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Transcript Incident

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The Transcript Incident

by Roy Behrens

Carl has left for the shop, and I am to entertain. I make quick sketches of Old Masters' drawings on the front of index cards; I use the blue lines as guides instead of drawing squares. I have marked my file box OM in green letters with serifs and a line which looks spontaneous. Tomorrow I'll check the mail.

I have a B.A. in physics, but the dog has pissed on my transcripts. It is Carl's dog, and when he goes to the shop, it follows. The dog piss is disconcerting, but the incident did not make me angry. I am always trying to temper my emotions with reason, and I took it as an opportunity: I reasoned that the animal had been trained to go on paper, that the transcripts did indeed consist of paper, and that Carl had not taught the dog to distinguish one kind of paper from another. Further, the stain is only on one page of the transcripts and when they are photocopied, it does not show very much. Even if it did, it is not a bad design, though a design by nature as I realize. Since then, I have in fact viewed the stain with some interest, and in a manner not so different from the way that Leonardo viewed the stains on damp walls (so I am told), or as one might look at an inkblot. I sometimes smile now and refer to the dog as "Rohrschach." Carl calls it "Bob", and when he goes to the shop, it follows. Carl has already left for the shop this morning, and so has the dog, leaving me to entertain.

The dog's bed is stored in the kitchen, about three feet from the sink and just a bit left of the stove. It is probably not the best place, because if we eat anything at night,

the dog is bothered. It is especially bothered by the refrigerator light and the garbage disposal, and we have thought of moving it. It would probably be better to place it somewhere else where the dog would not be bothered at night. I have thought about this quite a bit, and on many occasions it has kept me from eating at night.

Also, I have tried to make the dog a bit happier in other ways, and it was with this in mind that I hung the drawing of Albrecht Durer's rabbit above the dog. It was my thought that dogs liked rabbits, and that perhaps the dog would like the drawing. Carl does not think so, and he has said so many times and in very subtle ways. I clearly remember one such instance which was not so subtle when Carl and I were discussing the characteristics of dogs in general. I remarked that Bob (I call the dog "Bob" when I am talking to Carl) had a tendency to circle in his bed before retiring in the evening. Carl quickly questioned whether this was a characteristic of all dogs, and then went on to say that this may be the result of some nervousness which the drawing of the rabbit had caused in Bob. I knew then that this was a point of some disagreement between Carl and I, and I reasoned that either he did not like the drawing of the rabbit, or perhaps there was some jealousy on his part about the dog. Nevertheless, I have left the drawing there for two reasons—first, I have often observed the dog looking at the drawing of the rabbit, and its reaction (I think) appears to be one of contentment and pleasure

rather than any nervousness; and second, to keep the drawing in the kitchen is a convenience and pleasure for me since I can study it at odd times of the day when Carl and the dog are at the shop. Unlike the dog, I am far more interested in the signature than the rabbit, and when I am doing some easy cooking or sorting out the mail, I often find myself freshly surprised by the personality and the exquisiteness of that AD (Albrecht Durer) notation.

Of course, the dog's enjoyment of the drawing is not aesthetic, and I have repeatedly admitted this to Carl. In fact, contrary to what Carl may say, I have always readily admitted that there are other grounds for the enjoyment of drawings other than the aesthetic, and this applies I think to all the Old Masters, not only to Durer's rabbit.

Diane agrees with this, and I am certain she understands. For example, she and I have always enjoyed Durer's drawing not only because of the rabbit but also because of the signature (the AD), and this not always on aesthetic grounds. This is because Diane and I have several times come to very explicit understandings about Nietzsche's aesthetics, and our first discussion was especially compelling. In fact, I remember the high point of that discussion when I pretended a slip of the tongue and called her "Dionysian." Coming at the time that it did, this was highly amusing to the both of us, and now, on Wednesdays and weekends (and I have explained this to Carl many times), if she is in the kitchen with me to sort the mail or watch the cooking, we will often look over at this drawing by Durer of the rabbit above the dog, and we will obviously enjoy those initials AD for reasons which to me are not necessarily aesthetic. (I have made a note of this on the index card on which I have made a quick sketch of Durer's rabbit, and I think this will be significant as my file develops.) It is only fair to mention that this all began on the same day as the transcript incident with the dog, so there was some tension between myself and the dog. As a result, I suspect that Carl has always been a bit resentful of Diane's and my enjoyment of the rabbit drawing, and, in fact, this morning as he was leaving for the shop, he inquired as to whether Diane would be coming to the kitchen today. The dog followed him out the door.

