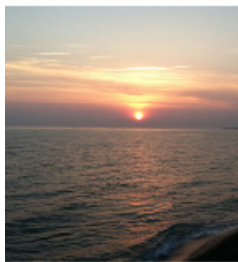


Ronaldo V. Wilson



*Off the Dome:
Rants, Raps & Meditations*



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RONALDO V. WILSON'S OFF THE DOME: Liner Notes

by Frances Richard

On Fourth Street Vista:

There's a constant clamoring in the system of whiteness around me

—is that what he said? Re-listen.

...an insistence of whiteness. An instance, a distance

in the system. We are in a café or bar. Mephistophelian, Baudelairean, RVW cultivates a narcotic, dreamy, levelly modulating voice—lulling, menacing, questioning, insinuating, inventing. Flâneur who feels his liver, records his spleen, whose thoughts are pulses half endocrinological and half iPhone, adrenalized and hot at the point where sound is sculpted by throat muscles, where it passes out of the body and stops being breath. Cooled and regulated in the flicker through the handheld device. Implied heat of the hand that held the device, almost-impalpable moisture condensed on the mic, and we can hear that frisson of the improvising body. Fantasize that we can hear it.

There is ambient chit-chat; we get mild blues and glass-clink in the background here on Fourth Street. Negatively Fourth Street. “White noise” suggests itself, but isn’t the precise term for this ambience—which does not buzz; has dimension; is inhabited. Permeable. This background sound does not seek to mask or scramble. It is not hostile to the performing voice in front of it, who surfs and infiltrates but does not interrupt it.

“Device” is an elaborately neutral term. Like “tool” or “apparatus,” it euphemistically blurs the issue of precisely what the clever little elegant machine does, and if I stay with this take on the voice as an auto-Mephisto, then the vice in personal device is apropos. As all soliloquies are onanistic. Actually, I think that isn’t right. I’m suspicious

of diagnostic-declarative sentences beginning “all...” The audience is implicated in a soliloquy, actively so, and since audience is a composite of multiple persons and performer is a composite of disparate selves, soliloquies are shared acts. What is true is that “soliloquy” and “onanistic” are mellifluous Latinate words that feel good in the mouth, in the mind’s ear—

It’s not really whispered. Does he hold the mic up to his mouth, across his cheek on its wire? Do people at nearby tables look surreptitiously, wondering is that an executive recording memos? A madman ranting? No, too good looking, and wearing a nice shirt. Is he a rap artist?

Yes. Mad executive.

*...makes its way, makes its way...
so permanent*

what must it be like to feel

No one, I imagine, thinks, Ah, poet. But isn’t this, partly, the service of this art: to place poiesis in the center of big, fat, apparently non-poetry culture?

I notice that I’m wanting to transcribe, to capture, to obediently write down what he says instead of writing something other than I think. What do I think? This voice is pushing back against the narcissistic, violent, sexy vectors that crisscross 21st-century public space, the leisure-fraught space. *Amongst the giggles and whispers of freedom*

The point being to ask, “What do I think?” “What is my freedom?” “How am I seen?” Here is thinking, audible, in transmission, in real time, streaming sweatlike off the active body. Though, of course, the “real” in real time is instantly over, dead, electronic, filed, banked. Therefore manipulable. Therefore replayable. [Bioinformaticists are storing libraries](#) on helices of artificially synthesized DNA. Perhaps RVW could be artist-in-residence in their lab.

sometimes I feel like a UFO

Sometimes the motherless child is an unidentified flying objecthood, mirroring selfhood to its self via the device, via the other. Become an uninhibited feeling other

I can sit there

On Commercial Street

You postulate some kind of/freedom you call me a demon/I'm an/angel, angelic

Outdoors, on the street, in the famous glaring-honey Atlantic light of Provincetown, enjoying the “hell” in helical, the “rough” in “house.” I’d been thinking more of monsters than demons, though both are desirably in-between

—Enkidu, meet Caliban—

& in my listening, for some reason, this commercial ditty adds itself: You can roll a Rolo to your pal.

