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from Notes 2

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EVAN S. CONNELL, JR.

from NOTES 2

Mirabilia testimonia tue, Domine.
Lord, thy marvels be witness.

Murshid ibn Munqidh, Emir of Shaizar,
copied the Koran forty-three times,
each time adding the fruit of his meditations,
which were different each time.

There is a world of streaming shadows that hides within
the forehead of every man.

Origen was so carefully tortured in Caesarea
that he could not die. Eusebius tells us
he appeared joyful beneath the hands of his tormentors,
and much at home, as though he had experienced it all before.

Voluptuous and ignorant
the people persist.

Sennacherib was beaten to death with statuettes of the gods.
This may be interpreted several ways, according to the context
and to the listener's understanding.

Centuries pass
with their lights,
agony and mutation.

Lat. 16.12 S.; Long. 71.34 E.
I have just this moment heard someone say:
He is nothing in himself.

I think with images and intuitions,
as women think.
People stare at me. I honor none of them by recognition,
but continue as I please. My small eyes
gaze inward.
My face, unless it becomes animated by some emotion,
indicates weakness and sloth. I breathe
with difficulty through my nose.

My mouth, with thick sensual lips, usually is open.
Few know what I have suffered.

They say I have about me a curious dreaminess
which causes me to remain indifferent to the future.
They say I am sunk in putrescent indolence. Yet
every man has nine round holes in his body
which exude abominable filth.

Do you understand?

When I was young I abstained from women. I would not throw garbage
into a chasm.

Now the rain has ended. The wind has changed, and blows
steadily from the south. It is night.
I lie in this room alone, sick and old, thinking
of a woman I met nineteen years ago in Marseilles.

J'ai reve tellement de toi. J'ai reve telle. . .

The spider spins a web out of its venomous self.
Good wine sours in an ugly glass.

Aethiopians are black Saracens.
Chingis Cham was slain by a thunderclap.

Dragons attack elephants
in order to drink their blood.

Amber is congealed sea-foam.

What artisan has made so deft and marvelous a thing
as the small sphere that is the head of Man?

To acquire the head of another man is a measure of power.
To shrink the head is a final demonstration
of mastery and of possession.

Pawn takes pawn.

Whatever fate commands us to do in this world,
neither Allah nor Jehovah shall punish in the next.

The American warden, Duffy,
as well as the German commandant, Hoess,
emphasize the humane nature of gas
as an instrument of execution.

According to Mr. Hoover,
despicable crimes must be dealt with
realistically.

The contract for the construction of the first guillotine
was awarded to a German harpsichord maker, Tobias Schmidt,
who was the low bidder, and who explained that sometimes
he set aside the practice of his art in order to assist
the realization of discoveries that would benefit humanity.

The Cross gradually has evolved
into three forms:
crux immissa, which has four arms;
crux commissa, which has three arms;
crux decussata, or Saint Andrew's Cross,
to which the victim is bound
by a leg and an arm.

Tacitus, though he mentions the Crucifixion,
fails to perceive it. Our eyes focus
on what they are accustomed to seeing.
Videmus nunc per speculum. . .

I have been asleep. Five hours have passed, hours
in the gaseous, senseless sleep of man's outer senses
during which life centers morbidly in the imagination.
Desire for the eternal, resident in each of us,
here finds expression.

Just now I heard the explosion of the cannon across the bay.
Sundown, and I shall withdraw
the black Knight.

My brain grows phrensied among its own imaginings.

Not far from Hebron on the mount of Mamre stands an oak
which the Saracens call *Dirpe*, but we call the Dry Tree
because it has been there since the beginning of time

and was green and had leaves until the day Our Lord perished.
Some say that when a prince of the Western world shall sing
mass beneath this tree it will turn green once again and
bear leaves and fruit. But I believe the hour is past.

Beside the Dead Sea grow apple trees beautiful to behold;
yet if you cut these apples you find them full of cinders,
which is a token that by the wrath of God the land was scorched,
and the cities of Gomorrah, Sodom, Zeboim, Aldama and Zoar
sank into this briny body.

