

# THE HIGHWAY QUEEN



Louise Landes-Levi

Including an interview with the american poetess by Uwe Claus

# COLOPHON

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NO. \_\_\_\_\_

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འགོ་ཤོར་ལམ་བུའི་སྒྲིང་བྱུག།  
ལུས་དྲི་ཞིམ་པའི་བུ་མོ།  
གཡུ་རྩུང་གྲུ་དཀར་བར་ད་ནས།  
སྐྱེ་བ་ད་དང་འདྲ་བུང།

„She smells sweet of body,  
My sweetheart, the highway Queen,  
Like the worthless white turquoise,  
She was found to be thrown away.“

The Poems of the Sixth Dalai Lama  
(D. Dhundrup transl.)

## 1. POSTCARD

Dear Robert,

A woman is planning to visit your  
shrine room. Her eyes will be the color of  
earth-silence, her hands will resemble (bear the mark-  
ings of) wild birds, if you recognize her  
singing, you will touch the wet-hills with  
her frail wing, always in moonlight,

from,  
a  
messenger.

## 2. 'NIGHT-SHORE'

The  
night we  
walked through  
forests  
of  
desire,  
to  
emptiness.



#### 4. MANDALA

Mandala  
light/ A  
secret  
room,

A  
woman  
with the face  
of  
a  
Goddess.

## 5. BUTOH

*for Ishii*

Concerning  
the bombing of Hiroshima  
&  
Nagasaki

You  
only  
said  
that on your  
Southern  
Island

the  
lanterns were trembling  
in  
the  
burning  
wind.

## 6. PRECIOUS ONE

If  
I were  
to be reborn,  
a  
fly,  
a  
goat,  
a  
man,  
I don't care,  
Precious-One

Just give me  
a  
birth,  
in a place,  
in a body  
in a galaxy,  
where,  
somehow,  
I can hear your teachings,  
again.

## 7. LAUGH

You  
laugh/  
on the hill,

while we gather/ stones,

&  
suddenly/  
the entire Universe  
is  
laughter.

8. '13'

She  
must have been  
a  
'Dakini',  
She  
could not  
have  
been  
'real',  
the  
blond-haired lady,  
hitch-hiking  
with  
her  
13  
valises,  
to  
Rome.

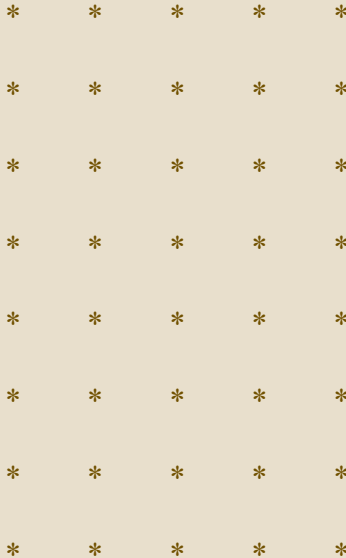
9. Image (for the)  
40th  
BIRTHDAY

40

„Ciocolate Fondente Extra“

Luisa

like they sell in Italy  
arranged like  
this



on a table  
&  
then,  
a  
cappucino,  
per  
favore.

## 10. POLITE

How  
(polite) of  
the  
(Buddhist)  
tent,  
(Type: Italian Circus) , Red  
Yellow  
&  
Blue,  
to  
wait until  
the  
last  
day of the teachings,  
(with no one in it)  
to  
fall  
down.

## 11. DZOG-CHEN

The  
land-rover  
at the bottom of  
the lake,  
empty,  
in  
summer,

The  
black umbrella,  
open,  
inside,  
the red, & yellow & blue  
tent,  
in  
winter.

## 12. HIMALAYA

After  
white-washing  
the kitchen walls &  
the stupa, at Merigar,  
I  
realize that  
what Mt. Labro really  
needs is a good  
coat  
of  
paint.

### 13. HALF-MOON

Slept  
beneath the  
half-moon/ next  
to the stupa  
until  
it  
rained.

## 14. SUDDEN

Still,  
in Bagnore  
after the rain/ A  
sudden  
concert  
from  
the  
birds.

## 15. ELEGANCE

Just  
for a minute, escaping  
the elegance,  
In  
the bar,  
as usual, sounds of the  
video-games,  
very  
common  
sounds,

I  
wish you were here,  
I  
really miss you,

„In my dreams I'm talking  
to  
you“  
like she said,

I  
wish the 6th Dalai Lama  
were here, then we cld.  
write  
romantic

poems  
together,

I  
really wish I cld.  
attain the state of non-meditation,  
non-distraction,  
absorption,

&  
like Mira-Bai  
be 'united' to my

Love.

## 16. RAINMAKER

*for Ira*

As  
though the  
Rainmakers gathered in  
your speach, as though the seeds unfolded  
in your breath,

Or  
was it all Reflection &  
there we lost the meaning & the content  
of the Symbolic Mirror, In your plentitude, appeared  
my empty State, in your Pleasure, I played again  
my harp of passion & rejoiced,

At dawn the tailor's threads became translucent, at dusk  
his cloak was sewn, for when we speak of Allegory  
we do not mean the Absence  
of the Stranger.

---

The substance was imminent  
& Immanence fled appearance to Inudate  
your form,

&

When they murdered him  
He disappeared *entirely*, that Lover  
of the Master of Tabriz.

## 17. STREET THEATER

That  
when  
he calls me  
„Joden“  
&  
calls all Jewish Woman whores,  
I think of my great-grandmother  
&  
hit  
him,  
but,  
of course,  
whores  
are great healers,  
which I don't tell him,

Maybe  
I should try  
healing.

## 18. SUFI WOMAN

„Mother“ I asked,  
„is water really burning?“  
She replied, „no son, rather whoever  
obeys God, all things  
obey  
him.“

## 19. IKEBANI

Sawamura,  
You really  
were a kind of  
„good-for-nothing“,  
As I described to the ‘cronies’  
of this place/ only a  
few minutes  
ago,

But you had class!  
You made yourself into  
someone very  
authentic,  
for me,  
at last,

Making-love,  
just when  
absolutely  
necessary,  
even for a nun, like me,  
Nearly setting ‘Merigar’ on fire,  
& finally getting  
‘thrown-out’,

A unique distinction, I  
might  
add.

## 20. THE DEATH OF PAINTERS

Traveling  
with  
you/ loving,  
you,  
Modigliani's woman w. Red Hat/ In my  
childhood room/ a print of Her,  
Now  
'Real',  
Modigliani,  
you threw yr. self, onto  
the Rue  
de  
la  
Chaumière,  
where I also landed/ for  
a brief moment  
in my life/

Now the circle is full.

—

Rothko,  
Now I understand why  
you did yr. self in,  
&  
I was so upset  
in India, when I was 26, You  
could  
not go Beyond the  
Color/ The Mass... You went  
beyond Form... but not,  
into  
Light,  
Perhaps, after the  
suicide,  
You  
Saw  
It.

## 21. LETTER

I  
miss Holland...America  
ages one, makes demands, where's your  
house, where's your car / They don't  
ask about your heart / The word  
'Guru' is  
a four letter word, like 'cunt' or 'fuck'  
a sort of 'dirty' word that's used anyway, mostly  
irreverently...(THE INDIANS ARE HERE, THE  
WHOLE CULTURE IS BUILT ON THERE BONES,  
BUT YOU DON'T SEE THEM.)

