

One Way of Thinking

The nerved nuances of a line swirled about by a pencil, a pen, a stick of charcoal. Darting up, now over, around, across, collecting here in a curl and there flaying out as if to reach. The instrument rises from the paper at the apparent behest of the hand or somewhere further up the arm, or through the shoulder and neck, there, or in the region known as the brain. Plunges down again, thicker this time, almost jammed against the resisting and allowing surface, vertically, but with curvature, downward. Only to circle round again, concentrically, but also trespassingly, cutting through lines already marked there, he thinks, trying to track the tracings in a hurried or impassioned copying, flurrying of a sketch of a face by Alberto Giacometti.

He thinks: this is one way in which he thinks.

The attempt to circumscribe and scrape the surface, to travel over, under, through, around; a context, a substance, a concept, an occurrence. To push the mind on an adventurous quest, a torrid and desperate quest, for treasures unknown; for comfort, support or supply that somehow seems required, a frenzied address and passivity, to want, to know. To get at something, like a clutching, a grasping, climbing or plunging, burrowing – a tunneling and a setting of the nets, he thinks.

This furtive dashing from subject to subject, fact to fact, possibility to possibility, a longing to create a shape, to resemble and reassemble, not a form, not a detail, but some unseen thing, some hunch or hunger, some aptitude almost, he thinks, not to resemble so much as to resonate, to feel participant – a welcoming, a discovery and a kind of theft, a claim.

He wants to know, he thinks. Giacometti craves whatever all of it is that comes to expression in the mask of the visage...wants his hand to find it, his arm, his mind, his gaze. Wants to achieve it, while he is so certain he cannot, he thinks, because it is not captured there, in the face, the gaze, but only animate upon, in motion through, “passing across” we say, so the lines too have to keep moving, crosshatching, spiraling, assaying like a monitor, trembling, piercing, ratcheting back, a furious fervency registering then scampering, skipping like a waterbug, dancing, rippling, erasing as it flits, leaving traces, he thinks.

This is one way in which he thinks – that doomed and ferocious surveying, cross-purposed tomfoolery of infinite regress, chasing, hunting, devouring pursuit of such a faster, farther and intimate foe – of knowledge, of dream, of certainty, surety. Of no end. The reprieve comes from exhaustion, a breathless unraveling, of being played out, of snipe-searching and jabberwockies, ferdurdurke and Holy Grail, he thinks, to know, he thinks

He tires.

He feels the softness of the larger tool, the thick grainy stamp of charcoal in Kathe Kollwitz’s fingers and palm. Slower, gentler, diffuse, he thinks, and the descriptive label denotes the self-portrait as “an observant, emotional, meditative depiction with a quality akin to sculpture.” In its stillness? Silence? He ponders, at times his thinking is this way, ruminative and owl-like, following the contours of ideas, shapes or persons with a gentling apprehension, as if soaking or calming an instinct, as if obligating time, to take in, absorb,

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he thinks, solemnly and resolutely about the laughing cheeks of his son or subtle curvature of his wife's waist and blooming hips, there is nothing quick or haphazard in this introspection, he thinks, bending the strokes of his mind to follow the lilt of her voice or the sleep in his daughter's breath. Near-somnolent the care and dedication matching synapse to tempo, surface to language, he thinks,

an activity that requires, nay cannot occur without, *demands* conditions like daydreaming or wistfulness, the focused meander of a hollow or phrase, an aroma registering intake, what bouquet implies. He sits now and thinks "reverie," thinks Debussy, Satie. Thinks Eakins, Homer and Wyeth, thinks precision and creation where the sheer urge to incorporate, meld, furthers the investment past copy to craft, past reception to conception, he thinks haiku.

