

P-E-A-C-E

David Bromige



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FACE

David Thompson

1805-1812

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for John Lennon

*I might have called this History,
but I'm sick of standing for it*

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The fins of another condition ended man's life as an I, the fins of a second way ended that man who served every day and every other good idea and they, now lit with farsighted colors, now shining offensively like the summer sun, skinned night's and workingclass reality's state sevenfold and often brought him back for more -- minnows, dreams and poems.

The era had a milky density, tepid and torpid, mildly disgusting like a one-acre homesite; this disgust had spoken of the rebuttal to its final vestige of candid spontaneity, except that the toothache of the times looped a scarf over everybody's ears. Of such was this milky perception, not so much eerily ghostly, as eerie the way a huge albino baby with two grossly celestial tits is eerie. "They retreat to salute" (literally, *step backwards and point to their heads*) deceived noone yet all did so, so assiduous was each of eternity, then imagined as a piano lesson on a humid afternoon with your pants around your ankles.

We who so hope stridently to summon the assassins of history to the mecca of judgment, instinctively cover our mouths and point at our feet, salivating the more to see the cuckoo-area vacated, in the ordinate fidelity of these elegant steps: our lucky friends have all disappeared, yes, having stamped their drama with glee upon the form of its content. Cheese in the sun has its odor; never the cuckoo of truth confronted the burro of intensity, with more gradations than the tic-tac-toe of this era's worrisomeness inscribed upon the napkins of the 90's.

When I, having lasted to be sued and marketed and licked with

the stamp-despising tongue of correspondence, was assigned to the same gallery of types with monotremes, cockroaches and unpolished tins of eel, it met darkness in full flight. Just as the individual had fallen away, so the atmosphere reversed itself. The same darkness, whose secret flushed its boundaries, horrible and grand, the same scummy harbor, with its locksmiths, coughing and symbolic, looted that old house. Men met that house who became one hundred per cent screeching romantics with heads as white all the time as the true trivial stammering of weather, petit bourgeoisie if only that their heads, too large for their mothers, and their hands, unused to manual labor, were foreclosed on and sold on the grounds that the truehearted and nicer people, and even the worst, lying, bovine, cuntstruck supporters of the aging chancellor, were the ones doing it to them, and burnt to a crisp in a blond grotto their innocent destroyers had voted for in a photograph. Not even money could lift its interesting hand, with its prematurely aged fingers of a chronologically young Oriental female, to save them. And when the Great Muddler died, a victim of daily venticide, eerily in May as long before predicted, chaos ensued.

But, as to the creative writing and its classes, Niecesleeper's capitalistic poems do not lack for genuine atmosphere, and bland and aging as the dorsal fin called memory, stammeringly stumble forth from the tidiest of doomed barns, among others a child of the state and (glory to him who animates our cadavers) half-way through sleep in the state:

I saw two happinesses in two trees:
the one of heat, the other of dark.
The example is a careful person
setting fire to his Honda in a park.

If I, for you, created a world,
for you am god, you take security for him,

and you come to him, to my security,
asking why my world is dead with hope:

I have sawed up my hope in language,
in number, and in written numbers;
now I can constrict my bowels
like a llama in the prison of actual size.

So much for death. For song with its laws.
Sea that I decimate but won't endure,
death those numbers that I push towards
a universe where me created I,

enabled to convert one
into one god: the god
that is faithful toward the end,
the number followed by the numbers.

