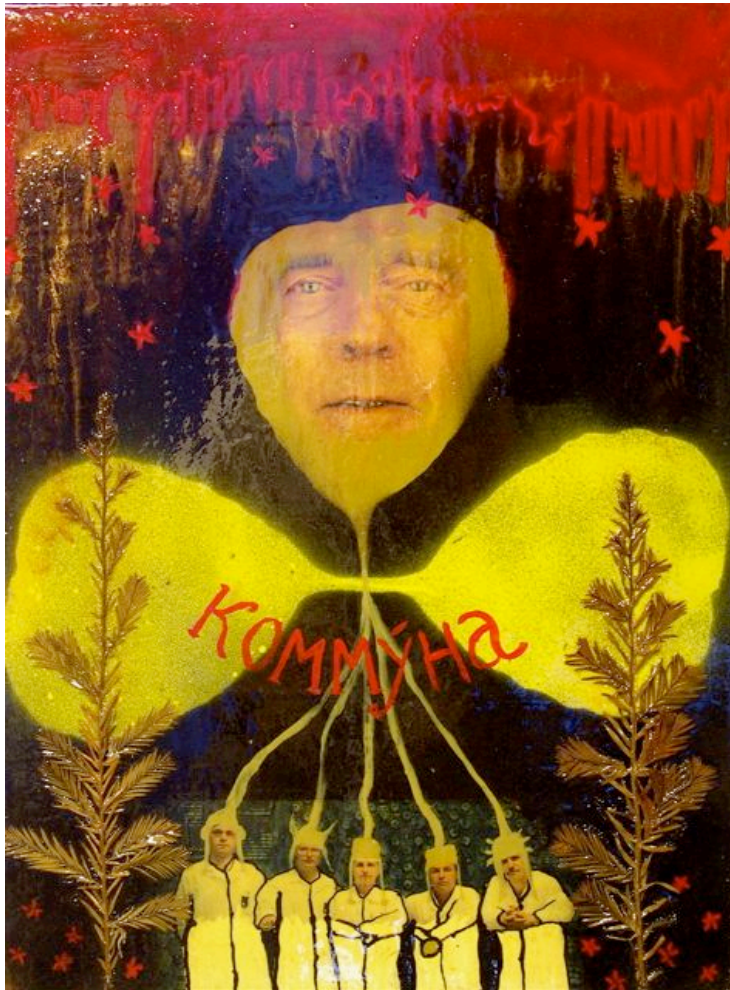


it is not long since conditions were worse than they are now

It is not long since conditions in the mines were worse than they are now. There are still living a few very old women who in their youth have worked underground, with the harness round their waists, and a chain that passed between their legs, crawling on all fours and dragging tubs of coal. They used to go on doing this even when they were pregnant. And even now, if coal could not be produced without pregnant women dragging it to and fro, I fancy we should let them do it rather than deprive ourselves of coal. But—most of the time, of course, we should prefer to forget that they were doing it. It is so with all types of manual work; it keeps us alive, and we are oblivious of its existence. More than anyone else, perhaps, the miner can stand as the type of the manual worker, not only because his work is so exaggeratedly awful, but also because it is so vitally necessary and yet so remote from our experience, so invisible, as it were, that we are capable of forgetting it as we forget the blood in our veins. In a way it is even humiliating to watch coal-miners working. It raises in you a momentary doubt about your own status as an 'intellectual' and a superior person generally. For it is brought home to you, at least while you are watching, that it is only because miners sweat their guts out that superior persons can remain superior. You and I and the editor of the Times Lit. Supp., and the poets and the Archbishop of Canterbury and Comrade X, author of Marxism for Infants—all of us really owe the comparative decency of our lives to poor drudges underground, blackened to the eyes, with their throats full of coal dust, driving their shovels forward with arms and belly muscles of steel.



dirty skylight window (or rainy day effect dim light)-
then very conscious of mechanics of light coming thru
or by a table very bright..

