

A Collage of Haiku, Kerouac's Spontaneous Writ, *Zengakuren* Couplets,  
Tibetan Mind-Training Slogans, and Blake's *Auguries*  
—with brief explanations

Excerpts from a Lecture  
11/8/78 Naropa Institute's Jack Kerouac School  
of Disembodied Poetics.  
A class on Meditation and Poetics.

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A wild sea!  
And stretching across to the Island of Sado  
The Galaxy.

Basho  
(*Haiku*, Volume I, Eastern Culture:  
Tuttle Co., R. H. Blyth; p. 377)

Coming out of the box  
This pair of dolls,—  
How could I forget their faces?

Buson  
(Blyth's *Haiku*; p. 378)

A bowel-freezing night;  
The sound of the oar striking the wave,—  
Tears.

Kikaku  
(Blyth's *Haiku*; p. 374)

On a withered branch  
A crow is perched;  
An autumn evening.

Kikaku  
(Blyth's *Haiku*; p. 374)

In the beginning of Kerouac's *Desolation Angels* there's a whole series of haikus. They're done in classical style, yet it was self-invented. He knew the tradition but he adapted it to the novel; the tradition being a travel journal, prose, economical paragraphs, giving a setting and suddenly the flash thought:

the wind, the wind, and there's my poor endeavoring human desk at which I sit so often during the day facing South, the papers and pencils and the coffee cups with sprigs of alpine fir and a weird orchid of the heights wiltable in one day—My Beechnut gum, my tobacco pouch, dusts, pitiful magazines have read, view south to all those snowy majesties—The waiting is long.

He ends the paragraph in three lines:

On starvation ridge . . .  
little sticks  
Are trying to grow

(Part One: Desolation in Solitude #4)

then came the long daydream of what I do when I get out of there, that mountain top trap. Just to drift down the road, on 99, fast, mebbe a filet mignon on hot coals in a riverbottom some night, with good wine, and on in the morning—to Sacramento, Berkeley, go up to Ben Fagan's cottage and say first off this Haiku:

Hitch hiked a thousand  
miles and brought  
You wine

(Part One: Desolation in Solitude #13)

hiss, hiss says the wind bringing dust and lightning nearer—Tick, says the lightning rod receiving a strand of electricity from the strike on Skagit Peak. Great power silently and unobtrusively slithers through my protective rods and cable: and vanishes into the earth of desolation—No thunderbolts, only death-Hiss, tick, and in my bed I feel the earth move—Fifteen miles to the south just east of Ruby mountain and somewhere near Panther Creek I'd guess a large fire rages, huge orange spot at 10 o'clock electricity which is attracted to heat—hits it again and it flares up disastrously, a distant disaster that makes me say "Oo wow"—Who burns eyes crying here?

Thunder in the mountains  
the iron  
Of my mother's love

(Part One: Desolation in Solitude #28)

Where'd he get his mother's love? It just came up out of his head, unborn.

The days go—  
they can't stay—  
I don't realize

(ibid.)

The fog in Japan is the same fog in Northwest Washington, the sensing being is the same and Buddha is just as old and true anywhere you go. The sun sets dully on Bombay and Hong Kong like it sets dully on Chumsford, Mass. I called Hanshen into the fog and there was no answer. The sound of silence is all the instruction you'll get. Whatever happens to me down that trail (gulp) the world is all right because I'm God and I'm doing it all myself. Who else?

While meditation  
I am Buddha—  
Who else?

(Part Two: Desolation in the World #49)

Those are the best of what I saw in *Desolation Angels*. There are a couple of others:

Neons, Chinese restaurants  
coming on—  
Girls come by in shades

(ibid., #65)

Eat your eggs  
and  
Shut up

(ibid., #69)

Sit in fool and be fool,  
that's all

(ibid., #72)

These are more abstracted. Although they're just thoughts that come naturally. Gregory Corso had one: "In Mexico City Zoo there are ordinary American cows." That was the American traveler's flash.

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Here are some similar in form from *Zengakuren*:

To be able to trample upon the Great Void,  
The iron cow must sweat.

