



a selection of poems by Paul Pines

# Voyage

a selection of poems  
by Paul Pines

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## Bio and Acknowledgements

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PAUL PINES grew up in Brooklyn around the corner from Ebbet's Field and moved to the Lower East Side of New York in 1960. He shipped out as a merchant seaman,



spending '65-'66 in Vietnam. In 1970 he opened his jazz club, *The Tin Palace*—located on the corner of 2nd Street and Bowery—which became a cultural watering hole for the better part of the 70s. It provided the setting for his novel, *The Tin Angel* (Wm. Morrow, 1983). During this period Pines traveled in Central America where he became aware of the genocidal policy targeting the Guatemalan Mayans—the basis for his second novel, *Redemption* (Editions Rocher, 1997). Pines has published five books of poetry: *Onion*, *Hotel Madden Poems*, *Pines Songs*, *Breath*, and most recently, *Adrift On Blinding Light*.

Selections from the last two have been set to music by composer Daniel Asia and appear on his two CD's, *Songs From The Page of Swords* and *Breath In A Ram's Horn*, on the Summit Label. Paul's poems have appeared in *New Directions* #37, *First Intensity*, *The Cafe Review*, *House Organ*, *Pequod*, *Ironwood*, *IKON*, *Prairie*

*Schooner*, *Mulch*, *Contact II*. Recently, Paul read at the Tucson Poetry Festival.

Paul presently lives in Glens Falls, NY, with his wife, Carol and daughter, Charlotte, where he teaches at Adirondack Community College, practices as a psychotherapist and hosts the annual Lake George Jazz Weekend.

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VOYAGE

*For: mes amis Francais: Roland, Francoise,  
Paul & Nadine; ma fille et ma femme*

The statue of Osiris in the dead wood  
Living to make  
All the dead idols in Paris churches  
Die again  
And the lovers kiss  
Osiris marries them  
And then re-enters the shadow  
Of his living night.

“Osiris”, Jacques Prevert

O Past and Dead and Gods who fashioned me  
I only live in passing as you passed;  
And turning my eyes from all the empty future  
I see the whole past growing in myself.

“CORTEGE”, Guilliame Apollinare

## Voyage

---

1

*We leave home to find ourselves*  
says Homer  
in whom we discover the first rites  
    through which individuals  
    and civilizations  
    must pass  
        as birds singing  
    in the early morning streets  
    of a distant city  
    remind us

then why are we surprised  
to find a voice  
    in foreign stones  
    that echoes  
    our own  
  
    even as we recognize  
    therein a shape  
    that calls out  
    to an unsuspected  
    origin?

Wind blown skirts along Rue du Bac  
candied fruit luminous in a window  
on Bellechasse

the ugliest girl in the world  
walking a black lab  
has the carriage of a goddess  
rising improbably from  
my first impression

(like the issue of  
Olympian  
horrors  
blossomed  
from  
a wave)

*dans le Metro*

unpunctuated poet  
Guilliam Apollinaire  
stares from a poster  
on the walls

WWI uniform  
bandaged head  
lungs full of  
mustard gas

the soul of his time  
exploding  
into mine

to suffuse  
the afternoon  
with unlived lives

(a mystery:

                  wherein  
          the greater is contained  
          by the lesser)

at a cafe  
on Rue de Guerre  
reading

          Thrice Greatest Hermes

          who suggests that  
          heaven  
          has penetrated  
          earth

                  to produce  
                  a horoscope  
                  in which

                          the new moon  
                          falls across my solar chart  
                          at such an angle  
                          it hangs like a shadow  
                          on a hillside

                  takes  
                  my breath  
                  away

                          like the undulant  
                          mustard fields  
                          of Normandy

