

6-2008

Energumen 5

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Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "Energumen 5" (2008). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. 425.
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ENERGUMEN 5

[29 June 2008 beginning]

I am always the poet writing _to_.

I am always writing the poem to.

To someone, some _one_. Or sometimes some more.

and this is, or is taken as, or should be, or may be: my weakness, my fall.

*

Transcribe a musical text into language. Translate a Beethoven sonata into poem. The 12 tones cd = 12 of the 13 vowels of ordinary English, chords as diphthongs or successions. That would give a pure vocalic line. Consonants as dynamics.

*

The pain of loneliness is the shadow of the immensity of the world, that is, our freedom. The terror of unconnectedness is a child's vertigo on a rollercoaster or a swing, it is frightening and perfectly true. We do move over an abyss, ever. When we feel that, this very terror is cleansing --- troestet und hilft, says Rilke about something similar, helps us and consoles us. Because the terror means we are free, we can change, we can do anything our body (our karma) lets us conceive and undertake. When you feel that terror, you are close to being healed. The mistake or the illusion is that you can reach out to some other person --who is just as much afloat, unrooted, afraid, as you are-- and think that by such clutching you can touch ground. You never can. We delight each other by love, stimulate each other by desire, challenge with anger, all of that. But we cannot make a ground to stand on for another person, or borrow one for ourselves.

The only ground is your own awareness: so the terrifying kindling of awareness of aloneness or bereftness or the abyss is itself the dawn of awareness itself, is the finest sign, the realization that no one out there can help this problem -- though we're good for many things, and should be lived with and loved and cared for and respected, we're not good for that. The ground is you. This is one thing Buddhism may mean when it speaks of mind as the only reality. Awareness is all we really have. And awareness is as strong as your cultivation of it allows it to become. Awareness (in another sense) is always there -- so our business must be to become aware of awareness, and then abide in it as our major strength.

*

"I am meant to be with language--that I am most true, honest, beautiful when in the company of words."
(J.C.)

*

A boy plucking on a guitar wants to make any girl watching feel that he is strumming on her private parts. Her private parts out loud. There's no sense in a woman every playing a guitar.

*

So curious (and powerful) that a playwright tells us What Happens and what it means, and doesn't necessarily start off in a treatment to tell us what anybody says. And when I write a play (if I can dare call it so), I just write down the words I hear them saying.

Aristotle begins with the action, the story, and I, sinner, keep hoping the deeds will grow out of the words. Actions speak louder than words, alas, is what my mother always tortured me by saying.

Most poets, incl. me, are trying to mine the body for language. To struggle with the body meat and bone and juice to get something into language, yes, but even better: to get language. Not to express oneself, not at all, but to milk the animal into language. I can tell in detail what parts of my body (and other people's bodies) certain language of mine comes from.

Now to turn it around!

to discover how language could embed itself in bodily action, gesture, movement, pause: that is, language silence itself into movement. That's why I look for the movement the vowels would beget. the abrupt shifts at each consonant, the direction of movement syntaxed by the language's sentence.

Lila, the Sanskrit for play, as in the play of children or gods, playing. Thinking of that, and how we call those strange ceremonies on the stage plays (and once called movies photoplays...)

*

Dreamt [22.vii.08] not a poem but the colophone beneath an already written one. I had typed there, below the date, two lines --widely separated, the second indented-- of German verse. And after them two initials I didn't recognize -- K.B.? K.H.? -- Were they the dedicatee, the author of the verse? And I didn't understand the German or why I had written it there. One word was Vergrieffenheit.

*

The strange thing: masochism is not sensuous. Does not seem to want to feel what it feels, but only to know it. Does not seem to want to perceive itself as a network of sensations, but as --almost noumenally-- a single object reified by pain, objectified, 'authenticated' by being someone else's target. The masochist's sense of identity is endorsed by being targeted. Whereas the sadist's pleasure arises from an empathy (uncompassionate it may be, but empathy nonetheless) with those very sensations the sadist falsely supposes are being aroused in the masochist by the sadistic inflictions.

*

The poet as priest -- the notion takes on a specially disquieting sense today: a priest is someone who is accustomed to speaking and not being heard, speaking raptly and not being understood, not accepted by those who hear him, not accepted as the guide he ceaselessly proposes himself to be.

*

Old men think a lot about Judas. To spend a whole life devoted to someone, something, and then betray it with a single kiss.

*

The intersection is the point of everything -- whence the star's arms radiate, its beams reach out to reach what? Or where?

Can we find where the light goes?

*

There is a photograph of Prokofiev walking on a wintry day in Chicago, 1921. He is in sharp focus, behind him other pedestrians, a few blocky old cars, lamp posts, all drift into softer and softer focus, till a low office building a few blocks away is very vague indeed. During the concert I can't stop looking at the picture. His face, hat, necktie, worn overcoat are all so clear, but the space from which he is walking, briskly, that space unfocuses, the past loses itself behind us as we walk. Time abolishes space. We are left alone with what we've been but where we were elapses, leaves the world. I yearn for those old square Dodges back there, the offices almost inconceivable in that building. Suddenly I want to go to what has been, and know, suddenly, that one can go there. There is a strange reversal that brings me into the barely conceivable. I walk down the hall, rap on the pebbled glass window of an office, a woman in a long straight skirt opens the door and smiles vaguely. And the music goes on.

*

Liturgy as pathology?

Gaddis: his concern with religion just 'went away.' But there must be some momentum. What does it when we lose it?

*

We are cleansed by dream.

I wake purified by the tumultuous images of my city (my own dream NYC always developing, more and more parts of it get shown, get known).

I stop to watch girls sporting off in the shallow water off the grassy banks of the Hudson, midtown. There are goats with them, on the water and on the shore. A farmer smiles, tending his goats.

