

30 July 1961  
Kyoto

Dear Jean:

I received your letter and immediately ran off to see Cinderella and some more Disney nonsense so as to forget everything for a while - the approaching war, old age, religion, sex, and most of all man's tiresome search for himself ... I mean after all what is he looking for when he's already got it? Perhaps he has too much. What I mean is I am undergoing some of the same doubts as you confided in your letter, so I can't add anything but fuel to your fire which I think is a little cowardly for me to do, so I desist.

Other than a letter from Bob stating that "Jane Fields died, I suppose you heard - suspicion as to other than natural causes" I've heard nothing. Please inform. I personally do not feel suicide so tragic a thing as our society makes it out to be, its just futile. But I do feel sorry for George (and Jane too) - did he take it badly?

I think perhaps I shall soon be coming back to America; I can't seem to shake a feeling of overwhelming disaster that's approaching. I mean war. I'll probably be in S.F. in two or three months time but as for plans I have none. This of course is in the strictest confidence too. Since I left Zuiunken, I've lived alone and other than teaching 6 days a week and doing some writing and lots of reading, have seen no one nor done anything in particular. I feel further and further removed from everything and everyone. A period of digestion, I suppose. I'll say one thing; it's certainly been a year of experience for me... a little staggering. But by and large a profitable one. I would like very much to see Sensei again particularly, but I am with the knowledge that he knows that I know what course I must heretofore take. Please don't mention that I may soon return - I mean that this is a decision that I must make for myself and I'd rather not be faced with a predetermined course of action that I feel Sensei would feel obligated to set were he acknowledged of my plans. He has too many responsibilities as it is.

As for these sinking feelings and low burning fires, it seems just a part of the whole. It would be just a little greedy of us were we to expect too much of a religion, after all Christianity was what we were basically running away from. Zen ain't much different all considered, just a matter of form...same message.

Each day leads me closer to my pet love, writing, and as I become more involved with it everything seems to slip away but the task itself of writing. I've been working on a long poem about Kyoto which is the most marvelous city in the world, which is about the only thing I care about in Japan. I have a strange feeling that even if the population of Kyoto were to disappear, the city would continue to live quite of itself. No place has ever struck me this way before. I am trying to capture it in poetry. So far so good. Parts of it are going to be published soon, I think, though maybe not. Who knows. Also, I hope, forthcoming a novel. But that's big work and I need to go somewhere remote and quiet.

That's one reason I may soon be leaving. Probably will head to Wyoming or Montana, about as far as I can get away from what I'm writing about.

You see how wicked I've become. Don't get me wrong. Buddhism and Zen particularly is one of the most profound forces man has ever been blessed with. And though I have some reservations and doubts, I can never take the whole lightly. It is with and part of me whether I like it or not. To practice Buddhism (or indeed anything, is not necessarily to like to do it... a matter more I would assume of having that particular attitude called faith.

I don't recall Robles, but I know Paul Alexander quite well, if he's the painter. I'm a little surprised at his doing Zen and the rest as he struck me as being very self-contained and vital as it were. His brother, who is a brilliant poet, is particularly anti Zen and more particularly anti religion.

How I miss Minds. Being here and Not speaking Japanese to any degree and the Japanese Not really speaking English is like living ~~and~~ Purgatory, a twilight world at best. And for the most part very lonely. The foreign colony is of no help at all, more a hinderance if anything. I have one good friend, but we live so far apart that we don't see each other often. And too it would not be a good thing as we would tax one another's friendship were we too chummy. Damn't. But I do miss shooting the bull.

Thoughts and anxiety at this point of departure:

Why do I have no desire to learn Japanese?

Nothing tires me more than books and talking about Zen... its more a matter of practice.- in silence. - beyond words.

Am I really homesick or just lazy?

Jane Field surrendered her heart a long time ago, we only knew a habit of bodily existence.

I would like to hear Jean Ross's laughter.

When Lou changed her name to Kira, it was like writing to a stranger.

I'm not really lonely, I'm only alive.

A fragment of the Kyoto poem:

Minds watchdog perimeter  
  rushes madly out  
to inspect each footsteps  
  approach  
on gravel  
                        coming        passing        going  
  around the corner  
and  
awaits another intruder  
is stirred to inspect  
                        a taxi        a motorcycle  
so many        come        go by

as  
~~and~~  
night's omnipotent hand *reaches*  
rushes out  
to caress  
crush  
minds great weed  
fragments scattered fitfully in sunrise  
dreams.

another fragment:

cross over the river

the Kamogawa  
a green  
a blue  
a red  
a muddy river

old men in hip boots

in winter  
young men naked

in summer

roll banners of cloth

out in long streamers

fixing dye in the Kamogawa

go down to the river

the water is mauve  
purple  
~~is~~ the color of cloth  
is indigo  
and my feet  
are light blue -  
from wading in the

Kamogawa.

another and last fragment:

a face like that  
the color of the new moon setting  
eyes dark as the places between the stars  
lips bruised by the night

and  
other kisses.

Love

*WMS*