If a man casts a ball of iron into the Dead Sea
it will float; although a feather on this water
disappears quickly, like a city sodden with sin.

Mundus vult decipi.

Without knowledge the mystic sees
without sight, without
information, without contemplation,
without description, without
veiling, without veil.

According to some, the pre-eminent cause of all
that is perceived by the intelligence
is not anything perceived by the intelligence. I will
consider this.

More than once I have begun the study of metaphysics;
each time I was interrupted by happiness.

Ruiseñor, usignuolo, nightingale, Nachtigall.
The name in every language is melodious.

Immanuel Kant sets high value on sudden ideas.

Lat. 28.14 S.; Long. 40.03 W.
Coming events cast their shadows before.

The words *sickle* and *hammer*
come down to us from the Stone Age.

Ou mam Hactani.

The man of yesterday has died in the man of today;
the man of today dies in the man of tomorrow.

In a cave beside the Dordogne my brother and I discovered a picture of a bison painted with remarkable individuality, and later we found a slab of slate showing the cartoon of this same bison, which of itself is most surprising; however what surprised us even more is that we did not find these two together. The preliminary cartoon was unearthed in the département of Ain, from which we conclude that some man or woman of the Ice Age very greatly admired the artist's sketch, and bought it or stole it, and carried it one hundred and eighty-eight miles.

According to Carl Gustav Jung, the artist who speaks in primordial languages speaks with a thousand tongues. He grips and overpowers, elevates that which he treats, and lifts it from the individual and transitory toward the eternal. He exalts the personal lot to the lot of Man; thus he releases in each of us those forces that have enabled humanity to rescue itself and to live through the longest night.

Where there is an obscurity too deep for reason it is good to sit down with description, periphrasis, or adumbration. That is the advice of Sir Thomas Browne.

Five hundred years ago Raymond Lully attempted to solve all mysteries by the use of a frame with unequal, revolving concentric disks subdivided into sectors with Latin words. Such is the progress of vanity.

According to Plotinus, the part of us that sees cannot be troubled.

The convictions of my predecessors make them appear to me in this enlightened age like pawns in a game of chess played with neither rules nor object, mindlessly following an incomprehensible plan where much was left to chance.

It has been established by historians that Columbus knew very little astronomy

and was not adept in the use of nautical instruments. It has been demonstrated that when he employed a quadrant to determine his latitude the result was merely approximate. Navigators and learned cartographers attempted to dissuade him from the voyage he projected.

Spanish chroniclers of the 16th century describe the discovery of the American continent as the most significant event since the creation of the world, save the incarnation and death of Him who created it. To my mind they are wrong, wrong not once but twice. I will say no more.

Man lives only to learn.
This needs no exegesis here.

Some ask the use of knowing things that are useless.
They ask me the use of maíz-pinto, crystals, and feathers.
I respond: There are many senses.

The word *maize* for Indian corn is derived from *mahiz* which is the name of the plant in the language of Haiti. And yet, strange to tell, the word *mayse* signifies bread in the Lettish and Livonian languages of northern Europe; furthermore, the word *maise* means food in Irish, and in Old High German we find that *maz* is meat. Therefore we think the Spanish *maiz* must antedate the time of Columbus, testifying to some far earlier communication.

The common pineapple, *Bromelia ananassa*, is reputed to be of American origin. Why is it represented with exactitude on Assyrian monuments?

There is unquestionable significance in this fact: Bessmertny has compiled a bibliography of approximately twenty-five thousand publications devoted to Atlantis.

I agree with Plato who situates Atlantis beyond the port of Gades. My brother, who is a scientist, disagrees for the following reason: in that area he has sounded the ocean bed and discovered

a layer of pelagic red clay eleven thousand feet thick
composed primarily of the shells of plankton.
He has learned, furthermore,
that one thousand years are required
to deposit three-tenths of an inch of sediment;
so he calculates
and calculates, concluding that
five hundred million years have elapsed
since the bed of the Atlantic was exposed,
from which it must follow, according to his argument,
that only a fool would say with certainty:
This is the location of our lost continent.

