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Letter to Michael Wiegers and Sam Hamill

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Message sent with four new poems:
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Dear Michael and Sam,

Here are the four new poems I mentioned in my last email: “Piece of Cork”, “In the Plague Years”, “Lion”, and “Third Rail (Autobiography of Lastness)”. Of them all, it’s “Third Rail” that concerns me most. I really want it to work, and I conceive of it as being central to the book. It’s still more or less of a work in progress, so if you have any suggestions about it I’d be most grateful for them.

And I’d certainly appreciate any suggestions about the others too. Also, do you think they’d all, including “Third Rail”, fit in the book okay? Do any of them seem redundant? “Piece of Cork” might be, just a little, and it’s, like “In the Plague Years”, another mildly humorous one.

(In the Plague Years” was just accepted, by the way, by Bob Phillips for The Texas Review)

But “Piece of Cork” is an out and out “portrait” poem, so...

And “Lion”, especially with the Note from the Bayley book, might be a little too personal?? I don’t think for Leonard himself, but possibly for others. I do like the poem, though. What do you think?

I’ve also included two possible arrangements of the quotations I’m now thinking of putting, with your approval, at the front of the book. (I’m also thinking of removing the Whitman quote. Or maybe of just adding a Frost quote: “Earth’s the right place for love” – but that seems awfully schmaltzy to me, how about you? Besides, it sounds – taken out of context like this – just a tad too self satisfied for what I’m after.

Sorry to be so picky. Alas, you’ll probably see more of it before we’re through. But what if God really is in the details?

Yours,

P.S. I’ll send along some other Notes – a first stab at them, anyway – as soon as I hear from you whether you think they’re a good idea at all.