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AE Reiff

Banquet of God

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Banquet of God

First in the soles of feet, up into legs and groins,  
The crux that leaps, forbidden flower employed  
Enflames a sleep. Throw out those books,  
Torn papers encrust stone, one walking looks  
To where a page of poems brood  
Outlined by, ah, the underlined, bright rood.

Home roadway, airport railway, factory,  
We eat our fill in earth’s refectory.  
We have a sewage problem Amazon,  
Piped to our cities. We long for you  
River of the world to eat our fill,  
If you can contain the products of our will.

There is a problem, surely it has been a problem.  
One lay across the thwart, the heart, the bleeding stem,  
Bled, burned. The boat? The bellowing ash of earth.  
There walked children whose eyes gave mirth  
To masses who saw their death and died,  
So look upon the faces with unaverted eyes.

The grass caught fire, lept trees, on fire his hair,  
On fire the man you will see running there.  
He leapt into a pool of sparks, redux,  
The burning coals enjoyed a barbecue.  
All cows were happily so consumed, goats lept  
Upon grills, sheep tendered their loins and slept.

Burn heavens, light mountains now you candles,  
Drain rivers, seas drain, or were you vandalized?  
Awake cave dwellers, for once upon a time  
in meadow, grove and stream you unapparelled find
celestial light, the forest wrong,  
At first the groves but then the trees are gone.

And the song, of outlandish devils shame,  
Imbedded from the mast of earth, who blames?
The flavor is an appetizing boil,  
Charcoaled, grilled to ash, unspoiled.
Our meat was in the fire cooking  
Consumed throughout. How’s that looking?

Pigs, chickens gave them up to farce,  
Alone among foods, vegetables last dished.
There is a hunger now, would you be warned?  
There is a thirst, you should not go unarmed.
So the world turns, the daily sight  
Continues its delight.

Silence pipettes in radioactive milk,  
Nonsense takes a mercury sandwich, silt,  
But no DDT. Don’t spare the topsoil,  
Stung before dismembering. No microbes toil.
No sky will fall nor mountain cease to clap  
When hands, though terrors, possess not this abstract.

Here proclaim a time when meadow, grove and stream  
Were filled, backfilled, trucked off. What does it mean?
Authorized, certified, entirely official,  
Back to nature we got an administrative bushel.
There man can better himself  
If not by worth he takes the earth by stealth.

Good funding institutes these bonds  
Where Procter and Gamble compose a split gene round.
Piruvate phosphatase* the daily song repeats,  
Science and business sing. No defeat  
For cruelty. The knowing herd, the drifting dark  
Comes to noon, sun shines, burns heart.

Tear turf, rip ravines, ruined cities judge first  
yourself. This is the way that God is just.  
When business empires whiten without,  
There within clerks and executives, doubt  
Inks margins to encroach the light,  
Which sport enables the approaching eon night.
Look, this is hell and there the savior walks
Among coals, pitted ruins, idle talk.
There it was among industrialists
He leaned into rubbish, proved to exist
This token of hope against war, to tell
How first with angel fire the first trump fell.

Still it’s a bit ticklish, the feeling
When the hair falls out as the skin is peeling.
Admit it. Trees never had leaves.
The telling those old wives’ tales must cease.
Come over for the visit, the erosions’ not too bad,
It’s not the flash, it’s the light and shock that’s sad.

We lost a third part of the atmosphere.
Nothing was spared. There was a sale at Sears.
The innocent working bee, bacterial spring,
The inward warmth, tree rings,
The cynic died a horrid death,
We saw him as he was, unstaunched and luminous.

Lover’s bone to sinew broken, ligaments
Peacefully expired, the hair fell into place.
You mistake. Ignorance feels nothing.
What returns? Iniquity, cowardice, slumping.
Why think a heart of beef, calves’ liver
Less human than this pumping gesture?

When I cut the heart into usable pieces,
I mean when I sought experimental protein
For the lab of judgment there was no meat
At all, fatty substance unusable, sweet,
Outpoured ill got sentiment,
I never knew just what it meant.

Rain fire clouds, smoke heartily ravines,
Lift continents angelic gravities.
Juggle its pieces into air,
Time’s filled, there is no way the earth were spared.
We shall not say it was the fault of man.
No man indeed. Indeed it was no man.

Come all to this great supper, press wine,
And heavenly birds you also come to dine.
One Pompeii blast or Ceres’ quake will bend
The fine earth, shake, lift sea and hems.
There is another sphere, come worms and flies,
Raveners to great sacrifice.

From pits come vultures, eagles come to fish,
The lambs must wait now man is the dish.
Earth cleansed, war with him has gone,
Come beasts, coyotes, dogs and learn to carnivore.
Come bear, panther, bobcat find your spouse
And breed, the earth’s your wedding house.

