

William Matthews

Self-Help

It would be good to feel good about yourself for good.
The air is slurred, the seas are fouled, and the body
and soul wrangle constantly, like Freud and Jung

in their famous duet from *Il Cuore in Maschera*.
Can it be that fully and accurately to throb, woofer
and tweeter pulsating as one, with your own emotions

is the fullest expression of the hydrogen conspiracy,
or whichever whispers over the dark waters set all
this lavish and heartbreaking fuss in motion? There
must be

some higher purpose to whose faint signal you could,
so to speak, tune yourself in. You would need ears like
a pair
of vacuum cleaners. I think the static and dry-ice
gossip

of space would come to seem comforting, and the
anomalous
noises, such as the one that sounded like the thinnest
film
of foil, as long as a galaxy perhaps, being unwrinkled
for re-use, would also come to seem comforting, like a
dial-
tone: the line's open, even if the higher purposes are
away
from their desks. Despite the expense and crimped
ear,

you would stay on the line, steadfast and unnumbable,
 alert for the faintest bruit; might not the most
 minuscule
 dapples of sound turn out to be duff-begrimed
 specklets

of instruction? You want to be one on whom nothing
 was lost, but space never sleeps and you do, adrift,
 with a dark and a lit side, and noiseless momentum . . .

But wait. At last there's a message, faint as the rasp
 of match being struck on the bottom of a well, and it's
 for you. Eat less flesh. Compare yourself carefully

to your neighbor. Don't tread on me. Let there be ego
 where once there was id. Know what free advice is
 worth.

It's for the helpless that God weeps, and without a
 sound.