

"A man has no pre-eminence above a beast, for all is vanity."

Ecclesiastes, or The Preacher, chapter III.

Rejoice in the Dog

JUBILATE CANE

by

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**"If I have any beliefs about immortality,
it is that certain dogs I have known will go to heaven,
and very, very few persons."**

- James Thurber

—

IN MEMORY OF OSCAR
the most admirable being that I ever knew
1996-2004

Whoever kicks a dog kicks himself deeper into Hell.

Our world, for dogs, is like a bewildering film in which they are brave and trapped.

The difference between us and all other animals is that our consciousness is intensive whereas theirs is attentive. Dogs are trapped by our intention - and by our inattention.

In many places on this earth cruelty to dogs is considered meritorious - and in some dog-meat is considered tastier if the animal is beaten to death as it hangs from a noose.

But in Media (later Persia) the Zoroastrian priests would bring a dog to the bedside of a dying person, to be fed a morsel so that it would lead the deceased across the Bridge of Separation to be judged. The dog was the leader of the soul - the psychopomp - to life after death, and the wild or feral dog was (along with the vultures) the devourer of the exposed corpse's flesh in the wonderful Towers of Silence which Parsis still use.

For the Egyptians with a mortuary practice directly opposite to that of the Zarathustran Medes, Anubis the jackal was the god of embalming - that is to say of preparation for and introduction to the Otherworld.

—

THE COURAGE OF MY CONVICTIONS

This other being
so different, distinct,
so intimate - he is
"my dog" !
And in the fog
of awareness he is my longing,
my light,
he is my saving grace,
he is the joy from which
the other joys progress.

Humans don't say how they feel -
does this mean they don't feel
or don't know how to feel
or don't know how to put words to
how they feel ?
Dogs show how they feel
but few humans bother to notice.

Even though they live in the moment,
even in leaping and bounding joy
they display the inconsolable sadness of being.

What I love about dogs (apart from their loveliness
companionability, amazing tolerance)
is their Theory of Mind.
With every human I am more or less guarded,
but with "my dog" I can be
my silly self.
In the world of humanity
I am the Owner of Oscar -
this other,
this humble, enthusiastic, transparent
superior being.
But in the real world
the world of awareness
he is a Master of Life.

Now the Lord of Truth (my vassal !)
the Terror of Lawnmowers,
the puller of yardbrushes, comes
in his smiling humility to tell me
how much he enjoyed the pear-skins
and rather old *humorous*
he had for his dinner.

FUNDAMENTALS

There is an Islamic saying:
"When a dog barks, angels flee"
- which does not say much for angels
or their inventors.
Nor can one pray where a dog has been.

As Oscar (who never barks
nor licks anyone but himself)
lies on a fine Beluchi prayer-rug
I consider how comparatively tolerant I am
even to talk to carnivores and breeders.

OSCAR'S POEM

Gnawing my bone: a poem
of life about death
about time and continuation -
a connection far beyond words
in its fine satisfaction.

There is only an O

between poet and pet.
I am just a spineless
kind of dog.

My dog-choice is to sniff
the arse of every
truth and mystery.

CANID CAMERA

When dogs become olfactory photographers
they will surely capture
carcasses and each other's genitals.

AS IF

In the prison of our power
the deep philosophy of dogs
is to behave as if
we are going to be half-decent to them,
as if we were worth knowing -
indeed, even as if we were worth serving.

Every one of them who spend
most of their lives waiting for us to
do something beautiful
is holier than Jesus
or St. Francis of Assisi.

Oscar crapping
beneath the crucified Christ's cast-iron pain
briefly redeems the Calvary
from millennia of unwholesome banality.

In every human prance prowl the shadows of our shame.

In his 'Book of the Hunt' (begun in 1387), the Gascon Gaston Febus de Foix-Béarn had great praise for dogs:

The dog is loyal to his master with the best and truest of love. The dog hath great understanding, knowledge and judgement. The dog hath great fortitude and goodness. The dog hath a fine memory. The dog hath a great sense of smell. The dog hath great diligence and power. The dog is valiant with great valour and is greatly subtile. The dog hath much nimbleness and power of perception. The dog receiveth orders well, for he learns as quickly as doth a man. Much frolicking is in a dog. Dogs are such fine creatures that rare is the man who desireth not one for this purpose or for that...

DOG MUSIC

Pure joy:
the sound of a tail wagging
aerating briefly
the inconsolable sadness of being.

A POEM ABOUT NOTHING

Before connection-
illusion

After connection-
burial

Oscar and I
asleep
together,
once
dreamers
of
bones.

Oscar:
at last - someone
I can respect.

Practising omniscience
dogs talk mainly with their eyes

Language makes us blind.

Dogs are not creatures
of habit - but thus
correctly they interpret us.

Oscar and I:
two halves of the same consciousness!
he wanting to be in the woods
I wanting to be close to the woods
and the cliffs and the river Aveyron.

