT point, that specific point, that fugitive point where words begin to glow. Like coals.

Like molten rocks spit into the air from the bowels of the earth. One finds this intensity, oddly, among we French. You, of course, Andre. You who wrote with drowned women's jewels and a rosary of stars. And Lautreamont and Baudelaire and Rimbaud. And Aime Cesaire to bring in an African European Caribbean blend. (I do not include myself because I was merely charming, a practical joker and a hoaxer. A Romanian transplant. An electrically generated buttercup. I sleep very late. I commit suicide at 65%. Which is hard to do for a ghost. My life is very cheap, its only 30% of life for me. And 5% is devoted to a state of semi-lucid stupor).

And Blaise. Good old Blaise. One cannot have a proper blaze without Blaise. And what do all these people I mention have in common? Desperation. These are people whose desperation explodes on paper and melts the centuries' hardened syntax into a grammar of the soul. A sequence of words that read simultaneously, not like the cars on a train, or even the images on a film, flickering past so fast they create an illusion of movement, but a sculpture, an object like a mountain one day capped with snow and fluffy clouds, the next belching smoke and mudslides, rock and pumice bleeding down its sides. Everything eventually explodes. Everything that is with an appetite a genuine appetite not the appetite of mangos or saccharimeters but the ferocious appetite of little girls the authentic appetite of a lion descending onto the Kenyan plain to sink her teeth into the flanks of a buffalo.

You cannot see planet earth from space. This is one of the first things to strike my attention in the afterlife. What you see is a big lovely ball marbled prettily with blue and white. But that is not planet earth. Planet earth is a maze of roads. The world is covered with roads. Like arteries. Like veins swelling on a hand roads of blood just there under the skin.

And so I say hurrah. Hurrah for the highways. Hurrah for freedom. That freedom for which fire itself became man. For which the Marquis de Sade defied the centuries with his great abstract trees.

No more drunkards!

No more airplanes!

No more urinary passages!

No more engines!

No more mustaches! No more water skis! No more dots!

You now owe me 943 francs

Tristan

2/10/99

If life was so sweet, then why do we prefer now to be dead?

Intensity--yes, of course, but where did it come from? Desire, of course, but

for what?

It seemed we were trapped in a world we never made. Art was our only real freedom. But we didn't want escape. We wanted to live life to the fullest, pushing the ties that bound us from all sides. To do that required IMAGINATION, which was one thing we both had plenty of.

When our work became literature, when it went into the canon, it died a death all the more horrible because it was caused by our success. I suppose traces of intensity do live on in some of our pages and poems--but how can any trace do justice to the kind of grandeur we knew and lived and expressed when in our prime?

When I think about the world now, I'm caught between nostalgia and dread. Sort of like being caught between the past and future when we were alive, knowing that all that really mattered was the present slipping thru our hands like water we bathed in and loved but seldom were able to drink.

In our art we drank to our hearts' content, just like in our dreams which carried us on strange magic journeys and back home again every night. As we grew older we tried to understand and explain this process and why we believed it was our only hope, how it contained the secret of modern man's redemption.

I now believe these attempts at explanation were mostly mistaken. They may have been our fatal mistake. If our art had the power we believed, then why try to explain it? It didn't seem so at the time, but now that effort looks like a fall from grace, a compromise with the negative forces of culture that we should not have made.

I was more to blame for this than you, Tristan. I wanted to save the world and in the end I couldn't even save myself. If I was still alive I'd feel guilty; I'd beat myself up for my failure and spend all my time thinking about what I could have accomplished had I been smart and taken a different approach.

I guess that's one of the reasons why I'm glad I'm happy to be dead.

Andre

2/11/99

Desire? Why, the greatest desire of all is what I desire, even in death. Especially in death. What I desire is to be free of desire. Isn't that what all beings long for? It is these words, Andre. These words keep creating and recreating us. These hemoglobin words diffusing life-giving oxygen throughout our ectoplasmic beings. These words giving us the desire to be free of words. Desire is synonymous with words. Words are desire. Spermatozoa. Wordazoos wriggling into the paragraph canal to impregnate the ovum of idea. Words are supple as larks and eery as the meaning inside a bright piece of water. Books are permanent amniotic sacs. A reader's eyes bring life to the words forming in them. The words multiply into catwalks and submarines, pianos and snake charmers. They belch. They yawn. They grow wings and emerge from the page bouncing radar off the membranes of the material world.