Meeting, the two friends laugh aloud:  
In the grove, fallen leaves are many.

In the vast inane there is no back or front;  
The path of the bird annihilates East and West.

(Blyth's *Haiku*; p. 13, 14, 16)

William Blake has a series of two-line poems like these which verge on the Vajrayana insight in Buddhism. In other words, turning things inside out, taking accident and mishap and learning from it. So any broken leg is an opening to experience of empty space, i.e., There's no place to stand on. This is from Blake's "Auguries of Innocence":

To see a world in a Grain of Sand  
And Heaven in a Wild Flower,  
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand  
And Eternity in an hour.  
A Robin Red breast in a Cage  
Puts all Heaven in a Rage . . .

It's like the two-line zen poem: "A cow eats in Kyushu, a horse's belly bloats in Boston."

. . . A dove house fill'd with doves and Pigeons  
Shudders Hell thru all its regions.  
A dog starv'd at his Master's Gate  
Predicts the ruin of the State  
A Horse misus'd upon the Road  
Calls to Heaven for Human blood.  
Each outcry of the hunted Hare  
A fibre from the brain does tear . . .

This is absolutely literal: "Each outcry of a hunted Hare," particularly if unexpected, could give you that shudder-shock, a little electrical short-circuit in the brain. There's a literality to these that's really uncanny. It looks like they're opposites, impossibilities, but Blake's intelligence has filled it in, or has found or seen the relations, or guessed the relations without thinking. If you read some of these lines, for example, "The cut worm forgives the plow," it will stick in your brain for years until you understand it—like a Zen koan. Every atom bumps into every other atom sooner or later. "A dog starved at his Master's Gate/Predicts the ruin of the State." The cruelty that would literally starve the dog, the quality of emotion that would starve the dog if prevalent in the state, would ruin the state. The insight needn't mystify us, so to speak. It's more simple.

A truth that's told with bad intent  
Beats all the Lies you can invent.  
It is right and should be so;  
Man was made for Joy & Woe;  
And when this we rightly know  
Thro' the World we safely go

Actually, that's the First Noble Truth: Man was made for joy and woe—existence contains suffering. It's not so much suffering and woe, it's "the suffering of suffering," the echo of suffering, the clinging to suffering; the cultivation of it, the addiction to it in the sense of resentment of it, that hurts most. Rather than letting the thought of it drop to allow another Haiku:

Man was made for Joy & Woe;  
And when this we rightly know  
Thro' the world we safely go,  
Joy and Woe are woven fine,  
A clothing for the soul divine:  
Under every grief & pine  
Runs a joy with silken twine . . .  
The Bleat, the Bark, Bellow & Roar  
Are Waves that Beat on Heaven's Shore.  
The Babe that weeps the Rod beneath  
Writes Revenge in realms of death.  
The Beggar's Rags, fluttering in Air,  
Does to Rags the Heavens tear.

"The Beggar's rags, fluttering in air,"—you just see the leprous beggar lying down on the ground with rags fluttering in the air. Actually, it's a very funny sort of space shot there. But how does it tear the heavens to rags? Quite literally, we see through the beggar's rags, into the air, into the firmament itself; the Dome of Heaven has become split with excessive suffering, blocked by rags to the eye.

One Mite wrung from the Laborer's hands  
Shall buy & sell the Miser's Lands:  
Or, if protected from on high,  
Does that whole Nation sell & buy

Now how can the unjust taxation, or the strong-arm robbery of a little tiny mite of money from the beggar, or from a laborer, buy and sell the land? Obviously, the government's completely askew if it's wringing a mite from the actual laborer's hands, and so, in that sense that mite can buy and sell the whole nation. It's like "The dog starv'd at his Master's Gate/Predicts the ruin of the State." He's showing the gap, or connection between mightily magnificent, and tiny—just like:

for want of a nail, a horse was lost  
for want of a horse, the battle was lost  
for want of a battle, the war was lost  
\* \* \* \*  
He who mocks the Infant's Faith  
Shall be mock'd in Age & Death

So watch out for ageism or babeism—

He who shall teach the Child to Doubt  
The rotting Grave shall ne'er get out.  
He who respects the Infant's faith  
Triumphs over Hell & Death.  
The Child's Toys & the Old Man's Reasons  
Are the Fruits of the Two Seasons.