People are no more autonomous than dogs
but dogs are much more wholesome.

OSCAR'S SONG

I'm me.
Let's go.

**"In the beginning, God and his Dog
created the world." - *Kato Indian Creation Story***

The soul of a dog will fill a field
while human spirits bloat in ditches.

Though Edward Elgar included a portrait of a friend's dog in his Variations on an Original Theme (Enigma), and Fauré described his dog Ketty in his Dolly Suite, the only composer I know to have written music for dogs was Erik Satie, who wrote Deux Préludes pour un Chien; Préludes Flasques (pour un chien) comprising Idylle Cynique, Chanson Canine, Sous la Futaille; and Véritables Préludes Flasques comprising Sévère Réprimande, Seul à la Maison, On Joue.

Two poets who sympathetically observed dogs more than most were the Czechs Rainer Maria Rilke and Miroslav Holub. And another Czech, Milan Kundera, is a cynophile.

If you need Religion
rescue a dog and worship him (or her) -
there is nothing more worth worshipping than living fur.

But god said: *To be worshipped
is to be put upon.*

BONE TO BONE

homage to Vasko Popa

Apart from everyone
I listen to the crows
And admire the blood-red
Japanese Quince flowers in April

The long-tailed dancer
With Cyrillic teeth
Is laughing
While I practise Howling

Which is poetry

'IT TAKES ONE TO KNOW ONE'

My dog is a Bodhisattva
and, like all true Bodhisattvas,
recognised only by his
near-peers.

DOG HAIKAI

**"And the subtle animals sense surely
that we aren't at all at home
in our description of the world."
- Rainer-Maria Rilke.**

The dog chained up
amongst his shit: his freeing
less a kidnap than an elopement.

Birds nesting.
Oscar and I are together
all the hours of the day.

Morning erections:
Were my dog and I dreaming
of each other ?

Now my foreskin-cheese
sought out by Oscar
no longer goes to waste.

Windy day;
a croissant-tail droops
as I read haiku to my dog.

Quiet rain. Dogs express
so much silently – why must
we make so much noise ?

The Year of the Dog
has come and gone unnoticed
by his divinity.

Our lives intertwined
Oscar and I check up on
each other's fæces.

Inseeing: a dog
becomes a window through which
I view my blindness.

Community of luxury:
I drink the wine
while Oscar chews the cork.

Sun behind mist.
Oscar howls piteously:
his ball is stuck in a bush.

Woods in May:
The glory of a dog,
The shadow that is man.

Ruined castles:
our only creation as beautiful as dogs.

Hiroshima Day:
remember that dogs also
were roasted alive.

My dog rolling:
None of the menace of men
enjoying themselves.

Oscar: the liberty to tell him
of my love twenty times a day.

Remaining perfect,
my dog failed to see
two butterflies on his bone.

(A perfect being
of which there are millions
and were millions of millions.)

Canine and capitalism:
the best in my life costs the least.

Failing to find the divine
in any human or pseudo-
superhuman, I found it in my dog.

Oscar and I gaze
at each other - each recognising
a god.

Jewish Spring *Shekinah*:
I celebrate the moulting God.

The only God
is Dog and there
are wonderfully many.

Rain on the window -
and Oscar's claws are scratching
on the thick front door.

Reassuring dog music:
Oscar is in touch with
his mobile bone.

Unless they see it
no-one believes that he picks
blackberries alone.

For a saint or dog
what is not mystery
is revelation.

Oscar and I
asleep together
each dreaming of bones.

Better than sex:
Sniffing Oscar's
never-washed fur.

Wet nose on my pillow:
holy matrimony
suits me and my dog.

Rolling in another dog's shit -
Oscar is doubly divine.

Summer afternoon:
Oscar bites the lawnmower -
such purpose in life!

In the world we've turned to pain
his beauty is almost
unbearable.

Why do so many humans crave Magical Beings
when magical beings are all around us
as we exterminate them ?
If you will not worship animals
you will never experience the Divine.

THIS IS NOT A HAIKU

Crunching a plastic
bottle, Oscar almost remembers
the bones of newborn mammoths.

OSCAR IN HEAVEN

into
the car
a romp
and snuffle
in the
woods
tearing
para
plegic
baby
squir
rels
limb
from
limb
then
back to
the car
and
dinner
of avocado
and pearskins
in his bowl
and then
his belly
rubbed
and then
to bed
on top
of me

from 'The Observations of Oscar'

Cats also return to their vomit
and cats eat cats.

*(reprinted by kind permission of
Osservatore Canino.*

THE NEAREST TO JOY

The nearest to joy
I have known
since I was a boy
on my own
in an attic of junk
was seeing the joy
in my teacher, my dog
as he gnawed at a bone
or romped in a field
or played tug-of-war with a brush.