Yes, Andre, what we sought, and continue to seek, and what causes our

ectoplasm to continue to quiver with agitation and glee, is immediacy, spontaneity, imagination. This is what gives us such a lust for the words of which we long to be free.

But what - if you'll forgive an old Dada clown for sounding sophomoric - is imagination? The power to make images in the brain? The power to give the image of what we actually see, forgetting everything that has been seen before our time? The power to become something else? A negative capability? An ectoplasmic capability? Is it a noon, or a midnight, of the mind? These North Americans among whom we are doomed for a time to wander and ponder prefer to use reality rather than to know it. This is why there is such a dearth, and a fear, of imagination in this artificial country. Artificial because it did not emerge from the soil. It was carried here in coffers and ships. The last gasp of the European imagination: in search of gold. Credit. Second mortgages. A present gratification whose substance is always deferred to the future. As if the future were a storage bin. Waiting for people to arrive who will never arrive. Because they lacked the imagination to appreciate the present.

I detest artificiality and lying, I detest language which is only an artifice of thought, I detest thought which is a lie of living material, the life living outside all hypocrisy

Daylight is opaque in order to promote reason; an encumberment and dragnet which covers our eyes with sails of fog. Sleep is our excursion, countries of perfect visibility.

The gong gongs. The decor and lighting change.

if you think *si tu es content lecteur* you will become for an instant transparent your brain a transparent sponge and in this transparence there will be another further transparence far, far away where a new animal becomes blue in this transparence

we carry lunar proverbs nailed to our scars

corpuscles, erythrocytes, hemoglobin

Tristan

2/15/99

As a poet words are just my medium. They are not the end all and be all of my life (creative or otherwise). They are no more or less than clay to a sculptor, paint to a painter, water to a swimmer.

Text poetry is a belated form in our century. The art of today is multimedia, and its guiding light is, always has been, movies.

Movies are my art of choice, which is very strange since I'm not and never will be a filmmaker. Don't even want to be.

It seems to me that there are two kinds of art: with and without words. Art that has words but is not confined to that form is the most powerful, at least in our age.

Of course all good poetry looks beyond words, even if the poet doesn't acknowledge that. That alone should tell you something about the limits of the medium.

The standard view in our literary world is that language is reality, that it is as basic and necessary as the air we breath. This I simply do not agree with. My disagreement is not naive. I know the evidence and why people believe this.

I am, always have been a very verbal person, both in my consciousness and my outward expression to the world. In effect I do breathe words, but that doesn't stop me from knowing they are polluted.

Is the imagination a remedy to this pollution? I'm not sure. Maybe it's just smog protector. Or a lifelike cyber robot that dreams of being a real person.

Of course, "real" is just a word also. And I could go on and on in infinite regress with such thought. I don't deny that I am living in the house of language. Probably I am a prisoner there, who's just trying to make the best of things during the duration of my life sentence (without possibility of parole).

If we're stuck in this house, then windows become very important. Poetry may be one of our biggest picture windows. But it's not the only one and it's not a door.

Spencer

2/18/99

I must say it puzzles me deeply, Andre (or am I addressing Spencer now?) why you would choose film as your art of choice and then choose not to do it, but to turn to language as your medium instead? That is like saying you are a vegetarian, and then eating a pork chop.

Language: we always come back to it, like turtles laying their eggs in the sand then waddling back into the ocean. Has there ever been a poet who wrote without words?