As he thinks this way about Kollwitz' haunted gaze, Dine's gates unused and aging, deteriorating there, tools rusting to the barnyard walls, bones lying in the weeds. Skiff in still water, dusty vases, repose and rectitude, what empathy costs, he thinks, some sorrow, some grief and much life. It's a sort of sleep-trance, this lostness, this concentration, a sacred scanning that can't go far but must be full, even now, thinking the letters into being tardies the procession – the symmetrical rise of the t to feel its t naturally follow, where "natural" now means "purposive possible" and gets completed with a careful "–" (t). / \ n = h, / c = e and so on for on the simplest articles (the), he thinks

as if all conjoins in pace and ratio – his body, his imagination, the world he beholds, yes, he thinks, it is a kind of holding as spent lovers might, a caress that presses enough to massage, things get imbibed rather than gulped down this way, he thinks,

as if in fluid line, where the ink cannot be broken, John Covert's "Leda and Swan" as one, one singular stroke, precision and soul, a setting that's mood and its nurturing, prolix, distention, a swelling and dwelling, he thinks

this is one way in which he thinks

as his attention fragments to a billion splattered drops of spillage where pressures, people, phrases over thousands of years and hands, minds and gestures needle his brain tissues and nerve endings surgings of pulse and tight quickening of breath as if he didn't avoid the heavy beam of the stairwell and swoons from the smack of it, he thinks, anxiety, inability to find threadendings knotted to pull or dismember, get some grasp of a fact, the facts, her voice his voice all voices at once and none of them blackout fireworks style chaos drunkenness vertigo

what is called thinking overload accumulation way past surplus felt as incapacity size-limitation functioning load brain flood freeze thaw storm saturate seeping like a twisted sponge on all sides, he thinks, can it still be called that he exasperates asphyxiates comes undone as the wires crackle and fray and the mines are tripped internal combustion combustible flammable conflagration spin wheeze dizzy compressing all this constricting open far past his ears and knees and soles and the temples crash down not crumble blades shaped to his sockets slice their way pounded from within and without with too

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much bewildering obfuscations of the sheerest realities and obligations and fogs of imagined consequences and everything had must have been, he thinks

this way

before the dark.

Which can only be described in one way. The blacking, the descend, nothing erased but made to be only one tone, one hue, broad thick heavy strokes, a vice that fractures the screen squeezing into and out of, a tectonic bleak; no, no, no; much darker than black, he thinks, not even an angled horizon or bloodied marks pulled by gravity, no, no, he thinks, if you can call it that, a downward spiraling already begun at the bottom, sometimes,

he thinks this way

as if the spectacles applied were full of nails and rammed on his head with an iron diver's helmet so no breath no sight no sound or only deep-sea cloud thunderstorm rumblings awash but ever so inky, he thinks, scarily, not approachingly but already drowned, ever in past tense like doom or disaster, no omens, no signs, always already has, and the too late of it all, he thinks,

this way,

thinks that the blood has drained but the broken cadaver lives on, if it can be said that this is living, the haunted and ghost pustuling maelstrom of absence that one lack of all color becomes or has been, somehow never is, but always, always, the absoluteness of it, the dualities of it all with no choices between, the either/or without the either, ramshackle and writhing unable to move, the no and the no and the no of it, he thinks this one way sometimes the only one way thought arrives takes hold but the crows'-talons-way mythmaking way he thinks fear would be if he could ever perceive it descending

Malevich, Kline, and the scars and smears that lay waste to Bacon and Baselitz or Auerbach's portraits painted with stone the blocking out and erasure emptying emptying "no always knows" he thinks, always knows no, no, no, what that means but no fair warning or dilemma, he thinks,

like when quicksand has already sucked too much of you, always that place of the last gasping excruciating breath blanketed under midway through the seizure and all is already all lost or nothing, all or nothing is already nothing, no, no, he thinks, the lost might be nothing already because it is not possible already, no, not, always, nothing, he thinks and so on, one description only, sometimes, he thinks this is another way he thinks that thinks him and doesn't offer, offers no, no, no, he thinks,

he does, sometimes,

think in this way,

too.