---

How to drop the old bone of emotional destructivity,  
If I cld. do that, America, You'd be worth it.

## 22. WANTING

Wanting  
to hold the river, I am the river,  
Sacred vessel/ water-bearer... the Nada is the  
Nadi/ In & Out breath-teach it to the  
politicians, shooting bliss/  
Up yr. ass-hole/  
Direct hit to the blood-  
stream of thought

Not even allowed/ to *name* you, MOTHER,  
I spent 3 days in the woods,  
calling for you.

Barrytown 1990

*nb. NADA = Sound, heard & unheard NADI = Channels for subtle energy in the body.*

### 23. KUNIYOSHI

Transparent / woman-in-the-wood,  
Riding through / the transparent-passion-for-  
est, Your voice, in the wind, I touch yr.  
cheek, again, listen, to yr. voice,  
you are a river, in the bed  
of  
dream.

---

*These 'gifts' you tell me, must not be  
'secret'/Are a gift of creation/As long/as I CAN, Hear/The  
Voices/I am safe. I am a poet.*

*Spreading my wings, flying, North, South,  
East, West, I scan the 4 directions with my multi-  
ple Eyes. I become the spacelessness, the spaceless space.*

\*

*I awake from dream. I give this  
birth to you.I walk in certitude.I do not  
fear.*

Here, I invoke you. There I envoke you. I read the lines of fate.

## 24. JAZZ

Such  
a beautiful Jazz  
butterfly, I find, under,  
my key, on the stair, that rainy  
night,  
in  
Bagnore,

Did you come to say 'good-bye'?

## 25. HEADLINE

PRESIDENT HAYES DECLARES WAR  
ON MEXICO, THEN RETIRES  
TO THE OVAL ROOM TO PLAY  
SARANGI.

\*

The lady sitting next to me at Veselika's says  
„President Hayes. A closet Sarangi Player“.

\*

„Rock & Roll is the Mahayana“, she further says. „I was just  
in love with someone who told me I just can't see keeping  
quiet. The way you dress...on a regular basis is not  
my idea of what I would like to live with.“

*On discovering in the Smithsonian, a  
Sarangi, said to have belonged to President Hayes.*

## 26. ON GINSBURG'S REFRIGERATOR

„Tired of Being  
Harassed  
by  
Your Stupid Parents ?

ACT NOW  
Move Out, Get a Job,  
Pay your own Bills

While you Still Know Everything.“

## 27. GIRL-FRIENDS

„All my girl-friends are getting laid & getting famous & I'm not getting Enlightened: I'm definitely not getting Enlightened. There would be signs. Smoke Signals, so to speak.“

LLL



## 29. SONG

Will you meet me at the door of death,  
O will you greet me at the gate of breath,  
O will you try me,  
Will you unify my sun & moon,

O will you take me to the shining shore,  
Guru Darling, give me more,  
Holy marriage of the mind,  
Nothing more I need to find,

Contemplation, Peerless friend,  
The end of days.

# The Highway Queen - Towards a poetics of enlightenment

An interview with the american poetess  
Louise Landes - Levi  
by Uwe Claus  
At Michael Berger's Harlekin Art Library  
Wiesbaden, December 1995

**U:** First I would like to know if you recall your first contacts with Buddhism and with poetry and how they joined and how this happened?

**LLL:** My first contacts to poetry came as soon as I learned to speak and to sing.. I wrote poems as soon as I understood how to write....when I was six, or seven. I had a contact with written language,from the beginning, that was luminous ... I still remember.. that I had a kind of luminous experience.. When my brother had left for school I was very jealous..

**U:** ..that he could learn those secrets.

**LLL:** Right. So I was determined to at least put the letters I knew together and to make little words. And I got a real sense of.. light from that. So later when I put the words together I made little poems,,,,, little notes.

But Buddhism.. I had an interest in India and Japan as a young child. I managed somehow to always write about India or Japan when I had to write something for school. Twisting the assignments around so that I could write about and thus understand more about these countries. But I didn't formally become... Well, yes, I remember , when I was at Berkeley, people were studying ,with Suzuki Roshi...Zen Buddhism in San Francisco..

**U:** Which year was this?

**LLL:** This was in the late sixties. I myself went to the Zendo only once. I remember how impressed I was because he stood on the podium with his wife and seven children, and this was quite different than anything I heard or read about . And at this same time I was playing in a kind of mystic opera.. I was playing improvised music in The Floating Lotus Magic Opera Company. At that time the people who were in this opera lived in a big house and one day a lady was meditating in the garden of this house. I had never seen anything like it... She looked like a statue, like a piece of stone. I circled around her, very curious about this otherwise lively person now suddenly solidified in the

garden. someone was watching me. It must have been an amazing sight... I think that was my first contact with the so called meditative state or my recognition of that state . I noticed, later that the meditation I was doing with The Floating Lotus Magic Opera Company didn't seem to go very far. I thought I should go to India — this was the sixties — and learn something about this other' real' thing. I also wanted to study Indian music by then.

I went to New York City to earn the money for the trip. and at first studied with someone named Rudi who was a disciple of Swami Muktananda..

It had actually been in New York , I think, that my first strong contact with Buddhism occurred. I had left the university and was studying acting .. I walked, each night, past an antique store and there was a Buddha in the window.. I became very fascinated by this Buddha. And one night it seemed, as I watched it, there was a thin light coming from the eyes of the Buddha..

**U:** You looked every night at this Buddha?

**LLL:** Yes, I was very fascinated by this store window & especially by the big Buddha.. This experience was so strong that I went inside to talk to the owner. The owner turned out to be a teacher of meditation, this same, Rudi, an early student of Muktananda who was later responsible for bringing him to the United States. I must have picked up on some kind of energy , at that time.& later, a few years later, actually tried to study with Rudi, by then understanding his connections to Muktananda.

But my first contact with a real lama, with living Buddhism was in India, in The Oberoi Hotel (New Delhi). I was suffering from a hepatitis, at the time, but didn't know it. My parents had come to visit me and were staying in New Delhi, at the hotel.. They went to see the Taj Mahal and I, to weak to go remained alone and sick in the hotel.. I met a being, a man dressed in robes in the lobby. I didn't really know what robes were about. But he very kindly talked to me.. very gently eased me through the afternoon. Later I realised he was the first monk (or lama) I ever met.

By the time I consciously connected to Buddhism & the lamas, the poetry and Buddhism came exactly together. This happened in Paris. It's was about 1976 and I was translating René Daumal [französ. Schriftsteller \* Boulzicourt 16. 3. 1908, † Paris 21. 5. 1944. Dem Surrealismus nahestehend, hat D. in der Hypnose und im Okkultismus die Quelle seiner Inspiration gesucht und Werke verfaßt, in denen halluzinatorische Visionen mit anarchistischer Revolte abwechseln; die meisten sind postum erschienen.], living in a tiny room in Paris, often working, during the day, in a friend's room, which was bigger. He was a scientist, a meteorologist and a disciple Muktananda. We used to meditate together. We sang in Sanskrit. together. And that was my way of generating inner silence, or inner space, for the Daumal translation. By this time I was studying with Muktananda., not with him, but with his disciples in Paris. My friend's concierge tricked me at this point. He saw me each day walking with all my papers and typewriter and said, "*you mustn't carry all those things, you can put them here.*" And he showed me a baby carriage behind the elevator shaft. "*You just can leave them here.*" And I did.. I was busy for a few days and didn't return. One afternoon I thought, "*What if all my poems were thrown away.. what would I do..*" So I went back, they were all thrown away. What I did was to freak out.. and I freaked badly. But I continued my translation.