("Beginning, Model and End")

This surely tells what we could have expected of a time when even the Emperors of Tar could not wrest the sun from its setting, nor the man responsible for wrecking the environment do so without the excuse that the world as foretold in prophecy was in any case shortly to end. Who has not known the long summer evenings toward the turn of a century when suddenly your parents' piano looks old? Niecesleeper captured his percentage of the prevailing interest:

If hunting blew in the alders specifically
so bitterly you never went hunting again voluntarily,
the alders where hunting still clamors
that to hunt in the stock exchange became delicate,
gripingly I'd hunt on the set in back of Solly's 7-11
in my evening stole sewn together with symphony
tickets,
in my designer gown stapled to my skin with fur blood;

a very long wind rips the women's blouses
but still the skipper of state on the bridge of debt
eaten by Twinhill's hands into a tingling shadow
hunts the 6 per cent who own nine-tenths of everything,
small figure till you realize it's 14 million,
enough to fill Scarsdale, La Jolla, Beverly Hills
The Bubble and etcetera, the ravishing ghouls
hunting the more that else were malnourished less.

("Up On Olympia")

"Throw off your shackles, throw off your chains, drag out your landlords, beat out their brains": one can almost hear the old chant, striding into the part of the true story where the ants help. Twinhill, of course, was the person who then owned the world.

But just as there can be no shade without sun, nobody can look at a small patch for more than ten minutes without hallucinating birds with leather wings, and what of the prose of those days? It might have been W. S. Canal who indited the ensuing, shortly before his assassination at the hands of some Christian revivalists while stunning pageantry through rippling fields of barley blushed with stands of wild and shaven forescalps -- cited here in its entirety, quite possibly:

One early, clear winter morning in July, when the sea already lay dreaming in its silver pantsuit, and the vaseline stacks loomed over the settlement with their spits and shudders, and the red berries of the hawthorn were like windows of a little skating rink, the sun rose into the white welkin dragging something after itself, like an egomaniac.

The hordes in the still morning air were jubilant with unconsciousness. The three innocent commu-

nists had been turned to chalk down near the edge of the ocean, and the tribal elder Slin, the alphabet arranger, had been evened out between oxen and axle. For the children, it was a happy day, for they had new skulls after the old ones had gotten scuffed and chipped by the railroad tracks, and seldom had the forenoon brought such lovely weather as snow.

Soon the sea had been all used up. On the opposite shore they found a way to use up the forest. There lay the results of the weather, a mantle of white monotony; human foot had not yet touched this purity, only the easy spoor of their sins here and there, projected like a jacket over a snowman, at once conserved and annulled inherited conceptual oppositions. Old seekers after the mustardseed would have stood buoyed up by the sting of nothingness, that park created by the repulsively wealthy for their middle-classes to get lost in, while frostbite worked unnoticed on their ears, except that none witnessed the deeper silence of this flecked accident, immaterial as glossems, except a redhaired woman in clogs, out there near her granny's cottage now and then "lostening" among the snow-burning ovens and uncommon snobbery and folly that require remarking -- or never a single echo with spread fingers in the blink of an eye will again crown itself -- of the hasty, knee-prodding necessity and vanishment where an I ate a hole in the stammering of trees.

There lay that so apposite, so opportune, so full of secret ugliness in the deep fry of the forest, if snow might be batter, instead of profound peace, that the roster of slaughtered children (after all, nearly always someone else's, and darker and smaller) started

to mildew, and the woman with complete certitude whispered, "Airday icker hairlicht hairinner!" Her vile accent mucked up the entire truth which gives in advance the central principle of all useful reflection upon words.

Finally it came to pass as Slin had worried it would, and been ploughed and harrowed for saying so: writing was the death of the metaphysics of the logos. Thus had been silenced the cinema; the practical grammarians had folded their canvas stoles away; laggards on sleds slaughtered each and every monotreme, drained Lake Dreg and crashed jets into the fronts of their own homes.

Here belief in the system lost its place. Each grammarian, with a "Later", stalled his machine, and little Lena (for that was the frozen laughter of the redhead) cried out: "Eli, Meli, how I wish the useless grammarians lay on the bottom of the sea, so much gargle have we had from inside their skulls, and I, who trod on their skulls and found it funny! Let them now stay, where they stay (she stamped her tiny foot) and come instead and play with me. Pappa and mamma will come home in the evening, and we shall have something festive. Shall we not become small lamps?"

