

"GOLDEN BOYS AND GIRLS ALL MUST /
TURN TO DUST, TURN TO DUST" W.H. Auden

1 Papa Hemingway would be 100 today if he hadn't shotgun-blown his brains out. He was as much a Dionysiac adventurer in emotion-driven **act** as Bern. Shaw was an Apollonian adventurer in the logic-driven world of **thought**--each in his own way a word-master.

2 From our beach, we cant (GBS didn't use apostrophes) see the tents for last Saturday's Kennedy wedding but we can see the Compound's most westward house along the narrow strip of land where "the American royals" still, though more subduedly, frolic. JFK Jr.'s plane plunged into the ocean, & wedding joy plunged into funereal gloom, a sorrow shared by a startling proportion of earth's population.

3 Saturday morning, less than a half day after the plane crash, at the annual meeting of the Christian Camp Meeting Association I read the memorial roster only moments after the plane-crash announcement was made. As these words I'd written at about the time of the crash show, I intended this instance of this annual ritual to be a memento mori (Lat., "Remember that you must die"), in sound what in sight a death's head aims at (as do the Auden words forming this Thinksheet's title): "As we remember, with gratitude to God & to them for their lives, those who during this past year ceased to be in the land of the living, let us now take this, as every memorial occasion, as an invitation to contemplate our own death. Two quotations from awesome spiritual ancestors may help us in this. ¶You remember these words of the poet-preacher JN.DONNE: 'Do not ask for whom the [funeral] bell tolls: it tolls for thee.' ¶And this from the most memorable English intellectual of his time, SAM.JOHNSON, anticipating his soon death: 'Almighty and most merciful Father, I am now, as to human eyes it seems, about to commemorate, for the last time, the death of your Son Jesus Christ our Savior and Redeemer. Grant, O Lord, that my whole hope and confidence may be in his merits and his mercy; enforce and accept my imperfect repentance; make this commemoration confirm my faith, establish my hope and enlarge my charity, and make the death of your Son Jesus Christ effectual to my redemption. Have mercy upon me and pardon the multitude of my offenses. Bless my friends, have mercy upon all. Support me, by the grace of your Holy Spirit, in the days of weakness and at the hour of death; and receive me, at my death, to everlasting happiness, for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen.'"

4 Monday evening (see #2964), I had the uncomfortable/pleasant experience of being the devil in the peculiar hell Bernard Shaw hoked up for his three dead main characters (+ the devil) in "Man and Superman," Act III--the three viewed under the aspect of the central characters (Don Juan, Dona Ana, the Commander-Statue) of Mozart's opera "Don Giovanni" (though Acts I, II, & IV view them pre-death, the couple being Jn./Ann). "A drama of ideas" S. called it (517, COMPLETE PLAYS WITH PREFACES [Dodd, Mead/63], Vol. III). He was an **anticonventional contrarian**, using his wit & brilliance--esp. in Act III--to shock his public by standing things on their head (in Act III, reversing heaven & hell) & preaching from unexpected perspectives & complexities, to break through life's quotidian flatness, two-dimensionality. (A figure pops into my mind. In my experience of the late 1920s, every livingroom had a stereopticon, each slide having two photos which had been taken by a camera with two lenses separated by the avg. distance between the eyes of an adult, so that the viewer's own binocularity enabled depth (third-dimensional) viewing. In this play, S. offers three stereoscopic-**depth** coigns of vantage: (1) We see the central personae dramatis both before & after death; (2) We see these characters both as themselves & as the Mozart characters; (3) We see both all our previous impressions of the Don Juan legend & the spin S. puts on it.)

5 Why does S. make this play so difficult? In the preface to Act I, 2pp before he calls this "a drama of ideas" (in Dodd, Mead/63), he says (in effect) that a good piece of literature is a tungsten filament offering **resistance** to the electron-flow so as to produce, in the incandescent bulb, both LIGHT & HEAT. Human beings facing crises (eg. death & death-ruminations [such as Act III]) heat up & glow. S.'s writ-

Chlorophyt.