Not a day goes by that I don't wonder why I chose language as my medium. I am a physical person. I like touching things. I enjoy lifting things. Throwing things. Riding things. Splashing and eating and swimming in things. Movement, in particular, is a great fascination. Movement is real. And language is not. Language is a cognitive wound hemorrhaging hallucinatory cruets and quadruped harmonicas, occasional coagulants and shiny chimeras. So why not clay? Why not acting? Why not Minot? Why not engineering or stamp collecting or horticulture? What is it about language that is so confoundedly alluring? Perhaps because there is so much of it. It is such an infinite resource. There is a constant supply. It's ubiquitous as nails, common as bicycle gears. It does not, like oil painting or glass blowing, require a lot of equipment and studio space.

But let's get back to the idea of movement. Film is movement, and there is an exhilarating amount of movement in Mr. Selby's poetry. Nothing is



stable. The language is always unsettled, always undergoing transformation. The images never harden. Never become scabs. Never become scars. They are always conjured as a living camera.

I wonder. If it's possible to make a poem without words, can one make a movie without film? A sculpture without stone? A dance without movement? A music without sound? A painting without paint?

Tristan

2/19/99

I don't deny the oddity of my aesthetic situation--but your analogy is wrong, in a crucial significant way. You've forgotten that preparing food is not at all the same thing as eating it. I can prepare vegetarian meals while eating pork chops. That's what I'm good at and like to do.

In a deeper sense, on closer examination, even this analogy breaks down, since language is an important component of both movies and verse.

Just as important is the fact that watching movies has always been a creative act and source for me. The ways that this is true are not the ways of others. Movies keep me awake emotionally. They give me fresh air away from my own ego life and give me perspective. They show me what it feels like, and means, when art hits the deepest nerve of one's soul. They have always done this more effectively than any other media or forms of art.

Perhaps I need movies because I live so much in words. Since I can't make my life into a work of art, I need an ongoing art experience that is more lifelike (and dreamlike) than poetry or other art forms.

Art must be linked deeply into my psyche and soul. I get no inspiration from any kind of art history or experience that is capable of being academicized. That's why literature isn't even in the equation for me. It's true that I can't ignore the literary world completely, that I must live in that world in a sense. But I'm like a misfit and phantom there. I don't belong and most other poets sense this--though they also don't understand it. How could they, since I hardly understand it myself.

To get back to your analogy, I really think there's a huge difference between making art and experiencing it as an end user. This is something that I think most poets don't totally appreciate or deal with. Writing poetry is all mixed up with reading it, more with others than it is with me. I suspect more with you than it is with me. I mean, I could never make the mistake you made in your food analogy. Even if it was just an email oversight, I'd say it was like a Freudian slip, revealing the nature of some of your thought below your intellectual knowledge.

Please don't take that the wrong way. I have the utmost respect for you Tristan (or John). This exchange has given me a much greater appreciation for you, as person and poet, than I had before it began. There are definitely some strong ways that we connect and agree and live parallel creative lives. But there are also some significant differences.

Andre

2/19/99

Well, so my souffle collapsed, alas. Perhaps because eating is a process of ingestion rather than expression. I was tired when I wrote that. I always think of food when I'm tired. And I always think of sleeping when I'm hungry. It's the effects of a lifetime of synesthesia. And synizesis and syzygy and sneezing.

I, too, look to the movies for inspiration and raucous tub-thumping proclamations of intuitive soup. Few people know this but I, Tristan Tzara, made *Tall in the Saddle* with John Wayne. Movies arouse me. They arouse my espousal. They espousal my arousal. I love movies because I love movement (*kinema*) in poetry. If I had the chance I would love to make a movie again. But about what I haven't the faintest idea. Maybe our old dada days at the Cabaret Voltaire. Arnold Schwarzenegger as Hugo Ball. Cameron Diaz as Lucille Ball. Kevin Costner as Lenin. Danny DeVito as Alberto Giacometti. I will name it after one my poems. I will call it *Cinema calandrier de coeur abstrait*.

But. Back to my point. Which is pointless. If you enjoy movies and prefer writing poetry it is really no business of mine. I was merely trying to goad you. I love to goad you. You are so wonderfully goadable. Thank god you are goadable. The opposite is apathy. Which I loathe.

Tristan