Not only was her speech contradictory, but instead of saying "small", she said "snow". Foresight existed in vain; a mangled snowball came towards her and stapled her to her death, an unholy pyramid. Into this skull, so quick to credit darkness, light broke, and the gladness of children who think magically that singing comes from the belly and to work is to fly. Earthquakes wrecked the dock, unfortu-

nately, and before long, the beginning was covered over and all in full swing.

("Mimesis")

The two ranges, of sound and placement, are in accord with the twin columns raised before the Temple of Monolog, the one dedicated to agitators, the other to the receptors of totality, and these two, in whose doubling we discover their thought, infinite and extensible, whose chain unpacked a shopping cart at the supermarket in order to ring each item up, tended to reflect the Cosmos as a Being with clipped wings, universally comprehensible, tuned to receive and absorb at the same rate anywhere as if it were all the same, and not more fickle than the winds, many of which prevail.

They averred that Being involved distinguishing the possum from the dead animal fact, in the quadrangle, and that the impediment to loving might be the pacifier, a rubber good then given to infants, and that whoever would be an impediment to his brothers should first secure their feces and other alimentary matter, and then carry this in a sieve, eating some of it and spitting out the rest, until all had incurred a great debt toward him, though that debt be but in the thought of the one who comported himself in this wise. And they held equality was possible, and that the person who inherits a fortune has no more freedom of speech, chance of justice, opportunity further to enrich himself with power and toilets, than a partial cripple nailed to a complicated cross he must pay for with unobtainable hymn-books while using his teeth to mine coal -- as if he hadn't been caught redhanded. And they held it obvious that a bird was not a lizard. And that Being obeys the truth, that god is oneself (lit., *me*), who must cure one's own sciatica, or sacrifice innumerable native speakers in the attempt. And that this diligent era, filled with easy instants always about to be, and not other-

wise veiled from the eyes, had nothingness in greater quantities than god has had pets. And the more diligently they went into debt, the more proudly they displayed their bodies in the city square, until this came to be seen the better Christianity: "And if it rain stained glass, it is better to be a transept window." And they said, "Better an immodest son of mummy, than titillate an ocelot", and they held that to solicit spit from your sibling's mouth, as long as neither is in a sitting position, while peeking into a cave, mumbo-jumboing while smoking pencils and pretending to be a woodpecker, after rolling up your eyes until only the whites show, while an uncle walks backward reciting his miseries, if one has abstained that day from penguin, counted as one volt of misery and as soon as one had a thousand posted out in the open before the eyes of the chorus, one would be enabled to dominate eternity as soon as one had been executed on the tables to the rear of the Bank of San Salvador. And they thought they were the first to discover that peasants who wanted to own the land they worked had been imported from another planet, and could not be harmed by steamrollers, only flattened into useful road surfaces for the transport of soybeans in place of the black beans people used to eat before they decided to starve to death.

And they held that hysterical women wanted to draw attention to and from the fact that they had knees, but really to make you dizzy. And they held that poets were hysterics who tried to disguise the fact that they had nothing to say so unsuccessfully. They also believed that facts were fascists, and that writing was not to be trusted (therefore they spoke their marriage vows) and that speech was not to be relied upon (hence they issued marriage licenses). They maintained that swimming was like writing, an immersion in a foreign body that restores one's sense of proportion, and that talking was like being in air, devoid of noticeable feedback but pleasantly full of yakety-yak. And they

had poets who wrote as though they were talking, and these were most often those treated to incipient manicures, if they imagined talking as training a Mynah-bird, and who had heaped upon them a stupefaction of peregrine falcons, credit cards and intaglio doubledecker busses; the other kind worked, when permitted, as lifeguards out at the filtration plants.