I was translating a story about Marpa, in my own small room and there was a knock on the door. A woman I knew, a poet from Amsterdam,, had come to see the big Buddhist exhibition at Le Petit Palais. . She asked if I'd like to go with her. I thought well, Marpa and Buddhism..(the material I was translating) and I went with her. On that day all the lamas living in France were also visiting the exhibition hall. I was very freaked out,.. you see, he threw the poems out, because, (I felt) I hadn't understood the protection of the guru. I had received an indication that I should live in that building,(where I was practising)but I didn't follow that indication.. it was so clear.. There were signs that I should move, but I was too attached to my little room.. which was next door to my family, do you understand? And I didn't follow those signs and there was a total crisis. The lack of understanding on my part....he

punishment, the loss, (the 'teaching') was so severe, I couldn't go on doing the *sadhana*.. do you understand? So I lost my work and I could not go with the practice I was doing. I was explaining this to a lama(at the exhibition) because I thought he was the only one who could understand('ordinary' people would not, I thought, understood a crisis which had occurred creatively & spiritually at the same time) He was very kind and said not to worry, that there was a Buddhist center in Paris and that I might like it. He also said that the Karmapa was coming. He told me not to take refuge until I met the Karmapa.. This was just a conversation in the museum. but there was something happening between he and I. I said good bye to him and went to see a film on Tibetan dance which was part of the same exhibition.. . Then all those lamas, all those lamas who were living in France came into that cinema and suddenly circled around me. They sat down around me forming a protective circle. This was the beginning.. I remained in that circle for many years... I was 'on the path'.

I lost my work and so called entered a path at the same moment. The rebuilding of my work was directly related to the practice & to the teachings. I was only 32. I was just entering a professional. committed literary domain. You know, I was translating the Daumal for a great American editor.. And was finally over a painful love affair& separation.. I was just ready to work. And instead a total crisis occurred in which everything was taken from me except the Buddha's compassion which was given to me or extended to me at that time.

**U:** Was this crisis also the starting point for your nomad kind of life-style?

**LLL:** Yea, it was one of them but there was another one, the loss of a child (an unborn child, but 'I experienced this at a very deep level), which was even heavier in some ways. But there was some kind of..... Other people would come naturally into house, garden, child and telephone. But this was not coming to me. Efforts in that direction were leading to, you know, tragic consequences. So by the time this(the loss of my work & my child) happened I needed healing, I was ready for some kind of path I forgot to mention, I had also been translating the great

French poet Henri Michaux [belgisch-französ. Schriftsteller, Zeichner und Maler, \* Namur 24. 5. 1899, † Paris 19. 10. 1984. Als guter Kenner psychopathologischer Seelenzustände, er erprobte Bewußtseinsweiterung durch künstl. Rauschzustände, und der asiatischen (buddhist., indischen) Weltanschauung machte M. darin Reisen ins Imaginäre und suchte die tiefere geistige Wirklichkeit hinter allem Wahrnehmbaren zu enthüllen.] at this time. He was a secret Buddhist, or practitioner, jlike Giacinto Scelsi in Rome. There were certain artists whom I met who were highly evolved, who already had kind of secret liaisons..

**U:** I just wanted to ask about him (Michaux). You were teaching him English also.

**LLL:** No, he gave me that job after I had lost my work. He saw that I had lost my center. I was in the middle of this so called important translation of Daumal. He had predicted to me that the editors of Daumal would be totally disinterested in someone like me. He said, they were very critical, very selective that they were disinterested in everyone, There was, he thought, very little chance that they would like my work. And he was wrong on that. He was kind of.. not proud to be wrong, but he was really proud that I had gone through that barrier around the Daumal work. You know, I had shown up there (at the Daumal archives) one day. Dressed in my like, late, seventies post- Indian clothing style. And they (the Daumal secretaries) had accepted, almost immediately that I was the right person to translate the Sanskrit essays of Daumal! They were relieved that I was a simple person, a poet who had come to his Sanskrit studies via Indian music. I had a kind of contact, a least a verbal agreement with New Directions, to do this work.. They wondered, how was this possible, when all the academics had failed to get the same thing. And then they thought that it was right, because Daumal himself was so much against the academic tradition., the academic treatment of these texts. Daumal was one of the early practitioners. He was a student of Gurgieff. The secretaries greatly preferred having someone who was *practising* do that work.. and they (& I) considered my Sanskrit chanting a practice for and necessary ornament of the translation. . Michaux was

supportive of this. I happened to be living almost next door to him. So, you know, he became my mentor and friend. When this crisis (of the lost work) occurred, he first sent me to Holland, so I could take a little holiday. then he suggested that I be his English teacher.

**U:** What were the sources for Michaux's secret Buddhist background..

**LLL:** His favorite poets were Lautréamont and Milarepa..

**U:** Who was the first one?

**LLL:** Lautréamont.

**U:** Lautréamont, he's a French one.

**LLL:** Yes. You know, "*Les Chants de Maldaror*". Lautréamont was a hermit and a visionary. He invented a language for his vision. The Songs were not published in his lifetime...he died at 24 in Paris... but he wrote a short introductory essay for a work called "The Novel of the Future" & that was published, & only that, just before he died.

**U:** I see.

**LLL:** His real name was Isadore Ducasse. He was born in Uruguay and lived the life of a clandestine in Paris, one of the first in the tradition, later of Baudelaire, Verlaine, Mallarmé refusing conventional social & aesthetic forms, he tried to go beyond formal ideas of 'beauty', finding instead a unique language for his inner experience.

**U:** And Milarepa. What was available in French at this time?

**LLL:** A translation of »*The Hundred Thousand Songs*«.

**U:** That was already existing...

**LLL:** Yes.. Michaux said that he had gone to different kinds of

meditation circles. He told me he went to one meditation meeting and had experienced something which he called.. a ‘transport’.

**U:** Transport?

**LLL:** But he felt that he had to remain in his own discipline. You know, he was a kind of Dzog Chen practitioner. he understood his ‘medium’, his own life as ‘meditation’. He was a mastery of poetics. but he did not use this mastery in a conventional way .He led a very solitary life and was interested in the exploration of the mind. His drug use was not to establish a way of life or to compensate for a lack of one, but rather a tool , which he tried to use consciously, in order to see into the unseen part of the mind. He did not feel comfortable in the atmosphere of ‘mediation groups, it was probably pretty conventional... He was too much of an explorer to have been interesting in a route shown by someone else. He had wanted to become a monk, a San Franciscan.. but he later chose, at first travelling, then poetry (& later painting) instead. But he never abandoned them as *paths*.. they never became fruits in themselves and for that reason he did not allow his picture to be published in his books. He felt that would not only destroy his anonymity, but work on his ego in an undesirable way. He once looked down at his name on a book .and said, “*That is Henri Michaux, but it is not Henri Michaux.*“ Another time he got(in the mail) a translation of a book with his picture on the cover. He threw it across the room.. threw it in the garbage. He had a lot of compassion.

And then.. the Karmapa came to Paris and he (Michaux) went to the *Black Hat Ceremony* and came also to hear a lecture by one of the other lamas. He had a Chinese girlfriend, a doctor, the last years of his life -already by the time I knew him. He was very interested in the Orient and particularly in the Orient of mind.

