

The Box

I awoke naked on the floor of a metallic room. It was bright, and the silvery metal walls of the room penetrated through my eyes like needles. I began to panic. I tried to remember how I got there. I tried to remember my name. Nothing. I thought, but nothing came to my mind. I searched the room anxiously. And I cried, but for what? The ceiling was out of reach, and I could not tell where the light came from, but again, there was nothing. I searched for a shadow, but there was nothing. The room's brightness pierced through me, and my head ached. I felt short of breath and paced quickly back and forth. The light faded to black...

I woke up after passing out. In my horror, I had hyperventilated myself into unconsciousness. There was a small pool of blood in front of my eyes as I lay there, still not moving. I brought a hand around and dipped a finger into the viscous liquid, and the preternatural light that penetrated the room magnified the red of the blood. I swirled my finger through it. I was pacified temporarily and did not notice the pain in my head caused by bouncing it off the hard floor. I tried again to grasp a memory. Thoughts were swimming in my head, drowning in confusion, but they could not produce anything to help ease my fear. I tried to think of my name. I tried to think of the year, my age, my birthday, and I tried to think of anyone -nothing.

I looked around the room. In one of the corners, there was a blue ball. It was made of rubber and fit my hand as if it were made especially for me. I threw it across the room, and it bounced out of control until it came back at me and hit me in the head where I had cut it earlier when I passed out. I let the ball roll to a stop and left it there. I tried to imagine what was beyond these walls, but everything was vague and fuzzy. I thought of words I knew and tried to place pictures of the objects in my mind. I paced the room tirelessly, but nothing I could do seemed to help this emptiness of mind. Who was I? I knew I was a man, but how old? I was not young, nor was I old. I decided that I was 25 for some reason, but I don't know why, and there was no way to determine if I was or was not. But I had faith that I was 25, which gave me some hope that I might figure out where I was lost. I began to bounce the ball, and what must have been hours –though there was no way of telling- passed. Thoughts had all but dissipated from my mind. I felt the urge to urinate, put the blue ball down, and began to pace the room again. Then, as if something or someone knew my needs, an invisible door in the wall opened. I should have feared it, but I did not. It opened to a lavatory. Inside, there was a toilet, a sink, and a shower. Mounted on the wall above the sink were a toothbrush, razor, and hair trimmers, all three attached with a thin line of flexible wire. A pair of fingernail clippers and scissors were on a shelf, also fastened with the strange wire.

The same strange light was in the lavatory. I relieved myself and went to wash my hands in the sink. A pump came out of the wall beside the sink. I pressed it down, and it produced soap. I put my hands under the faucet, and the water flowed out. I washed my hands and left them under the water for some time, letting it flow over them and stimulate and relax me simultaneously. I stepped away from the sink, and it retreated into the wall. I looked beside me and concluded that the toilet must have done the same when I had left it to go to the sink. A huge towel hung from the ceiling, and I dried my hands off with it. I stepped into the shower through a door in the corner of the lavatory. As with the sink, when I stepped under the showerhead, the water came on, and there was a pump that produced soap, and I used this to wash with. The water felt so relaxing that I stood under it for quite some time. I began to prune and stepped out of the shower as the door closed the second I was outside. I dried off with the towel still hanging from the ceiling and stepped away. It, too, retreated to the ceiling from which it must have descended. The walls of the lavatory closed in such a way that they forced me back into the open, breathing room.

I felt tired, so I fell asleep on the hard floor. I was somewhat disoriented when I woke, as I had no way of telling how long I had slept. But to my surprise, I slept well on the hard floor and felt refreshed, at least until the confusion of the metallic room suffocated my thoughts again. I paced around the room and noticed the blue ball I had played with earlier.

I picked up the ball and began to bounce it in a soothing rhythm as I had before. This time, my mind was distracted as hunger bit at my stomach. And as before, with the lavatory, a door opened, and inside was a round table. It was constructed out of the same metallic material as everything in this place where I now dwelled. The table was round, though, and this was a change in scenery, at least from the room's sharp angles. Placed on the table was a plate of food. There was also a large glass of water to go with it. I sat down to my meal.

There were utensils: a spoon, fork, and a harmless knife, but they were secured with the same type of thin wire as the toothbrush and razor in the lavatory, as was the plate itself and the glass of water. All the implements, as was everything in this metallic abode, were made of the same strange metal material as the walls that enclosed me. There was also a napkin that hung from below the table under the plate of food that reached well enough to use conveniently as I ate.

After my meal, I left the room. As I had suspected, the door closed behind me as I entered the main room again. The door to the lavatory opened simultaneously with the closing of what I assumed was the dining room. This was good because I immediately felt that I had to have a movement after my meal. After relieving myself, I stepped into the shower again. Afterward, I shaved and brushed my teeth. When I removed the toothbrush from its mount, another pump came out of the wall. I put my finger underneath it and pressed down on the pump, and toothpaste came out. There was no mirror. Routine. Had I done this before? And would I remember it the next time? I had not noticed this silence that I lived within until now.

I ran my hand across my head, but I had no hair. I kept it shaved off. And my fingernails were well trimmed. It seemed like a lifetime now since I had awoken in the room. Yet I still had no sense of time, except I had memories now. Of course, my only memories were after waking in this silvery room. Always was my mind returning to that awakening, to that delirium, to that moment I ran my finger through that red pool of blood. But the blood was gone. I had not even thought about it until now, but I don't remember seeing it after the wall opened and lured me in.

I sat content in the room, bouncing the blue ball. I had given up trying to remember my name. Who did I need to tell it to? Who would call it out that I might respond? I talked to my blue ball now and then by accident. I spoke aloud often when I thought also, by accident. That is how I realized I found comfort in the room's silence. As soon as I realized I was talking aloud, I became quiet, as if I did not want anyone to hear me, as if someone or something was listening. This feeling of someone watching me had grown more vigorous in passing, but I did not know what to make of it other than I feared it enough to try and put it out of my mind whenever the thought arose. So, I found comfort in my blue ball. Bouncing it and whispering to it on the occasion, I felt brave enough to speak. Then, one time, I woke, and my friend, my precious blue ball, was gone. If only it had a name, I would cry it out. I sat down at the round table to eat. And I continued to sit there, not eating. As I stared into what now seemed an emptiness, a space without time, a cup made from the same stainless-steel-like metal arose out of a hole that opened in the center of the round table. I noticed I was standing, out of alarm, looking down into the cup and the black liquid it contained. And just in front of it, engraved on the table where the cup appeared, was a symbol of the death's-head, a skull and crossbones, and I thought of death. I knew what the cup of black liquid was for, that it was poison, and I felt the same strange feeling I felt since I woke in this place, that someone or something was watching me.

I gave the notion of drinking the black drink a thought. But I couldn't drink it. My blue ball was gone. Perhaps it had been only one awakening since it left me, perhaps three. I lost track of how many times I had slept since it disappeared, but I could still remember it. I worked on returning to my routine, but everything was different. I paced the room every time I woke until I became tired, and then I sat and stared at the walls for some unknown time until sleep came. I dreamed when I slept now of my bouncing blue ball and was eager to sleep so that I could be with it once again.

I awoke. I lay there momentarily, trying to return to sleep, to my Blue... And then I was wide awake, curled up in the corner of the room. There was a girl asleep on the floor across the room. I had first felt fear but then curiosity. She woke and began to pace the room frantically, as did I some distance ago. Then I went from being curious to being amused as I watched her face, disoriented and confused, search the walls for a memory that was not there. And as did I, she passed out. I sat and watched her, examined her until she woke again. "Who are you?" I asked. And it had been quite some time ago that I had heard this voice, but now I did not fear it. Nor did I fear being heard. I wanted to be heard. But the girl could not speak. She only shrugged her shoulders. Yet it did not matter that she was mute. I could read quite well the silent language of her body.

"I am...?" But I did not know my name.

"I am a friend," I said. She nodded her head in agreement as she pointed to herself.

"You are my friend?" I asked.

"Yes." She said again, nodding her head.

"I am 25," I told her. She held up two fingers with one hand and all five with the other.

"Yes," I said. "I am 25, and you are...?" I paused and tried to think of a name. I did not know what to call her, but I felt she needed a name.

"You are..." I said the first thing that came into my mind. "You are Hope with blue eyes," I told her, but she looked confused. She felt about her eyes with her hands as if she tried to look at them with her fingertips. "Your eyes are blue," I told her, and she smiled.

I was happy again. Though I never realized that I was happy before with my blue ball, I knew it now. I still miss my blue ball now and then, but now I have her. Who was she? Where did she come from? I did not know. But, like everything else, I did not understand. It did not matter. Nothing mattered except her now. I told her about my blue ball, and she listened.

Things had changed since she arrived. There was an extra plate of food and a glass of water on the round dining table. I showed her around and explained how the doors opened and closed.

I have a shadow now. I have a mirror now. It was Hope's presence and her eyes. She followed every footstep I took, and I reflected in her blue eyes. I had a past. I had faith that I was 25.

We woke up again. But this time, instead of being across from me in the room, I woke, and Hope was beside me. And I felt that feeling again that I had felt before I lost my blue ball, that feeling of happiness... And from then on, I missed my ball no more. As soon as I put its memory behind me, it appeared again in the grave part of the room. It was obscured from my vision as I lay there and kissed my new love awake. When I lifted my head to rise, I saw it in the far opposite corner. I was happy, though, for the return of my blue ball. She and I had it to play with. I bounced it to her, and she bounced it back to me. The blue ball, her blue eyes, and I together, as all my fears were put at ease. I could scarcely remember my ball even being lost. I did not care where it had been; it was just back.

All three of us were friends. And it seemed as if neither I, nor her, nor our blue ball had ever been without each other. I watched her play with the blue ball.

One time, after awakening, as we had done a hundred times, I noticed Hope had become ill. Then she surprised me, and with her finger, she wrote invisible symbols on the wall. Hope pretended to write! But to my despair, I could not make out the letters or words she wrote. And then she whispered.

"I can remember..." She struggled with the words "...everything."

The sound of her voice was soothing and beautiful. I was happy again, happier than ever before. Now she could talk and remember, but she was happy no more. And the more questions I asked, the worse her sickness became.

"What can you remember?" I asked her. "What is outside these walls?"

But she said no more. In the corner, she sat with one hand on her head and the other on her stomach. She searched the walls as if she were looking for some invisible door that was not there. As I grew tired, I lay down beside her in the corner.

Then I woke again, and she was gone.

I paced the room frantically. My blue ball lay there alone. I stopped and looked across the room at it... I, too, was alone. I walked over to it and rolled it with my foot for a moment. But it was just an object now. Not a friend like before, just a ball that happened to be blue. I picked up the ball and threw it.

The ball bounced about the room and then retreated to the corner.

The dining room door opened. I hesitated but went inside. If ever I was to see Hope again, I must eat. I put a bite of food in my mouth and struggled as I chewed and swallowed it without pleasure. After the first bite, I sat and stared at the wall for some time. The walls began to breathe, and I didn't even notice at first. But then, in anger, I cried out as I left the room and headed for the comfort of the shower.

"I've been drugged," I exclaimed to my blue ball as I passed it and headed to the shower. But after that, I said no more.

Time passed. I had not eaten, and my thin figure was evidence of this. I did not even pace the room anymore. I only sat there, cross-legged, listened to the rhythm of my heart beating, and breathed breath after breath.