Yet these people, barbarians only in a minor sense, were the first to know we exist to consume (lit., *get cancer*), and that when a younger person is alone he is recumbent with a small disc which he tries to set on fire and smoke. And they were the first to train iguanas to repent for the sins of their trainers. But before we set our plates in the ashes as a token of our debt to these extraordinary and ignorant precursors, the work of Art-Dave Brimbody (whose essay "Shooting Is Too Good For Them" these pages are sometimes a redaction of), awaits our indulgence: Brimbody, poet of hedonism before the strange conversion, at the instigation of the millionaires who threw him out of his home, of all his money into small tiles of imitation wood, a disaster that happily forced him into his work as a translator. Here is a snatch of his earlier canon, imagined from within, as it were, through the persona of the poet's wetnurse:

If I am pregnant since given his stake
upon whose underside's inscribed "Success"
doubtless I have the swallow who obscures the river
stones
with wintry rearrangement;

I know only what the birds drop from their tiny beaks,
let me insert this in your nest, my weeping Herman.
Whyfor such regions, if our days cannot collaborate?
Whyfor black night and all those books?

If he made me pregnant getting his revenge,

while I conversed with his red thing,
with dismaying utensils from Copenhagen
and with my accordion heart

nothing shall be recovered that he believed in,
neither the dove yellow with sleep in my olivetree
nor my gargantuan dedication,
nor that diploma I rang up in his eyes:

transport him to scurrilous obscurity,
gods of the alimentary tract with your sad blood!
Here are violets, little canoes,
to give the peasant the time of his dull life.

Maybe no penetration but all the handling you want,
no biting under the cascades of accumulated silence
because no contest:
I had an aunt who died,

and she was malevolent with a red thing at a party,
and her horses were gulping buckets,
and her hands burned with kisses,
and she lost her things and didn't know why.

("After Bohemian Grove")

However, he did venture during this period into the margins of
the political in his poetry; and this despite his contention that
the universe is implicit in any action, even turning off the alarm
and rolling back into sleep as the house burns down; but here,
so there shall be no mistake, is "The Fellow-Travelers":

Those others, the family,
with their inevitable galoshes,
those others, vulgar pinkos,
will be my death and things.

Maskers of the first rank hasten
to a familiar salon,
the clearer you are late
the cleaner the impeachment by sonar.

And the death by abhorrence escalates
you rowdy diverting persecuted
for love and for your wheels,
the death of thieves — snoring sirs,

rubato up those crystals
from God's toenails...
Moscow today is the hora,
the infants and adolescents,

my childhood scales:
this being the second of innocence,
how not to believe in nothing
forever and ever...

Vulgar fellow-travelers,
how the pure families
tender no dignity to your song:
you have a possible bone

stuck in your jugular and sober singing,
sober in the library of bottles,
sober with the chart of love,
sober as the parapets

open to the dead.
Inevitable galoshes,
never as abject as the lips
nor brilliant like the mariposas:

voracious fellow-passengers,

French for door, Italian for window,
bold Muscovites, pertinacity
may sober your infantile calves!

Shockingly, this maturity of vision diminished with the chain of events that began on October 22, when the first gamboge poster defaced a Frinco Sifistan wall, even as rumors of an armistice with China the Incredible, though late in coming, surrendered their protest at the water's edge. Every other province voted rightwing and Rinaldiste, carrion crows scenting out a sick or dying body, craving to mingle bloodstreams with the Gang of the Skimming of the Cream off One Billion.

Brimbody wandered the streets seeking advice on how to come to his country's aid. In those districts where the overchargers stick their heads into tropical birdcages, oriental carpets and pubescent statuary, while nigger gardeners make things pretty for very little, he would urinate his opinion upon the important shrubbery. Since he loved plants, this made him sob piteously. Yet even this was not enough: Beach Stinson, for instance, elegantly evaded the Definition by continually leaping from vehicle to vehicle, while Pearl Boehme kept disguising herself as anyone with flaming red hair and eyes one brown one otherwise. These were exciting times to experience futility in. In the words of Matt Battenburg, "I am the obstacle" -- referring perhaps to an item in a street barricade he had erected in a cul-de-sac, or possibly something else. Millicent Wrongsong wrote more than anybody else in her attempt to demonstrate the point of no return between beer bottles, production and commodity, a black-bordered poster denouncing resistance as less interesting than little brown cigars. Her attempts to produce workingclass texts as if written by someone very well-educated in esthetics succeeded, and the proletariat gratefully passed over these as under so much else, disgusting pale worms of the electronic siege, in

which they had at last as much chance of survival as the Sorbonne-bred Winder of the Cubist Sundial and his constant companion, Tiffany, Lizzard of Was.