Sensible, "negative capability." In other words two separated, completely separated, conceptions are simply natural perceptions for differing brains.

The Questioner, who sits so sly  
Shall never know how to Reply.

I keep seeing that every day at big lectures. Slyness itself is a funny kind of aggressive falsity; so obviously, when presented with something open or empty, the falsity becomes dumb.

He who replies to words of Doubt  
Doth put the Light of Knowledge out.  
The Strongest Poison ever known  
Came from Caesar's Laurel Crown.

He means the poison of power.

Nought can deform the Human Race  
Like to the Armour's iron brace  
When Gold & Gems adorn the Plow  
To peaceful Arts shall Envy Bow

That's a classic. Pound repeated it over and over, and Robert Duncan pointed it out also; that in the Inca Empire, Cuzco, there was a garden full of flowers and trees made of gold. Gold was used for art and artisanship rather than as a means of usury or commercial manipulation.

A Riddle of the Cricket's Cry  
Is to Doubt a fit Reply

Now he's talking about problems with conceptualization and over-rationalization. The cry cuts through conceptualization.

An Emmet's Inch & Eagle's Mile  
Make Lame Philosophy to smile

That's Einstein's theory of relativity.

He who Doubts from what he sees  
Will ne'er Believe, do what you Please.  
If the Sun & Moon should doubt,  
They'd immediately Go out.

And . . .

To be in Passion you Good may do  
But no Good if a Passion is in you.

That's the whole key to the Vajrayana practice in Buddhism: participation in passion. Passion is real, thought is real, emotion is real, the microphone is real. If you are attached to your passion, then it so fills up your brain that you forget the space where the passion takes place. It's a very clear thing, and I chose that out of English literature for an arrow of direction. It's a clear arrow of direction, very similar to a Tibetan text, Jamgon Kongtrul's *A Direct Path to Enlightenment* (Kagu Kunkhyab, Chuling, Vancouver, B.C., trans. Ken McLeod), composed in the fifth or sixth century A.D.

This text presents mind-training by slogans; one-line slogans for directing the mind in training, Mahayana, like:

*Think that all phenomena are like dreams.*

*Examine the nature of unborn awareness.* Awareness that is simply there, without traceable rational conceptual underpinnings, simply there like we are.

Regarding mindfulness: *Let even the remedy go free on its own.* If you solidify mindfulness, or if you solidify the notion of breathing, of following breath, or meditation, the difficulty there is that you can get addicted to meditation as a conceptual solidification. In other words, using meditation for your own passion, aggression, ignorance, pride, vanity; allowing the *idea* of meditation to displace the actual disappearance of conceptions in the breath. When you're meditating you have to forget you're meditating. Which is to say, finally, at the most literal level; let the breath go free on its own and dissolve.

*Drive all blame into one.* Where there is "the great stinky ball of blame," take it—because it's empty to begin with—take it on yourself, because at that point you can get on with your business of clear lucidity, in open space. Otherwise you are blocked; (i.e., "Well you're to blame, it's all your fault.") Having tried to project the fault outwards, on to something else, you never get to adjust the perceiver, or adjust the perception of the perceiver, or adjust the faulty perception.

*Be grateful to everyone . . . Always rely on a happy frame of mind.* That's a nice one.

*Do not discuss defects.* In other words, accentuate the positive, work towards that which is workable, rather than be attached to what is unworkable, and constantly complain and resent.

*Don't be consistent.* That's sort of the beginning of Vajrayana. It's actually an old American saying, "A foolish consistency is the hob-goblin of little minds." (Emerson)

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It's interesting to note that Ezra Pound's idea of poetry was also a few "don'ts"—for images and imagists. His essay on poetics is simply a few "don'ts" (i.e., Don't say "The dime misty lands of peace." Don't use reference instead of presentation.)