I thought back to when I had last eaten when I hallucinated from the drug in my food. If I gave in and ate, I would submit to whatever was watching me. I did not eat as I sank deeper into this room alone. I must eat. I need food to know. And like clockwork, the dining room opened before me. I crawled to my feet, walked in, and seated myself. The thought had left my thoughts. And I ate as a man starving again, for that is what I was.

Awake. I felt awake again. The walls were breathing at me as I got up and headed to the shower after some time staring at the round table. I saw my blue ball, and it was alive again. Rain poured down from the shower, and I relaxed in relief. I shaved my head again and trimmed my fingernails... I had disappeared from time, and it could not find me here. Neither the memories of time past nor the fear and terror of existence could pervade these walls now.

Every awakening, I looked forward to my plate of food. Afterward, I spent some time in the lavatory grooming myself and playing in the rain. I had even taken my ball there. Its name is Blue, and it is alive. I know because it talks to me. We play in the rain all the time. And then we walk about the vast breathing room.

"Do you think she will ever come back to you?" Blue asked.

"I know she will." I thought. "You came back to me, and so will she."

"But how do you know? Maybe she doesn't like you anymore?" "Are you jealous? Don't you remember how we all played together?" "Bounce me." Blue insisted. So, I did.

I bounced my blue ball to the rhythm of my heart beating. When I bounced Blue, it took me outside these walls. And I stood there naked in an open space. I walked upon some swirling silvery floor. The blackness made the distance unclear. I looked up, and I could see Hope. She stood on some different floor above me.

"What are you doing?" Blue asked, and I was back within the walls.

"I saw Hope," I said.

"Where? She's gone." Blue replied.

"Where has she gone? You know, don't you? I know you must because you left the room once before. Or did you? I can't remember."

"I am just a ball. Maybe you're thinking of something else." "But..." But I drifted away as the walls began to melt.

I woke up in the middle of the room. I looked around for Blue. It was sitting in the corner, sulking. I paid it no mind and went to a wall, no wall in particular, and began to pound on it. An invisible door opened, and I entered the dining room to eat.

"Do you want to come?" I asked Blue. But as usual, it didn't talk to me upon awakening, only after my meal.

"Fine," I said. "I will eat by myself."

I sat down, ate all my food, and drank my glass of water. I tried to shake a dream I had. It was always the same, and I could not understand it.

"What are you thinking about?" Blue asked, and I realized I had wandered back into the room. "I can't remember now that you interrupted me," I said. "Anyway, I see you are speaking again. You sure are moody every time we wake."

"Can we go play in the rain now?" It asked excitedly.

"I suppose, but don't interrupt me anymore. I think I have found some clue to where Hope is."

"Where is she 25?" Blue laughed. "Have you been dreaming again?"

"Shut up." I laughed at it now. "My dreams are... they are like a key -Ah, yes! That is it. I need a key."

"For what?" It asked. "To unlock those invisible doors you are always imagining and looking for."

You only know that because she told you."

"Well, at least she tried to help me find a way..." I said.

"What, a way out of here. There's nothing outside these walls, you fool. I told you that before. I know."

I have been outside them, and you have not."

"What then?" I asked. "What is outside these walls?"

"Nothing, I told you."

"But what is nothing?" I was confused.

"You're too stupid to understand. You think too much, you know?" Blue replied.

"Let's go," I said. "I don't think you know anything, stupid ball."

We went and took a shower in the rain. I gave Blue a good bath. It floated around in the water stream at the shower's bottom. I watched it swept around in the currents. The swirling of the water comforted me like nothing else I could imagine besides maybe Hope. But I did not even think of her as I watched the water funnel. I crouched down and reached my hand into the water, then my arm, and then I dove in.

I could see Blue above me, floating in the waves. But below me was Hope. She sat at the bottom of the pool of water, reaching her arms, stretching toward me, pleading with her blue eyes. I tried to swim down to her, but...

"What are you doing?" Blue asked as I raised my head out of the water at the bottom of the shower, choking and coughing up water.

"I saw Hope. She's at the bottom of this pool of water."

"You have gone mad." Blue laughed. "Maybe when you hit your head that time, it knocked something loose inside there."

"When did I hit my head?" I asked as I dried us both off with the towel.

"When you first woke up here. I remember. I might add that you roughed me up a little that day and for no reason."

"I don't remember. Well...maybe a little. But I did nothing to you."

"Whatever," Blue said. "Let's go play in the room."

I bounced Blue in that steady rhythm I always seem to seek. And then I was above the room on that same silvery, swirling floor as before. This time, I could see myself below, bouncing that cantankerous blue ball. And then I saw her, Hope, standing some distance from me. I began to run toward her. And I don't believe I ever remember running before, but I was running now. I continued to run, but she was no closer than before. She waved her hand for me to come to her, and I ran faster than before. "What are you doing now? Why did you stop bouncing me? We were going so fast, and it was just getting exciting," Blue said. "I was chasing after Hope," I said.

"Hope. Hope. Hope. It's always about Hope. What about me? I'm here right now, and I'm always here. You toss me around and entertain yourself. But all the time you play with me, you just think about her. What about me?" "You're just a ball. Hope is like me." "And what are you?" It asked. "I am a..." I didn't know. "I'm not a thing like you. I'm not something to just play with." "Are you now?" It laughed.

"Stop laughing, you're the stupid one."

"But look at you, how pitiful, talking to a ball like me." It said. "You are a toy just like me, you know?"

"How's that?" I asked.

"Who do you think feeds you, and who put you here, and who makes the rain?"

"Nothing put me here. I was born here."

"How do you know; you can't even remember? But I do."

I was tired of talking. I put Blue in its corner, lay down in the middle of the room, and went to sleep. Then I woke up.

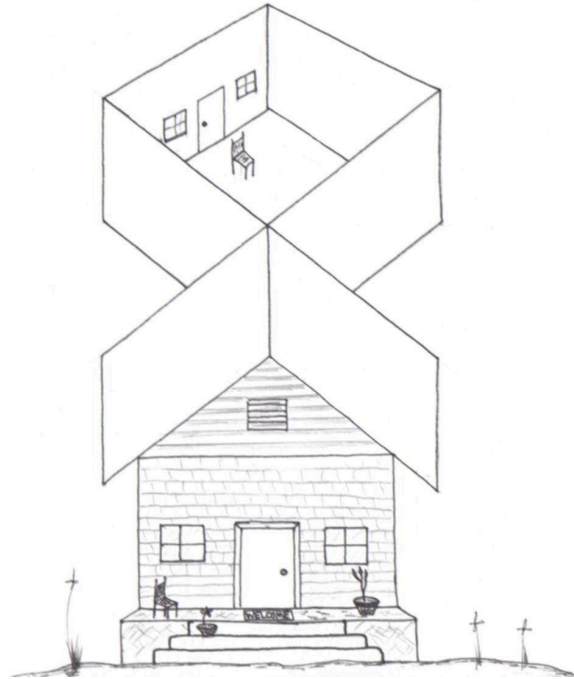
I was soaking wet. But the drug was gone.

I paced the room endlessly. I picked up my blue ball, but it was different. I opened my hand, and it fell to the floor, where it bounced into the corner. There it would remain. I could not stand to look at it. It was no friend of mine. It only brought me pain, gave me Hope, and then stole it away again. I went to take a shower. I stood under the shower. It was calm momentarily, and then it poured upon me again. I sat down, cross-legged. I did not know what my heart was, what it looked like, or what it did, but I listened to it again and breathed breath after breath, this never-ending process. I noticed these things, the beating of my heart and my breathing each time I went to sleep.

I stood up and faced the wall, no wall in particular, and an invisible door opened to the round table. I walked over to it. I picked up the silvery cup and took it back into the room. I sat back down in the middle of the room and placed the cup in front of me. It was the only thing left to do, I thought. And I understand now what I was: Nothing. I drank the contents of the cup. My thoughts began to fade. I could feel my heartbeat and hear my breathing as if I were going to sleep.

I awoke naked on the floor of a metallic room. It was bright, and the silvery metal walls of the room penetrated through my eyes like needles. I began to panic. I tried to remember how I got there. I tried to remember my name. Nothing. I thought, but nothing came to my mind. I searched the room anxiously. And I cried, but for what? The ceiling was out of reach, and I could not tell where the light came from, but again, there was nothing. I searched for a shadow, but there was nothing. The room's brightness pierced through me, and my head ached. I felt short of breath and paced quickly back and forth. The light faded to black...

House of Thought



House of Thought

Everything Here is an Allusion

We discover that we do not know our role; we look for a mirror; we want to remove our make-up and take off what is false and be real. But somewhere a piece of disguise that we forgot still sticks to us. A trace of exaggeration remains in our eyebrows; we do not notice that the corners of our mouth are bent. And so we walk around, a mockery and a mere half: neither having achieved being nor actors.

-Rainer Maria Rilke

Dramaturgy is a theory within Sociology; put simply this is to say that life is analogous to a play, and society is the stage upon where individuals act out their roles; we have masks that we put on when we are on-stage, and we have another face that we take on back-stage. Rilke saw things differently than this theory; I interpret his view of the individual in this aphorism to be aware of the fact that we merely wear masks and take on roles for different aspects of our lives. I have tried to propose an even different view or question rather on this particular idea of society as actors. If society is composed of nothing but actors, who is in charge of auditions? Or better said, *culture* does the casting for the play, and *society* is the stage where the roles are acted out. I have only tried to touch upon this notion of Dramaturgy and Rilke's aphorism and am under the delusion that society is composed of mute, out of work mimes; we do not know our role even though we act it out: and we don't even have individual roles but instead we mimic; we take on the roles of time and place, of what culture has dealt us.

The Box has three dominant motifs: Alienation, Isolation, and Co-dependence. Alienation of the subject from himself, of the subject from a society, which creates this self; secondly, there is a vicious cycle that the subject is ignorant of; not only is this cycle analogous to drug addiction, it is at one point in the story drug addiction; but it is also an endless cycle of despair, of the loss of love and of pleasure; and lastly the plot revolves around some implication of the subject being lost in a labyrinth, of both his own mind and the surreal room he is in; and this *labyrinth*, this *perennial awakening* of his life seems at a glance to be some kind of mad scientist's experiment; this is an allusion to time as something watching, something that "comforted and controlled, resolved and conspired" against the subject.

And that is what the man, 25, becomes, a subject in an experiment called life, taken out of society, but with a knowledge that alludes to his possibility of having once been an actor, an individual; for, one must be a part of a whole, of society, to separate oneself and be an individual; one must have others around to mimic. Therefore, the experiment is this story; I am the invisible "thing" that dictates fate within the story.

I have tried to implement some technique of minimalism to the structure of the story. Whether I have achieved this or not is insignificant. Effect and conveyance are what matter; we must as artists continually address these problems of communication. The artist cannot assume comprehension of his audience, and he cannot accept censure as failure. Regardless, the problem I faced was how to separate the character, the subject, from society in terms of his memory. He must have a fluent and rather refined vocabulary, which at times may seem to fail him and at other times is quite complex. But the problems of what words the subject could use to describe his state and his life within the room are not too restricted. These "concepts," as the subject calls them, create ambivalence; they are evidence of two minds at work; there is a juxtaposition of infinite understanding and transcendence of time against total ignorance and a moment of time in a box that cycles.