---

4 – TELESFOROS

A blind boy  
in a denim jacket

threading  
rush-hour traffic

people pouring out  
of the Metro

on General Leclerc  
part for his cane

which sweeps  
the side-walk as if

all of Egypt  
were pursuing

the Children of Israel  
through

the crease  
in his forehead

---

5

at the Cafe Fiorelle  
in the Hotel Leon

red awnings  
and umbrellas

cover red geraniums  
red napkins

on red  
tablecloths

as Matisse  
might have painted it

everything  
flattened under the weight  
of a single  
color

immune to time

bleeding through  
this page

---

6 – HERMENEUTICS

outside a bookstore

LA TABLE D'EMERAUDE

in the shadow  
of Notre Dame

I wait to button-hole  
Hermes  
want to ask him

what crisps  
the once delicate hairs  
around my ears

He doesn't come

I walk toward Voseges  
the answer  
to my own question

Hermes  
unrealized

one who forms  
and disappears

before his own  
eyes

## Mathilde Comes Home For Lunch

---

At fourteen her blue eyes  
hedged by dark lashes

prepares three plates of pate  
and goat cheese served

with a side of white beans  
bread and wine then

confides that her English teacher  
encourages students to learn

Chinese German Russian  
any other tongue but English

Her father Roland points out  
the French threw Tom Paine

in the Bastille for objecting  
to the wholesale execution

of aristocrats but mark the spot  
with a silver plaque where

Hemingway drank himself silly  
at La Closerie de Lilas

Americans in Paris are always  
lost (he says) but no worse

than Germans or Spaniards  
Once a group from Munich

asked him where he'd learned  
to speak their tongue so well

to which Roland replied  
"Auschwitz"

## Silences

---

1

I have learned how to read  
little girls by the way silence

registers in their eyes  
Mathilde holds her silence

out to meet me while  
her sister Melissa's eyes

dance silently to the music  
of her voice My nine-year-old

daughter Charlotte has a friend  
whose mother screams

and brother beats her up  
Everything this girl looks at

resonates unheard in a place  
where she has learned

to step away from herself  
.....

---

2

I assumed I would outlive  
my assumptions

then watched them grow  
that I would fortify myself

against the outrages  
of my world then found

I couldn't live so enclosed  
had to come and go

so I hollowed out  
my assumptions until they

were big enough to hide in  
but portable enough

to take with me  
anywhere

---

3

People are no longer surprised  
when I tell them my age

I begin to treat my friends  
like silences

want to know them  
from inside

my silences like friends  
who make room for me

in their hearts  
More and more my life

feels like time at sea  
with no land in sight

my consciousness  
a ship on its way to

no particular  
destination

a kind  
of immortality

adrift inside a  
silent friend

## From Paul's Place

---

on Damrayment  
I take the last Metro back  
toward Marie d'Issy  
checking the map  
for clues  
where did Abelard  
last touch Heloise  
in the market  
at Place Maubert  
Apollinaire's grave  
behind St. Germaine  
overlays a Roman garrison  
built when fires  
along the Seine  
gave the name  
Lutece  
to what we now  
call Paris  
where time folds  
into itself  
like an old coat  
to find  
Bernard of Clareveaux  
inciting the massacre  
of Troubadours  
and Cathars  
from Cluny  
as Hitler  
alone  
on the Trocadero  
executes  
a time-step  
to the unheard tempo  
of Gertrude Stein's  
last words

*What is the question?*

sucked into  
a tunnel  
that opens on

---

Notre Dame de Lorette  
where I remember  
St. Augustine's  
insistence  
that our senses are organized  
by an interior  
sense  
at 1:00 AM  
nobody on the platform  
but lovers  
and derelicts  
inviting me  
to become conscious  
of the world  
becoming  
conscious of  
itself  
on rubber wheels  
speeding towards  
Madeleine  
Montparnasse  
Bienvenue

## Tryptich

---

1 – ENTERING THE MUSEE D'ORSAY

Augustine says:

*I see myself seeing  
or not seeing*

*but not what another sees  
or does not*

*though the same thing stands  
before us both*

as if proof of the eternal  
were encrypted

in the process of how  
we know what we know

and thereby traceable  
to a single source (God

or DNA) but does not  
tell us why the stone age

images on the cave walls  
of Lascaux will inevitably

be recomposed into  
“Lush Life” by Billy Strayhorn

---

2 – ON THE WALLS OF THE MUSEE D'ORSAY

Eakin's wife Clara  
her haunted  
blue-eyes stare off to the left  
at Carrier's  
wife and five daughters  
(painted in 1893)  
blots of ectoplasm  
in the dark  
of their four-square world  
floating away from  
Jean Delville's  
SCHOOL OF PLATON  
composed around a central figure  
bearded like Christ  
in a garden of pastel flowers  
addressing naked youths  
and semi-draped  
hermaphrodites arm-in-arm  
beyond the reach of  
Corman's  
CAIN  
in which the outcast  
and his family  
wearing animal skins  
pull a litter of dead prey  
across an endless desert  
hunters whose primitive  
condition does not save them  
from the fear of what  
they don't understand  
on their way  
to Gustave Dore's  
ENIGMA  
a winged angel  
gazing at  
a maidenly Sphinx  
above the smoking ruins  
of a city

