I don’t know a thing about paradise || In my house nobody ever brought it up ||
In college I learned about Kierkegaard’s knights || The knight of resignation || and
the knight of faith || I wanted to be a knight of faith || as did the professor || and
everyone else in the class || I assumed
I was born in paradise and raised in science. The semester I studied Kierkegaard, I also took Calculus, which I failed. I fell in love with the sounds of cypress trees in the wind. There is the female cypress, and it was the male I loved. The same semester I read Kierkegaard and flunked Calculus, I also read *The Symposium* by Plato in English translation. You will remember that *The Symposium* is about a dinner party and you are familiar with the story in it told by the comedian Aristophanes about the search for love and the origin of longing. We have all been split in two, broken, each half doomed to wander far and wide in search of the other. We remember this story which Socrates belittled in common expressions like “He completes me” and “How is your better half?” and even when we refer to finding “the one” or our “soul mate” in the culture to which I was born, after premarital sex, divorce and remarriage became accepted and then commonplace, it became possible to find your soulmate not just once but twice, three times, or more, and to declare it to the world in the media, in a church. Anxiety over this development, which may be described—using a term I learned—the same semester I flunked Calculus and read Kierkegaard and *The Symposium*—as a “paradigm shift” is pervasive if unacknowledged for how can you find your other half more than once? They say the human body regenerates itself once every seven years “they” being modern science, and in the 5th century BC Heraclitus wrote ποταμοῖσι τοῖσιν αὐτοῖσιν ἐμϐαίνουσιν, ἕτερα καὶ ἕτερα ὕδατα ἐπιρρέει, which we are told meant “You can’t step in the same river twice.” The traditional marriage ceremony still calls for the promise to stay together for richer or poorer, for better or for worse in sickness and in health till death do us part.
Being raised in science || under the sign of logic || I never understood how certain || promises || could be made || I could say “I promise || that unless something unexpected happens || I will do the dishes every night || this week” || I was very literal || Even in my love relationships || I could say “I love you today” || but not “I will love you tomorrow” || or “I’m in this for the long haul” || I would have made a terrible bride || which might be why || the only marriage proposal I received || was during a transatlantic phone call || with an unhinged person || who knew I would say no || I had a good relationship || with a philosopher || fall apart || over my inability to adequately perform || what I vaguely remembered were called || “speech acts” || a term coined by J.L. Austin || and developed by John Searle || whose class I also took in college || though sometime after || the disaster of “the Calculus”

I came to Paradise with a friend || named Hope || During our stay || another friend || went home to Ohio || with his camera || and sent a photo || HELL IS REAL || across a billboard || which I received || on my phone || Growing up I watched a TV show || on public television || called “Connections” || in which the host || followed a trail || wherever it took him || across time || space || and disciplinary divides || This was before the invention || of hyper text markup language || broadband || or the smartphone || “Connections” || was a big “influence” || on my “work”
Freud famously said that the only two things that matter in life are love and work. I’m paraphrasing, having never read Freud or at least not the part where he wrote about that. I am working in paradise. There is a bird here which makes a noise like a typewriter, Smith Corona or Olivetti, a manual. I don’t know what kind of bird it is or I don’t know the story of Adam and Eve except in its most basic outline. I have thought about reading the story in the bible but there are so many other books I want to get to first. I thought I could kill two birds with one stone so to speak by reading it in French to practice my comprehension so that it will in some sense constitute work. I try to find the passage but I can’t.

There is one story from the bible that I know quite well. The story of Abraham and Issac. I know it from its appearance in Fear and Trembling by Kierkegaard. I did manage to find the story of Abraham and Issac in the bible. It is in Genesis. I was surprised at how short it was and by some of the wording. "Or, apres ces evenements, Dieu mit Abraham a l’épreuve et lui dit: "Abraham"; il repondit; "Me voici". Il reprit: “Prends ton fils, ton unique, Isaac, que tu aimes. Pars pour le pays de Moriyja et la, tu t’offriras en holocauste sure celle des montagnes que je t’indiquerai.”. I was surprised by the use of the word "holocauste" when the word I expected to see was "sacrifice" a word which does exist in French spelled just as it is in English with the identical dictionary definition. I made a note to go to the library back home to look at the King James version and see what word is there.
It occurred to me also that I had never wondered at the origin of the word “holocaust” before it came to refer primarily to the events of World War II which occurred thousands of years after Abraham agreed to kill his boy and more than a century after Kierkegaard wrote under a pseudonym his Fear & Trembling.

