

Denver, Colorado

March 5, 2005

Dear Jill,

I have been carrying around your beautiful letter for a long time now. I was hoping for a quiet moment to begin, and it is finally here!

Today I went to the sacred mountain, the Red Rock just outside of Denver. Climbed it slowly with my student Christopher Lorring, and sat there at the top of a red cliff for a long time. Unknown birds came to visit us. Some gliding, some singing sweet songs, and I kneeled and prayed, singing to her in her rocky womb, in her wounds, made by rushing water. I remembered the *Akapana* in *Tiwanaku*, where the great pyramid was conceived as a hollow mountain, carved by deep tunnels so that when it rains, water rushes down those canals making a most frightening sound. Inner Thunder or The Mountain as a musical instrument, our souls as a musical instrument, trembling of terror in that cliff, always just about to fall off. I renew my vow to her, the one we don't know, the *Pachamama*, mother of space time in each climb.

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I want to begin by remembering you. Do you remember that day when we met? It was at Naropa, I was teaching a workshop called "Word Senses" where I wanted for us to "feel" the way in which words "feel" us, and not the other way around. Do you remember how hot it

was? There was a drought, and the whole desert country felt ablaze. Water going away, water disappearing slowly from our lives, from the whole planet, as we pay no attention to her. Forgetful to our being water ourselves. But proceed, we are in this workshop, and then there was an alarm, maybe a Fire, or a Bomb drill, something of that sort, and you were there, among all those girls. Only women, do you remember? It felt as a gathering of women from all over the world, from all colors, all quietly sitting in a circle, waiting for the class to begin. How can we begin? There is no other place but our fire, our drought, this is our drill. Can we let it penetrate, take us somewhere? This is our place, our thirst, our only guide. If we don't listen, the thunder will go on without us.

That's how I felt, and then I saw you (remember? I was remembering you!) You with your deer eyes wide open, a northern girl, Finnish, perhaps I thought, from the other side of the earth, a wild dancer perhaps I thought, and then you spoke. It was Paulo Freire you spoke about, with such passion and knowing! I admired you right away, and felt so moved to see someone had taken his words, his practice to heart! I said, I never encountered in the U.S. someone who spoke of Freire like you did. As if this really mattered, as if this new kind of education were a matter of life and death.

Perhaps, you could write to me about that experience in your next letter.

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Then, I will try to answer some of your questions.

Yes, the day you wrote your first letter I was probably in Brazil, crossing the rainforest by land (or the frail remains of the mighty rainforest) on our way to Sao Paulo, where the dead river Tiete receives the traveler with its stench. My performances around that city were about its death. I met there a young poet, Ademir Assunção who told me the only other people who noticed the dead river were the Tibetan monks visiting Sao Paulo. I am sure this is not true. Everybody notices, everybody has a nose, but what do we do with our nose? Tell her don't smell, don't bother, we have to carry on.

He told me how magnificent the river Tiete was until not long ago, people bathing and swimming in the tropical gardens around it, until some companies created a very precise plan to pollute it. It was not an accident, or an unwanted result, it was a plan! He devoted a lot of time to research this, write about it and so forth to mobilize public opinion, and nothing happened. There is no public opinion.

There is only public oblivion, he said.

So when you ask me how are my performances received, what can I say? You put it so beautifully, and I would hope that somewhere, deep down in their bodies, in a place their mind has not yet reached, or invaded with the controlling thoughts that keep telling them, "forget about it," someone must hear, or may hear the cry, the lament that's coming from all that death.

It is beautiful the way you speak of your father and his sound, and you are right in your instinct to listen to that “thread of voice” to the pain he was trying to forget. Maybe the listening, the connection between sound and ear *is* the thread of life. And to forget the pain, *is* to break the thread.

I wonder what a “lost sound” could be. Have we “lost” a sound, or a way of listening, of attending to space and time?

Maybe we are not losing our past, but a future possibility.

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I’ll take a break, and continue later.

Love to you,

cec

Denver, Colorado
September 12, 2005

Jill,

Before I forget, there is something I still wanted to respond to from the first letter, the question of recognition. The "re" is very important here, it says "repeating" going there again and again. "Cog" in Latin is grasping, holding something until your body knows it. (In Argentina "Coger" is making love.)

If I think of your struggle with "recognition," I imagine a sweet shift, to move you to the need behind it. I think what we really want is to see who we are. If we manage to look inside, and re cognize it, maybe others will follow. And re, re re as needed. That is the process of poetry anyway. If we do it, a response will happen of its own accord. Others may re cognize you if you do. Or so, we like to think. It may take time, or it may never happen. Who knows, but it is not for us to wonder.

"Healing" in the ancient traditions is "wholing" a completion, an acknowledgement of circulation and transformation, the two main qualities of the life force.

I can tell you how it happened for me, when I was still a teenager, and a first moment of "writing" from an inner re cognition came, the instant when I think my poetry began. I woke up from a dream, and there it was, a force grabbing me by the neck. A "cognition" you could

say, that either came from a way of listening, or demanded it. All I could do was let it be. Write as fast as I could! It wanted recognition! It wanted for me to see the language, the form in it. It felt different from anything I had done until then. As if something had shifted in me. These words were not coming from a will to write or a desire to "be a poet," (I had done that for a few years). They had a "reality" of their own. It was like an animal encounter. A sensation so powerful it can not be mistaken with anything else. I suddenly saw that I was language, that something was being said in me, or through me. Even today I say "¿Qué quieres decir conmigo?" "What do you want to say through me?" Spanish somehow allows you to acknowledge the collaboration, the "witness" within.

You were created by life, and you are participating in your own creation. Life speaks in you and with you at the same time, and you speak to it and from it.

To "recognize" language, the way it speaks, to hear it and discover where it is in you, is what matters. To find the source that opens all doors: being within poetry.

The next step is to acknowledge the collective creation of being, cells and neural connections as created by the exchange. We are the work, the *poiesis* that needs recognition.