---

3 – LEAVING THE MUSEE D'ORSAY

I understand  
the Museum as a record  
of that which is uniquely seen  
by one

    in what  
    is common to all

each of us a world  
that is born and dies  
    references  
    the sum  
of every birth  
and death...

    even so

        my morning-star  
        is not  
        your morning-star

and neither exists  
as an object  
in space

## Le "Big Bang"

---

A solitary policeman paces  
the cobblestones of rue de Bievre

guarding Mitterrand's mistress  
pacing inside her silent retreat

behind a walled garden...  
I pass *couscous* joints

and *patisseries* on my way  
to the Jardin des Plantes

where Rilke sat mesmerized  
by a caged panther in whose

pupil he observed the explosive  
origin of the universe

## I Meet Nadine For Lunch

---

at a little club on Rue Le Pic  
between Sacre Coeur

and Place Blanche owned  
by her lover Patrick

a balding man whose mother  
worked with Sascha Guitry

and knew Jaques Prevert  
who wrote the screenplay

“Les Enfants du Paradis”  
a book of poems, Paroles,

and lived a few streets  
from where we now sit

Later, over cassoulet at Chez  
Papa facing the Cimetiere

de Montparnasse Roland  
complains that the dead

should take up so much  
space in the heart of Paris

but on our way back to  
Boulevard General Leclerc

can't resist showing me Satre's  
apartment house and a cafe

where he once stood tongue-tied  
before Simone de Bouvoir.

## We Go Where We Must

---

I get off the Metro at Pont Marie  
walk to the Marais down Rue

Rosiers with its Kosher *boucheries*  
to stop at a monument outside

a school on Rue des Hospitaliers  
commemorating seventy-five

children deported to concentration  
camps...a bouquet of flowers

upside down above the words  
NEVER AGAIN! and recall

orphans in Saigon begging  
for piastres. *Chung toi di:*

“Let’s go,” they say. *Di di,*  
I tell them. *Get out of my head.*

We go where we must to find  
what we need and I have come

back to Paris on the brink of  
my 55th year wondering what

that might be...a bridge  
through time a tunnel of light

another look at Voseges  
the lost kingdom of Shambalah

behind a locked door at  
30 Rue Sevigne the autumnal

scent of Isis who smiles at me  
in front of the Hotel de Ville

## Pausing on Rue Mahler

---

where my daughter danced  
two years ago  
    by candle light  
    before Martine's  
    gilt mirror  
        oblivious to  
        adults  
        watching  
        from a doorway

seven years earlier  
she rode in her mother's belly  
all the way to  
        Pere Lachaise  
where we grazed  
among  
    granite mausoleums  
    crowned  
        by alabaster angels  
        in search of  
        Heloise

but could not find her  
  
    as if she were the daughter  
    whom I now  
    seek

## Light Changes

---

1

The subject Monet and Pissarro  
discussed late into the night

Light changes everything!  
Over a bottle of Bordeaux

Roland insists history  
doesn't live in people but

in stones. Even in *Indochine*?  
The ten-year-old Jew who

grew up under Petan prefers  
to talk about how the woman

he picked up after leaving  
his first wife in Antibes

saved his life over a period  
of three days in a hotel room

He uncorks another bottle  
To toast the memory

of Roland Teuton  
stuntman and ex-husband

of Betty Hutton  
who taught him close-combat

with a handkerchief  
and an ashtray

Wine washes through us  
like light on stone

---

2

Madame Jose D'Avila  
wife of the astrologer

and psychic who stays  
open seven days a week

and lives in a trailer  
to the right of

the Creperie  
in front of the Metro

at Denfert-Rochereau  
walks on bird-legs

braced with knee socks  
gray hair pulled tight

at the back of her head  
to the *Poste*

where she drops  
her letter

in the box just like  
everybody else

---

3

In a grove off Rue Auguste  
I think about Abelard

raiding the nests  
of thinkers before him.

until I hear the exquisite  
song of a thrush

and wonder how  
different our world

might be if instead  
of Aristotle as his guide

he had chosen  
Hermes.