I ask directions of an elderly German couple, who know where things are now -- they've been moved since I was last here, in waking, in dream. Familiar buildings clustered too close together, out of rank. Out of synch.

Blonde girl, friend of a friend.

*

All we can say is what we don't know.

*

[28/29 August 2008, dream ending:]

The clerk is gone.

Nobody home

in the Judgement Room.

[and spelled like that, in the British way.]

*

To recognize that i am not at all a social person, and speak still after all these years
reluctantly --if sometimes articulately. The painful paradox of that.

And this is why I don't speak German or French or Tibetan -- I don't _want_ to speak. A strange silence of
which I somehow remain a citizen.

*

sulfur = sound[s]
salt = system - language
mercury = meaning

when each has been calcined, purified, recombined, the result is the Elixir -- the poem, the text, the perfected
utterance.

*

"The, same objects are before us---those inanimate things which we have gazed on in wayward infancy and
impetuous youth, in anxious and scheming manhood---they are permanent and the same; but when we look
upon them in cold unfeeling old age, can we, changed in our temper, our pursuits, our feelings---changed in
our form, our limbs, and our strength,-can we be ourselves called the same? or do we not rather look back
with a sort of wonder upon our former selves, as being separate and distinct from what we now are?"
Oldbuck in The Antiquary, Chapter Ten.

"But is a sneaking, evasive, half-bred, exceptuous sort of a conjunction, which comes to pull away the cup
just when it is at your lips-" ditto, Eleven.

*

XVI.

Désir—crépuscule enfoui, lueur d'un regret
Histoire d'un astre perdu. Monde réciproque

Où chaque être se dédouble
Retraversant ces chemins dans lesquels on s'était perdu—

Un arbre, une ombre, un tournant
Nos pas gravitant vers les moments incompris

Les non-dits recouverts des plus belles couleurs
D'automne—fougères brunies ruisselantes de souvenirs

Paroles dissimulées sous une poussière rouge.

*

"To those who lie out of the road of great afflictions are assigned petty vexations which answer all the
purpose of disturbing their serenity..." (Scott, Guy Mannering)

*

Every Christian is waiting for the knock on the door. Maybe dreading it, maybe hoping. Waiting for the men to seize him in the garden and drag him up Calvary. Not even any palaver with witty Pontius Pilate. Just the hill, the cross, the dying for something. We know from the first moment that the last is coming, we accept the shape it gives our lives.

Even, later, though our insights, convictions, cognitions, practices, veer away towards other formulations of reality, other dharmas, that early knowing is still in us, waiting.

*

When I read 'arbre' or 'oiseau' in Jennifer's poems, it feels as if the things themselves were lost to her when she moved between languages, and left only their shadows: the most general words. It could be a wren or an eagle, an oak or an apple tree. Size is gone, scale, color, weight, all gone. I think of her crying, among shadows.

*

Whoever knows something
knows something else.

Whoever knows one thing knows everything.

So the Buddha is a person who really does know something,
truly and fully knows one thing.

And since a perfect knowledge of one thing entails a full and detailed knowledge of the thing's causes, status, uses, deployments, effects, destiny, to know a single thing means to be omniscient.

*

To escape from 'he' as universal pronoun it is not enough to flee to 'he/she' or 'one' or 'they.' Instead, so compose your sentences that no such pronoun is required. Say I if you mean I, you if you mean you, etc.

Or better still: use no personal pronouns whatever.

That would be true non-dual language.

*

how much cleaner, clearer, poetry is in delineating human event than even careful prose (let alone CNN). The latter can come up with images, but poetry can USE them, give them to us.

*

Sometimes, as Gertrude Stein reminds us by her practice, it takes many words to say a silence, that meaning silence (which is, and is not, a silence of meaning) where someone in me hears.

How your words move my silence[s] around.

*

One set of gists came to my mind [during Chuck Stein's reading of XI-XII of his Odyssey] along the line of fate as fatum, that which has been or is being or will be spoken:

consider moira as possible variant of moisa, a dialect form of mousa, muse. The r/s variation is common in latin (mos/moris, etc.). The fate moira as what the moisa makes us tell (ourselves about our fate, past present future fate).

or consider Hermes as variant (a la herpes/serpens) of the Latin Sermo: speaking. Hermes as the poet (hence lord of meaning, distraction, abstraction, bargaining: hermes really meaning (sermo really meaning) _hagging_: all the uses of language to describe, persuade, cheat, illude.

whence the Tris-megistos wrangler

*

The trees we saw in the Punjab in the deep heat, under the snow peaks: not just the jacaranda I knew from California but the scarlet poinciana, the _gulmohur_ tree, blossoming in May.

*

Rapture in darkness. This ice-storm power failure night (11.XII.08) is no different from a hundred thousand human nights before electric light and central heating. For us it is an ordeal, a terror, full of danger. We sit and read or try to write and all we think is: what will happen? When will they bring the power back again. They. The dependency.

But all it is, is human night on earth. This is what the word night means: cold, dark. You sit in a room with a candle, it flickers, gives you a headache to read, the glare of it. Across the room a face you love and know full well is barely recognizable, a shape in gloaming. This is what night means. This is what it meant when they wrote it down in their poems, Virgil, Dante, or the sweet imagined night of poor John Keats, who fled from such weather but not fast or far enough.

And when Novalis sings his hymns to Night, this is Night. This is where the words go. This intense inwardness, this utter dependence in the dark on who one actually is. To sing a hymn to night is to sing a hymn to one's own individuation. Night is the self from which the day hides us in the other.

