

Friday the 13th of March 1998

Dear Rafe!

I finished your lovely book last night, wishing it were longer. You found the Mongolian louse and many another nugget. My feeling, with coffee this morning, is that the next commentator has a feast to chew on. I think this putative genius may give me a point for seeing that The Kingfishers can be in the category of meditations on ruins -- a family of poems that begins with what's-his-name's Les Ruines, the Romantic discovery that the past is VERY deep, and that history is precisely a parade of changing attentions, downfalls, destructions of cultures, Ozymandias lying broken in the sands that stretch far away, Mexico raped by Spain, Rome toppling down, Europe in ruins after the 12-year Thousand Year Reich.

Human achievement is discrete; nature is continuous.

The big surprise was CO's animosity toward Bucky Fuller. One Transcendentalist burring up to another.

Our putative synthesizer might also draw both our attentions to poems with daimons as birds, notably Keats, Shelley, Whitman, Hopkins.

And if he's a Freudian, to the red-fronted kingfisher as phallus, and the fetid mass, with eggs, a cunt. Nature's continuum. "What you are / all is".

But these are random afterthoughts, in no way diminishing my admiration for how clearly and thoroughly you have explored and laid it all out for us.

I have this feeling: that "hath not th'advantage" MUST be a quote. A quick look this morning in a Shakespeare concordance turned up so many entries that I despair. You must, in any case, have had the same idea and already checked it out. That damned unsyntactical line is like an itch that won't be scratched.

Plutarch's "De Epsilon apud Delphi" is very much a montage of voices theorizing. I wonder if the Greek he isn't is Plutarch, whose "advantage" (by now) is of being a Classical author, whereas CO is a living contemporary hunting among stones (as Plutarch and his party were)?

Another thought: that in this obvious response to both "The Waste Land" and Ez, CO is wrestling according to their rules, and that thereafter he was free of their ways and forms.

Xaipete!

Guy

16 March 98