The essential dates of history remain for centuries
undetected.

I believe and continue to believe
we are like cats or dogs which wander into a library
and observe the books, but have no idea what they mean. Or say
we are sleepers who shout in our sleep.

None of us can suitably express what occurs; inevitably
it defies understanding.

As the parallels of geometry intersect at infinity,
so our parallels cross in the immutability of Man,
to whom the gods granted that he should be the measure of
everything on earth, at once its beginning and its end.

Thursday. I am forty years old. Flocks of parrots
darken the sun.

A branch of fire has dropped from the sky
six leagues beyond our ship. What does this portend?

We live in a world of enigmatic punishment
and indecipherable transgression.

In China many were executed for defying the imperial edict
of Shih Huan Ti; so many that melons grew
in winter on the burial ground.

Thus much concerning those thing which I beheld most certainly
with mine eyes, I friar Odoricus have here written:
other strange things also I have of purpose omitted,
because men do not believe them unless they should see them.

Currents flow. The needle turns north
by northwest.

Not long ago we sighted a vessel whose sails, floating
in the wind, were green and slick with moss. We boarded her.
The deck broke beneath our feet. At the helm we found a skeleton
and beside the panel three more, ten in the crew's quarters,
six on the bridge. She is the *Marlborough* out of Glasgow,
last seen in April as she neared the straits of Magellan
with a cargo of wool and meat from Littleton, New Zealand. I
remember my father speaking of her. She was lost when he was
thirteen.

I have spoken with Captain Warren of the Greenland whaler
Herald. He has described to me the apparition
that bore down upon him while the *Herald* was becalmed.
The ghostly vessel was sheathed in ice, he said.
It glistened in the sun. Spars, sails, and ropes
glittered with ice. There was not a sound
except the creak of timber and the wind
through the rigging. Captain Warren, followed by
four members of his crew, went aboard. In the forecabin
on each bunk he found a corpse covered with blankets.
He counted twenty-eight. In the master's cabin
he discovered the captain slouched in a chair with a quill pen
on the table beside the fingers of his right hand,
and the logbook open. She was the *Octavius* out of England,
bound east on the China trade. Captain Warren believes
she was seeking the Northwest Passage.

God knows where we are bound. The sun sets early
and there is not a star. The compass wanders
like a child's toy. We have petitioned our commander
to turn back to Spain. But he has set himself apart from us,
out of his mad desire to count the Indies.

What a man loves, that he clings to
and everything that obstructs his way he despises,

lest he be deprived of what he loves. This I have learned
from St. Maximus the Confessor.

Now the earth is augmented
and now the earth diminishes,
according to the diastole and systole
of my heart. Someone approaches,
suggesting. . .

I could not say how long I have been here.
I stand beneath the bridge
with water fouching my sandals and wonder if I have the right
to climb this metal ladder. Death does not obsess me,
it is life that oppresses me.
I cannot think of one man or woman who would condemn me. Not one.
Lord, let there be a witness. A world of streaming shadows
lives within us.

The influence of Plotinian doctrine on our thought is manifest:
since all things have their origin in God
they must finally return, after their dispersion, to live
again in Him.

If someone, having seen God,
has understood what he has seen
he has not seen God; he has seen of God
His known creatures.

Now the boy approaches, swinging the censer
as it swung in adoration of Bacchus
I remember that the cassock of our priest
originated in Persia, his veil and tonsure in Egypt.
Alb and chasuble are prescribed by Numa Pompilius.
His stole he borrowed from the sacrificial victim,
while his white surplice is described by Ovid.
His formula for the exorcism of evil spirits
he derives from the magicians of Chaldea.

Hilka! Hilka! Beshal
Beshal!

This day I mark with a white stone.