*

Ingredients used in the tinnitus from noise cochlear damage remedy

The ingredients used in the noise tinnitus remedy are a proprietary blend of natural ingredients that have been potentized homeopathically and include some of the following ingredients:

Thiosinaminum - is a natural chemical that is derived from oil of the mustard seed and is excellent for ringing in the ear, noises in the ears.

Thiosinaminum may also be helpful in tinnitus when the cause is from fibrous, scar tissue. Helpful with otitis media and deafness due to some fibrous change in the nerve.

Carboneum Sulphuratum - is also referred to as Bisulphide of Carbon with a chemical formula of CS₂. Carboneum Sulphuratum is a clear liquid which has a distinctive odor and is obtained from chemists. CS₂ is made into solution in alcohol and homeopathic potencies are made from this.

Carboneum Sulphuratum helps with impaired hearing, a sensation of fullness in the ears and noises in the head. Will help when the hearing is impaired with buzzing and singing noises like a harp. Carboneum Sulphuratum successfully treats Tinnitus and Meniere's disease.

Chininum Sulphuricum - Sulphite of Quinine - Used in homeopathy to help with buzzing, ringing, and roaring sounds that are loud enough to impair the person's hearing. Particularly helpful with violent ear ringing, buzzing, and roaring in ears with deafness.

Pulsatilla Vulgaris - Pulsatilla belongs to the Buttercup family of flowers, native to western, central and southern Europe. When potentized homeopathically Pulsatilla diminishes acuteness of hearing, and relieves inflammation the Eustachian tubes, also relieves ringing noises in the ears.

Cinchona Officinalis - China. Peruvian Bark - Excellent in the relief of sensitivity to noise and tinnitus. Symptoms helped include ringing in the ears, humming, roaring, or ticking in the ears. Also be helpful with hearing problems.

*

I like the word kratophany -- manifestation of pure power. (Mircea Eliade first used the word in this sense, far as I know.) Big things do it, loud things, quick things. Ayers Rock in Australia, the cliffs of Oahu, Mt Everest, the wild surf on the rocks of Oregon -- things that strike us as rich with power. Usually we stand and gaze and come away thrilled and renewed. It is a simple, perhaps the basic, human religion: awe. Everything else in the world of cult and tendance seems to arise from the root perception of power suddenly (lightning, tornado -- Jehovah a storm god, a volcano god) or enduringly (mountains, waterfalls) manifest before us.

And this kratos, this power, is in us and in our relations. It's probably one of the main reasons that people fall in love. Or become friends. Or disciples, teachers. And writers are those to whom the kratos of vast Language is visible, palpable, it floods into us and we declare.

But there is a pathology of force among people. Vampires are the emptying persons, the ones who drain our force; after being with one, the soul is filled with indifference, the body slack. But there is another kind of person, the kratophanic, the ones who manifest power and give it to those who touch or regard them.

Touch is important here: the vampires are kratokleptic -- a new word? power-stealing -- they drain it from any hand or even eye that reaches them. A vampire must appear power-full so that its victim does reach out.

From my early childhood till into puberty my sight was very poor, and the family was against correcting it. A long story, very strange, but what is relevant here is that I came to depend on color as my real visual realm, aided by touch. Touch is all important -- we think of corny images of the old blind woman running her fingers over the face of her homecoming son, we think of how touch too can be unreliable -- blind old Isaac tricked by the goatskin into supposing Jacob was hairy Esau. [Surely a curiously disguised memory of Homo sapiens taking over territory from the Neanderthal peoples.]

Anyhow, touch. Science of haptics. What I'm after here is that one comes to trust the touch of people, how even the slightest contact --not even skin to skin, just skin to clothes will do-- reveals the true power-nature of the person touched, and the true balance of power between the two persons. For people who havent

depended on touch as desperately as I have, it may take a while longer for them to realize when they're in the presence of a vampire.

Now every touch involves a power exchange. Blessed are those whose force is so balanced that when there is contact (and here I mean all kinds of contact, using touch here only as a mute example) there is a generous and rewarding confluence of energy, from which each person takes strength. We are happy to be with such people. But I don't mean to say that any passage of power from one person to another, where one is more the donor and one more the recipient, is a case of vampirism. In ordinary contact, the recipient gives something back, the donor takes something back. In the vampiric connection, power is drained and nothing is given back.

I think of the passage in the Gospels where an afflicted woman reaches out and touches Jesus's cloak -- He whirls around and says Who touched me? and says He felt the power go out from Him. Surely this doesn't mean His power was so feeble that He complained of its loss. Surely it does mean He felt her needy touch, felt the surge of healing power from Him into her, and asked for her avowal, her explicit conscious reception of that power: as we acknowledge all that we receive from one another by saying It was I.

*

Waiting for the world to do its work: is a deliberate mental act or attitude of confidence, confidence that you have done your share and now the world will do its. This confidence is kept fueled by the energies devoted to your own work. The energy obviously feeds the positive mental stance from which work comes, but it also I think (esoterically) sends an energy into the world that powers the work you need to have done.

Passivity, though, is weak, unconfident, worried. Worry is (short of anger) the most draining of emotions. It feeds on doubt, resentment, revenge, anxiety, issues of self-worth. Being passive is letting all that slosh around inside, unrefuted by confidence, not organized by patterns of work. The intensity of hope is a fierce drain of energy. The more intense one's hope, the less power available for work: either your own work or the work that the world does.

*

What's funny is that in saying all this I reveal the curious obtuse heroics of my own life. The strength that sustains, runs, the system both of own work and other world comes from inside the artist. And who knows how big the inside is? My confidence is the fuel on which the engine runs -- and who knows from where the confidence comes? All I know is that one must make a conscious decision to embrace confidence, really embrace it. Amplexus. Cling to confidence as your best lover.

*

So much Post-2nd Viennese school music tends to ruminate rather than think.

