

# from the DICTION AIR

*jam. ismail*

**patriarchy** 7 pay t.v. 8 reduction of sexes and genders to two. 9 fusion of sex & gender. 1 identification of 'father' with 'male' and 'mother' with 'female', hence (allusively), parentnoid. cf.

**trans'parent.**

**patriarchly** 'am i going to be a father', she wondered. patriarchly. giving herself heirs.

**pedigree** his stance and gait ar not in vain. left arm straight ending in a shiny weight of shopping. right hand backs the head of an infant who, when last i saw it taken away a step, by step, down the stairs, was head back, eys and mouth open as if for the face above. the look before fallen in love. now the man's eys touch this small sweet round in his hand. i make it a mutual ador . he's not pedestrian, a younger heart with the most beloved face grows, out of his chest, daily, and he moves with it. one does not say: this is a father & child, one sees, essent , this is loving. contemplate. the van swung into parking puts him a meter behind the site of me . he stops, turned.face rifting into pleasure & misery. pave ment, i do look, eco no ledge. pond . what's to say, do abridge , i go on to market. he too turn quick, open shut. new hardnes- s, bcgot with his sister.

keep an ey on the good of one another.

i mean , of rivals, too (6.viii.85)

**photosynthesis** in plants must be *imagination* in humans. what ar stories, for plants? we call them stores. what is narrativ , chemically speaking- ? tran s port.

**prefix**, e.g., **con-** (L.), with. 010 **concoct** (catachrestically) he. 111 **concord** with strings, attached. 09 **concur** girl in skiblue jacket, alsatian [german shepherd] alongside her bicycling. he's lean, not from muscle, so it looks like a (picture of) cure, for health; although the steady stepping's like dressage. sunlit north shore . . . thrills above snow line. her windy hair's the colour of this blond grass. above horizon blue form even. disturb of sea with wave, that's winter.

they ar about to curve from wall street onto kamloops, her head & hand reach down to stroke his face. 04 **controlls** with dwharves, ferries, gnomons, and pick-sees.

race 3 leak of nations.  
sly near perceval street.

Webster's, 529

be fur of this animal:



Race.

ly coursing channel of  
2 A contest of speed.  
ng the balls in a ball

on of mankind having  
at as a distinct human

rack  
fit  
gu  
rack  
to  
in  
rack  
& c  
rack  
op  
fr  
th  
O

5 lunch fills the vegetarian restaurant on hennes-  
waiter motions her to the table where i'm waiting  
for a dish of noodles. chat, of strangers, in can-  
tonese. she says, yes i see that you'd enjoy  
sinking and tibet and uncultured places like  
those. not looking at my blue hollofil vest. (the  
armadillo, ma calls it, it tells everyone you're  
from canada). she's come down from near  
shanghai, been in the colony 18 years, hairdres-  
sing, refers to the mainlanders as 'they', is joining  
her family in toronto, and, do you prefer hong  
kong? or vancouver, she asks, splitting. i see  
now that it's been this way for 20 years. a day  
later i read in a book of ackbar's, 'writing is  
precisely working in the in-between' (helen  
cixous). 4 here at the film shop on commer-

cial street rani says. you go home and see things. that they have done very well, ar  
healthy, and the hygiene is good. that they hav money and now ar educated, yes.  
and that the buildings hav changed, the standard of living is better. but it's not  
right for me because i don't see what i came to see. have you ever been hurt in  
that way

places gone, sites reoccupay.

in see-thru.

a history of my ey. like gills in  
stream the walking body picks up bits like gills in a stream the red of sudden  
altars. an ashpit, 6 with me it was the same, madhu smiled. when i first  
came here in '53 it was love at first sight. oh in those days there were would  
you believe one-tenth the people in these streets! we are walking towards  
chhetrapati, to the tibet guest house where i'm staying. he says kirtipur is the  
way kathmandu was 30 years ago. the origin keeps moving. but janek says,  
why do you want to come back. people say that to me all the time and that is my  
question, why do you want to come back?

real 2 i bought him a rolex knock-off. that's what he wanted for his bir-  
thday. you know, taiwan is really getting very good now, you can walk in and  
ask for a cartier and they'll know what to give you. they make them really well  
and they're not cheap either, it costs US\$150 but the real thing costs  
\$7000. and it's so funny! he treats it like the real one, keeps it in the bank,  
takes it out to wear to meet the bigwigs! and the funny thing is that he has a real  
one that is all banged up & scratched, you know how rough he is, that he wears  
everyday to do the marketing in!

resist *Where There's a Wont, There's A Way.*

serendipity unreturning sticks to the thrower on the  
dock, the wheaty retriever continues uphill. aloofly  
flinging, drops of light with every pad up-  
slope, dancing fountain.

linger, and of the show ahead and beside angles,  
sun is darkening trees. & building serene  
dipitty

fo lowing up the path, small stones may be seen sending  
shadows, times 10

hong kong

Vancouver

**sex** a latin word meaning six (6) which has been pared down to two (2).

this may not be a bad thing, especially during family reunions and other group fares. dacoity is not for every one.