stained hands with black ink not minding

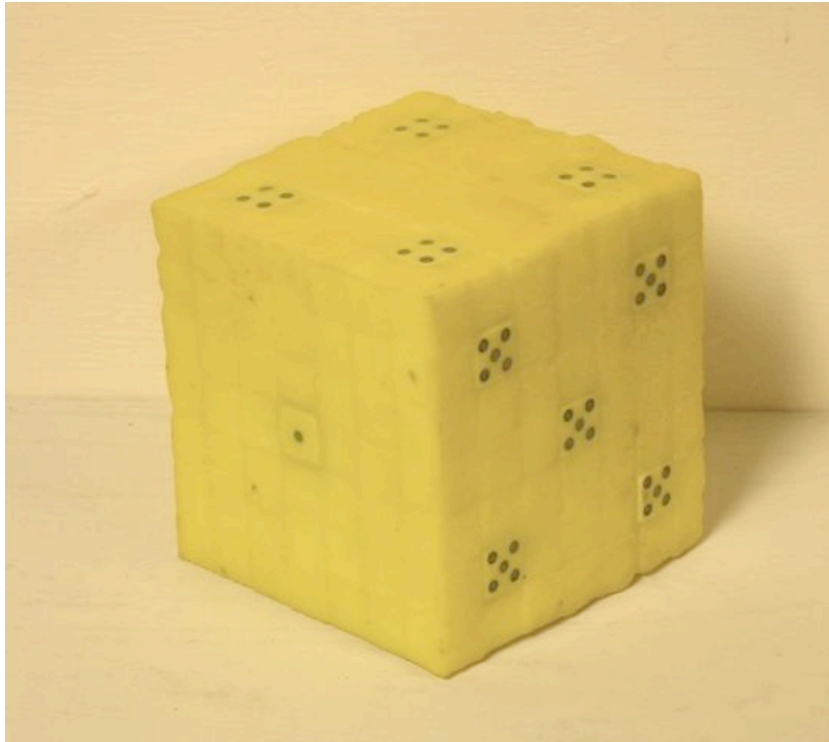
mine too
maybe not such a bad thing

On Dec 18, 2007, at 11:40 AM, Scott MacLeod wrote:

yeah

my tape heads are worn down

(page 15)



-also a sequence of being on a couch and looking out
as though over a river at night & up at the constellations
-but as though they were seen in a picture book

(page 19)

standing gazing into open space rural- exquisitely
quintessential atmosphere of indian summer light...

-this one fragment best recalled mystical- akin to
eakins' painting of the skull tower

no, congratulations doesn't feel like the right word.
the process beats you up, makes you feel like a petty
criminal - a stupid petty criminal. when it's done
you don't even feel relieved - you feel like you've
just crawled out of a sewer, which is an improvement
over being in the sewer, no doubt, but there's clearly
some more to be done before the process is complete.



On Dec 17, 2007, at 12:35 PM, Scott MacLeod wrote:

congratulations doesnt quite seem like the right word

congratulations! youre bankrupt!

but like I said, it seems to have vastly improved a few of my friends' lives

hope it does the same for you

On Dec 15, 2007, at 12:34 PM, jim leftwich wrote:

i'm on this list too.

the bankruptcy process is over as of last thursday.
what a miserable process it is.

(page 50)



same very pale blue a gauzy opaque smoke grey- mass
overheard something from last night's dream almost
forming an image- soft mystical light on things helped
by the dirty windows

(page 56)

last night- a dream sequence about observing the city
in some phen. light- color- old + new- an image too
much to grasp in words- children looking out with me
something flowered from a large window frame

I once rode amtrak from Denver back to DC, I met a girl on the train, we were making out in all its corners, I was about 18. Passing through WV she & I were hanging out the open window of the exterior doors, where you climb up into the train when it's in the station. I doubt they let you do that anymore. The train would go pretty slow around all these tight curves. Thick leafy forest on either side. We'd lean out as far as we could, to see & touch as much as we could. We were laughing a lot, feeling each other up & leaning way out for a long stretch of time. Finally we pulled ourselves in & looked at each other's minstrel faces - we were in coal-dust blackface, like Al Jolson, just from leaning out the window for 20 minutes. I guess a lot of that soot was from the engine of the train, but anyway coal dust has always deeply terrified lil ole asthmatic me.