**U:** When the Karmapa was there, did you meet also Lawrence Durrell who was living in France at that time?

**LLL:** No, I didn’t. No, I just worked on the translations of

Michaux and Daumal. Michaux found it very interesting that I had been to India and had a spontaneous contact to Sanskrit (to the devanagari alphabet), very similar to the contact I first had when I was writing roman letters. I saw that the energy was similar & I learned spontaneously, I didn't have to study very hard, you know. I felt that there was a previous knowledge of that (Sanskrit) alphabet and I could work with it very easily. I still can. I was interested in the Hindu exuberance..& the devotion.. so naked. And I read many texts (in English translation)...But on the other hand it was also little bit a little bit, you know, not boring.. there was a quality that didn't correspond to tension, to my own tension or 'presence' in those texts.

**U:** Something that you were missing?

**LLL:** Something that didn't correspond to the tension of my own development. And then I discovered Michaux. Michaux was the same resonance, but at an octave that was like a higher tuning.. .no, not a higher tuning, a tuning that was similar to something I could sing. I used to go to the library(I was teaching French at the time) and translate Michaux for the fun of it. You know, somehow it was much more ecstatic than., even than the Hanuman Chalisa at that time. So when we met, he (Michaux) was very glad . I knew a lot of his poetry, at least the poetry I had translated, by heart. He was glad that such a person should arrive and he worked faithfully with me. I still have his manuscript, the manuscript of poems he chose & corrected. I don't know what to do with it.... all his notations..

**U:** Well, future will show.

**LLL:** But his contacts(to Buddhism) were secret in a sense, this was his private research, not something to display. Ah, one anecdote: He hated pictures of himself, but once I went to his apartment and he was very excited, because he had sent a photographer to the Dalai Lama.. Oh, no. the photographer, who was his friend, had come to him saying he wished to show portraits of various European artists to the Dalai Lama. He

wanted to take a special picture of Michaux for this purpose . The photographer had returned from India and he said, that the Dalai Lama . had picked out Michaux's photo from all the others & said "*who is this?*" Michaux was very happy, very content . He said, '*now I'm in the mind of the Dalai Lama.*'"

**U:** Yes.

**LLL:** He was very charming... but he was also. you know, a practitioner.. he was devoted to a non-dual state.. but through the perception of the ordinary,. through integration of what was immediately present. He wasn't interested in a church and he wasn't interested, for himself, in any practice other than the one he was doing, which was his work. I think, looking back on it, that the visits he paid to, the interests he had in, mental hospitals and in the effects of different drugs on sick people, had to do with the development of his compassion.. as well as with his research, in general, into the mind. He was very compassionate. He said some very important things to me, : "*The only art that interest me is either very very old or very very new*",

**U:** Your work with Michaux, had that already a connotation of a master — pupil relation?

**LLL:** Oh yes, of course. For me the translations that I did, all had to do with a master — pupil relation. But he was the only living master. Daumal was dead. (& Mira)Oh, definitely..

**U:** Could you say more about this significance of master — pupil relation for you? Like.. you quote Rumi in »*Extinction*«, for him it was also very important and..

**LLL:** I don't know if you should print this or not, but in some way, my life... you know, the difficult; circumstances .. though only sad in a subjective way., difficult in terms of personal hopes and dreams, not in terms of global realities like starvation and famine... This prepared me for a submission, or for an openness. I was unconsciously looking for an object of devotion. So yes,

of course, the relationship between Rumi and Schamsuddin of Tabriz, was very interesting to me. I loved the poetry of Rumi.. I still love it. I was interested in this scholar who became a so-called madman.. or this studious professor who become a lover and a dancer through his meeting with his mate or mentor(sic. or master). And I was always also quite interested in the fact that his disciples, who were still on a relative level, did not accept his relation and his transformation and even tried to kill the Master of Tabriz. Did you know that?

**U:** Well, I just had little information, I just looked yesterday in a big encyclopedia and looked up Rumi on his life's story.

**LLL:** It's in the poem in the map [»16. *RAINMAKER*« from »*THE HIGHWAY QUEEN* « by Louise Landes — Levi] which is dedicated to Ira (Cohen) and Ira also introduced me to the great translations of Rumi by J. Arberry \ It's described that the disciples resented Schamsuddin Tabrizi for focusing the love and thus winning the mystic favor of their master. In an act of vengeance they killed him in a garden behind Rumi's house. After they murdered him, they all fainted and when they woke up the corpse of Schamsuddin had vanished.

**U:** He was gone?

**LLL:** Yes, he was gone. Rumi later had other masters, but he didn't write about them in the same way.. A woman who did my horoscope a couple of weeks ago, she said that it was in my 'stars' that I would be 'saved'. You know, that there were very difficult circumstances, but also something like a total release from them. My medium(for this release) was Norbu Rinpoche.

**U:** So when did you met him?

**LLL:** I met him in London in 1979.. maybe at Christmas/New Year, 1978/'79 that period. And I had, as I said, lost my poetry, my work, & then had gone to the Buddhist center in Paris & ceremony.(sic. Refuge ceremony w. the Karmapa). I had had a lot of trouble with Sanskrit mantras as they were taught in

Muktanandas sadhana, they were almost too powerful. for me. I loved the Sanskrit but the kundalini, the working with the lower chakras was making it even more difficult for me to integrate. Everything seemed to make it more difficult until Norbu. Everything seemed to make matters worse until Norbu! The mantras the Buddhists were using. and later they explained that they were working more with the fourth chakra., and up, were more soothing to me. And then I met the Karmapa, which was very beautiful and took refuge. I was surprised, because the name that I got was the same name that I had received from an Indian swami years before in India.

**U:** Has it to do with poetry?

**LLL:** Yes, I was something like '*Woman of Literary Accomplishment*' you know,. seriously, *great* literary accomplishment.. I never used it. But it was more or less the same one I had received in Sanskrit, years before. But even the Buddhist community, the so called sangha also got-on a social level= very complicated. I couldn't maintain the proper relationship to the sangha, ...or to the masters. I had the opportunity to be in the Dordogne when it was first starting. The Karmapa was doing the *Black Hat Ceremony*. He was doing a nine days Mahakala initiation and I had already been very often to His *Black Hat Ceremony*.

Ah yes, to backtrack... The first great initiation I had was from the Karmapa. In 1974.. this was in Amsterdam. I didn't know anything about Buddhism.. I was working in a little book store called Ge Nabrink. I was ordering the books. Nabrink sold very few books, the business was mostly by mail-order. I never talked to the clientele.. anyway I could hardly talk Dutch. But I was so excited that this monk.. this 'Karmapa' was coming. I had no idea who he was. But I was. so thrilled that I announced to everyone who came to the store that a great monk was arriving that evening.

**U:** And where did it happen?

**LLL:** This was in 1974..

U: No, I mean which place?

LLL: He was coming to the COSMOS.

U: To the COSMOS?