*

Hegel sees essence as past -- as by our verbal aspect system complete because completed -- as by what he calls the 'anomaly' of German morphology Wesen [essence] becomes the past participle of the verb 'to be': verwesen. As I read this in his Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences, section 112, I am reminded that verwesen means decay.

The essence of anything, he means to remind us, is complete, finished -- in that sense, per-fect (completely made).

Unchanging, then.

The notion of essence --even the essences of the smallest things, milkness, breadness-- opens the door of the absolute.

What a strange world looms the instant you suppose -- or feel -- that things, beings, processes, races have essences, each an essence of its own, and as essence distinct from the individual instance of it in the contingent, frail, mortal we see before us. That we are.

Essence beyond its entity--
is that strange world called philosophy or terror?

Abyss of essences
and no thing found.

And each thing somehow compassing an abyss of its own.

Essence is abyss.
Or (mathematically) a catastrophe.
Lost irretrievably in the thingness of itself.

Bless furtive Time, that turns milk sour, and rescues us.

*

See, the reasons to trust the vectors proposed by one's desires, inclinations, arise from karma. Those inclinations are radical to your being in this life. Of course one can --and often should-- consciously reject or resist them. But trust them first, as accurate indices of your basic nature in this life. To know who you are: you are the one who wants these things.

Everything else may be the nurture/culture imposition on you of judgments, attitudes, infantile fantasies of how life should be lived (art queen, great poet, hero) rather than what you actually want, and want to do. To do otherwise is to condemn yourself to a lifetime of servitude to other peoples' expectations of what 'someone like you' ought to do or be.

*

Poetry is always the vanguard art. In our day then it enacts autism, the feeling-veiled surface-tending manipulation of language -- our own time's ailment/ability.

*

A terrible question: is there an entity that sets things out for us the way we set out millet and sunflower seeds for winter birds-- or poison for rats?

*

Big ideas have short shelf-life.

*

Debord described the drift (derive) like this:

“ In a *dérive* one or more persons during a certain period drop their usual motives for movement and action, their relations, their work and leisure activities, and let themselves be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they find there... But the *dérive* includes both this letting go and its necessary contradiction: the domination of psychogeographical variations by the knowledge and calculation of their possibilities...”

I stress the 'usual motives' part, so that the highly unusual motive of walking-in-order-to-speak takes over. Almost as if you cd move your legs only when your mouth is speaking. This is, wd be, a grand overturning of the hated norm. And an opening. And a radical reinvention of the body's own 'society.'

*

Benjamin begins his reminiscences of Berlin childhood: "Not to get your bearings in a city doesn't amount to much. But to get lost in a city the way you get lost in the woods -- that needs training." And this might (1930s) be the first hint of psychogeography.

*

CHRONOPLASTY: that's the word I've been meaning to invent all these years: what poetry, music and (to some extent) film are, the _shaping of time_

(while words, tone, etc., are _means_ .)

*

That there be a language of only nouns.

*

The art of Apart and the art of Among.

Not till February 2009 has this become clear to me.

(reading a little story by Cassandra Cornell, suddenly the shock)

At last the clarity of that difference -- between people and between books, my books were all the Aparts, and how hard to grasp the Amongs.

The Odyssey is unashamedly Apart, the Iliad an Apart yearning for Among -- _that_ is the great and palpable difference between them.

*

We were trying to figure out why conservatives were such good stylists -- Burke, Schmitt, Carlyle, Pound, Chesterton. We guessed that style is essentially a conservative matter: a brand-name in the language, a commodity, an appropriated voice. Style is a kind of property. Then too, language is innately conservative: past meanings into present moments cast, trusting the firm outlines of the old: this word means that.

But I thought a more terrible answer then: these men, and men they all are, it seems, who defend the beautiful in long discourse, are men who fancied manliness, courage, and liked pretty red coats and sword play, emperors and conquistadors. _These men loved war._

Language is based on the duality of speaker and spoken to. If there were no other, there would be no reason to speak. Language is dual. And it is by nature, it seems, both appropriation (conquest) and aggression (the I against the Thou). We live by language, and it teaches us to kill.

*

Maybe the capacious grammar and interminable measures of old Sanskrit kept the forest masters at peace in their upanishads.

*

You need empathy with yourself. Without that, no other empathy will work. If you know accurately the shape of your own desire, you'll have a good feel for what everyone else wants. Desire is a democratic realm. Be close to them, you will feel what they feel, you will know how to tell them what they need to hear from you, how they need to hear you so they can listen and respond. You are responsible not for what you say but what they hear. Shape what you mean pleasingly into their ears, the way a lover's tongue has often enough, or too often, probed softly into yours.

*

[from a letter to Tom Meyer, 11 IV 09]

all this semester I've been working in tutorial with a hard-nosed young classicist, wrangling on the nature of Epic. He's enraged by the use of that word to describe movies or novels, so we've tried to find out what epic actually is: what definition wd satisfy an ambitious Lutheran classicist and also me. In the course of this wonderful far-fetching and summary judgmenting, I led him to Kenneth Rexroth's long poems, so important for me when I was in college and soon after, learning his graceful parlando strategies of talking about everything (in that sense realer and truer than O'Hara, I think) and 'going on.' Nihil alienum to the poem. Yesterday Christian (his name, in fact) came in delighted and enthralled with The Dragon and the Unicorn, and we spent a little while with it.

And as I read (lordy-me, I'm slow getting here) I found myself remembering your new Vespers -- passages like (on the first page) the one beginning "Through the woods" down to "...vanishes." Or the whole long passage on page 3 beginning "The thick wood..." down to "from which one day you might return." So I delight in my turn in the persistence of song, song no matter what, song in every matter, every turn in the road. Not to say you're from Rexroth or like him, but just this amazing American thing that we've had this almost-a-century-now, of being able to talk in the eloquence not of rhetoric but of music. And that you do so powerfully now.