I have tried to achieve a minimal method of simplicity and sparseness through the motifs of the story, and the lack of figurative language thereof. But the story is not reductive, especially when it comes to allegory understood as an expression of symbolism through truths and generalizations about the human experience. The literary devices that are used are intended to breathe some life into an otherwise dull interlude of existence of the subject. I will attempt to address these motifs in this autobiographical interpretation. And I call it this rather than this being an explication in that through it, I am not trying to explain the story; I write this as an interpretation, not a definitive meaning of what was intended. Perhaps the reader received more or less insight into the story than was intended, and this is good.

But my interpretation is only meant as a supplement to try and solve these problems of communication that arise out of the use of any medium to function as an expression of ideas otherwise ineffable; or maybe more precisely said, to express ideas that I felt I could only address through fiction, through this experiment I contextually structured as a life in *The Box*; and this was the only way in which one can conduct an experiment that separates the individual from society, an experiment that makes a man into nothing, into just an obscure idea.

Birth. The subject and the story come alive! The subject awakens as if a child; he cries for no reason at the confusion and then passes out. Blood. This is very significant in that the subject immediately goes through a kind of rebirth, this is analogous to the Christian rebirth of a baptism; and it is a baptism, this “pool of blood;” it is a beginning to a linear sequence of events that are not teleological but almost suggesting the notion of reincarnation: a birth, rebirth, death, and yet again, trapped within this “delirium,” this relentless and at times, vicious cycle. Constantly there is a sense of a recurring phenomenon that is to the subject no different than *déjà vu*; it is “intuition” into the fact that he has a sense that he has done this before and that this is not the first time, but perhaps the cycle began when the subject was 25. Other things would lead one to believe that the subject was “once a mime,” but they are ambiguous details: the subject has a complex vocabulary, yet the story does not explain how –this is an unnecessary detail; for, what matters is that somehow he is alienated from society. Where did our language first begin? We do not know if it ever did; it too, our language, is not a teleological phenomenon, but we find that one day we are awake, alive, we are conscious and in a perpetual state of presence.

Routine. These rituals of eating and grooming the subject performs suggest that he was conditioned, psychologically. Or are these rituals just instinct in a parallel universe of the “breathing room?” What this alludes to, routine, may lay further under the surface than I intended; but this process, if it is looked upon as a ritual, may be better understood as an analogy than allusion. In Christian mythology, especially in Protestantism, prayer is seen as an individual’s way to an intimate, one to one relationship with God. Thus prayer gives to the believer, or the subject, individualism. What is missing from the subject’s lavatory in the story, though, is a mirror. Reflection, then, is what is missing. Instead of reflecting upon the individual’s life, instead of having “retrospective,” the believer only searches for answers to prayers, and the subject 25 answers to questions, rather than trying to understand as the subject presents the question: “Intuition. Was this what I had? Was this a memory or something else?”

These routines, then, beckon the question as to whether we can know about God through our own experience, or are we just searching, trying to pigeonhole some image or belief of a God we never were given a chance to experience for ourselves first. How, in other words, can we ever know that God exists if we did not learn it first? We only mimic a path laid down before us by ancestors; there is no original thought; we cannot trace thought to a beginning, for it becomes vague and invisible eventually as we search into the past.

To believe that, in truth, whether we believe in God, whether we are Atheist, Agnostic, or Christian, God exists; that is to say, the truth is that God exists whether we believe in Him or not, this is an allusion the story creates that it is just as absurd to believe that the subject in the story could know that a mirror exists, that the thought presents itself from within, without him ever having seen one before, as it is to believe that one could know about God from within. I assume that the only reason people have a belief in God is that they are conditioned to believe in God, just as one who would read *The Box* might assume that the subject must have existed at some time, temporally and spatially, outside the box „, to obtain the knowledge he maintains. If God exists outside this universe, how do we know about him from within this room? That there is an Ultimate Reality, something sacred... -Who or what am I, as an individual, *subject* to? Is this “thing” something that watches and listens to everything the subject does? There is a saying: *think outside the box*. But have I done this? Can you do this? Can an individual that is, do this? Can I create original thought or do I just mimic? These questions are not rhetorical, but a consequence of self-examination.

Death. Is the absence of love death to those who know it, this love? There are awakenings, births that the subject experiences. He learns and is aware of attachment and of the loss of what is loved; he learns of the comfort of being detached from “reality.” And the subject has insight, or belief, that without time, death does not exist. How does he know that death does not exist outside time? The answer is quite simply that time is a creation of society. How then does society create time? Society does not create time; society creates the illusion of time. We see birth, but we cannot experience it, or least we cannot remember experiencing it. We see death, but cannot explain it. We see death, and we fear it. How can we not fear what we do not know; how can we not fear the unknown?

Belief. This is one solution that society presents us with. But I have no belief that would give me comfort, one that leaves me without a trace of doubt that I should not fear death except one rational thought: if death is natural, if it is inevitable, why worry? But then there is some thought lingering that, as the saying goes: to learn to swim, you must get into the water. Either way, the point is that we perceive death like a simile, only in comparison to something we have a foreknowledge of, and that death is merely *like* or *as* this or that thing.

Thus there are caricatures we must look past. Time is what is misrepresented in society. Perhaps even more horrifying to us is that we only have theories of time: creation stories to explain its beginning, whether mythological or scientific, and time without end stories, this mythology and science of eternity. Who or what you believe is not in question, but these questions of: what are time and death? These are the questions raised in *The Box*. We fear what we do not know. There is an anxiety everyday in life that pushes us on; there is an anxiety within the room that pushes the subject on. I assume that the only reason people hold the beliefs in death and time they maintain is that they are conditioned to believe in them the way that they do, just as we are conditioned to all knowledge; again, it is all from without, from culture first, then we search for it. We see birth and death and they are confirmation of our beliefs.

Time. There is this allusion to time being God in the room. Even more important is that it is “someone” watching the subject, “someone” that listens. There is this idea that the subject is in an experiment; he is the subject to this “thing,” and this thing is outside the room. Society then is what subjugates the subject to this alienation. Emile Durkheim theorized: “Religion is society transfigured,” that the Ultimate Reality people worship is themselves. Not only does the story suggest that the narrator is in an experiment, it suggests that what is watching him and listening to him is not just time but God. –It is this theory of society transfigured that allows what is watching to be both God and society; both a deity and a person, say, is what operates the room. Anthropomorphism, is the idea in Anthropology that the gods, or in this case, God is like us only in perfect form. Society strives toward perfection, in government, in religion, in everything I suppose. God is an omnibus. But society creates God just as it creates time; therefore, they are the same. And both are only a product of conditioning.

Back to a previous question: How does death not exist outside of time? It is because in the room, and more specifically, in *The Box*, time is this omnibus; this Omnibus is relating to many things at once: society, God, some “thing,” time that is not present. Time is often seen as presence; this, too, is a caricature; time is never present, even in the way we understand it; we utter the question almost everyday: What time is it? But even if we consider that time is mathematical, -or better yet, it is our conception of time moving always forward that proves that it is never present. Or another way to look at it is that presence is always moving forward; by the moment we ask: What time is it? The moment has vanished. Moments. Presence is only understood after it is gone. It is much the same as Nietzsche’s idea that “God is dead.” Like the light of stars, things take time to reach us before we can comprehend them. And while this simile is a macrocosm, presence is the other extreme; presence is a microcosm; by the time we process what is happening, it has passed us by.

Reflexive action is the closest thing to presence that we can experience, and it is under the surface; reflex is outside our consciousness. By the time we have jerked our finger out of the fire, it has already begun to burn us. Death does not exist outside of time because time and death are the same; without one, the other is not present. There is a symbiotic relationship of the Omnibus: of time, death, and God with society; the Omnibus is one illusory concept that allows us to function. These things, the Omnibus, provide the anxiety necessary for our survival in society; and outside society, within the room, the Omnibus is not necessary. To Nietzsche, God is dead in that the world is void of all insight. Society has no introspection any more. Nietzsche’s madman in *The Gay Science* posits at least that God is dead, though “it has not yet reached the ears of man.” More important is what the madman says about society: “Must not we ourselves become gods simply to seem worthy of [killing God]?” Again, the story beckons one to wake up, as does the subject; he experiences these “awakenings.” Religion is society transformed, society in a chrysalis; and when society emerges from this cocoon it is not that ugly caterpillar called Society, it is a beautiful butterfly called God.

But this change of form, of appearance, it is a façade. Lest that Belief be transitory, lest God die, society worships an infallible deity, itself, whilst it persecutes the deviant individual; Religion is the perfection of conscience while the individual is an epitome of chaos; the Omnibus, this “thing” in the story, is the architect of fate while the subject is the archetype of ignorance. Society is made up of impersonators, of actors, and even more precisely, society is made up of mimes, which mimic each other. This is the survival method of culture. If one steps out of line and takes on a role that is not in the play, they threaten its performance.

So, on with the show, the individual is alienated; he can only sit in the audience, silent, with the other individuals and watch the play. Perhaps there are whispers here and there; there is defiance and freedom from time to time, -But the actors ignore these whispers, this individualism; these mute voices are but rude interruptions of the play. And thus is the subject in the story, silent. The artist must shout out his demands if he is to be heard.

Memory. Images. "...symbols without meaning, representations of an illusive memory, or just illusions?" What is real? And more importantly, does it even matter? Why does the subject search for memories? And why does this process cause his head to ache? But it is not "amnesia," at least not in one aspect. The fact that he has this word, "amnesia," tells us something. The subject does appear to have some unusual loss of memory, but perhaps it is just "illusive," deceptive. The subject's memory is "amnesia" in that it is the selective ignoring or forgetting of things or events not favorable to his purpose; the individual is selective when he interprets life, when he interprets Art. What is his purpose; what is the individual's purpose? There is this popular aphorism of mimesis: *Life imitates Art, and Art imitates Life*. This is the individual's purpose, to imitate Art. Like the subject, the individual sees what he wants to see, hears what he wants to hear. Representation. The subject is a likeness, an imitation of the individual, of a person; the individual is a likeness, an imitation of Art. The words that the subject uses are very significant, then.

Reminiscence is essence. For the subject to discover himself, his fundamental nature, he must recall his past experience outside the room. He has images and he has words to go with them, these symbols. Yet the process of trying to do so makes his head ache; even worse, it brings on this anxiety attack; he is flooded with the fear and horror of the unknown. This experience he goes through alludes to the human experience: How do we describe what is real? Reality is only a relation of things, and these things appear to be fixed, to be grounded, solid and physical; yet, life is in flux. Change is inevitable. We know this. Change is inescapable, but we try to deny this. Why? Why must we deny change? Why must the subject keep his head shaved and fingernails trimmed? Why this grooming, this tidiness, this order?

Invisible. The subject becomes invisible through this process, this ritual of grooming. Ritual. This is why we must deny change; ritual wills it so. Nietzsche posited that "men are inclined to laziness...they are all timorous. They hide behind customs and opinions... From fear of his neighbor who insists on convention and veils himself with it." And he also presents the question: "what is it that compels the individual human being to fear his neighbor, to think and act herd-fashion, and not be himself?" Well, ritual wills it so. It is out of habit that we become lazy; it is out of practice that we become lazy, out of rehearsal of our roles. The subject becomes invisible to the Omnibus, from time, from death, from this "thing" in that he takes away these things that remind him of change: his hair growing, his fingernails growing, his body changing. It is easier to become invisible by following custom and regurgitating

common opinion than it is to be the artist who stands up and shouts and breaks the silence; it is easier to be an actor than an individual; it becomes habit to feint, to whisper, rather than speak out; it is more convenient to veil oneself from criticism, to hide among the darkness of the theatre, among these other individuals and become an audience than to stand up and shout out, Stop! And so the madness goes on, and we remain silent. But silence is never a solution when it is intended to silence us. So the artist becomes himself transfigured, a caricature to the world, a madman.