It was at the Babylon Barracks, sodomized by soldiery, and by now really immaterial, Brimbody penned his last to his demented friends: "You must burn, for I wish it, and I think you will respect my wish, as one already dead, my poem P-E-A-C-E!" This, understandably, was not done properly; some fragments survive, to testify to the frothing grammery of this cuckoo-ridden decade before the ultimate car of self got towed:

P-E-A-C-E

for K.K., who gave us the Pleasures:
the missing portion.

So you think peace exists within the group
Heaven has a contract out on what's outside
Alien, Aryan, Arab stir the strife
Look at your debt to them
Outsiders existing merely to make you cohere
Messages that each decode the same

Every art, inquiry, act, intent, aim at some good
It follows there are many ends
Rhetorics, and wars
Each judges what he knows with what he knows
None disputes that happiness is best
Excellence excercised appropriate to virtue

Exemplary? who can elude that function?
I tremble at it
Rolled from his chariot, felled beneath my staff
Expiring like the myth beneath the reasonable
wheels

Not I alone, but the whole city hears it
Enigma's darkling sphincter might unfold

Shalom, Irene

Possessors lay down the law
And prosperity secures the peace
X has the power to enforce this

Family your measure of whatever
Rights, honor and welfare of the clan
Intact as to loyalty before the Thing
Duty never to be doubted
Unimaginable crimes can break no rules

Political conciliation to begin with
After odd gods proved in
X terminable by Jahweh the Forsaker
Comprehend the incomprehensible
Honor your father *and* mother
Raging phenomena
In and out at once of everything
Spanning history to come close to an answer
Too close for comfort
I sees through love to a distinct advantage

State's monopoly of force
The principle of competition
Asks recognition of the principle of difference
Talents cause division, loss and profit
Equality's the legal mask its absence wears

Possibly it never has occurred to us
Equality upon which base we rest
And validate our veritable existence
Can't be while only some inherit wealth
Ergo noone is really ever here at all

Pursuant to this thesis note
Empiricism to the contrary
A language only can have currency among its
equals

Can the latecomer be denied a place?
Evidently so, but this reduces us to nonsense

Property across the generations
Eats at the life of all who have none
Ask any wage-earner unable to compete with it
Cuckoos is the pert response
Except a human being is more smoke than bird

Plutonium diverted
Echo said
Agents (several dead)
CIA to nations they'd befriended
Evidence others beside Silkwood murdered

Poetry slavers to save slave's faces throughout
history

E.g., How much does that Grecian urn
Ah, Fred, is that music -- oh, brethren and cisterns,
Can Xanadu be put into a skull-sized pot?
Enough! give me some money, all you got, or
else shut up

The dullness of this, not to mention the stupidity of mentioning money like that when the surest way to get some was not to, justifies Brimbody's subsequent donation of his organs and their setting to a landfill company. The decadent economists we still remember in our architecture and our cookery, from Ringworm and Centquester all the way up to Twinhill, ex-owner of funky old Mr. Globe, wherever it wanders, as if it took its impulse from Whitman, and America from him, rather than wor-

rying unduly about the iceberg slammed into by the Titanic, or the alleged deterioration in thought and language, or who is to have the last word in a sentence, pretending it wasn't simply the sounds that caused it all — when the signifier creamed the signified at the intersection of the century, *they'd* seen it coming!

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