— original, 8 leaved "Cypripedium"

Ac. 4. 5. 2. Ls. 226-9;

"Green lily & girls all mist,
Lily chimney - sweepers, ever & dust."

ings are *contrived crises* so resisting our conventionalities--in religion, philosophy, economics, politics, manners (esp. wo/man [gender] relationships)--as to heat us up enough for new light (the vision of the Superman?) to arise within us. Incidentally, not a bad definition of preaching: S. was a preacher of the (creative evolution) "Life Force" we are to discover (as the universal design: he would be on the design side of the present Darwinian controversy) & conform our lives to.

2965.2
6 CONTRAST: Geo. Carlin is a comedian with an attitude, cynicism. Here a few days ago, he was asked by the CCT "What was the most important lesson you ever learned?" His answer: "That most of what they want you to believe is false. 'They' is the society at large as represented by the schools, the churches and the government." "GBS" (his comedic self-designation) was a comedian with an aim, viz. to teach obedience to the Life Force & to improve society. In Act III, the Devil has trouble understanding D.J.'s (Don Juan's) discomfort in the pleasure-palace hell in which (D. said to D.J.) "you have all that you sought without anything that you shrank from" (165, Penguin Books ed.). D.J.'s reply is the clearest statement of his innerness: "On the contrary, here I have everything that disappointed me" including the stage-wide scroll of names of his female conquests (at the beginning of Mozart's "Don Giovanni"). "As long as I can conceive **something better than myself** [my boldface] I cannot be easy unless I am striving to bring it [the Superman!] into existence or clearing the way for it. That is the law of my [& S.'!] life. That is what has made this place of eternal pleasures so deadly to me. It is the absence of this instinct in you that makes you the strange monster called a Devil." Those who yield to "The Tempter" "are not moral: they are only conventional [for S., the essence of waywardness]. They are not virtuous: they are only cowardly. They are not even vicious: they are only 'frail.' They are not artistic: they are only lascivious." In his rejoinder, the D. speaks of "my religion of love and beauty." D.J.: "Though there is much to be learned from a cynical devil, I really cannot stand a sentimental one."

7 As I see it, here are S.' PASSIONS/CONCERNS: **intellectual**, how to counter the 19th c. "death of God" (by creative evolution); **economic**, how to produce a socialism that will stem the ravages of capitalism without quenching the creative spirit; **philosophical**, how to make an advance on traditional liberalism, now exposed as unable to face the new world; **political**, how to replace the war system; & **social**, how to improve the lot of women & creatively manage their superior sexual aggressiveness....He had the will to progress, but was not optimistic (24): "Any pamphleteer can show the way to better things; but when there is no will there is no way" (Epistle Dedicatory [Penguin]). Next p.: "we must get an electorate of capable critics or collapse as Rome and Egypt collapsed. Our newspapers and melodramas are blustering about our imperial destiny; but our eyes and hearts turn eagerly to the American millionaire" (1903!)....A white-on-black poster on an L.A. bus shelter pictured in last Sunday's NYT: "Do you have any idea where you are going?--God." One of adman Charlie Robbins' billboard ads now spanning the U.S. A similar one: "Will the road you're on get you to my place?--God." And this invitation: "Let's meet at my house (Sunday) before the game.--God" (I put "Sunday" in parens because it was dropped for fear of offending nonChristians; result? a sentence that offends sense).

8 PURPOSE: D.J. (169 [Dodd, Mead]): "To be in Hell is to drift; to be in Heaven is to steer," & "The philosopher is Nature's pilot." The D.: "You [D.J.] think, because you have a purpose, Nature must have one." D.J.: As "a part of Nature," I am purposive, in compliance with Nature. 22: Literature reveals "the struggle of Life to become divinely conscious of itself" (cp., later, N. Kazantzakis)....D.J. argues that "In the Heaven I see," the "joy" is "the work of helping Life in its struggle upward." And his pre-mortem womanizing was an unconscious attempt to escape that central life-aim deep within him. The aim's earthly form is the struggle for "universal liberty and equality" without war."

9 D.J. (on sex's power to divert from the central life-aim): "Wherever ladies are is Hell. 20 (Ep. Ded., Penguin): Woman "often...wait(s) motionless [to capture man]. That is how the spider waits for the fly. 17: "In Shakespear's plays the woman always takes the initiative"--&, S. says, in his plays.