Vespers moves in and out for me, passages of shadow where I can hardly see the trees, passages of great brightness. It feels as if you judged the poem nicely, yet spontaneously, can that be it, a mirror of your time with it, not just your thought but the moods of your thinking.

Cold comes back, supposed to be quite cold (teens) tomorrow, on verra. Rainy today, but the daffodils have risen, weeks late, and the forsythia on River Road hardly in business yet. Slow spring.

I am sad that you're not planning a northern trip this time. I miss you, and would love to sit talking the moon up. May it be!

love,
Robert

PS/ As far as we've gotten in definition:

The epic must be a poem
 Must be in some sort of consistent, coherent verse (Cantos almost qualify with their insistent trochaic/spondaic line endings, Maximus not so)
 Must not be told from the point of view: the epic is I-less (though almost the best of 'em starts cano)
 Must narrate a distant event -- in that sense the 'long poem with history' that Pound simplifies matters to.

Yet these characteristics apply to many texts I refuse the label to (Faerie Queene, Gerusalemme Liberata) (Christian wants them to qualify) -- partly because they're clearly 'romance' rather than 'epic' in old Ker's useful sense of it, partly because the stanzaic strikes me as a blemish. Though there are characters with PhD's running around claiming that Homer is really written in couplets. I wouldnt mind vexing them that the Iliad is written in twenty thousand haikus... (since the typical homeric formula, 5dactyls+1spondee/troche yields a 17 syllable line...)

*

My career has been delayed, weakened, by my self-confidence. A less confident artist would have worked harder to secure recognition, worked harder to get constant reinforcement of the value of his work. My certainty too keeps others from bothering to convince me of my value, delays them from struggling to proclaim my work. Interesting. But i find myself so sure of what I have done, of what I am doing, of what I must do. Only today does it occur to me to suspect how that certainty affects the world around me, and my place in it.

*

So if asthma is foiled orgasm, it is in breath that breath can be healed.

Breath practice: following the breath.

How to cure asthma: stop lying to yourself.
 Say what your body needs you to say.
 Say what the heart says, but say it out loud.

That's what the breath is for, I shout it, that's what the breath is for:
 Breathe IN to feed yourself
 Breathe OUT to feed the world (the other)

In between the in breath and the out breath and the out breath and the in breath: the between breaths feed the mind. The true mind, the quiet bright empty place from which we come.

*

A dream I need to tell, to deal with, but how. I am lying in bed on my left side.

*

My favorite dog is a cat.

*

The figure disappeared from painting about the same time as the aria disappeared from opera. Guernica = Wozzeck. Now that the figure has returned so emphatically, will the aria come again? (To spare us the tuneless operas of the last 20 years...)

*

How easily we forget what we know.

The astral person does come in dreams to visit, speak, instruct, wound, caress, restore. Only a few of us can consciously, purposely, send _that person of us_ on its travels. Mostly the persons of us move on their own feet, buffeted and cajoled by karma winds, drawn, sucked into the places that yearn for them. Or (in a mystery) into places that need them.

When you appear in my dream, it _is_ you -- but what happens in dream stays in dream.

We dream each other.

But expect no morning.

*

That discovery (so late I made) of the Apart and the Among as two intact categories of literary practice, composition. Melville ever striving to the apart, Henry James ever towards the among.

The young man yearns to escape from family, from school, from the net: and valorizes the apart. Stephen Dedalus. Ishmael.

Poor Olson did not live long enough to pass from Ishmael to Henry James.

What a meeting that would be!

Melville + James = Cervantes.

*

Two things it said in the night:

When I touch someone else
I stop being anyone at all.

&

What does that _ragazzo_ of a self know of what its body has planned, the programmed years ahead, to which the self has no clue except its own fugitive desires?

*

How strange it is that some people want to, need to, belong to other people. There are deep phratryies of unconscious human organization -- are they _castes_? -- some people need to serve, need to work with their hands, or never do physical work, or master others, or tell other people what to do, or be told. The laws of Manu are the laws of mind. Our kind's mind, anyhow? Are we to fight it (universal democracies, equalities) or do it right? Are these the colors of our selves, the colors of our self-awarenesses that we harm ourselves by ignoring?

*

The density of openwork is harder to understand than the density of close texture. That is why 'modern' poetry is so difficult and so great. It sets higher standards for connection. Gives us more work. Makes us dance harder, more of us in the dance. It aims not at enjoyment but enactment.

*

Always so many blocks behind I am.

*

Let me see all I can, then run for cover. The one thing they leave out of all their analyses is _pleasure_. Examine pleasure.

Studying addiction without studying the particular experience to which the subject is addicted makes no sense. We do what we do for pleasure.

Examine the pleasure itself as near as you can. Cure (if you must) by finding other roads that lead to like pleasures.

If I study _what_ I want, I'll know at length why I'm wanting it.

We are so shy of pleasure, only want to buy or sell it,
never to look it in the face and say:
Thou art my desire, let me see thee naked.

*

In Roman times comedians mocked the upstart and the wicked, from the vantage of morality mocked the unvirtuous Other. Now comedy avails itself of mockery daggering the vulnerable Self. Self stands up and takes it lying down, self-exposed, safe from even worse. I abase myself before my other selves.

Times Square when I was a kid had
a crummy little Laffmovie my father loved
only funny films were shown, his favorite
the Ritz Brothers. Now all I have to do
is look in the mirror and get in for free.