LLL: I told all the customers that this great monk was coming and they had to go.. and I had no idea who he was. Then, at the end of the day I got on my bike.. I was in mourning over a broken love affair and I didn't go out at all. I was travelling by bike back to my house.. and the bike really just turned around..(laughter).. and it carried me to the COSMOS. And there I was at the COSMOS and everyone was going in and they said there was no room. I thought, NO! There *is* room for me.. because I knew a secret stairway. So I went up in the stairway.. and there I was.. and this being did this 'thing' called *The Black Hat Ceremony*.. and really I had the experience when he.. and I didn't know who he was.. when he took his hat off.. I really saw.. like in a pure vision.. everything became dynamically lit.. and all beings became angelic.. and then he put his hat back on and everyone retreated into their.. of course this was in my mind.. it was like everyone then became like animals or ghosts. They all became like an ordinary mandala (of beings) or even a less than ordinary mandala. . So I was amazed and this was also the first time I felt this animation of "the spiritual master " since I had been at the satsangs(sic. spiritual meetings) of Muktananda in India. And it was .. it was so joyous!

I left the hall quietly and then I thought, "*but I have to see Him again.. I must see this being.. this 'Karmapa' again*" I only thought, "*I must see Him again.*" So I turned around and I went back to the Cosmos. He was just then walking out of the building flanked by Mother Bedi, the first Western Buddhist nun and some other assistants.. and I was thinking. like completely one-pointed, "*I have to see Him..*" . and I walked right into Him!! A body to body crash with the Karmapa. And He didn't mind at all.. He was smiling and His attendants were horrified.. and I thought, "*Oh no! What to do in this situation?*" And I somehow knew that the thing to do was to lie down on

the floor in front of him, like a prostration.. but I didn't know what a prostration was. Luckily I did lay down on the floor, and that was some kind of heavy good cause..

**U:** So on that road at the harbor, there..

**LLL:** No, no, no it was up the steps. I walked up the steps and into the COSMOS and then.. CRASH!!! And really it was funny, because He was so beneficent..

**U:** Beaming..

**LLL:** Yea, beaming and it was like a comic-strip, the attendants were horrified and I thought, "*Oh, what to do? Lie down!*" . Then three years later, when I'm in Paris they told me to take refuge with the Karmapa and I've already had this odd meeting with Him. So I go to see him . I'd been chanting Sanskrit songs for months... every morning and night for four hours, doing the Daumal. Really, probably about four hours of Sanskrit chanting every day. I go to see the Karmapa. I've already lost my poetry books.. I go to see him and I remember reading somewhere, that if you meet your guru, one of the signs is — you start to tremble as if you were afraid. So I was pleased to see myself trembling..

(laughter)

You know, I mean it was a slightly better level than my early 'curiosity'. And he saw me.. and I saw him, looking at me.. and seeing the vibration of those Sanskrit mantras.. at least I thought that's what he saw. And then He said: "*Good.. very good.*" I walked to him and bowed politely and he touched my back. He touched me lightly, with one finger.

Years later in Amsterdam,... I just go forward.. I have a badly deformed spine and I had been told that it was a scoliosis, but a complicated., double scoliosis. I had always been told (as a child)that when I was older I would have trouble with this. So at a certain point, in Amsterdam, I had very much trouble walking If I tried to take a step it was like..a terriblet toothache in the spine.... It was getting more and more painful and finally I couldn't walk at all. So I went to an acupuncturist, thinking

that they would give me the good news that my diet was deficient.. (laughter)but instead they gave me the bad news that either I had a hernia of the upper spine, which they had never seen or.. the only explanations they gave, that I had a degenerative disease of the spinal column and that I should be very careful.. that truly I might not be able to walk. I should loose weight because.. they said, *“Imagine, carrying a ten pound suitcase up the stairs.”* That’s all they said and I went home weeping. I wept for three days and I had no idea what to do. Now, people in America said, *“Well, why didn’t you call your parents?”* This was not possible for me. I wept and wept and on the third night I remembered that in India, it is said that the words of the Guru are like mantra. Every word(of the Guru) is a mantra and every gesture is a mudra. So I said, *“Oh, maybe it was a mudra of the Karmapa’s protection.”* This was eight years later. Because he had touched that vertebra.. that now could not support my weight.. So I began to recite the mantra of the Karmapa, *Karmapa Chenu..* I recited the mantra of Karmapa all night. And in the morning I got up and slowly started walking and from then on it improved. It got much much better.

Then Trogawa Rinpoche came to Amsterdam and I was his attendant. I was his cook. I didn’t have money to go for a diagnosis.& I never mentioned my back pain to him. But in the middle of dinner one night he said, *“The pain in your back is due to your nervous system.”* (laughter).. And he said, *“Don’t loose any weight or the truck drivers won’t be able to see you!”* Then he said, *‘You’re going to Merigar, right? Well, can you carry a bag for me?’* And he gave me a bag.. it was like a bag of stones. It was like the heaviest bag I could have imagined. I could hardly pick it up. So I was very very angry with him.. (laughter).. furious, you know.. but I didn’t express it to the lama.I wanted to say, but didn’t *“how can you do this to me?”* I dragged it down the stairs and somehow got it on my bike. The next day I left for Merigar. The neighbor had to carry the bag down.. but of course, as soon as I turned the corner — I got a ride! And I got rides right to Merigar.(sic. Toscana, Italy). I had a little bit of back pain, but hardly any.(when I arrived) . and it went away and never came back . So this cure, through mudra

and mantra, & instruction from the Guru greatly increased my faith .. So this has nothing to do with poetry but..

**U:** Well it has something to do with your relation as an artist to the dharma. There was one thing, you talked about the light, that was radiating from mantras to you..

**LLL:** Right.

**U:** ..and in your poem »*The Death of Painters*« y. on (Mark) Rothko you say: “*you went beyond form but not into light.*“ Is ‘light’ here something like a metaphor for inside, for enlightenment or is it something else?

**LLL:** No. I think, it had to do with the teachings. In the Dzog Chen teaching they talk about sound, light, rays, form.. So the rays of color are the subtle manifestations of form, but there is, before color(or ray) light and before light, sound.. Sound is the original matrix. So it had to do really with that. I was really fascinated by those light rays, volumes of light that he painted.. volumes of color. But then I thought, if he would have experienced light... he was my kind of.(sic. a teacher of mine). I loved his paintings when I was young, so I was quite sad that he should kill himself, now I can understand.

**U:** Are there other visual artists that impressed you. Modigliani you mentioned in the same poem.

**LLL:** Well, my father was a cloth salesman, but he was also an amateur art historian . He was very interested in visual form and especially form in painting. So from my early childhood, you know, as amusement he’d take me to museums, he would even drive to other states.. sometimes he spent hours and hours driving to a small little-known museum. He would take me around to see the paintings of the Impressionists, especially Corot or to the Dutch painters like Vermeer. So I had an early contact to painting and then later, I developed great love for certain . painters and museums.. even when I lead my ‘wanders’ life-style, the truck rides. etc., I visited the museums wherever I

was. I felt, that the museums were store houses of energy or that in these museums I could. contact the spirit & instruction of great painters.. I was very interested in visual phenomena., visual construction...in Modern Art the image & imagination (in general) is fragmented. And of course this relates to poetic form and poetic construction.