The artist asks himself: What is real? And believes that it matters what the answer is; and so the artist goes about the world searching for a medium to communicate his ideas. But mute words fall upon deaf ears. Why do we search for meaning? This is why the subject tries to remember what lies “outside these walls.” He tries to understand. And that is what makes his head ache; that is what causes his anxiety, which is suffering; and it is confusion, this “delirium,” that he suffers. His self-awareness of his state becomes more evident when he is “amused” at the sight of the girl’s birth into the room. But what does the subject try to remember is outside the room? These images he believes are from memory, are they just illusions? Or are they but mistaken beliefs? That, at least, is what his memory alludes to, -there are beliefs that we think are our own, but are not.

Words. The subject asks: “Dare I speak aloud?” The subject finds comfort in the silence. Solace. Like children, we fear to speak up; we are “timorous;” ritual wills it so. Custom demands that the individual make himself invisible; the artist struggles then to be seen, to be heard. The writer becomes mute; he knows something but obscures it, represents it with symbols. Expression, then, becomes therapy for the artist. But it is more than this; it is rebellion. Why did Samuel Clemens use a pseudonym? Perhaps nowadays the artist has less to fear, but there is more noise; the artist must set himself on fire to become noticed. W.B. Yeats said that man runs his course between extremes. And that is what humanity is, two extremes: silence and rebellion. There is no middle ground. Custom or change. Convention or transformation. The individual vacillates between these two extremes perpetually.

Symbols are not used to just communicate meaning; they are used to obscure meaning. Like the subject, these communications become rituals we have been conditioned to; we use these figures of speech without examining their meaning. Why must the artist set himself on fire? What are these obscurities that make him invisible except when he spits fire from his breath? It is the euphemism; this is what is written in the script for the play. And the mass media, that is just what it is, the voice of the masses, of convention. So and so “passed away;” the “criminal” was “executed;” the family pet was “put to sleep.” We can see these things most in television and newspapers; there is “popular culture” or “pop music.” -But that is why it is popular? And more to the point it is not popular culture but censored culture. It is bound and gagged, chained down by a million terrified faces, “the melting faces of theatrical-like masks.”

The euphemism, this is what obscures meaning. It is the mask that violence wears in culture. Terror walks around and shrouds the individual; so he walks around, the individual, “a mockery and a mere half.” -Rilke knew this. Neither has the individual become alive, nor has he achieved death. The individual is conditioned to fear death; his breath is cold, though, as if death itself. But we are sheltered from death, and to speak of it the artist must face being labeled dark. But what does it mean to be dark? Is it mere pessimism? Or is the artist mentally ill; is his mind sick? Yes. He is a caricature, a deviant, a madman, just as was Nietzsche’s character. -Silence!

Mirrors. Memory is altered by time; it is twisted and contorted by subjectivity, by the subject. The subject has no mirror; he has no shadow in the presence of the “preternatural light” that pervades the room. It is this light now that becomes significant, not his memory. It is “preternatural light,” light from the outside, inexplicable by ordinary means, incapable of being explained or accounted for. Such is our knowledge of the Omnibus; such is the subject’s knowledge of the Omnibus. Dreams work in such a method. And the room is a surreal place; and the subject’s memories that he searches for are “vague and obscure,” as is our knowledge an obscurity of reality. Reality is difficult to understand; it is ambiguous to us what is real. We have these words we try to describe reality, existence with, but they are all circular; they are, these words and definitions, like M.C. Escher’s *Waterfall*. The water appears to fall and flow back into a distance, but it is only an illusion, and the words fall back where they began, in this “pool of blood” that the subject wakes, this birth and rebirth, this struggle to understand, to make sense, to reason.

But there are other mirrors in life and within the room. Other individuals become our mirrors; they are what we mimic. This is what the subject has with the girl, a mirror, a real mirror, and a false mirror. Real in that his image reflects in her eyes, false in that he thinks that she is like him. She is a being, a person, but she is an individual also; she has her own character, both physical and psychological. She is mute; she is silent. But the subject does not understand why she is silent. So, too, do we not understand this silence we live under; this suppression of social control, of the Omnibus. The subject becomes an ephemeral individual, a fleeting freedom; for he felt “naked,” he felt “free.” The subject speaks; he breaks his silence because he is not alone. The artist shouts out because he knows he is not alone in his quest even though he works within the confinement of a medium, as the subject lives within the walls of the room. The artist also becomes only a mime; he must mimic other artists. Again, there is no original thought, only change.

But we must deny change; ritual wills it so. And the artist then comes to understand the difference between art and Art. The artist must work his way at some time or another through the masses and learn these techniques of his medium, of mere art; but then, he shouts out and creates Art. There is this assemblage of words in writing to form sentences and paragraphs, but then the writer learns of structure. The writer learns grammar and is restrained by it; the writer learns of poetics and then he violates grammar; he becomes an artist rather than a writer. There are these physical things such as paint and brushes in painting; the creation comes from a method of assembly. But the artist is not restricted by oil and canvas. Perhaps one day he shouts out and slices his wrist, drains his blood into a bowl and, then, spills his blood onto the canvas. Then the canvas comes alive; it is the artist on the wall, not a painting.

Shadows. The “preternatural light” does not create a shadow of the subject. First, we must ask: What is a shadow? There are many species of shadows. In the room though, there is a lack of shadow; the subject does not have a shadow; there is an absence. In effect, there is an absence of real light. It is the artificial light of the Omnibus. Again, it is a light the subject cannot explain or account for. Pun intended, the subject begins to shadowbox; he is in a shadow box; he is boxed in the room, and he fights an invisible adversary, the Omnibus, this anxiety that forces the subject into action so that he does not “wither into nothing at the amusement of this shadow.” It is the same anxiety that I have said pushes us on in everyday life. There is an absence of shadow. The subject does not have society; he is invisible and therefore transparent; he does not have someone to remind him who he is, what his role is, and what his past is. Not until, that is, the girl appears. Before, the subject is lost; he has no sense of self; he has no “soul.”

This “shadow” that the subject believes in is also a source of pain, of sorrow and despair. It is what he believes watches and listens to him. In a sense, the subject is delusional; though, eventually he does become delusional, there is a sense of paranoia in him ever since his first awakening. He is suspicious that something has been put in his food. The blue ball fits his hand as if it were made for him. Looking from the outside in, we can see that this may be a result of this cycle he is in, this “perpetual oblivion.” Or another way to interpret this is that his suspicion suggests that he has done this before. This is what *déjà vu* is to the individual, a sense that he has experienced something before, but not in this lifetime; there is a sense that one is in a dream momentarily; the individual is both in awe and in alarm; a panic comes over the individual that this presence is a perennial state of being. The individual perhaps understands there are no odds, no chance that this conglomeration of being that he has become will ever happen again.

Thus, this is the anxiety that pushes us on to make whatever we can out of this state of being. But in horror the individual recoils at the thought of being trapped in this endless cycle of pain, of having to face death once again; or perhaps he is more optimistic at the thought of getting to experience the happiness he finds in life.

Three things follow the subject; they shadow the subject. The girl is the most obvious, for the subject tells us so. The other we can conclude is the Omnibus, this “thing” that watches him and follows his every move. But the third is a transient; it is the reader. The subject has a duality; he is both a character in the story and my blood spilled onto the paper that breathes, it is what makes the story come alive. And as the reader pilfers his grubby fingers through the pages, stops reading and directs his attention to some diversion, some offense to the intimacy of the experience, spills his coffee on or writes the graffiti of criticism or little ideas that pop into his wandering mind as he reads, -yes, the artist must be paranoid; and perhaps this paranoia has seeped into the story; blood drips upon the page; there is a very subtle yet violent transference psychologically between the artist and his audience.

The room is a shadow itself. It is a vague representation of reality; it makes the subject, a man, an obscure idea. How does it do this? The vagueness in the story is a result of the medium used to convey the message; this is quite evident. But man as an idea, this is more complicated. Whereas the vagueness is a result of the medium used, writing, the obscurity of man is a result of Art itself. This popular aphorism: Life imitates Art, and Art imitates Life. But that is what Life and Art become, imitation. They mimic each other in the same way that the actors of society mime each other. It becomes impossible to discern which is which. Here, too, there is symbiosis. Two things that evolved alongside each other. Therefore, the way one interprets Art dictates one’s perspective and attitude toward Life.

There are no right or wrong interpretations, but there are ethics of interpretation. That is to say there is an ethos to interpretation; there is a distinguishing character, sentiment, moral nature and guiding principle to interpretation. What is this ethos? I suppose that depends on the audience. There is an ethical relativism and etiquette to Art; the audience cannot pass judgment on a piece of art only on their egocentrism; the interpreter must look outside their own opinion. But we all commit this artistic felon. Why does Art offend the individual? To reiterate, we fear the unknown; we are angry, but we do not know why. But the artist, too, is in fear; he is simultaneously alienated and understood.

There is the infamous aphorism of philosophy from Socrates in Plato's work that: The unexamined life is not worth living. And at the other extreme is the notion that of the laymen, that Philosophy reads too deep into things. There is no middle ground. One must either admit ignorance or read deeply; the individual must not imitate art anymore, he must strive to be it, to be an artist. What is this etiquette of Art, then? What is this ethic of Art relative to? The etiquette is quite simple: there is a time and place for Art. Art requires examination; it must be read deep into. The quality and respect a piece of Art or art receives depends on its depth.

This is not to say that Art does not deserve criticism; this is to say the opposite: Art demands criticism; it demands attention. We must be critical of Art if it is truly an imitation of Life; for, when we judge an artist we judge his life. What ethic is relative to Art? As with all ethical relativism, Art is subject to time and place. Just as the subject is a product of the room, *The Box* is a product of life. Tragically, a representation of life. And this is the point of ethical relativism in Art: Art is a product of culture; this culture is conveyed through the responses of the artist to life; Art must say something of humanity; it must relay some universal message if it is to have depth and respect; therefore, the moral nature of Art, what is right and wrong about it, is dependent upon that there is no universal standard of moral value, but only the cultural norms our particular society creates.

There are two problems here: *The Box* cannot be interpreted as my life, -no, it is a product of my life, an imitation of what I perceive as life. I wrote the story as a consequence or more precisely, as a reaction to my environment. A psychoanalysis of *The Box* is not necessary, or I should say that it is a useless ploy; my whole point in writing the story was that it was the only way to express something otherwise ineffable, or perhaps to reach the ears of those men on a distant planet, like the light of the stars. Secondly, there is a problem with ethical relativism: How can we create change and not offend the norms of culture? We cannot; ritual wills it so. Rites in Art insist that one be creative, and to create one becomes deviant; the artist again shouts out to stop the play and interferes with the play. Thus is the method of communication.