Here's something I found for the dispatx project:



this is good

On Dec 19, 2007, at 1:49 PM, Scott MacLeod wrote:

finally got permission from Paul to have this on Vugg

Could you please list this as

Paul Lambert & Scott MacLeod
Worng Pec / Wong Prec

Thanks



A miner's working shift of seven and a half hours does not sound very long, but one has got to add on to it at least an hour a day for 'travelling', more often two hours and sometimes three. Of course, the 'travelling' is not technically work and the miner is not paid for it; but it is as like work as makes no difference. It is easy to say that miners don't mind all this. Certainly, it is not the same for them as it would be for you or me. They have done it since childhood, they have the right muscles hardened, and they can move to and fro underground with a startling and rather horrible agility. A miner puts his head down and runs, with a long swinging stride, through places where I can only stagger. At the workings you see them on all fours, skipping round the pit props almost like dogs. But it is quite a mistake to think that they enjoy it. I have talked about this to scores of miners and they all admit that the 'travelling' is hard work; in any case when you hear them discussing a pit among themselves the 'travelling' is always one of the things they discuss. It is said that a shift always returns from work faster than it goes; nevertheless the miners all say that it is the coming away after a hard day's work, that is especially irksome. It is part of their work and they are equal to it, but certainly it is an effort. It is comparable, perhaps, to climbing a smallish mountain before

and after your day's work.

(page 67)

dream remembered- the sublime ones
too elusive detail only- large slices of snow

(page 68)



incident of a batch of pencils being sharpened much
lost

memory has changed - changed again, i suppose.
once with gutenberg, possibly again with photography,
and now with the internet. memory in the brain
has always been a very mixed bag, potentially
very positive, of course, but also potentially very
negative. learning to forget has always been a
good part of learning.
the brain is good with knowledge and wisdom, or
at least is capable of being good with those things.
in the current context it is not particularly good
with information and data.
memory can be part of the process of transforming
data and information into knowledge and wisdom,
or it can be a hindrance to that process.
we need memory in the brain, obviously, in order
to get anything done on any level - but perhaps
more importantly we need access to memory.

(page 76)



brace of dreams into clear
catching a rabbit looking more like a fox
in hand goes to sleep
wakes up close-up
turns into my hand

this is a good article. i read it a while back, when
it was in orion magazine.
when we drive through west virginia on our way
to indianapolis we're always struck by the number
of enormous coal trains we see. they already seem
anachronistic, as if two distinct eras overlap in this
particular part of the country. 50 years from now
when aaron tells his grandchildren about the coal
trains he saw while he was in college, they might
tell him that's not possible, coal trains disappeared
long before you were in college.
should have, but didn't. we knew this was a disaster
when we were in college. 30 years later it's still an
ongoing disaster.

(page 79)



field mouse
dream of mouse
live coals walking right into them unscathed

i was planning on doing something to it too
but don't know where to start.

i put some of the oaken grove texts in those
bo peep assemblings. if i'd continued with print
xtants i probably would have put some in them
as well.



On Dec 18, 2007, at 11:40 AM, Scott MacLeod wrote:

yeah this bit was swell - I took it for the dispatx project - haven't started working with it yet - I think it is next in the hopper