Glissade of breathlessness because he’s running—
the percussive is in you.

The coast. The water is visible from where RVW is now. The rolling continuity of ocean, and letting the body, in public, self-consciously, deliberately, with technology, be a little bit like that.

Now I can’t stop thinking about the shit-like pellet of two-tone coated candy in its segmented red-and-gold roll. (Is that what the product looks like? I don’t wish to check.) I often think of sugar as psyche-soma fuel, metaphor and metonym for fabricated, addictive, yet fundamental urge. Candy = waste = capital = this magic thing he does, which is that the sick game of domination by commodity value, reduction to chattel

and/or exaltation to status, the relentless will to brand is consumed in a more relentless and more capacious permeability, the shaky mastery of being self and not-self in a dangerous, cerebral, pedagogical, athlete-and-lover's elastic, oneiric language.

Have you, reader, promenaded in a seasonal, queer-friendly, upscale-yet-hardscrabble ex-fishing town? In case you can't picture it: RVW is running past fancy soaps, designer and/or trashy t-shirts, pizza, coffee, saltwater taffy, leather, jewelry, ice cream, fudge, teak furniture, rainbow banners, condom giveaways, used books. The roll to the pal is exchange. All art is exchange (this "all," I guess, is incontrovertible). Commercial Street is full of chic little shops and tourist traps. To walk the strip is scopophilic and what the poet is doing—right?—is voicing the revenge of the eyed, the packaged, polished, sold, picked-up and put-down, passed-over, grasping, seductive, addictive, and grasped. Voicing the power that animates money and sex but outruns both, as if it shot through form and escaped in a cascade of jouissance and ions.

Where does power go then? What kind of space is beyond being fetishized? The rhyme? Rhythmic entwining like limbs of maybe multiple bodies; sonic copula of/with/in syllables is oceanic, libidinal, hypnotic. Language is a fetish for itself.

On Melodic Song, 34th Street

I am imagining (because of flagship Macy's), a nice old-fashioned, dark-wood-framed department-store vitrine filled with overlapping silk neckties in tropical-plumage colors, repp ties, gaudy but luxe and manfully perfumed.

This torch-song is light and surprising.

On Steamers Quiet

Could you imagine what he looks like naked?

Anaphora of “could you imagine...” and though we are again in a public place—a restaurant in Los Gatos, California—the milieu suggests Tina Barney’s drawing-room portraits of the rich, Larry Sultan’s or Nan Goldin’s photographs of their elderly parents in perfect polyester-gilded bedrooms.

It’s the auditors, we, who are exhorted to imagine. Baudelaire calls the imagination, “The Queen of the Faculties.” And this queen, Q.E.D., must cruise.

On Dad's Garage

Acoustics or room-tones differ in each segment. This is a moving-car-tone. *What do you use rhyme for? You wanna battle with me? I'm a UFO, outta sight.* Statistics on DWB profiling may come to mind.

Professoriat, commentariat, precarity, the tracks. Queen of the faculties on the way to class, late, grumpily horny, in traffic.

I'm tugging at the imagination, I have no expectation

Teacher, I ask: What is dirt? What is aggression? What is flow? How come, in this art, I think so frequently of tenderness when there is so much fuck-you-you-small-minded-parasite and voluptuous showing-off and violation?

When I and thou are composite. When dirt assumes balletic form and evades its category, *like a zit in the helix, the helix in the zit*

Muriel Rukeyser says re: Käthe Kollwitz:

I name Rukeyser's blurbers because RVW thinks carefully about who hands power on to whom, and how.

In an essay RVW wrote about my work, he synaesthetically compares something I'd written—a sound I wrote—to William Pope L.'s *Yard (To Harrow)*, 1961/2009, a restaging-with-a-vengeance of Allan Kaprow's *Yard* (1961). Body bags and necklacing in the townships, petroleum and landfill, and my toying with notation for a car-alarm. I love this reference.