Play. This is what the subject does with his blue ball. What, then, is the blue ball? It is a toy for the infant minded subject in the room, something to pacify him with, something to pass time by. Time has passed by; it is forgotten; it "does not exist here within the walls of this room." Like an artist who labors hours into the night with his work, the subject plays with "a rhythm against the wall." The subject must ease his mind; the artist must have his catharsis.

How do we act, what role do we commit to, what instance do we decide as the subject does, to pun, to make a play on words? "Watch." This is what the Omnibus does. The subject shows us how we make these connections, how thoughts play on our consciousness. Like a butterfly going from one flower to the next, the subject's mind wanders about the room, from his wrist to that empty place on the wall where something belongs but is missing; the artist wanders about his mind and searches for something witty, something clever to say. But if the subject is not careful he will fall prey to his own will; he will wilt like a flower trampled in a meadow; the artist will be alone, alienated; ritual wills it so; -that genius be mistaken for madness; the artist, the madman, he has come before his time. The subject must clear his thoughts by playing with the blue ball; the artist must simplify his subject. This is what *The Box* does to the subject; it simplifies him. The subject wants to cry out but no one listens except this "thing;" the artist cries out, but the play goes on.

Death is this butterfly that floats about a meadow, outside. We hide inside our *dark* theatre. The subject wants to shed his dank cocoon and become a butterfly like God, but he does not have the knowledge, the insight "to be a king." But he plays this game, unwillingly, or rather against his will. What is his will? Is it himself? Is his will a negative construction; is it something he plays against? Is the will of the individual this dramatic medium that the play is structured? When the subject asks: "Who or what has put me here?" -Answers. Rhetoric is like chess; it seeks to control the middle ground. But there is no middle ground. The subject does not want an answer when he asks this question; the artist knows that through suggestion, by being subtle, he can convey his meaning, if only to a few. But then the whispers begin to spread. Gossip is in the theatre. But this time the whispers are backstage; this is where the artist finds himself; in terror he must go onto the front of the stage. But the subject in the story retrieves his hand back from the cup of "black liquid," from death; and the artist searches for the back door. Many times the subject goes through the doors into other rooms only to find himself forced back into the "breathing room;" many times the individual tries to leave the play, but there is only one exit here, and we fear it. So we are forced to play the game, to contend with life and the play, to acculturate and humble ourselves to our will, to our ignorance; ritual wills it so. Culture dictates our fate.

Yes, the individual's will is ignorant; such is the subject in *The Box*. These manifestations of a determination of desire, these dispositions to act according to principles, this power to control one's actions and emotions, a choice of one to have authority or power, -these things are the will of the individual, and they are ignorant! The will is self-control, but there is none; it is all an illusion, and the will is ignorant of this. The subject asks: "Who or what has put me here?" But only the audience answers. We clap simultaneously, in "herd-fashion."

We answer quite quickly without thinking; we pass judgment and interpret that this “thing” has put the subject here in this room. But we have put the subject in this room; the individual, his behavior is absentminded; there is no reflection; he plays, as does the subject, to ease this anxiety; he reads to be lost in a “labyrinth,” to build a mystery he cannot solve. The artist, though, is responsible for this web of deception; for, he plays, as does the subject, “for a stalemate;” the artist creates a maze of “symbols” unknowingly, “without meaning.” Reminiscence is essence; for the subject to discover himself, his fundamental nature, he must recall his past experience outside the room. “Nothing.” This is what we find at the end of the maze. Culture applauds with social control; this is what the will is ignorant of, that it is the subject in the play. The story beckons one to reconsider, to question what is this play that we are a part in.

Walls. But, “no wall in particular.” There are just merely walls the subject is confined; there are just merely walls that enclose us. But what are these walls? Their essence is important. Door. There are “invisible doors” that the subject searches for, as are there invisible walls that surround us. We know that we put up walls, and we know that others put up walls to keep us out. But do we know that there are walls that confine us; walls that custom builds? They are the walls of the theatre, and like the walls of the room, they are alive! Yes, we are trapped here, just as the subject, within this “breathing room” called life. What are these “invisible doors” of life? Why can’t we see them? What in life is obscure to us that we might enter but the future? Yes, that is where these doors lead, but what are these doors? They are choices. Decisions. We must make them constantly.

There is a Buddhist parable that goes something to the effect that: The world is on fire and you are laughing. This statement is true in that, as Nietzsche believed, “men are inclined to laziness;” this is not to say that there should be no laughter in life. No! What awful state of affairs would we be trapped in without laughter? There is laughter in Art, even; it is called Comedy. But as was Aristotle’s precious manuscript on the subject lost, so too has laughter left Philosophy, this examination of life.

The artist who examines this “thing,” as the subject calls it, the Omnibus as I have named it, -the artist is labeled as dark. And indeed it is a darkness that surrounds us. We are surrounded by a distance, shadowed by a future that is “vague and fuzzy.” At one point the subject “sat content in the room, bouncing the blue ball;” the individual is pacified by activity; he is content to do the work society has dealt him just as the subject with his blue ball. At first, when the subject wakes and discovers this object he “threw it across the room and it bounced out of control until it came back” and hit him in the head where he had injured it earlier. Like Sisyphus, the subject is left to labor over and over this “ball.” But the subject takes on this boulder not as a burden; the individual takes his work as a relief; he does not wish to be his own master, but controlled by society, given direction; doors open up and the individual

enters them. And laid out before him are these rituals; the subject grooms himself; the individual works and is content to be “invisible from time,” invisible from the Omnibus.

The artist that chooses not to be a part of the play, or not to play along, -the finger is pointed at the artist; convention speaks and says he is lazy or useless; but the artist chooses his work. And it is this choice that matters. The theatre is composed of actors, and not all of them play the role of the artist; -and some of these actors are “exaggerations;” -Rilke knew this. They are not real artists but wear the guise of one while others are like the subject in the room, they “eat as if a man starved in the wilderness.” Yes! I tell you the true artist is starving; he is in the wilderness and to be noticed he must set the forest on fire! Then people in the city take notice; someone in the audience smells the smoke; and then some obnoxious individual, wanting to play the hero, or perhaps some attentive individual who makes it his duty to stand watch over the theatre shouts out, “Fire!” And everyone in the theatre rushes to see what is the clamor, what has disrupted the performance. And water is poured on the artist to put him out; that is why he must not even just set himself on fire; he must set the world on fire if he is to be heard.

But most do not even know that the world is on fire, and they sit in the luxury of their seats, or act the laughter of their role on stage. The actor is an ignorant beast; roaming about his meadow he thinks is his stage, he grazes. He is a mere sheep; and unlike cattle the actor depletes the meadow of all but the sad weeds of regret. The subject becomes unhappy, and he did not even know he was happy before with his blue ball; but he knows once his work has been taken away and then given back to him. So appears this girl; and so forms this relationship. But the subject is deceived into this union. The individual is married and is happy; he has children; ritual wills it so. But the artist lives in isolation. Solitude!

Actors speak in double-talk: words spill out and appear to be meaningful but in fact are a mixture of sense and nonsense. The individual must learn to read between the lines; he must learn to interpret the play. The girl appears before the subject in the story, and he learns to “read quite well the silent language of her body;” the individual learns to read body language because he knows that what is before him is a mute, an actor who speaks in double-talk; the individual must learn the role of an analytical detective; for, we are half mute and try to hide this or that thing but “a trace of exaggeration remains in our eyebrows; we do not notice that the corners of our mouth are bent.” -Rilke knew this. Some are better actors than others, though. So there is distrust in the air of the theatre; no one wants to say who they really are; we choose to wear these masks, to make these false impressions from fear of being labeled a madman; ritual wills it so.

So there are these walls we put up such as these... these masks. Yes, these masks are the walls we put up, but we already know this. And so the mad *act* goes... *-on with show!* The individual puts up his wall as a defense, to hide what is inside; the individual learns how to build walls to separate himself, and he learns how to build walls to enclose himself, for comfort, for this solace he believes is sanity. The artist is a wild beast; unlike the sheep in the meadow, the artist runs loose in the theatre trying to tear down walls; he is a madman bent on destruction at the cost of his work; he starves himself and sets walls on fire; the artist, he is out of control I tell you! The artist is a ragged thing; he lets his hair grow long, he is not properly groomed; he runs around the theatre as the subject does in the room; he is “naked,” and he is “free;” that is what the subject becomes conscious of, this freedom. He stares at these walls, “no wall in particular” because they are all the same; they are all the same, these walls we build; but they are all invisible; they are indeed transparent!

The subject learns from the girl that there are these “invisible doors,” this “passage” within him. So the artist seeks to penetrate his subject, to open up these doors and reveal the true nature of this or that thing. And this becomes the problem of the artist, how to handle his subject. It may seem that I have begun to handle the subject at hand here vaguely and obscurely, -But this is no deception; we are deep within *The Box* now; but we shall dig deeper than before. This interpretation is a means of access; we are the participants examining this “thing;” and like Carlos William Carlos’ *The Thing*, “It merely rings and we serve it bitterly, They and I.” But if you buy the ticket, you had better be prepared for the show; for it is a drama, it is a tragedy, Life. But you are already in! -on with the show!

Nothing. The artist is a nocturnal creature; like Dostoevsky’s subject in his *Notes from Underground*, the artist must admit to himself: “I am a sick man... I am a spiteful man. I am an unattractive man.” The artist is malicious and mad, he is indeed a madman; he is ugly. The artist lives in the dark; he is nothing; he does not exist; he is a person but is of little or no value, a vagabond, a transient. Like the subject in the room, we awaken one day and try to figure out this thing called reality; it is breathing; “it is alive!” But we are confused and in a panic; our chest tightens and we feel short of breath; we think, but nothing comes to mind. We “look for a mirror.” -Rilke knew this. But when we find this mirror, when that day comes that we stare into this “black liquid” and see ourselves, we are old. And we cry out, but no one hears us because we are mute. We are poor; we are starving. We need something to comfort us as if we are children again... And we stare into the face of death, in that reflection that emanates from this “viscous liquid.” What is this “pestilence of mind,” these memories that we search for? Are we nothing? What is our purpose? But why should we even have a purpose? I don’t know.

But that is what we do; we search for answers; we build this “labyrinth” that we cannot solve. We cannot understand what it is like to be nothing. But we are nothing; we do not exist. How absurd to think that we do not exist! -But it is true; we are nothing; we are of little or no value to this “thing” we have created. And like the subject we feel angry, but we don’t know why. We are “like a stranger lost in insomnia” We are “never really awake, but never really asleep.” The truth is enslaved; it is hidden from us. The truth is deceptive; to search for it one must become either a zealot or a bigot; ritual wills it so. So choose your mask and step onto the stage. Speak out if you must; silence me if you must; I am a madman, out of control. Run for the door

Why does the subject try to forget? What is all of the time that he has tried to remember? There is this individual in the audience who stands up during the show; some of the members of the audience are annoyed that he is blocking their view; the individual is ridiculed, but only momentarily as he passes by. What is this individual doing? He walks to the back of the theatre but is stopped by an usher and told to take his seat; but he explains that he wishes to turn on the lights, for he knows that this is just a play and that he must reveal this discovery. But he is too ignorant, -by his very own ignorant will he does not know to stand up and shout out to stop this charade. So he waits there at the entrance; but the play goes on and on, and the individual waits there until he withers away. And that is the past, this *time*, that our subject in the story tries now to forget; it is regret for having remembered anything from the start. It is like when a child cries out: I wish I were never even born!