The story of Abraham and Issac is five paragraphs long. It is told simply without psychologizing. The characters are affectless. It is like a script waiting for actors to fill it with emotion.

When Freud said love & work, I assume he meant meaningful work, but it still seems that further definition is required. When I say I am “working” in paradise I refer to one kind of work to the writing of this film which you are now watching and I hope finding meaningful as I found meaning in the process of its creation. Another type of work I performed in paradise was cleaning mostly dishwashing which I enjoy but do not find particularly meaningful and yet another type of work I performed was the intensive pruning of olive trees in an ancient olive grove which I both enjoyed and found meaningful since it allowed me to commune with nature and with a notion of the past. I was not paid for any of this work. I was not paid to go to paradise. In fact I paid for my room and board and volunteered my labor.
Medea sacrificed both of her children || though no God asked her to || and unlike Abraham she has rarely || been praised for the intention || much less the execution || In a film version of Medea || by Lars von Trier || the scene of the execution || is filled with emotion || though stark || and wordless || “It is written on their faces” || EXT. HILL—DAY: Woman walks up a hill carrying her two sons., etc. || While Abraham presumably thought that Issac || after the sacrifice || would have risen up to paradise || Medea would not have had such comfort || the Greeks having a very different conception || of paradise || a place inhabited by gods || inaccessible to mortals || even after death

This || combined with the fact that || Medea’s reasons for killing her children were || more or less || selfish || make her act appear less like a sacrifice || and more like killing || like a || holocaust

After God spares Abraham the agony || of killing his only son || “qu’il aime” || a ram appears || and Abraham || sacrifices it instead || “Il alla le prendre pour l’offrir en holocauste || à la place de son fils.” || We are told that Abraham named this place || “le seigneur voit” || and reminded it’s still common to say “c’est sur la montagne que le seigneur est vue” || which is rendered in the King James version of the bible as || “in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen” || but in other, more recent versions, as || “on the mountain of the Lord it will be provided” || making me think of the “hold” || in “behold” || a link between seeing || and having || for keeps || Martin Luther King, Jr., proclaimed || he had been to the mountain and had seen the promiseland || that he was not fearing any man || in a speech he gave the day before || he was killed || the soundbite repeated on the radio || every hour on the hour || April 4 of last year, the 50th anniversary || of his assassination
I do not know if it's accurate or appropriate to draw a correlation between the mountain in MLK's speech and the mountain in Genesis 22.

The professor who taught me Kierkegaard, Hubert Dreyfus, seemed to make a connection between King and Abraham. He seemed to suggest that both would qualify under Kierkegaard's definition as Knights of Faith, able to see the dagger hanging over their beloveds and not recoil but love the more fiercely.

There is a library in paradise and in it a book called _Disbelief and Faith Are Not What You Think_ written by someone called Jean-Francois Six. I liked his name and the fact that in French the title _L’Incroyance et la foi ne sont pas ce qu’on croit_ rhymes. “This book” he writes “is an invitation to an experimental faith, a humble, vulnerable faith.”
In another book I found the etymology of the term “entrainment” now used in certain psychoanalytic texts to describe the transmission of affect between individuals in other words, contagion suggesting we are not contained within the contours of our own bodies; the outlines of our skin. The language of halfness in Aristophanes’ speech may be an attempt to explain metaphorically hence inaccurately and well before Freud and the dawn of psychoanalysis this fluidity of boundaries.

“Entrainer” the infinitive form of the French “entrainement” means simply “to train” as in for the Olympics or for success in love.

It turns out Heraclitus never said the thing about stepping into the river that it was probably a disciple forgotten by history or some poor scribe bursting with intuition. I was alerted to this fallacy as well as to the fact that “kierkegaard” means “churchyard” in the philosopher’s native Danish by the writer David Markson another “influence” on my “work” another Knight of Faith who is now most certainly in paradise.
Entraîner: to pull or carry away or along; to train; to lead (to); to cause; bring about; an invitation; to an experiment; a humble faith

When I went to paradise it rained I forgot my camera and could only take pictures on my phone

I sent them to everyone and saved them all for myself
for Hope
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