*

[Dream, 27 May 2009]

Beside me as I waited at the back counter for my credit card to come back, slow processing they said, a small woman stood, in brown, long blonde-brown braids tied back -- the hostess of this restaurant. She began to talk to me about Mahler, I asked when she had first heard him, in the 1960s, in Mexico City, when she was two and a half years old. And ever since loved him. I sang, well, from the Ewig, ewig passage from The Song of the Earth, but instead of the distances shimmering blue, instead of die Ferne I sang die Stille. I told her about hearing Fischer-Dieskau sing it once, but she had never heard of Fischer-Dieskau. We moved over away from the desk to a side wall and went on talking, about Mexico, and literature, but I couldn't remember the name of Salvador Carrasco.

Long after I left I remembered I'd never gotten my credit card back. The restaurant was closed. It was in a darkened mall, and I stood about asking for help. The back door of the restaurant was blocks away -- S.39th

St. -- so I went back to my hotel across the wide avenue. It was raining hard, very hard for L.A., and the gutters were flooded. I heard children calling. Once in my hotel, I realized the restaurant I had been in was really here, not in the dreary mall across the avenue. My restaurant was open, and I approached it confident of reclaiming what I had lost. But I still woke brittle with anxiety.

*

If you live in a zoo you must hear the animals roar. There are compensations, but silence is not one of them.

*

For a man suffering from tinnitus, silence is pastness. It is something only remembered.

*

You escape the Minotaur by running deeper into the Labyrinth than the monster itself ever dared to go. The way out is always within. The center is outside the world.

*

Index Expurgatorius: Words I should not use: always everything remember forget listen music hands. Doubtful words: word mind light dark skin. On probation: you I mean real[ly].

When one of these proposed to speak, find out what it really means. What it is trying to keep me from saying.

*

The artist is not expressing himself-- she's expressing the Other One inside, the trim perfect unstainable identity the artist has life and body and voice and skill _for_, and has them only to serve that 'expression.'

The sheer strangeness of making, making anything.

Poems, cathedrals, scratches on a quarry wall: signs we put up for others -- the Others speaking through us to all the others we are, will be.

I build this steeple now so that in some future life I will look at it and remember. At least will see that a stone is somehow made to live in the sky, and I'll wonder. Maybe I'll finally understand.

We are the future -- we make it now, half-blindly, thrusting out as many signs as we know how to make, or don't know, but do make, even when we don't know they are signs.

Signs that they (who are also we in time to come) will come to read.

*

When theater gets as boring, stupid and oppressive as everyday life around you, then it's really doing its job.

*

Dream [24.vij.09]: "You are the only person I know who likes stuffed animals," she said to me affectionately. But I don't remember who she was.

*

"I am afraid of loving you" -- a woman's voice heard in a dream.

*

When it is said "we die from life" we are to understand that what sustains us finally gives way--our relationship with the nurturing material of the world, the foodstuffs and mindstuffs we relied on, has come to an end. No blame. The bowl is empty. Das Lied ist aus. The song is over. If the song didnt come to an end, it would not be a song, just ongoing hum. This is a sort of consolation. But for whom?

*

No more books. What does he mean by that?

*

In dream: a woman speaks about a man she lives with: "He experiences himself as special, and me as ordinary."

*

Port of Spain. Would
there have been an America
without slavery?

Thought experiment:

-Africa without slave traders

-Europeans got to labor in the New World by their own efforts.

Can a Spaniard dig? Can an Englishman reap?

-Native Americans welcome travelers from Europe into their own cultures, leading to slow syncretism of cult and family structures.

Would that have led to a real America? Maybe the real America, the land itself released from its ancient anger. Is it too late for us? Have we hurt too many, too much?

*

Achilles. Fierce adolescent resentment from which most violent crimes still come, and without which war and terrorism would be impossible. Terrorism is a disease of puberty.

*

The second act of an opera is where the politics goes on. Tristan. Palestrina. La Boheme, Walkuere. Turandot.

We have to talk a long time before we come to love or death or both together in the last act.

Triumph in the third. Is politics just a special way of delaying, deferring the orgasm when the barbarians break through the walled gate or Bruennhilde falls asleep in fire?

Opera reveals: politics is the boring part of art, lumbering towards the death of all our passions, all our acts. Our last act.

^

Interesting how the smallest words get lost. Like 'yes' or 'me, too.'

*

Your career will blossom as soon as you stop thinking.

*

I'm not worried about my career, my career is in safe hands. Karma's hands. I'm worried about my soul--
having one or making one out of the dross of my self.

*

Believe nothing. Know everything.

*

A curious thing about Evolution is that it has a capital E, like Stalinism, or Christianity.

But the most curious thing about Evolution is that it doesn't work very well.

Or if it works, it takes too damn long. To get there. (Where?)

We are animals made up of useless and fatal vestiges. We are unfinished cathedrals of structure and sense,
abandoned by the masons, the dead architect.

We are not done. Or were done wrong.

*

I live in the country: that is, I live in mythology.

*

A new religion would need a new geometry. The empty circle. The hollow cube.

*

I go to type love, and I type lob instead. It must mean lobo, wolf.

*

A dog is a wolf gone wrong.

*

Always enough time to fit between the clocks.

*

Healthy eating:

Eat what's put in front of you.
But leave a third of it on the plate when you leave.

*

Fear is a bad friend, but a good teacher.

*

One thing that woke me this morning: the sense (I don't know whether it will withstand the day's reflection, let alone scholarship) that the Abrahamic tradition focuses on, gives us, primarily the rites of initiation and puberty. Its heroes are youths: Isaac, Jacob, Jesus. Its characteristic gesture is circumcision or even more broadly martyrdom and bodily sacrifice.

(Is a circumcised child a suicide bomber in parvo?).