might be too good to touch

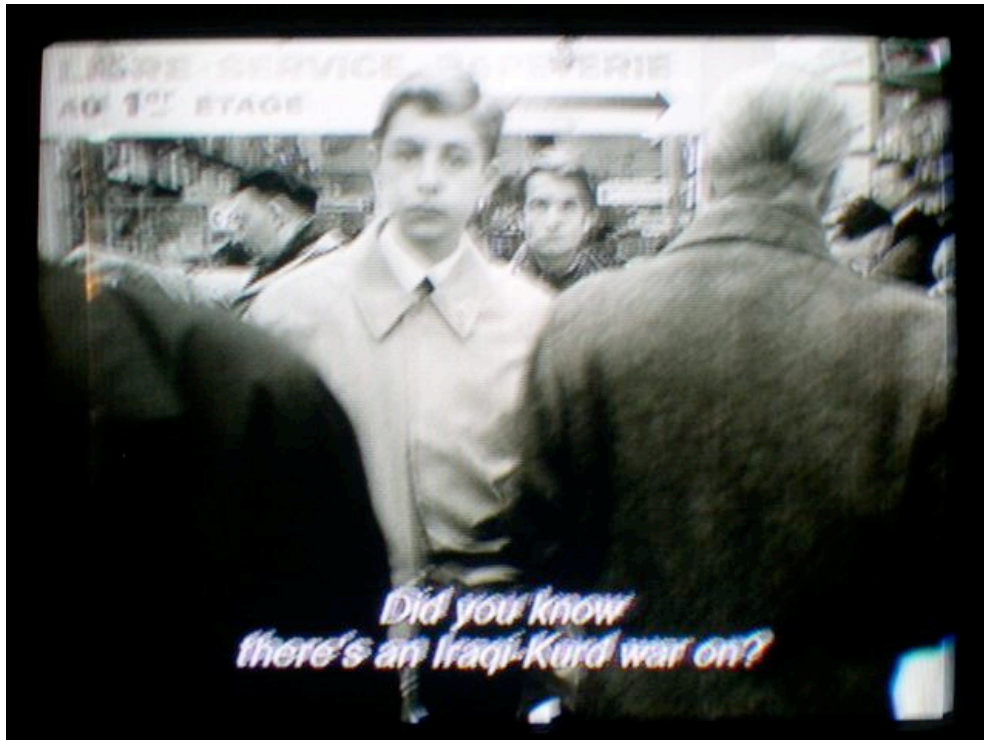
like oaken grove

(if I had a winery I think I'd call it oaken grove)

(page 93)

i go into the modest dwelling- "business" of a
labyrinthine wandering through the rooms...

beaut. music was going on non-vocal- one cd not
discern the source



On Dec 21, 2007, at 12:09 AM, Scott MacLeod wrote:

Even when you watch the process of coal-extraction you probably only watch it for a short time, and it is not until you begin making a few calculations that you realize what a stupendous task the 'fillers' are performing. Normally each o man has to clear a space four or five yards wide. The cutter has undermined the coal to the depth of five feet, so that if the seam of coal is three or four feet high, each man has to cut out, break up and load on to the belt something between seven and twelve cubic yards of coal. This is to say, taking a cubic yard as weighing twenty-seven hundred-weight, that each man is shifting coal at a speed approaching two tons an hour. I have just enough experience of pick and shovel work to be able to grasp what this means. When I am digging trenches in my garden, if I shift two tons of earth during the afternoon, I feel that I have earned my tea. But earth is tractable stuff compared with coal, and I don't have to work kneeling down, a thousand feet underground, in suffocating heat and swallowing coal dust with every breath I take; nor do I have to walk a mile bent double before I begin. The miner's job would be as much beyond my power as it would be to perform on a flying trapeze or to win the Grand National. I am not a manual labourer and please God I never shall be one, but there are some kinds of manual work that I could do if I had to. At a pitch I could be a tolerable road-sweeper or an inefficient gardener or even a tenth-rate farm hand. But by no conceivable amount of effort or training could I become a coal-miner, the work would kill me in a few weeks.



LIFE'S (A SHORT STORY)

Maybe you guys (Pete Blethen, Lynn Riley, John Crawford & Ron Sutcliffe) know this already. On a complete whim I sent a Christmas card to an address I had for Roush. Today I got a reply from his wife Susan. Here's most of what she wrote:

Scott,

I have heard your name over the years quite often. After listening to some of the stories, I would like to think we would get along just fine.