Label. Everything needs a name; ritual wills it so. Why does the subject choose a number, 25, for his name? What is the significance of this? Well, it is quite simple in one aspect; symbolically he is just a number; he is not a person, an individual, but just another number; the individual is just another face in the crowd. But the subject chose this number for a reason, because he was neither young nor old; he tells us this. And he named the girl Hope; and, again, symbolically she stands for something, this hope that the subject might understand who and what he is. It is not so much the names that are significant, and they are significant, but it is this process; this fact that it is in the subject’s nature to give things names, to label things. But it is not just his nature to label things; he does not just name himself 25, but he has ‘faith’ that he is 25; this is in the individual’s nature, too, to have “faith.”

It is not just important that we label things; it is also important that we have *faith*, that we *believe* that these things we call by this or that name are what we call them for it is in our nature; ritual wills it so. The individual, though, is zealous indeed; he must have a name; he must label everything. But he has names and labels for things, and he does not realize where he has got them, -even more terrifying, the individual has labels for things that he did not even name himself, and he has labels that his ignorant will does not understand, but he uses them. And the dreaded misery this single individual causes to others just like himself! But that is the problem; these other individuals, he does not think they are like himself; the individual is under the delusion that because other individuals are just that, an individual –it is this fact that each individual knows what he is, an individual, and that by the very fact that he is an individual he is somehow unique, -and he is, but it is the fact that that individual somehow becomes delusional and no longer thinks but believes that each individual is different that he causes so much misery. How does the individual do this? The individual does this in that he believes in difference and makes it a point to only point out these differences; the individual no longer or perhaps never understood that even though each individual is an individual, he also has the same fundamental nature as everyone else. But moreover, it is the fact that the individual has more in common with other individuals than he has differences that creates this misery.

But we assign roles; and even worse, our ignorant will accepts them; we take center stage and want what the subject in the story wants to be told; for we want to be comforted and know our role; we want to be told as the subject that: “This is your name, this is what you do as your profession, and this is your past.” This is what society does; ritual wills it so.

Attached. Everything in the “breathing room” is “attached with a thin line of flexible wire.” As the subject in the story comes to discover; so do we discover that in life, everything is bound to something else. But the individual, how his ignorant will is deceived! The individual goes about the theatre of life attaching labels to everything but the poor fool forgets yet again, that everything is attached to something. We deceive ourselves into thinking that there are criminals in the world. And indeed there are; these criminals are everywhere, but only if we had a real mirror we could see ourselves in it; we could be horrified to find out that the world is not just full of criminals, that this vast theatre is full of them, but that each and every one of us is a criminal! How absurd it is that we are all criminals! But it is no lie. Even this thing we have labeled as religion, it too says that we are all criminals. Christianity, how absurd a truth that it points out, even though I am not a Christian, I know it is true; each and every individual has sinned; by the very fact of being an individual one commits sin; ritual wills it so.

Schopenhauer, in his collection of essays, *On Human Nature* posits the notion that the individual can have no dignity; for, how can he when “his conception is a crime, his birth a penalty, his life a labor, and death a necessity.” I have discussed this labor of life, and I have discussed the inevitability of death. But what do we make of this Christian belief that our conception is a crime. Is it not natural to procreate? And how is birth a penalty? The solution can be found in one simple formula to answer both these questions, as I suppose it was intended to be: our conception is a crime in that more than this idea that man is born into sin, he creates by procreation yet another criminal. And the part about birth being a penalty, well that is simple, too: we are thrown into the play; what more punishment could this “thing” do than put the subject in the room; or what better way to torture the individual than to give him his freedom, this choice, than to take it away.

Death is a necessity indeed! We must make room not only for the next act in the play, but the theatre must have its drama; it must have death or the theatre will overfill and collapse. But it is getting too full here everyday. And at any moment the dam will break and blood will flood the world! We believe this prophetic propaganda; that there is some foreign pestilence, some “drug” that is being secretly added to our food. Yes! The subject is correct in his suspicions; from the outside we can see this; and the artist, this madman, he has seen it; he has looked into this cup and seen his own reflection, “and death stared back.”

And like the subject, his “reflection was clear, just as the present...” But what is the significance of the cup? Most importantly, it is the only thing in this “labyrinth” that is not bound with wire; the individual is free to make choices, and he can also choose how he dies. But- “In hospitals, where people die so agreeably and with so much gratitude toward doctors and nurses, one dies a death prepared by the institution:” –Rilke knew this. But we do not know how to meet death. We do not search out our death, as we should; and that is what the subject in the story suggests; we fear death because of “these false perceptions.”

But there is another more pitiful reason that the individual fears death; he is under the delusion that these things that he is attached to, that he can somehow hold on to them forever; and perhaps that is why the subject has such a peaceful moment, why his thoughts are so clear and rational when he drinks what he believes is “poison;” the subject has lost all his attachments, not by his choice but all the same, they are gone: the girl, Hope, and the drug, and his blue ball is just a mere object; and this object is nothing more than a labor. This way of looking at attachment is found at the root of Buddhism. But we do not have the time or resources to explain this in detail. What is important is that one understands that this is a fundamental principle in Buddhism, this idea of freedom from attachment to meet death peacefully.

But for now I must address something that contradicts a statement I have previously made. The subject states that he does not fear death because he did not even know what it was anymore than he knew what was outside the walls of the room. Again, how can we not fear what we do not know; how can we not fear the unknown? The individual must free himself first from all attachment. But I do not believe that the individual can do this; we remain under one delusion or the other; we either have some belief that enables us to not fear death, or we do not; we have a choice; we can either choose to die, or we can stay and play. Mediocrity. The individual is just this and nothing more, ordinary, common; ritual wills it so.

Meditation. To become absorbed in thought, to find a source of inspiration, this is what the artist does; he becomes absorbed in thought; he contemplates; he ponders; he looks for inspiration. The subject mimics this, meditation. More importantly he imitates this ritual of meditation. He sits there cross-legged and notices some consciousness that becomes “some dream-like state after a while of just sitting and listening” to his heartbeat and his breathing in silence, like each time he goes to sleep.

We must meditate; we must filter out all the noise and listen to the silence; the individual must step away from the noise of the crowd and the play. So I will meditate for a moment. When I write, I think of, or I should say I am inspired by the people and things around me: by friends and family, by books or at least parts of them, by these ideas I find here and there. A friend of mine writes, but this friend doesn't let anyone read what he or she has written (and I cannot say his or her; for this friend is very paranoid for his or her own reasons... even I say that the artist must be paranoid and suspicious). But there is a reason this friend does not let anyone read these things he or she keeps to himself or herself, and that reason is because he or she believes that people will be able to know how he or she thinks, and by knowing this people will be able to control him or her. I don't think that anyone will be able to control me by reading my writing: story, poem, or what have you. No! I think just the opposite; the writer is in control; the writer dictates, he controls and manipulates the words to his advantage. The artwork does not reveal the individual artist; the artist presents his representation of the way he sees things. One cannot say when I speak or when some other voice speaks through my writing; perhaps you think you know me and you can see my blood poured out on the paper, and you very well may; but do not assume that you know my intentions. This thing, Hermeneutics, is a caricature itself; that one can take a piece of writing and even approximate what the author intended is absurd! There is no middle ground.

But no apologies necessary, those who would take offense already know that all I say is just madness; I am nothing more than a babbling madman, and they can guess what I will say next is, “Very well then, -on with the show!

Mirth. The individual looks upon the stage, and the sounds of laughter echo through the theatre; the artist looks upon the world and hears this laughter; and this laughter, it comes from his audience; but this play is a drama; what the artist created, this blood that he spilled, -he is dead serious! But his audience responds with laughter; so the artist sets his masterpiece on fire to silence the laughter. The subject, under the influence of the drug, talks to his ball; “it is alive!” The subject is involved in a conversation that goes as follows:

“Can we go play in the rain now?” It asked excitedly

“I suppose, but don’t interrupt me anymore. I think I might of found some clue to where Hope is.”

“Where is she 25?” It laughed. “Have you been dreaming again?”

“Shut up.” I laughed with it now. “My dreams are...”

First, there are two microscopes one can put under to interpret it. One might think themselves clever and think that I should have written “...I *have* found some clue...” instead using the word *of* in place of *have*; but then one would be playing the part or role of the Editor instead of the proper role of Reader in this case. But interpret as you will. I, on the other hand, will interpret this another way. (I will break my rhythm momentarily and tell that I intended to portray some imitation of life by the subject’s use *of* vernacular). Anyway, -on with the show!

The subject laughs along with his “cantankerous blue ball;” but his laughter is a different kind of laughter. There are, like with shadows, many species of laughter: the individual hears the crowd laughing and he laughs along; he does not know why he laughs, and he does not laugh to merely fit in, but he hears laughter and he finds himself laughing alongside his theatre patrons. This is one species of laughter. But the subject’s laughter, it is a rare species and when it is spotted, the individual is either alarmed or insulted; for, that is this laughter’s intentions; it is sarcastic laughter. The artist hears this laughter, he may even be delusional, the artist, he is also a rare species, like the blue ball he is moody and cantankerous; the artist, he hears this laughter mocking him and he mocks it back! The artist must not only be paranoid nowadays, he must listen carefully to his audience and mock them if necessary.

Lake. The subject wakes after his passing out and “there is a small pool of blood.” He “dipped a finger into the viscous liquid, and the preternatural light that penetrated the room magnified the red of the blood.” The subject swirled his finger through the pool of liquid, the lake of blood, and was pacified; he did not notice his pain temporarily. This is the rebirth I described earlier that the subject goes through immediately after reawakening in the room. And it is very important in the fact that it is a reawakening, that it is not just a “small pool of blood.” But it is a lake of blood! The individual sets comfortably in his soft seat in the theatre, and he watches the drama unfold; he watches the tragedy and he weeps; he has his catharsis and then he gets up to leave the show; but he does not notice the red sign shining above the door he walks through that reads: THIS IS NOT AN EXIT; but either way he thinks, or he believes that he exits the play; but he only steps through a door, a passage that leads him to another play, and he sits down, he settles himself and becomes comfortable and the show begins again. This drama unfolds before the individual again and again just as the subject reawakens in the room; he drinks the “black liquid” again and again.

But the subject does not know that the “black liquid” is not an exit, that it is not a “poison.” And so the cycle goes. Where does the blood go? It flows into this lake of blood; it is physical evidence of his pain; but he perceives it as a “small pool of blood;” but it is not! It is a lake of blood! And he is drowning in the pain of it all, time after time. There are other very significant details to this scene: he “dipped a finger into the viscous liquid;” the finger is symbolic, through synecdoche; the finger represents the whole of man; and the “viscous liquid,” this “pool of blood” functions as a literary device the same way, it is the “soul” of man; it is that blood of the artist that is spilled on the “hard floor;” this floor is like a blank canvas, and the artist must, as I have said, slice his wrist, drain his blood into a bowl, and then, spill his blood onto the canvas. This swirling of the finger is symbolic, then, of the creative process, of the artist putting his blood into his work. And this “preternatural light” that penetrates the room; this is the light the artist must work under; he must work from a light that does not create shadow, but inspiration; the artist must shade in the details; he must draw these shadows of life; he must shade life in as dark.