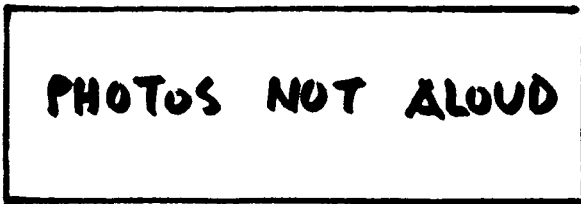
**shirley,**

17th january 1987

you know i'd put my *goon yum* [cantonese deity of compassion] into a fire, years ago. burnt it up. it's been, so long. after seeing yours, and sophie's, awe set in. once again, some phoenix. and i knew i couldn't just go buy another. as in the story you told, an encounter was indicated, or at least a tense. as with stars, or molecules. guide d,

so a day or two goes, a-nalept, before it materializes, ceramically: hard milk: in a clearing in the backhills of cloudview road, in one of those wire-fenced open air workshops with a rubbish pit in the middle, and machinery around. she'd been set with care on some grey 4x4s, a little away from debris. on the dusty office desk one of two phones was ringing. i knew not to undo the camera from its pouch, nor did i squat to see better. a young man of sullen cast had noticed that someone had wandered in. on my way out, a smaller man with a thin mustache said, how may i serve you. i liked the uigyr of his face and his curtesy. as if i were from a family he respects. i do not live here, i reply, i am walking around looking. your *goon yum* is in a good spot. he nod & laugh delight. a few steps down the hill i hear him shout out the names to me, of the two people who'd placed her there. it was for the record. credit do.

**sign** in a temple near kathmandu



**siblings** brother: in thailand, a naked beautiful girl comes in and gets into the water with you. then you're put on the lie-low and she rubs you all over with oil. then

sister 1: she fries you.

brother: no! then she slides all over you

sister 2: with roller skates.

brother: no! she has this little plastic bowl with oil and water mixed together and a sort of whisk that beats it up and she

sister 1: bastes you.

brother: no! she

**six** afrodit's number. said pythagoras (corinne, 46)

**sob** i remember when you lent me *peyton place*. grace metalious, i'll never forget her name. i had to phone you up because there was one word i couldn't find in the dictionary, & i said, jam, this word s.o.n.o.f.a.b.i.t.c.h, it isn't in the dictionary, do you know what it means? there was a silence and i think you said something like, break it up shirley.

**story** ah little 2-storey in profile sitting empty and alone, full to the sens of sky. the moon unseen & night verdure it's been years! since i saw you in kits[ilano] last, somewhat outside, drawn onto a large paper in the room southwest. the winter they were there

suffix, e.g., -sibling (A.S.), gene'sis. 19 sensibling o, a  
 sis. 18 responsibyl tran'sis'tor. 9 invisibling the sibling who isn't  
 seen; also, solip'sis. 16 possibling takes courage, or heartage, sometimes by  
 way of neme'sis.

**trans'parent** (a tercet)

mum. and/or d ad. in loco parenthesis . gone between  
**verse/vers** to ward  
 avers un toward  
 divers downward  
 angles, &  
 transvers analogs  
 collectible as  
 s i g h  
 time paradi m  
 dust iridesce  
 imaging , s train s. a mere opticale  
 imagene :  
 airwar e . culler  
 evenings  
 here and there a seen, infinativ  
**invert** he imagined her fate to be bleak famous.  
 all the while keeping happy , at home.

version **versionity**.

**well** . of loneliness . its good.  
 4.ix. feeling lonely & liking it.  
 oh the drag of a task befor (one gets to) the freedom  
 with in. attitude to word servants.  
 bum sits by window  
 fingers reach for , rose.  
 some roses wont depetal into hips.

hand 弋 writing | upon a 冂 surface.  
 It forms

- 肆 A pencil, pen forth-  
with, and then
- 肆 To dig a grave.

- 肆 To practise toil, pain,  
sprouts
- 肅 Circumspection, respect
- 肆 O expend to expose  
our excessive reckless now.
- 肇 begin,  
to range

this avid barter, switch on the sens of timing

**what** is your etymologist  
 'as soon as she received the book she knew immediately all that it contained'  
 ('the liberation story of jomo memo' (1248-83) in tsultrim, 210)

**words**, cited. *chinese characters* by I. wieger, s.j. (1927). colette guillaumin,  
 'the idea of race and its elevation to autonomous, scientific and legal status', in  
*sociological theories: race and colonialism* (1980). A corinne heline, **sacred**  
**science of numbers** (1985). **diction air**: 'a new inbreathing brings back the

copywrite\* of wieger, 763

\*well what i did was, i photocopied wieger and then i whited out the words & punctuation i didn't want.  
 with liquid paper.

entire fantasmagoria of the universe to the one who meditates' (alexandra david-neel, *initiations and initiates in tibet*, english trans. by fred rothwell (1932, 1935), 79). dorothy richardson, *pilgrimage* (1938). helene cixous. *oxford shorter english dictionary* (1933, 1968). pauline kirman, *a secular baggadab* (1986). tsultrim allione, *women of wisdom* (1984). *webster's illustrated dictionary* (1949).