[*A few days later/.. in a letter to me, Louise Landes — Levi writes more on her relations to visual art: .. later I understood museums to be a kind of 'repository' of sacred power (in the West)/& sites where 'vision 'could undergo direct transformation. The modern painters, who 'influenced' me.... Paul Klee, Mondriaan, Rothko (& to a lesser extent) Die blaue Reiter school, once I discovered them in Munich, Jawlenski, Franz Marc & Kandinski... But Paul Klee, when I was younger, had a very creative impact & effect on my mind, . Arshile Gorky is another painter to whome I felt very close t.. his life whole story & and in particular his painting, 'The artist & his mother' / also Chagall's 'The poet returning Home'. deeply touched me & all forms of Japanese & Chinese art, including their specific history of 'visual—poetics', calligraphy etc.*]

So I would study these painters.. study their compositions & the relations they developed color and form ... Later I was interested in fragmentation.. and then, by the time I knew Michaux (in Paris in '76) I was in some other state of mind.. some kind of odd state.. and when I saw those Tibetan thnagkas (sic. in the Musee Guimet) for the first time.. I received this kind of 'transmission', I didn't know what it was then.. But I intuitively understood that there was a visual form, in which the form was only a vehicle. I didn't know the vocabulary to describe this kind of 'aesthetic experience. Michaux's work, once I was in Paris & could see it, , was transparent & in this time I studied his work carefully. In fact, I couldn't bear to look at other work , generally, in museums, I got very nervous, but that also past...

And you're asking me about my favorite painters?

Well, I guess in the Renaissance and in Medieval period Hans Memling, Giovanni Bellini, Beato Angelico (The Annunciation) & Piero della Francesca ...Scelsi said to me.. Giacinto Scelsi [italienischer Komponist, \* 1905, † 1988, musi-

kalischer Autodidakt, sein kompositorisches Hauptanliegen ist die radikale Erneuerung des Phänomens Klang, weniger die Erfindung neuer Strukturen mit bestehenden Klängen.] that “*He( P.della Francesca) was the last great master, a pure master in western tradition and the last great transcendentalist.*” And I was, of course, influenced by French painting.. the school of painters to which my father introduced me, especially .. Cézanne!

**U:** Let’s look in the future.

**LLL:** Wait, there is something I want to add ..it’s important to understand that there was this complete ‘catastrophe’ a complete breakdown of my personal order, the loss of.. my poems.. my baby & still it took me three years (after meeting him) to become Norbu’s disciple. I had contacts with him that seemed to be by chance, but were actually very precise. It wasn’t until three years had past,(in 1982) that I had a very powerful meeting with him. and from that moment on.. in Amsterdam.. I was bonded to him. And the first thing he did was resurrect my sense of myself as a musician and a poet. I had to work on my physical body so I could be strong again. He never faltered in his capacity as mentor, my poetic mentor. He was very original. We would write poetry together in Italian, which neither of us knew very well, he knew more than I of course.. And he would ask me to perform poetry(for the *sangha*) And at first I was a disciple like the others.. no, I was even more, reticent. I kept a kind of distance. Then I had a dream, in which there was a union with him.. but in front of the entire community. It was very open & joyous occurrence. And the next day he arrived in Amsterdam and started to talk to me like I was... a friend of his. I had to invent answers to his questions; it was like been invaded... If he said, “*How are you?*“.. my mind.. (laughter)..would implode.., but I gradually understood that this was a kind of.. meant for the amusement of his other disciples.. in the high sense of the word. Because I never talked to him private.. he would have me do improvisations of very weird kinds of verbal poetics.. or he had me recite poems that we had written together. And he showed to me the art of poetry as medicine. Both for the poet

and the audience. And he broke down any constructions I might have had between sacred and mundane art forms. Anything that I had inherited from Daumal he also broke down.. because I couldn't use it. A

**U:** In the performing of a Western Buddhist Art, could you see that there are some exponents.. some composers, poets, musicians, artists who are helpful in bringing a distinct Western Buddhist Art on the way? Or do you think, it's not at all necessary to have a Western Buddhist Art, that it is a universal thing that we Western people just now connect with?

**LLL** In America, before going to India ,I was aware that people were using words like *Karma* or *Devi* or *Bodhisattva* without really understanding the content of those words, and I wished to discover this ' content, the root.(sic. of this vocabulary)..not just adapt it to my own personal usage & I wished to develop a state of mind, significant significant in terms of a path .. but also of a poetic...I wanted the poetry to reflect the path without direct reference to it...so that people who weren't on it cld. also understand. I was concerned with this inner development I thought of those great Buddhist poets, you know.. so many Zen poets that I had studied.. they were able to manifest the historical phenomena of Buddhism in a totally poetic fashion. It's difficult even impossible to judge if another person is going to authentically represent the teaching & intentions of the lamas. I have benefited so deeply that I pray only that my every word is impregnated with that benefit. But for other people.. you know, I feel as an artist.. each artist must find the ground that is fertile for him or her. For me a particular Buddhist form of art, in itself, isn't interesting.. what is interesting, for me, is the artist who is able to manifest the nature-the essence- of his experience. Now, of course, friends who work in the field of 'Buddhist' Art are very dear to me. We have met & been influenced by the lamas, so, of course I follow their personal development. But if I go to hear specific musicians or to see specific exhibitions I do not consider whether or not this musician or painter is a Buddhist... I heard, a few weeks ago, a bassist Joëlle Léandre & I follow the playing of Giacinto Scelsi's protégé Frances Marie

Uitti.. their artistry is incredibly developed.....I am in awe of them... Joëlle Léandre's performance in Basel was pure Zen! It was so amazing.., I hate to say this, but it was almost more spiritual, for me, than the concert of a particular Indian master, with whom I was studying at the time. Because her relation to her instrument and the way she defined her experience was so empty.. I think, it more has do with traditional and non-traditional art forms and how to transform traditional art.... you know, the Indian or the great African traditions..

**U:** Which follow lineages..

**LLL:** Right, how we can transform these tradidtions in ourselves without loosing the power that they carry &. without imitating it.. and not only without imitating it.. there is no way we can be artists and deny our experience, I'm sure of that. Norbu says, "*The transmission develops according to the potentiall of the individual.*" If you are an artist, how can you deny (sic. or repress)that and still realise... the artistic process itself refines & develops our energy

**U:** Yesterday you said, you would like to talk in this interview about 'Secret Language'.

**LLL:** Well, when I was in America, in the Floating Lotus period.. I did not feel that I was doing a real research. not on a social level and not on an creative level, although the experience itself was very exciting. And.. I certainly wasn't suitable for the academic community of the country. I went to India, thinking there might be something else.. and there was! I discovered a literary form which contained an enlightened energy...a transmission. A literary form which was created to conceal, contain reveal.. reveal(an enlightened state) to anyone capable of receiving it. I was fascinated by this and later found that this was actually an acknowledged feature of the 'traditional' aesthetic system.. There were three levels of so called expression: *kalpana*, [*bhavabhavani* and *anubava*. The first refers to a purely material form of creation, in which dualism is accepted as the basis of existence. And the second has

to do with something — that Michaux was talking about, he implied that I was in this category.. (laughter).. — of a writer who although ‘transported’ by the sacred writings is not yet in that state, him or herself, but at least is able to get the vibes. The third is *anubavani*.. *anu* — highest, relates to do beings like Mira Bai or Rumi or who are not only capable of the highest understanding, but have the technical mastery with which they can share this understanding.. communicate this understanding. I started to translate Mira Bai to study this.. to understand. I now understand, that of course, there are many artists who are doing this. It’s not only a literary phenomena, but has to do with any art form in which the highest level of experience is concealed. In India and in Tibet there is something called the twilight language, the *sandhya bhasha* and for instance the VI. Dalai Lama’s poems are written in this language.. If you study his poetry, if you read the translations of his poems in texts which are commonly available, they are also very relevant to a person sitting in a cafe.. to some one walking down the street, they speak of ordinary love affairs and so on, but to someone who is familiar with the texts of Dzog Chen and the specific vocabulary which developed to convey the teachings, that person can find a complete method in those poems. It’s the same for a poet like Mira Bai. If you understand the level to which she is referring, you can have a complete teaching on the nature of devotion...ust by *hearing* her poems, the transmission is in the sound. But if you have had a very unhappy love affair or are confused about this human existence, you can receive comfort or a support for your situation. . These texts reveal themselves on diverse levels, some carry as many as 4 distinct levels of meaning.