As I have tried to make clear, I was not angered by the transcript incident, and in preference for the dog, I have revised my eating habits in order to adjust to his bed in the kitchen. I do not mind the extra cooking since it allows me some time to look at the drawing of the rabbit, and besides, I have to sort the mail in the kitchen anyway. It does not bother me in the least to do these three things simultaneously. In fact, I see it as a challenge, and if Diane should come to the kitchen as she often does on Wednesdays and Saturdays, then I also talk to her—while at the same time doing all these other things as well.

I have not only met Diane in the kitchen, but as a general rule, I have. Several times I have seen her on the second floor, and once in the basement, but these are exceptions. The fact that we have met primarily in the kitchen is no doubt a limitation of sorts, since my knowledge of her has necessarily remained somewhat constant. In regard to this, we have often discussed the possibility of future meetings in different places, or even on different days. To an extent, I think this would be

enjoyable and enriching since a person can often be surprisingly transformed in different environments, or even on different days. For example, when I saw Diane in the basement, she looked very different than she does in the kitchen. In the basement, she appeared much taller I think because the ceiling is quite a bit lower there, and her skin was musty. In the kitchen, her appearance is quite different than in the basement, and I have often remarked that she has a kitchen look about her when she is in the kitchen. I will be more certain of this when I have met her in a variety of places.

The dog has never seen Diane, even though Carl has, because they are usually at the shop during the day, and, even if they were here, I don't think they would come into the kitchen. It is true that once in a while the dog will come into the kitchen during the day to look at the drawing of the rabbit, but this has never happened when Diane was here. This is probably a matter of chance, I think, just as their meeting would be a matter of chance. For example, if she were to come to the kitchen today, it would be highly improbable that they would meet, since both Carl and the dog left early this morning for the shop. I am to entertain.

Diane is very different from the dog, and I don't say that facetiously. Even though they both like the drawing of the rabbit, there are some important differences. For example, in contrast to the dog, Diane enjoys the light in the refrigerator, and even the persistent hum. She prefers to eat at night, which is my own preference. She even likes the sound of the garbage disposal and especially its sweet odors as it grinds up the grapefruit and toast. We have discussed these preferences not only on a level of likes and dislikes, but also as obvious indications of the difference between her and the dog. I have maintained that she is increasingly sensuous in her approach to life, that her experiences are instructive for her, and that her environment is constantly flexed and enlarged. I have contrasted this with the dog, which I see objectively as being somewhat sensuously atrophied. Carl says this is because of old age, but nevertheless, it reverts to my original contention that the dog's enjoyment of the rabbit drawing cannot be aesthetic. I often use it as an example when I argue with Carl.

Carl and the dog are alike, and Carl is different from Diane. Carl does not come into the kitchen because of the sounds and the light. He does not like the things I cook, nor the letters I get in the mail. Diane contends that all these things are enriching, and she is quick to say so. In this manner, she was especially comforting during the transcript incident, and it was through her assistance that I tempered my anger with reason.

I am grateful to her for this willingness to assist, and I show my gratitude as I can. I will say kind words to her, or remark on her appearance in the kitchen. I may even give her a sketch of the Old Masters from my file, providing I have an extra. She is appreciative of these things, and I am happy to do them, and very often we will look at Durer's drawing of the rabbit, and we study the signature and laugh.

Carl and the dog do not laugh. They are mindful of the drawing of the rabbit, but not of the signature as such. And they do not come into the kitchen, even if Diane is there. They go to the shop every morning, and I am left to entertain.