**words**, incited (see also **metonymy**). words ar like money they hav no backing other than us. 'man' still includes 'woman'. 'she' used to refer to 'he' as well, and 'girl' used to mean 'boy' too (*oxford*). dorothy richardson said it, people go on writing books using the same words with diffrint meanings. which may not be the most efficient way to run a country. as goebbels said to fritz lang, mr. lang, *we* are the ones who decide who a jew is (colette, 41). talk about sementics. no wonder words slip, slide, perish, will not stay still. struggle, the *secular baggadab* says, is better than boredom. PALESTINIANS AGREE.

**words**, of mouth. rani, madhu, janek, sheila ismail, leslie stokes, shirley omar-thanks to hélène mino for alexandra. hi renee!

[afterword to *diction air*]

i like to sweep the flat before i settle down to work. the lines of a page of dictionary often remind me of the lines of dust that never get into the pan, they stay on the floor. there are times i feel small dense print (especially the 13 volume *oxford dictionary*) as an arrangement of dust.

some dictionaries are born in times of great cultural turmoil & renewal, when the house is such a mess of wires, pipes, & broken walls that all i can do is put word-things in alphabetic order. i indexed some of what i'd collected over the years: words i couldn't use (e.g., serendipity); words i can say but not write; words i keep on forgetting the meaning of; samples of rebus; definitions more sensible than those given in the *oxford* & skeat's *etymological*; notes on (english) dictionary (e.g., it's not a text that's meant to be read through; its tendency to definition by polyglot synonymy; its absurdity; &c). And so on.

utility

after small writings, problemata, & decipherings became part of the file, the name *diction air* presented itself. i was delighted, as if it meant i wouldn't have to write a novel after all, i can stay libretto.

**aria** (3 july) sky of dark & various cloud, bit blue it's so laden above [water] sea looks slated for a parking lot. tear of colour west that she will see further south. we'll share this big roof for maybe a week mor. by the side of the park where sparrows bathe & ezra used to drink, gravel . streams . look . icy this evening. nip in the air. mammals . all the diffrint currents your skin feels. she is inside wat i hav imagined & doing wat i can't. do you know the troubadours ? that's the '*spirit of romance*' ! i'm drinking last night's wine. the pocket of your cousin's husband's shirt is not easy to unstitch. roses. & shamrock . it's night now where in sedro woolley ar you

about serendipity. *oxford & britannica* hav it that sarandib, a former name of ceylon (now sri lanka), is an arabic 'corruption' of the sanskrit simhaladvipa (dwelling-place-of-lions island); & that an englishman hitched **-ity** onto serendip to make serendipity. well, that's one way to do it. english a word by romanizing an arabesque of sanskrit & grafting on a latin tail. it's a tail that wags the dog, for latin sends on its imperializing ways. but a colonizing onomatopoeia (ceylon became a crown colony in 1802) needn't be an onomatopoeer. one could learn by it to resuffix *paris-ian* with an *-ite*, or decline 'british' to 'brutish. me, i like e.s.l. trips, such as 'united sates'.

when serendipity was coined in the 1750s it meant 'the faculty of making happy & unexpected discoveries by accident'. a brutish example, from the 1750s, might be, the takeover of bengal; which financed the english 'industrial revolution', & so england went on to Empaaah. no of course i hadn't it figured this way when the word first buzzed me, testily, in the 1960s in hong kong. herstory comes & history goes and sensor's always here. it bothered me that the word was plucked from native tongues i did not speak. i dint want to ape the brits, stopped passing it, it went in bardo with other words i couldn't use until , well, untilled.

not that serendipity lived up to its meaning in english mouths, they often wore it like a meddle. i like the word, it still feels acute. something comic, or maybe karmic, in that lap of sound & sens. raphael (lui) says it's since become a word in science. example? the accidental discovery of mercury as a catalyst when someone broke the thermometer he was stirring a solution with. that's how we get minamata disease. pause . and is it true, i ask, that einstein apologized to a post-hiroshima delegation from japan? yes, raphael says he broke down & cried.

electrification is so recent & already unmanned light is endangered. some summers ago when i was loitering around deep cove in north vancouver i saw a dog come out of water & go uphill, dripping, to wher the sun disk flashed & dipped among the trees. someone on the dock called again & again until drawn into the evening's better temper. in that rich light, humans young & old appeared perfect, cast in gold, forever, sealed. and i went with the wet dog dancing fountain to the loom of dark evergreen.

later on, when i thought of placing that writing in *diction air*, i remembered the word serendipity. the news is that while i was typing the text, something else came along like a part of water or wink of sun sat & tapped itself in, 'serene dipitty'. now that's what i call evening , serendipity coming out. what did you say about language scars last year at sechelt, i ask helene (mino). it is 10 mins befor her clock is due to beep at her. well, she says dreamy into the phone, they itch.