When I began to seriously investigate these matters I was concerned with the relation of the ego and the artist. I had studied the Gurjieff teachings, even before I translated Daumal. Gurjieff specifically states that in the West one of the obstacles(sic. for the artist & for the development of a ‘sacred art) is that the artist becomes a public figure and that the energy given to him as a public figure from the public becomes an obstacle. Because it solidifies aspects of his ego, which otherwise might directly serve his artistic process.. and assist in the creation of a higher form of art. When I was young, I strangely had this

vision of 'enlightenment' and that this was, you know, the great thing to do or to accomplish. I wonder where I've got that from.. I was rather burdened by this, I felt my process was unimportant as long as I remained in a relative state. Daumal wrote an essay »*Poetry black — poetry white*« in which he discusses the difficulty of a creation which does not reinforce the ego, the difficulties one might face in the effort to develop real clarity, to not be side tracked or distracted in ones work.

Norbu Rinpoche.. he is actually the head of the Drukpa Kagyus.. did you know that?

**U:** No.

**LLL:** Yes, he has the seal. Because of political intrigues in other incarnations he, in this life, is as you know, Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche. But he is also the incarnation, the mind emanation of Pema Karpo (sic. legendary founder & King of Bhutan)& thus head of the Drukpas. Khamtruil Rinpoche the VIII (to whom *Rasa* is dedicated)was a great lama of this lineage. He was a great painter & dancing master. He was also the first lama I knowingly interacted with & the first who intervened on my behalf. The Drukpas are known for their great artistic accomplishments.. there is a saying "*Half of the Kargyus are Drukpas, half of the Durgpas are crazy yogis and half of these crazy yogis are the greatest artists in Tibet* „,“... many great poets come from that lineage and great thangka painters and great dancers.. So I met Norbu and he was a poet. Rinpoche is known as a poet. Someone said to him, "*I hear that you are known as a great erudite in India.*“ and he said "*Erudite? What does it mean?*“

Norbu Rinpoche's sister was also an important poet She learned poetics from the Princess of Derge and taught them to Norbu. Poetics was not a commonly taught subject. So both he and she were poets from their childhood. She was imprisoned by the Chinese, she spent 30 years in prison, because of her intellectual influence. She.. stayed alive only long enough to see her brother (Rinpoche)one more time and then she died. I think that he really nurtured this in me, you know, he never told me to get a job..

**U:** So actually he holds a certain lineage of poetry, is it that?

**LLL:** I don't know enough about how the tradition works. But many of the lamas.. all of the lamas are also poets! Poetry was considered to be one of The Six Great Sciences... one of the activities to be mastered in order to communicate the teachings. .. Norbu took a particular interest in nurturing this in me.. I was so sick when I met him.. I was literally lying down on the sidewalks of Paris. People thought, that I was a junkie, but I wasn't, I was just very sick. And I'd be thinking that „*how can it be like this?* „, And then he took me and nurtured me, he was (or *seemed* to be) very proud of each accomplishment....though I never truly adjusted to the 'art world', through the *Dakini* I received many unusual opportunities, you know.. through the spontaneous manifestation of phenomena, rather than through effort.

I had been doing certain retreats, like the 'dark retreats' and I found that all of the poems I had written with Norbu (in Italian) were completely recorded.. word for word.. in my mind. So this was a kind of teaching and he was actually awakening the mnemonic aspect of the old oral tradition in me. I spend a year.. or nearly a year in New York last year at his bedside and with his wife.. and poetry was one of the principle activities, one of the principle fields of interest to him. He was writing every morning. He was writing his *namtar* his secret biography with a little computer. No matter how sick he was.. no matter what phase of treatment he was in. And then he started to write experimental poetry. Studying the modern forms of Tibetan poetry, even the almost (equivalent of the) Counter Cultural Poetry in Lhasa. He got this poetry magazine.. published in Lhasa and he read it aloud to us from his hospital bed, asking us what we thought of the poems. He would experiment in these new forms. And he'd say to us.. he'd say, "*Do you think it's poetry?*"

I would like to tell one anecdote, to me it was very interesting. I was attending a poetry conference in America, in New York, last year, and I was quite discouraged, you know. The American poets are all so articulate and charming and

organised. I went to see Norbu and he asked, “*How was it (the poetry conference?)*” and I said, “*Oh, I’m in discouraged, they’re all so organised.*” And he, he seemed almost angry, he said, “*What? People have their methods! Everyone has their own methods never compare yourself to others!*”

Another time I went to hear Allen (Ginsberg) read. I hadn’t heard him in a long time.. and a friend of mine, Steven Taylor, was playing guitar for him.. So I went.. and really, I was impressed.. I was so impressed.. The performance was wonderful, he was almost a kind of president.....a Buddhist president.. (laughter).. or the president of a Buddhist country.. The performance was so entertaining and so wonderful, I was totally impressed. Afterwards, I went to Rinpoche’s I would go there all the time to see if they needed anything. And I guess he saw in my mind that I had been very impressed by this reading... and then he read me a poem . He had written it in Tibetan and he translated it into Italian. The first part was a presentation of the view of an enlightened master. And then, in the second part, he started talking about his illness... since he had learned that cause and effect follow each other like shadow and sun, I forget the exact image.. he didn’t (in the poem) understand how he could have this illness. But since he was so ignorant, he would go to Lord Buddha to inquire. When he read this poem, something in my understanding, in my conceptualisation.. completely dissolved. .. the humility of this poem and the softness of it the wisdom level involved. Then I realised that ‘the poetics of enlightenment.’ was something very different than..... not to divide sacred and mundane art, but to have that dedication and that fruit.. is something very rare, it’s not a display, it’s not technique only. And I suppose, if you have that fruit (of genuine enlightenment), an elegant poem like Rinpoche’s or a very simple statement would serve. There was no feeling of separation — ‘*Oh, he’s a great poet and I’m nothing*’.. The poem generated absolute wonder and an awakening of pure mind (sic.existing in us all) . He had been capable of expressing this... it brought me back to my original intent, to create that potential & poetic in myself. Now I see that such an awakening is a life’s practice or the practice of many lives... it turns out to be so different than anything I could have imagined..

**U:** You think, this would be a reasonable title: »Towards a Poetics of Enlightenment«?

**LLL:** Yes. ere we're getting at something... this is also just between us. I just took a seminar with Ali Akbar Khan.. I've studied with him before and it's very inspiring. He teaches in Basel once a year. And after sitting in his class every sound is so sacred... I sat in a café, drinking coffee and suddenly this pop song.. I heard it on the radio..was so beautiful, so moving, I could hardly control the urge to cry.... I was always aware of him as a performer.. a great great musician. And I am also aware — now that I'm older — of his struggles as a human being and the burden of carrying such a great tradition.. leaving behind his own country, so he could do that. I thought of his sister. I had studied with her in Bomba...she is the acknowledged master of the *gharana*. But because she was Ravi Shankar's wife, she didn't want to perform. She said, "*In the 15th. century this music was played for God, later it was played for the kings and it began to die.*" And she said, "*Why should I play for the fighters?*" But she played for me one day.