What are these “thoughts swimming” in the subject’s head, and in what “confusion” were they “drowning?” The individual in the theatre gets up to leave the show; he walks toward the door that he thinks is an exit, and he does not notice the sign; but something else happens to him also when he goes from theatre to theatre; every time it happens to him but still he forgets, perhaps this is his method. This particular time, but no time in particular, he slams his head into the doorway; this individual, he is tall I suppose or the door is small; either way he slams his head into the doorway and it is painful, but he is not angry. Why? Why is he not angry? Why does the individual subject himself to this pain time after time and not get angry? Perhaps it is his method; the individual, there are many species of him as well; there are *he* individuals and *she* individuals, *small* individuals and *tall* individuals; so maybe only the tall individuals hit their heads. But why does this particular species of individual hit his head time after bloody time and not get angry? It is his method; it is in his nature. He does not get angry because, like the subject in the story, his will is ignorant. Again I must reiterate: Culture applauds with social control; this is what the will is ignorant of, that it is the subject in the play.

There is another lake in the story; it is an inland body of water; it is inside not only *The Box*, but also within the subject himself. This “water,” what is it? As there are multiple levels of thought in Buddhism, there are multiple levels in interpretation. This is not just a method of the Far East; it is just an approach; it is merely an analytical method. How far one is willing to go, how deep one reads into something, depends on the interpreter. I will look at least three interpretations of this symbolism at hand: the water, the lake, and depth.

So what is this water? There are several things as well. This water is something that soothes the subject, pacifies him like the ball; and it is the “rain” that he plays under; it forms a stream at the bottom of the shower that the subject dives into the lake through. And this is a process: the rain falls from the sky upon the steep mountains of the countryside; it floods the lands and drains down the mountains as it forms tributaries; and eventually, at the end, these streams run into a lake. The subject is more than just delusional, then; his behavior represents something; it is symbolic. The individual, his behavior is not just delusional, he is not just in denial of his addictions; the individual’s behavior is symbolic; ritual wills it so. How? How does ritual force its will upon the individual? That is simple. As I have said before: Culture dictates our fate. We are products of our environment.

The individual is a product of his environment; he has his attachments and he has his addictions, his habits; and the habits are sometimes healthy and sometimes not so healthy; he must not make excuses for his habits and addictions but merely admit that they are such; the individual must become awake, like the subject, and realize that this or that thing is an addiction or that this or that thing is habit; and if he is not content with his state he must merely abandon these habits or addictions. But this is not so easy for the individual to do because his will is ignorant; and there are different species of will that inhabit each individual just as there are different species of individuals; and some species of the will are more ignorant than others, but they are all ignorant. So the more ignorant the will of the individual the more difficult it is for him to abandon his discontent, even if he is aware of his habits or addictions that he is discontent with; so he forms a disposition with his ignorant will; but this will is his own; the individual deceives himself and hates his own will, perhaps because it is ignorant and he does not realize that it is natural for his will to be ignorant; ritual wills it so; culture demands the individual will's ignorance; for the will of ritual, the will of culture is powerful. But there are some individuals whom their will is of so little ignorance that they have some knowledge of the will of culture; it is the zealot; history holds many of these just as it holds many bigots; but the will of the bigot, why it is the most ignorant species of will of all!

What, then, is this lake? The lake is several things as well. But we will not go into much detail; it is only important that one realizes that, like the theatre there are thousands of parts of a lake: a shore; it is deep, it has waves, -but that is enough for now. Let us just look at these three components of the lake in which our subject first stands upon its shore, and like the artist, reaches a hand in, then is shoulder deep, and then he "dove in." This is where we will begin.

The subject is submersed in this inward body of water, in this lake of his mind. Above him his blue ball, his labor, is "swept around by the currents," it is controlled by this rhythm of life. And below him, deep in his thoughts, at the bottom of this lake sits Hope; and she is anchored to the bottom, she is like a stone or perhaps she is the very floor of this lake; for, this lake is deep, so deep, so very, very deep is this lake of the individual mind that it has no bottom. And that is why perhaps we say that so and so has gone off the deep end. But either way, the subject tries to swim down to her; the subject, like the individual, has an ignorant will and his behavior is not just delusional, he is not just in denial of his attachment; the subject's behavior is symbolic. What, then, does it represent? Despair. This is what it represents.

There is a disparity of reason, a distinct quality in its character. Reason does not merely fail the individual; but reason is this process of rationalizing, of understanding; and to understand one must reason; so there is this circular process of reason; the individual, to reason, must explain or justify; but to understand is the problem of the individual; to explain or justify he can merely believe this or that thing is true; but to truly understand requires proof. This proof is often just subjectivity, just an explanation or a justification of something; and justification and justice, though they may seem two different words, are the same; and they are subjective, too, they are nothing more than an excuse to do this or that thing; that is why justice is so absurd. But back to the individual's attempt to understand. The individual must have proof to understand; and that is what the subject searches for, proof of Hope, proof of existence, of whether she exists outside the room. The individual searches the theatre for proof that these actors who die in the play are only dead in the play; and therefore the individual looks for life after the play is over; he believes that there is this vast world outside the theatre; we call this an afterlife. This is what the subject searches for at the bottom of the lake, deep within his delusional mind that is subjugated by his ignorant will.

The lake symbolizes something else, though, earlier in the story. By the very ignorance of the subject's will, by the very weight of his own thoughts as he describes, he begins to drown in this lake he imagines. Freedom. This is what he has when he is out of the water; the subject is free from his thoughts. The lake, again, symbolizes the mind, a deep abyss; but even more, it suggests that the mind is something we must fight the currents of, swim against the undertow. The individual, he is constantly in the undertow. Though he sees the shore and swims toward it, he is like the subject trying to swim toward the bottom of this perpetual depth of the lake, of the mind. The individual swims toward the shore constantly, but never gets any closer because he does not understand that he swims against the current.

Perhaps the individual decides to swim toward another shore and for an instance the individual can see the shore getting closer; but he is never aware of the currents of the lake; by the very own ignorance of his will he is not aware of the currents of life, of the overpowering will of culture that he swims against. But the story suggests that the only way that the subject can escape this undertow is to fly, as do the birds. But, people do not fly like birds, do they? This is the question the subject proposes. The artist, though, wishes to learn how to fly his whole life.

Dark. Such a dark symbol it is! It is getting dark here within *The Box*. But we have three more motifs to address. “Death lay ahead of me, in the dark forest of the future.” This is the “concept” the subject introduces. Why does he introduce this in particular? It’s not just any particular concept. He is dark, secretive; the artist, he works in this period of stagnation, this New Dark Age; and as in Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World*, he is a Savage! How savage the artist has become, he writes in his own blood, in the dark!

But we must address this concept of the forest, of the dark, and of the future. The future is dark, it is secretive; the individual, how his ignorant will is a slave to this darkness; for, he is in the dark, and he is ignorant. But we already know this; the individual must be ignorant for it is in his fundamental nature to be ignorant. How is he ignorant? He is not ignorant simply by means of his will, though; the individual is ignorant in that, as the saying goes, he cannot see the forest for the trees. We hear this from time to time; it is quite cliché; but it is cliché because it is uttered out in ignorance, by the ignorant individual himself. So what do we make of this figure of speech? Perhaps it needs to be interpreted again, -with new light we turn on our microscope.

Why does the subject say, “Tree,” or more importantly, why does he think of a tree. What is a tree? It is a perennial plant of wood, a symbolic Tree; something resembling a tree, for this symbolic Tree is a representation. So what does a tree represent? A tree can represent thousands of things. But it is how a symbol is used that matters. So how is this tree used? Most important, it is the first image, or thought, the subject tries to picture in his mind each time he wakes because it is symbolically Perennial, a symbol of this cycle. Again this is just an interpretation; but it is my interpretation; and more importantly, it is an interpretation of my own work, my own blood that I spilled. Anyway, the tree is significant in its relation to this birth and rebirth; it takes root, the thought, on the shore of this lake of blood; this “small pool of blood.”

The symbolic Tree, then, represents Life, as trees often do: there are family trees, most importantly; for that is in essence what the subject searches for, his roots. He tries to “think of someone, anyone.” Perhaps he searches for his family, -No! He searches for more than just his family; he searches for this greater family, for “Society.” The individual has a family, and he has a past, but he also has History; and this is the past of the individual’s Culture.

But we must turn to this cliché, this notion that one cannot see the forest for the trees. The second thought that comes into the subject's mind is, "Person." What is this symbolic Person? It, too, is in relation to this birth and rebirth; but both the Tree and Person are in relation to our interpretation of the cliché; and this Person is not society but the individual. "Who or what has put me here?" This is the third thought the subject has. But this is another level of my interpretation of *The Box*, so in this instance this question is not, as I interpreted before, a rhetorical question. No. It is in relation to this birth and rebirth, this Life and the Individual, who is but a tree in our forest. And that is it. The subject cannot see the forest for the trees because who or what has put him there is this Forest. What? What has put him there? This "thing" has put him there. But it is a symbolic Thing; it is the Omnibus. Well you must have forgotten what I said earlier; I am a madman and I ramble on and on; I know this. The Omnibus is the subject transfigured. Perhaps if the individual were to transfigure this cliché it might read: the trees cannot see the forest. Why the individual who thought of this clever little pun did not say it that way in the first place, I don't know. So don't get annoyed; these artists are very moody and cantankerous, we know this. But either way, the trees cannot see the forest; this makes more sense; the individual cannot see the play because he is in it; the subject cannot see the story because he is in it; we cannot see Life because we are drowning in it; it is deep and dark.

Dark. The artist is dark; he imitates his dark life; he is a gloomy creature. The subject speaks of the dark. He says: "Day was light, and night was dark." And that was all that the subject says he can make of this. What does this symbolize? Well, first, you must remember that as I put in big bold letters as the title of this interpretation: **EVERYTHING HERE IS AN ALLUSION**. This is the context, the framework under which everything in *The Box* is structured; everything in it is allusion; it refers indirectly to Life. So why was daylight and night dark and nothing more? Why all this blue? What I allude to is this idea in life that things are not just black and white, but that there is a gray; and the subject lives here, in the gray, in-between two extremes.

But there is no middle ground. There is no gray in the artist's life, for he lives in the dark. That is why he must set himself on fire. The individual, he is blind as well as mute; all he sees is white, for he is under the bright lights of the play. The individual, he is deaf as well. He is such a pitiful beast, this individual; he must see everything in black and white; for the lights are either on or they are off; and in the dark he sits there terrified; in the audience he sits, mute, blind, and deaf. What is "this strange aphasia" the subject is possessed? What is this loss of power to comprehend words the individual is ill with? What is his sickness? How can the artist even attempt to communicate with such a sad state of affairs? And how is it that the artist can see in the dark? Why you might have forgotten, but I have told you; the artist, he is a nocturnal creature; he only comes out at night, in the dark, and sets fires! The artist, he is in the darkness now, and he is trying to set the whole world on fire and burn down this edifice, this theatre that he is encased in!

What is this darkness? I had almost forgotten until now. But that is how we come upon this or that thing; as the subject says, he has "stumbled upon a windfall." Windfall: something, -like a tree! -blown down by the wind; or in this case, an unexpected gain or advantage. Yes! The artist is always searching for the advantage; he goes about a meadow with his butterfly net and tries to catch a butterfly. What is this butterfly? It is death. We know this already. The artist goes around and tries to capture death in his net; the subject says "Death lay ahead of me, in the dark forest of the future." That is what this darkness is, the future; it is dark; it is secretive. And so is death captured in the story; death is portrayed in *The Box*.