Buddhism on the other hand focuses on, gives us, the ars bene moriendi the Renaissance sought in vain. Buddhists are taught a contemplation, a serenity of focused attention proposed to carry us through the death experience into new life. (One great Lama once said, if we didn't have to die, there'd be no reason for Buddhism.)

So we might look at these great religions as Liminal indeed, guardians of the two thresholds.

Am I explaining why one moves from one to the other?

*

You can't take kisses back.

*

What a strange, terrible thing to say: The light hurts my eyes.

*

Goal: to keep things lucid in the dark.

*

Not cast away but not yet known and not yet home.

*

Surveillance. The Stasi is a perfect image of Control (almost) entirely through Surveillance.

Surveillance infantilizes the one beheld. The beholder claims authority -- the impotent voyeur overpowers the window. Being surveilled, surveyed, limits you, holds you in a frame, makes you vulnerable to the judgment and blame of others. Seen or detected, one is very angry, but one apologizes. It is what the infant does. The vagrant super-ego drifts onto the visage of the other -- the mother, the prying servant, the voyeur.

The artist, though, is obsessed with observing, surveillance, but is mortified to be surveilled.

Maybe the artist is caught in a game of revealing and concealing. Wants to 'over-see' the concealed, wants to watch the watchers watching, and hear how they justify their surveillance.

When the artist loses control (the lens is in the hands of the other), anger, rage, infantile sense of loss, terror. The artist apologizes, the way the victim (we hear this so many times) eventually apologizes to the torturer.

And the artist wants to be seen, to be surveyed but not surveilled, so to speak. Wants to be naked in public but only at the chosen moment. Wants to show himself showing himself, see himself being seen -- but always, only, when the lens is in his own hands.

To be spied on is to lose the opportunity of showing oneself.

*

The one question I've been asking for years now (at least since [my] *Parsifal*, but more explicitly in *Wer Spricht?*) ((Was that ever published in English?)) is: When words arise in mind to be spoken, early morning especially, no one around, *who is speaking?*

Now I think another question needs to be asked, its answer no longer as obvious as it once seemed: *. . . and to whom?*

*

On first looking through Jung's *The Red Book* (my Christmas present!), what strikes me is the calligraphy -- maybe the changes in the handwriting, the formal aspirations of it, are the realest evidences of his learning, 'development.'

It's hard for a hand to tell lies.

*

Each person has sexual feelings they more or less acknowledge--these are the feelings they are more or less supposed to have, given their gender, age, circumstances, education, etc. Only the most repressed will not avow these. But then each person also has sexual feelings of their own, a unique mingling of particulars, fetishes, implanted images, urges, desires--and these are never acknowledged, never admitted to others, sometimes scarcely admitted to the self. And these are the feelings that *actually* empower us.

And the curious thing is that these feelings, or the shape of these energies, are often perceptible somehow to other people, who may get some more or less unconscious sense of them, and accordingly move closer or further away. And in such ways at times the yearned-for hand reaches out to the silent yearning skin.

*

The flâneur walks through the crowded streets at ease because he never sees a single face.

*

The pressure of people's presences. Am I autistic or just neurotic, that I feel a person's presence, physical presence I mean, too strongly. The words they say, if any, hardly matter, except maybe long afterwards, if I try to analyze some interaction. (Action? Action at a distance? The terrible asymptotic stance from which something leaps across a gap?) Are there synapses of us?

The barber's belly pressed against my shoulder when I was a little boy, how I hated that. The sheer anonymity of meat. Or was it hate at all, maybe a deep and uncomfortable wonder, that some other body could be there, impinge on mine.

And mean nothing by it. Not a blow, not a caress.

That's not what I mean by touch. That my own body could learn (long after) to touch too. Strange to be so ignorant, and to remain so. Even now. I suspect that I've never gotten used to life on the physical plane --- and know no other.

*

I think what I'm saying is also this:
that the touch be enough.
And we recur by touch
to an ampler universe
where a single gesture is enough,
a fingertip touches a hipbone and a world is made.

*

Short stuff. Nothing
long to say.
Not a symphony every day.

A word's enough.

*

To read the Bible as if one had never read it before --- what then?

And how would one do that? Find a virgin reader, bethula, and have her or him read it and tell what they made of what was read. And are there such virgin readers still?

*

Poems: footnotes to a moment's heightened perception. "Inspiration."

*

Poets are always in search of more magical grammar. The second-rate make do with grammatical magic.

*

I think the reason I write so much more in January is not just more 'time' but gradual release of
nervousness. Nervousness is stifling. Real nerve sings.

*

[Dream, 15 January 2010]. We are walking from somewhere to our car, parked by a big low bland pale brick medical arts building. Out of the doctor's office ahead of us two people carry a stretcher on which someone perhaps dead or perhaps still living, old, emaciated, tumbled in the sheets on the stretcher, as if lying in a scoop. Very bad smell. The poor old person! Gender not clear.

In the dream I feel terribly guilty for not having visited my parents in a long while -- they are still alive. Waking, I manage to forgive myself: they're twenty years dead this year. But there must be some old ones I am neglecting. Who?

*

Saturday is such a rhetorical problem for me, always has been, not sure why. Even in vacation time that Loki Day (as the Icelanders still say) seems to come with a snarky mind of its own, railing and sniding and none too bright, coaxing me to say wise-ass things about politics and war, things i truly know all too little about. Easy sneers at easy targets. I wonder if it's the Loki Force, and I for once am in tune with the time? Too tired from the week to state, stake, stay my own mind?

Do more meditation on Saturday -- that would help. Let the snark sail away. By late afternoon it's always better anyhow, Sunday's fleet is already in the outer harbor. The opera's over, music and its deaths have chastened the day.