It is with great sadness that I must tell you that John passed away July 10, 2006. He asked me to take him to the doctor July 5. Our doctor had us go to the emergency room immediately. His organs began to fail. By the 8th he could not breathe on his own.

He was my life partner, the love of my life. We were in high school together. I got married young, John spent great years with you and the other guys.

Lucky me, he came back to Jersey. We were married on Aug. 28, '92. I miss him more than anything.

...

Just take a minute to think about John Roush, the best guy & crazy as they come. He was loved by everyone.

*My love through John to you,
Susan Roush*

That really sucks. I will send Susan some photos I recently had converted from slides. Any explanation of what did him in? Cancer would be my guess from all the asphalt fumes he inhaled. Did you tell Lyn Riley? Blethen? OK for me to forward this to them? Hey. Olga and I are planning a trip to SFO. March probably or end of Feb. You going to be around? We're going to Reno for New years. Olga is telling everyone we're going to lake tahoe because she thinks Reno sounds too whorish. Her mind is always in the gutter. One of the reasons she's special. - Ron

she didn't say

I'm hoping to be at a friend's wedding in PA in end of Feb sometime

might even be able to go meet Susan Roush

but I'm basically broke & probably wont be able to go

I'll keep you posted

Reno whorish? yeah & Las Vegas is sin city...
good luck if you can find the gutter anymore

What terrible news, it is hitting me very hard. I really thought I would see him one more time. I will send photos....unfortunately one of my un-done tasks...scanning prints. Scott, I really hold our Wahoo Ranch days near and dear. That son of a bitch left without saying good bye. - Pete

I hadn't talked to that idiot for almost 30 years

my occasional letters & attempts to get in touch never brought any reply

I assumed he didn;t want to get in touch

what susan wrote doesn;t jibe with that assumption

so it is really irksome to have this be the reply, finally

& irksome to think that maybe I could have seen him or talked to him if I'd tried harder

fuck

well Greg made a pretty quick exit too

Pete you better smoke 'em while you got 'em

I see you notified everyone. Maybe we should get together next summer and invite Susan.

Here's all I've got of Roush digitally.

The one with my finger bandaged up was taken up on Flagstaff in the spring of 1978. The construction ones were taken in Broomfield (I remember that house and trying to put the T-111 on it and hurting my back- I was a pathetic construction worker) circa spring of 79'. I think. - Ron

Man, that hurts. I hope he knew joy and happiness. Sounds like he found love. He still shows up in a dream now and then (along with the rest of you young folks). - Crawford

the best-looking ones always die first

& today just about two hours ago we just got a call that Jen's mentor & friend, Tyler Beard, the guy whose book inspired Jen to become a bootmaker & changed her life entirely, died yesterday suddenly & alone, problem with his throat, sounds like it just closed up on him & he suffocated. He was maybe 59 or 60.

almost makes me miss your sorry ass Crawford

I wrote Susan Roush a letter last night to accompany the foto prints (3) I have of John. But all my fondest memories of John except one involved substance abuse. So I deleted the famous pissing event in the painted desert of wyoming, the suitcase of pot, the trip up Flagstaff to drink beer after I almost cut off my finger in a chainsaw, the coke by the highway window instruction, and the BusStop Bar arm wrestling event (he called me a delicate construction worker and was right but I won the arm wrestling). I just left it at the memory of his favorite Roy Buchanan CD that came out a couple of years ago on CD. I play it on my monday and friday two hour commute in the desert and told Susan I always think of John when Roy plays. And I do. - Ron

I did notice that just about every photo, J's got a tall boy in his hand.

I used to get really scared the few times I looked across the table & saw him losing it, saw the drug-fueled ethonic terror in his eyes. That would usually mean I had already lost it a half-hour before that & was doomed, doomed, doomed.

and that's the thing about Roush. I know I'm doomed and I'm next and going to hell if it exists, but for now I'm content to go fuck whores in Nevada with my girlfriend. Get my paradise up front I say. Like John. -Ron

"Get my paradise up front I say"

amen to that.