Bonsai: a miniature version of a *tree*. *The Box* is still growing, and perhaps it is a mutant. I intended the story, like the leaves of the bonsai, -the pages of the story were to be a third the size of the whole idea. One must understand that even though the story is short, it took a year to create. There are several procedures involved in this method. There is the idea; there is all the research, this slaving over pages of books, thousands of ideas and making sense of them and their relation to my original idea; and there are these pages of doodles, of notes scattered here and there, ideas scattered here and there to be assembled.

Most of this just requires time though. Like the bonsai, my story must have the time to take root in my mind and grow. But I am thorough; I am a madman. It was not just enough to write the story, for I knew that the individual has bad manners, and he would not give it the full attention it needs; for the individual is too occupied with life to hear me thoroughly; but the story it must be nourished if it is to grow, and perhaps if it is not read it will wither away and die. But I could not let it do that. So, like the madman, I wrote page after page, groomed leaf after leaf, limb and trunk until I was satisfied that I had shouted loud enough. I even had to set my poor tree on fire; it burns even now. But I could have written a hundred pages. My tree, even though it is small, has many leaves. The individual does not understand that the artist spills his blood, hours every day for months, and in this instance, a full year, just to present to the individual one refined piece of work.

Box. This individual, she is a special kind of individual, she sits on the balcony in her theatre box. What is she, what species of individual is she; we know that she is a she, but what else? What more could she possibly be? She is an assassin, that is her role, -and the masks they wear, these assassins, they are painted pale, as if death themselves. There are assassins as well, but this one happens to be a she. She sits there with her theatre patrons, assassins themselves, but she does not watch the play. What is she doing? Concealed under the costume she wears, under her black robe is a crossbow. For this is her method, to sit and watch the theatre and assassinate. But what separates her from her other theatre patrons, this plethora of assassins? Why does she hunt the artist! Yes, this is her role; she has rehearsed it many times. The artist knows this assassin is after him; he watches her, for he is paranoid and suspicious. But this assassin, she also has another role; she is the Critic, -even worse, she is a Psychoanalytic Critic. And she hunts your poor ignorant narrator, how pitiful.

Hope, this is why she becomes “ill with melancholy.” Melancholy. A black bile. That is what is in the cup, this “black liquid.” And the subject, like Sisyphus, is sentenced to this cycle of despair. The individual is lost within the depths of indifference; he wakes everyday and is annoyed at the sound of time, at this foghorn that blasts out: “Wake up slave! Work!” And he fears time, so he obeys, how pitiful. The individual goes to his work; he takes it and calls it his own, but it is not; this work, it is not his own. The individual gets off work and takes up his habits and addictions, for it is in his fundamental nature to do so. But the artist, he wakes in darkness, for he lives in it; he is nocturnal. The artist wakes in darkness and is comforted by it, for he is a ragged thing, and does not want to be seen. But he takes on his work, for he is driven; he is driven on by madness. The artist, he is a madman! He is delusional and dangerous! But he lives underground. He does not live in a box; ritual wills it so.

The police, their role, it is proof that the artist must be paranoid. Their job is to be suspicious! What an act to play! What effect this must have on the pig! For this is the beast he is, Authority. The Pig, and the Artist, they must be paranoid; the world is full of criminals! Sociology tells us... Science tells us so! -This new religion of Science, it has killed God. And not just this insane belief in Evolution; this is true; I wish we were not, but it is; it is true I tell you! -Ask any Criminologist and he will tell you that we are all criminals, each and every one of us! Look beside you, there...there beside you in the theatre, this individual beside you, he, -whatever species- he is a Criminal! We share many things in common: this thing I told you about, our fundamental nature. But the only one role I am absolutely sure of is that we are all Criminals! That is why the artist must be paranoid; for I have said it many times, -I am a babbling madman you know- that the artist must fear his audience, and be prepared because they are all criminals looking to create some artistic misdemeanor or felony, some breach of artistic etiquette, -and the artist must be suspicious, he must be prepared to mock them! Jack the Ripper said he brought forth the 20th Century, and he did! He brought this new species of fear and terror, this new breed of violence. And it was not this sadistic violence, this is in our fundamental nature, we evolved into these beasts we are; the Marquis de Sade only named something already here: a label, a particular image to identify it with, this beautiful sadism. But Jack is a product of Urbanization. Globalization. Yes! We are all in one huge theatre now, full of Criminals! And today's motto is not, love thy neighbor, but: fear thy neighbor! For your neighbor is a criminal, and you do not know the depth of his role. Good actors always operate just under the surface. The madman, though, he brings forth the 21st Century! But not Nietzsche's madman. -No! There is a new species of madman nowadays; he has evolved!

Nietzsche, though, he was there when God was killed! What a sight this must have been! It was probably according to History somewhere around 1850, respectively. Yes, Nietzsche was there when the world gave birth to Industry! People in hotels once "...died there in a few beds. Now one dies in 559 beds. Factory fashion, of course. In the view of this enormous production rate, the individual death is not so well executed; but that is beside the point." -Rilke knew this. The point is that this new species of madman is the Artist. But he is not like any other artist, he must be paranoid and suspicious and always ready to mock his audience; ritual wills it so. Custom demands! Custom, too, has evolved. Jack the Ripper, he brought forth blood, center stage. The artist, the true artist paints a message in blood; he paints of his own blood! Art imitates Life, and in the world it rains blood. Blood. Streams of blood. Rivers of blood. Lakes of blood with corpses of the dead floating within. But this blood, it is the subtlest of subtlest blood, just a "small pool of blood." This is what this century awakens, just as did the subject in *The Box*.

Anyways, we have come as deep in this lake of mind as I can go; it is too dark to see any more. Enough of this, this interpretation.

The show is over!

THIS IS
NOT AN
EXIT!

Naïf

Is this the price we must pay for eternity, this pain and suffering, the happiness of life shattered and molded again, this pestilence called time? Yet it urges us on. As individuals we know that our existence is no more premeditated as if by accident, that chances of this conglomeration of pieces that make up our whole existence are only one time, and no more. How can I not know this? I feel that there is an ineffable passion that urges the artist on; one in which he is being watched by time, and he has a vague notion of when he developed this passion, a point when his initial expected feedback was not, "You are a genius!" No, at least it was not this way for me. I rose above a naïf in my being to a writer, but an artist? No, not at all. And I lie there dipping into that same blood of my rebirth from being a naïf. Time creates more change than reason. And so it goes with the creation of writing. Nietzsche said that he wanted to say with one sentence what others would say in a book. Well, I have tried to write hundreds of books in the Box.

There are larger themes that run through the Box, but I believe they are merely the grounding of it in time and place, cultural ambivalence. There is as I have said, a birth and rebirth, symbolic of Christian mythology that pervades my society. But also there is an essence of Buddhism, Eastern thought so they call it. There are multiple levels of interpretations that are to be conveyed –and perhaps my interpretation of my own work is the only way that you can fully experience all that was to be conveyed through this medium, as metonymy would say, through the pen.

But there are multiple levels of interpretations. The effect is more of a labor than anything. Art is a process. Creation should not be the problem, but communication. When I write, I consider the problems of communication. Grammar, vocabulary, poetics, -these things are developed through practice, through labor. Aldous Huxley said that Art has its morality, and that this morality is analogous to our own ethics, as beings. And that remorse is felt in the same relation to our bad art as our bad behavior. I feel guilty if I have not conveyed my meaning, but the practice comes from not trying to fix mistakes you have already made in previous works or performances, -but one must not make that mistake again, and that new work will keep your art alive. Well, my practice has been in putting multiple meanings to different motifs that are parallel to each but under different themes. If I place an object in a space, but not to be symbolic, -yet it is symbolic just by the very nature that it is a symbol; so then, is it symbolic because it yielded it so, or can I dictate what is symbolic and what is just...fluff. The answer is quite simply no because there is no filler, no prologue between books. I believe I understood Nietzsche's madness quite well, that we must be concise, that I must put a book into a story. And it is written to be read this way. There is a socially constructed ethic to the criticism given to a certain work, to the question of the depth of meaning conveyed. As a writer I watch my blood, pilfered through, and I lie awake at night and feel that remorse I spoke of before, but for no reason except that you know that everyone understands this ethic of Art, this ethic of criticism, and I

accept that this is what I have to do. But there are a lot of things that I don't want to do, but this, to put myself at the mercy of your knife slicing through my blood. There are far too many starving artists as well for me not to lay awake at night and fret. What pestilence plagues us also keeps us alive.

For me, there is no passive voice; there is no middle ground. I must do what I do, say what I say at the cost of my family and friends. There is a solitude that I have tried to touch upon; this is not just an interpretation, it is a naïf striving to be a being. Dostoevsky said in his *Notes from Underground*, that this is no longer writing but a form of corrective punishment. Perhaps it is. Punishment for our bad art and bad behavior as beings. Life, I find, is innately tragic. Life, all life is a tragedy as it passes, -I believe we can find this in Art. There is a price that one must pay to be an artist. You become quite deviant to society. You become one of the Others, an outsider, alienated from your own culture, trying to express yourself to; and there is a reason, and that is because to create entails that you bring about change, not reinforce old ideas under new labels. Oh, I suppose that some people fall prey to the caricature that fame is a sign of genius, or this mythology in our culture of misunderstood genius -hah, what idiots. It is more of a delusion than a misrepresentation, genius and fame. Does the unknown artist die the same death as the famed? Can we imagine this death? And if so, I believe this is the torture, this punishment through pain that the artist must go through. That each time I produce a new piece of work (and it is a labor), I must die another death.

Macabre. That is what it is, my writing. But I suppose there is a reason for this. People have asked me what I write about, but not why. When I was young, I used to read such books as *Animal Farm* and *Lord of the Flies*. Either way, the significance of when a book is read, as far as what was going on in one's life, that one can relate to that story, and it is the blood that gives writing life. It, writing, must speak something of Humanity, or it is just fluff, something to start a fire with. And when I say that it should speak something of Humanity, I mean that its message should strive to convey, in any way, and to be universal in its message. It will be grounded in time and place, culture, but that is how we get culture, through the reciprocal relation of art and time, its interpretation called History. -Macabre. My writing, that is what it is. We are subject to our demons; they are our shadow. I was twelve when I learned what death was. And it led me to that sense of urgency of inspiration, and that feeling that as soon as a thought entered my mind, it must be worked out, then immediately written down; for, just as I know I will only have this life, this lucky lottery ticket, I also know there are thoughts that can be lost, very important thoughts, -and I search for them still.

It is hard to explain how there is comfort in darkness. In a sense, one becomes that shadow, some mockery of the real being behind these socially constructed veils. The *Field Guide to Demons* suggest a method to identify the basic demon:

An incorporeal spirit: disembodied, ghostly, intangible, spiritual -this is its method; this is a sadist play the artist must act upon, his stage. Effect is what matters, it is conveyance. This medium is what the artist subjects himself to; this medium of writing is what I must humble myself to. The artist is no master, he is subjected, he is at the mercy and limitations of a physical medium. It is easy though to hide behind obscurity, and it is hard sometimes to determine whether an artist expresses himself through the medium, or if the medium expresses the artist. The demon can do this, he can shadow himself in the guise of a story, through fiction.