*

The little fox in *_Pierrot le Fou_* is the best example of how movies can (even the plottiest of them) sometimes really help us. A sudden shaft of light from elsewhere that makes us urgently here. The fierce clarity of an actual thing suddenly, unexpectedly, seen.

*

In the moment of these masters (Beethoven, Bruckner, 5 Feb 2010) the issues of music's manipulation of an audience, issues of compulsion and control, these dissipate. One is left alone with the fact of the thing -- something to which it is not necessary in any way to take a stand, the thing that needs no interpretation. No participation.

*

Stories are not about things happening.

Everything has happened already.

Fiction is picking up the pieces

Especially after all our wars.

*

The shortest line always holds the meaning.

*

Meter has value for framing the discordant element, as in music only harmony makes dissonance meaningful, true.

*

But I am neurology.

As to say Identity is neurology.
or The neurological diathesis is the web of karma.
or Where else could karma live?

*

Everything we perceive refers to something else.
This is _poetry_, the bardo state of language.

*

Only once in all the 18 mortal years of being in school did I have a teacher I'd even think about having sex with. She taught some required course everybody hated, Speech I think. No wonder school was so boring. There can't be learning without desire.

Or: what is there to learn if desire does not reveal it?

How terrible to stand before someone and not desire them in the least! How terrible to fail in that tribute to alterity.

*

All poems are political, or none is.

*

Death is the most natural thing there is. Think of that the next time someone tells you to go green.

Green is beauty in trees and grassland. Green is hideous decay in the human body.

*

Coincidence is not an explanation. Calling something a coincidence is making an act of faith in an unwise deity for whom some things are realer than others, some events are significant and others 'just coincidence'

The study of coincidence should be the very basis of science now. The actual empirical, not the sad a-prioristic certitude in advance of any possible fact.

^

Most of the time, what we call principles is nothing more than ego. A man of principles is usually a pompous egotist.

Better than principles is virtue. (Latin virtus, strength) Virtue knows what to do and what avoid, what helps and what harms oneself or others. Knows when to bend and when to be rigid. Virtue flows.

*

a Mirsuvian proverb: Pernashaba glad, ushnikam-ta habanaz. If you dance on the table, they'll look up your skirt. Meaning: any lighthearted spontaneous gesture will be taken advantage of by someone.

*

Take it for granted that there are people who do well what i can't do at all, and conversely, i do things well that others don't or can't or won't. So with every person. The secret of happiness is to prize highly the things that you can do, and to honor those who do the things you can't. To honor them as you would be honored.

*

Is age/aging a process in itself, distinctive and self-orchestrated as puberty? Or is aging just the visual accumulation of karma? The heaping-together of bad results?

*

In our time, the only credible emotion is confusion. Anger is diffused, lust solicited, fear universal hence impersonal, love conditioned. But bewilderment is always true, always sincere.

Imagine a feigned bewilderment--it can be acted out, surely, when (for instance) someone does not want to acknowledge recognizing the stratagems of a seducer. But the actual feeling of bewilderment -- that is always spontaneous, sincere.

*

My lopsided figure eights begin to worry me. Make me doubt infinity or my readiness for it.

I am puzzled by how hard it is to write 8 in one fluent symmetrical stroke. If I want it to look balanced and neat, I need to pose one circle atop another, a childish snowman trick. There is some imbalance in me my hand knows about. and twitches when it means to round off the retrocurve that completes the 8. My double-circled 8s look childish, a child in the kitchen making cookies with crisco and karo syrup.

I demand the liberty of symmetry! I want to get my 8s right, number of Mercury, 888 number of Messias.

*

When I say Spinoza I usually really mean Zukofsky.
When I say leprosy I usually mean me.

*

You need a wall to hang wallpaper on.

*

The frequent line-breaks in late free verse ("projective" verse) are just caesuras given a little silence of their own.

*

A day when no one needs to know me.

*

Of a moment: "I will never be able to forget it either in time or eternity; because the Eternal, which hitherto did not exist, came into existence in this moment." Kierkegaard, Phil.Frag.,2

*

Now that I'm resigned to writing plays, I should look through all my work and find out who was really saying what, when, why.

*

Reading the news gives one the sense of having accomplished something. One is marching forward with the world, taking part. Time for once is on your side.

*

Our longest plays assume the density of a minor scene in Shakespeare, so packed are his line with *reach* -- a character says something relevant to the scene's occasion, but the words go on and out, asking other men and women, us, to be up and at some work we have not yet imagined, but such words guide us towards.

*

Men forget the body in the midst of which they live. They worry about women and houses.

*

Who invented work?

And why?

How did the need to feed oneself turn into the necessity of working for somebody else? This is the central issue of human history, and how it radically differs from 'natural history.' Hierarchy is shared with the animal kingdom, but economic subjection is our own.

*

What is time to a machine?

*

Lilith. Adam's first wife. Every man's last?

*

Mozart's music is all for us. Even Beethoven writes some of what he does for himself alone—some for him and most for us. But Mozart is all ours.

*

Humans are animals who sleep together and wake far apart.

*

Wishes. Don't waste your wishes on sports or politics: don't wish this team wins or that politician gets elected. I'm not preaching quietism: play for the team, campaign for the politician, vote all you can—just don't *wish* for anything like that.

Everyone is born with a certain number of wishes (like the three wishes granted in so many fairy tales).

The system wants you to waste your wishes on sports, contests, politics, identitarian symbolic victories. The system always fears you'll use your wishes to effect real change.

The system depends on keeping the masses compulsively active, productive and consuming, but morally and intellectually inert. Woe to the system if the masses ever use their wishes to enact virtue, compassion, intelligence, peace.

Don't waste your wishes.

*

Could synaesthesia be the default mode? And all our variegated senses defects or neuroses in our perceiving machinery?

*