I taught William Pope L.'s *The Great White Way* (2001-ongoing) to an art-history class of men in prison. At the end of a long discussion, a big, quiet, baby-faced guy (I want to cite his name as I would Rukeyser's) (but this is the internet and I signed a confidentiality agreement with the state) mused on what it means to crawl in the gutter when you are Superman, when you have a skateboard on your back. It means, he explained, to have in your possession the means of freedom, and refuse to use it.

What Rexroth says about Rukeyser is what Whitman says about himself in "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry": "I consider'd long and seriously of you before you were born." Rukeyser and Whitman foresaw RVW. Would Rukeyser—certainly Whitman!—have recorded extempore on an iPhone if possible?

Once, many years ago, I went to a marathon reading of *Leaves of Grass* at Saint John the Divine in New York. At the end, well into the night in the candlelit, unfinished cathedral, the organizers played a scratchy recording thought to be—perhaps—the only surviving sample of Whitman's voice. The words were unintelligible, the sense of meta-ghostliness momentous. Suddenly from the neo-gothic rafters shading away into gloom, a bat swooped down over our heads.

Crossing. Transmitting. Traveling. Recycling. Unleashing. One of my measures for "good" art is how widely, how precipitously, it spins me out into association, then draws me back with a sharp wrist-flick to its own

core.

On Port Jefferson Park Run

...about what I would do if I confronted you. I'm not even sure if you're an apparition. I'm not even sure this is about my own volition.

I submit: these are formulae for emotionally and historically mature expression.

Plastic, credit, flat, serrated, steel, cement, the real, the certain, talk, success, in your office, in your paper, in your government, how to live in history, with others, through the bouncing ball, the muscle fiber, wicking fabric, passage to the other side, the liniment, breath, bandage-bound knee, ambition, the revulsion, Ph.D., the fellowship, the job, the chairship, the know-nothings, the hermeneutic. Hygiene of the mind. The hermeneutic, baby. Let it bleed.

So when you talk about psychic memory... Race isn't a proclivity...This is about inundation

This is my favorite. So perhaps I don't write about it well.

On Battle at the Shore

You wanna battle with me? Again. Who "you" is.

Pull the string, make the call, install the transparent and polysemous in the seat of power.

The oceanic emerges as a theme. Trickster toastmaster and his soi-disant big cock, like Eshu-Elegbara, master of interpretation, indeterminacy, jokes, and dialectics, afloat in the feminine element.

Reader, this is way, way too condensed. See Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism*, (1988), blurb'd by W.J.T. Mitchell and Jacques Derrida. See also Derrida's essay "Plato's Pharmacy," which demonstrates that the drug of interpretation, the *pharmakon*, is synthesized via writing's relation to speech (writing is prior to speech. We have to read Plato to get to Socrates. RVW records as a way of writing). Gates makes it clear that Eshu-Elegbara will fuck you up and save you simultaneously. He "doubles doubleness," and that's what signifying is.

...Plus, think how regulated, how expansive, lung-capacity has to be to make up poetry out loud, while running, especially on sand.

On Frog Song

Frogs twanging their rubber-bands. Once on a country road in upstate New York, the frogs in the bog were exulting like this in their numbers and, in the air, a zillion fireflies were equally ecstatically communicative. This track re-submerges me in that synaesthetic, bewitching, and profoundly normal night. Note that RVW, poet of proper names and realpolitik in sexual, academic, and other pushy-kitschy marketplaces, can totally marshal the non-technological sublime.

To find yourself...

Disrupt the channel. You're an animal.

The Dome. Is the skull? The sky. The ionosphere. The Superdome. The membrane that holds together or entraps. Hence Off the Dome...? Out of our heads.

On Tucson Yoga Poem

Birdsong poolside. Psoas stretch so as to stretch into the Marianas Trench, the ocean's deepest zone. *It needs to be beautiful.*

The Conversant
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