These are interesting metaphors, they aren't rules. In the course of inserting one of these slogans into your nervous system, you have to figure out what the language means. They're more like metaphorical guidelines, born in four or five hundred A.D., the Boy Scout rules for mind training. Long-needed rules in the state of confusion, they are good reference points for what you do, or what you don't do, warning against getting into mind traps. Although we only know them in relatively unsettled English translation, they're really interesting. "Drive all blame into one" is a classic worthy of Blake.

And so, back to William Blake's "Auguries of Innocence."

To be in a Passion you Good may do,  
But no Good if a Passion is in you.  
The whore and Gambler, by the state  
Licens'd, build the Nation's Fate.

That's interesting: consider the modern licensing of gambling in New Jersey, and you can see the Mafia taking over.

The Harlot's cry from Street to Street  
Shall weave Old England's winding Sheet.  
The Winner's Shout, the Loser's Curse,  
Dance before dead England's Hearse.  
Every Night & Every Morn  
Some to Misery are Born.  
Every Morn and Every Night  
Some are Born to sweet delight.  
Some are Born to sweet delight.  
Some are Born to endless Night.

That's Vajrayana, "unobstructed play of the mind."

We are led to Believe a Lie  
When we see not Thro' the Eye

Actually, that's good instruction on how to compose your eyes during meditation: to see through the eye from the back of the head, into space through the window of the eyeball, realizing the particular perception which you will get if you're actually attentive to the optical phenomena. By attentive I mean resting within the eyeball, not trying to rationalize, but simply seeing physically through the front surface of the eye into space. Otherwise, staring hard at a wall, you get a solidified external universe which looks real, and you are led to believe a lie. Whereas, if you are actually sitting in a resting position, with your eyeball relaxed, aware of the space at the surface of the eye and all the dust-motes floating in it, you see that there's a certain transparency. "We are led to Believe a Lie/ When we see not Thro' the Eye." That's simply an Einsteinian notion; that the measuring instrument determines the shape of the external thing measured—and as the measuring instrument changes, the shape of the universe of phenomena changes. In "The Mental Traveler," Blake says, "For the Eye altering alters all." (Anybody who has taken acid knows what that slogan means.)

An earlier version in Blake's hand clarifies his intention:

We are led to believe a Lie  
When we see with not Thro' the Eye  
Which was Born in a Night to perish in Night  
When the Soul Slept in Beams of Light.

That's kind of mysterious It sounds sometimes to me that he's signifying. He's not referring to the night before birth and the night after death; he's referring to *this* as night, the vegetable world. Then he goes on:

God appears and God is Light  
To those poor Souls who dwell in Night

He really reverses it, you know:

But does a Human Form Display  
To those who dwell in Realms of Day

This is more Vajrayana. It's really an innocent angel voice singing: da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da.

We might look at "The Mental Traveler." William Butler Yeats thought it was one of Blake's greatest poems. He said, however, that it was impenetrable, that nobody could understand it. Yet I think it's the obvious scheme of an eternal return, or cycle of what comes and goes back, a snake eating its own tail and it has a number of great slogans within it. There is an interpretation of it by Foster Damon. His contention is that the two characters are youth and age, youth giving in to age. Youth or the Babe is revolution, political revolution as well as psychic—in that it is only born from death, or revolution is only born from cutting through the present status quo, or is born from the death of the status quo. However, as revolution ages, it becomes more and more encrusted, solidified, conceptualized, and so becomes an old woman. You could apply that to the Cuban or Russian Revolution. He's writing about the French Revolution, a revolution betrayed by Napoleon, in the sense that Napoleon finally had himself crowned King after being a republican all along. It's also a parable of alternations of mental states—In other words, the uncreation of a solidified identity, and the opening up to open space and then slow solidification again. So it's a cycle of solidification of conceptual thought forms, and then desolidification of then . . . "The Mental Traveler," it's a terrific title. Imagine writing anything like that.