## If I Could Do Anything I Wanted Today

---

I would violate the privacy  
of lovers  
    in the Jardin des Luxembourg  
on an overcast afternoon  
    as wind  
    invisible  
except in its effect  
    bends everything  
    north  
I who write poems  
and remember none  
walk around the fountain  
    watching kids  
    sail boats  
        then enter  
        a wooded glade  
where light falls on  
    what appears to be  
        a lesbian embrace  
until her hair whips back  
    to reveal she  
sits astride him  
    her hand  
        on his cheek  
I would possess them  
    both  
        if I could  
    not with the indelicate  
click of the camera  
    I hold up  
        but  
    as the wind  
        might  
        invisibly  
    except in its effect  
        bend them  
like blossoms  
    to seed my breath  
before blowing down  
    on old men  
    playing chess  
    in front of  
    the Palais

## We Sit Around The Table

---

1

We sit around the table  
over wine and pate

celebrating Yves' return  
from Minsk

where he went to learn  
English from

his Russian mistress  
while his wife waited

in the mustard fields  
of Dijon

We also toast Roland  
off to Martinique

where he will manage  
a tire factory

for Yves brother  
Philippe

an ex-cop who left  
the force

for reasons that remain  
undisclosed

Yves will soon fly  
to Benares to open

his new ice factory  
to cool the cocktails

of suburban Brahmins  
with purified pieces

---

of petrified Ganges  
haunted by a *soupcón*

of Gerry Garcia's  
ashes

---

2

We are the guardians  
at the gates

old boys lost  
in the Horse Latitudes

together  
we compose a mid-life

Mandala  
that rotates around

our desire to embody  
all that ages well

we vow to meet  
again one day

in Tierra del Fuego  
where Yves

will make crepes  
while I videotape

Roland and Philippe  
in a *pas de deux*

called  
"Four Crazy Penguins"

## The Creation of the World From Chaos

---

can only be grasped if we understand  
the meaning of chaos as

a gap

between objects  
or conditions  
which

opens  
unannounced

the space  
between  
breaths

Herme's wind  
*nourished in the belly  
of the earth*

where God  
becomes conscious  
of Himself

## Grosettest

---

says the world  
is light

but fails  
to indicate

what  
we might find

at the origin  
of consciousness

(God or  
Gerry Garcia?)

though he states  
the concept

of a rose  
would not exist

without roses  
suggesting

we can say  
as much

for God  
and Gerry Garcia

## I Get Up at 5AM

---

on May 23 because  
I am 55 today

on my way from  
Paris to Glens Falls

with gifts for my wife  
and daughter

and these poems  
about a question

I have pondered as if  
the lesser might

contain the greater:

*is consciousness  
extinguished or  
redeemed by  
death?*

to which I listen for  
a reply strapped into

my seat as we ascend  
on jets like God's voice

at the instant  
of creation flying

backwards in time  
on an economy fare

## Envoi

---

1

We must separate earth from fire  
says Hermes

subtle from dense but it  
must be done *suaviter*

without force or desperation  
employing *magno cum ingenio*

the utmost ingenuity

because matter is a fallen angel  
redeemed only by death  
or awakening

---

2

Hermes  
who invented the lyre  
then gave away its music

god of healing  
and thieves

who reconciles  
opposites

in whom  
the visible world dissolves

enters my dream

together we fly  
over the rooftops  
of Paris

an encoded message  
of tiles and  
chimneys

dome of Sacre Coeur  
blinding in  
the sun

the Seine  
snaking  
through the city  
before Rome  
and after

we circle Eiffel's tower  
and the polished  
brasseries  
along San Michele

Egypt came to Paris  
with Rome

is embedded  
in her stones  
Notre Dame  
on the barc of Isis

---

We descend  
in front of L'TABLEAU D' EMERAUD

where I find myself  
as I had been  
days ago

waiting for  
him

*What appears dis-  
appears*

(he whispers)

*Your ambition to know  
how things fit  
seen into unseen*

*learn to live with it  
in silence or by  
speaking*

*forget  
what you have learned*