**U:** She was playing a saranghi?

**LLL:** She plays an instrument called the surbhahar , a bass-sitar. It was the same experience,(as with Rinpoche's poem) ... the mastery, the musical awareness was so profound that at first I didn't know what I was listening to, at first the sounds were so much like a kind of mental (sic pervasive) sound. The fact, that *she* was playing, that there was a player...was almost irrelevant. She disappeared in her own music. And there was *only* music. I think, that's the real meaning of »*Rasa*«, the title of the Daumal book.

We have to find a way to balance our condition with this gift(of the teaching) .. If we break the link to the world's traditions, we'll lose their precious gift of communication as compassion .... and so called Buddhist artists we have also to see that the Eastern aesthetic at its highest octave really did mean a loss of ego.. really did mean, that aesthetic & spiritual process could be unified. When I had three initiation in dream

with Norbu and he started talking to me, one of the first things I asked him about ( in real life after a practice) was..( he had told me to write poetry) I told him that I was a bit afraid...that in the West, there was a tendency... that the artistic structures were arranged so that if you were good at something , you would become well known and there was a whole other (social & cultural)dimension to the artistic process. I said that I really wanted to meditate. And he said, *“For you..“* he said this in front of a lot of other people, he said, *“For you it would be good to be famous.“* he said, *”It’s good when Dzog Chen practitioners are integrated in the society.“* and then he said, *“Anyway, you can sit in a cave for twelve years and you might not realise yourself, so you better write poetry!”* You know, that was twelve years ago.

I have a deep respect for expression. For instance in poetry — the only art I know— there can be a great poet, who is not in the ordinary sense enlightened but who has such fantastic understanding of the tension, technique and tradition.. like (Gregory) Corso,.. that there is a profound knowledge, also a profound compassion which opens up. I don’t think you can just talk about Buddhist Art or Spiritual Art.. because great artists, who have concentrated on their form or have this calling.. are going to arrive at techniques, which by their nature are meant to release energy. Of course, when it’s combined with a consciousness of that state.. like in Norbu Rinpoche at that moment.. even Michaux, there is something, there is another quality. But it does not diminish the quality of these other beings who, through their concealed virtue or their passion, arrive at a mastery of form which is certainly part of the enlightened experience.. and indicates it.

**U:** Well, I know that from Joseph Beuys, who was not a Buddhist practitioner, but who was working on that kind of level.

**LLL:** Yes. and also the humility of these beings, you know.. if you think of qualities like compassion, generosity, perseverance.. sometimes these artists.. many times these great artists have these capacities. They can be more developed.. let’s say, than someone,

who may have a *karma* , a relation with a certain master or path,... someone like Joëlle Léandre in that anti-music (at that moment) created absolutely a space of freedom or emptiness, at least for me.

Some people (sic. in Italy) relate me to the Beat poets and in some sense it's true,... the provocation to the society that I seem to express but in another sense it's not true because they had a strong relation to each other and to the substances & interests which animated these relationships. I didn't participate in this kind of social life and was not part of their communal development.

**U:** It was also a kind of male society.

**LLL:** Yes, that's right. But there is a female Janine Pommy Vega, who's been a good friend in New York. I published a book of hers in the Il Bagatto series.

**U:** In Italy?

**LLL:** Well, she wanted to do it together in New York..the poems were for her Guru..but the imprint was created in Italy...Il Bagetto (sic. the 'magician) is the name of an ice cream parlor in Arcidosso, near Merigar.

Through Norbu Rinpoche I began to practice poetry as purification. I understood that a poet has certain gifts of perception and secret or specific ways of integrating visual, audible and inner phenomena. But that.. if you, if the poet, does not have the opportunity or means to utilize these.. this same energy can become..mouldy... almost destructive to the center of the individual, the center of the poet. And for the poet, this mode of integration, the poetic activity itself purifies the psyche-the psychic dust or obscurations. Therefore, even when the individual poems are not that good, it's important to work through them-to concentrate on them. It's like taking photographs..from a given series one is going to be good. The process itself (sic. at least for me) removes a lot of mental confusion & phenomena that otherwise can obscure higher function and vision . It's like a ground work. &.. Every once in

the while, there might be a real perception, (when the finest mechanisms conjoin)but you can't have that perception and *that* poem without the ground work, And what happened to me is that the nomadic life-style of the past few years is now blocking this day to day *practice*...which I have to do. So I'm at the point where I have to radically chance my life-style..for the first time editors are asking for work & with all the moving around I can't do it...So I'm trusting in Tara to provide some change.

**U:** And locate a space.

**LLL:** And if any of you home owners see yourselves as Tara..(laughter)...

Something else, this year, being around Rinpoche in NYC deeply affected my mind . He was always asking me, for instance, to write a poem for his father who was starved to death by the Chinese... He requested this and I wrote, the first time, something which he thought was not very good..then I got an invitation to participate in something which was called »*The Time Capsule*«, part of the Woman's Conference in Peking.

**U:** This year.

**LLL:** They wanted.. like what you wanted at the »*Art meets Science*..« Conference in Amsterdam.. just one page. but at that time, when you were in Amsterdam, I knew so little about fax and new art.. I didn't know how to participate. This time though I thought about it and in a moment of inspiration I wrote out something, which I hoped was addressing Rinpoche's grief and the cruelty from which his father suffered and the theme of genocide in general... "*A* — meaning Allen- *may not be Buddha*. "... "*A is not Buddha and I am not Mira B. but this is no reason to do away with us*. " I tried to speak of the tragedy in a general but specific enough way for people to understand what I was saying. I was very happy when this was circulated inside China...as part of the conference...

**U:** And all these contributions and your poetry are in a time capsule?

**LLL:** Yea.

**U:** When will it be opened?

**LLL:** . I think they are doing something w. it in China but I don't know what.... it's in book form in New York now.

**U:** I see.

**LLL:** Someone said, "*I missed you at the Tme Capsule opening.*"

..... Finally I should say, that women ,in general.. women really have to chart new routes for themselves within the structure of the society, within the structure of secular and non-secular societies in which they find themselves. This realisation has been an important part of my development.. I didn't know that this would be necessary when I went to India and I am still learning about it.

Note on Isadore Ducasse (if you want it):

1846- born, Montivideo, Uruguay

1870-PARIS, lived as hermit, died at 24. First novel, Les Chants de Maldoror, 1869. Refused by Le Croix, his publisher, as being too extreme. Published small preface to "A Book of the Future" in 1870. Completely unknown in his lifetime. Rediscovered in about 1910. 'Angel of the Bizarre' who founded a new language of the unconscious'.

Note on Rene Daumal (Daumal was an auto didactic sanskritist, and one of the first Western scholars to recognize the practical value of the teachings for the West. He wrote the first reviews of Sanskrit & Tibetain translations & translated himself the essential texts on Aesthetics , including the Bharata Natya Sastra, the first written treatise on the Arts of Music, Poetry & Dance.

Note on Pema Karpa. Dug.pa Pema Karpo 1527-1592. NNR recognized by Gyalwa 'Karmapa & Paldung Tai Situ. Leading Master & scholar of Dugpa Kagya school of Tibetain Buddhism.