Progeny extinct, come poison fish.
Mercury snakes from inert wood.
Calculate the final layer of mud
Where even the bacteria find no food.
This witness from the art invite
But banquet first, this food is ripe.

When once at the predicted end of time
Forgiven my sins and rhyme
Certified, I came to the wedding,
Rose in the mist, spread across a flooded plain,
It seemed the ghost of all the souls who died
Mammalian successors and antecedents sighed.

Come to the palpable spirit wreck
ghosts swarmed air like soundless bees to seek
The million million stings themselves,
It was no cries with which the air was filled.
Air smokes and solid forms melt.
Was there a sun? Not that my senses felt.

Stone ran a common river, molten steel
a monument when it congealed.
The night air cooled, there was an evening breeze,
O attic shape, what pipes and timbrels these?
Who comes to sacrifice? What have they forged?
Thus my earth hungered even while it gorged.
“Retarded:” Another Spoil of Child Abuse

Individual esteem teeters where
Social development’s just a jewel in higher climbing.
Too few among the ambitious
Realize real ramifications of rubricing.

Those sagacious sorts grasp and spout that severe impairment,
Triggered by nights of shouting, slapping, stomping,
At offspring, at spouses, at pets, cleft days,
Impossibly resulting in fractured juveniles.

They lecture that familial fiduciary crises,
Parental drugs or alcohol,
Rough neighborhoods, sickness, all
Route innocents to emergency rooms.

They point out how
Red lights, whistles blaring,
Announce unmentionables, the sort
Captured on x-rays, records, police videos.

Later, “tonsillectomies of the hypothalamus,”
Performed by their well-intentioned social workers,
City administers, undereducated clergy,
Bring about further breakage.

Consider that while spacesuit bladders are rubber,
Little boys’ heads were never meant
To resist harsh cosmic vacuums,
Oceanic atmospheres, clinical evaluations.

Pajamas, messy shoes, peach pit games, submarine imaginings,
Ought, instead, fill moments where
Children labeled “developmentally handicapped”
Could have thrived, would have grown straight.

No soul needs to be constrained to sweeping
Civilization’s discarded bits into self-supplied bins.
Fairy dust costs too much for happily ever endings.
The youthful “derelict” has long been a collaborative project.
Loving One’s *Hevrusot*: Authentic Brotherhood Evidenced at a Wedding

Hand in hand, hand on shoulder, swaying, rocking, lifting
Ever light, bright, righteously invigorated, virtuous in energizing generations’
Reach, in partnership, the next best, deluxe, most excellent, incomparable peak.

Seeking, searching, questing, the chatan, when not spiraling in Shemyim,
Pulls rabbis, fathers, friends, other loved ones, a speck higher, a madregah more,
Cashes in his special spiritual investments while hoisting wedding callers forward.

Such near-caliente wagging of limbs brings joy beyond our ken, luminosity enough
That this royal paloma, this groom, flies, again, from his trumpet-filled party,
Beyond, flutes, drums, oboes, to the singular, complex place of merit.

In rare movements, he spins G-d’s Glory past chuppah silk, further than
Kallah radiance, clear of guests’ gauche, worldly finery until supernal altitudes
Converge, beckon, set on fire, sure torches for the new husband.

Plunged back to the mundane, the tedious and regular, once more he heaves the troop
Toward shiny radiance parallel to dancing life’s principle condigns. He spreads good
Fortune, boosts the entire community, fortifies all holy klipspringers.

Morphed into heirs, into legatees to ethereal emotions, into recipients of benevolence,
Men embrace truth-spangled illumination, otherworldly chromatics, pious notes. Together, doctors,
lawyers, plumbers, roshei yeshevot, turn to everlasting splendor.

Then the angels rebuff, puff at dutiful ears, trip keen feet, cover eyes; apparently,
Certain semitones, which herald ultimates, remain too profound for flesh.
Only the kitel-decked ought to trespass, to encroach, the quintessentials of creations.
Rock is Home

Rock is home. Stone’s sound, verifiable, secure. Steadfastly warms, holds light and heat until Street crews sweep up odd gender-defined litter. Then, we go home hungry, contemplate necessities.

Compassion lifts up. Empathy elevates, promotes, raises. Coexists with neighbors, makes grandchildren sing unless Green grocer bribe police, other bureaucrats. Thereafter, we might miscalculate tearing motions.

Today’s common denominators rot. Oversimplification hurts, punctures, destroys. Depletes denizen quiriness, denudes half life love pending times when Pursuing aggressors halt growth’s utility. From then on, we scrutinize each other’s laundry.

Setting aside taxes harms. Levies spoil, impair, otherwise sting. Collects fumbling more than friendship, mars anticipating happenstances where Formal discourse serves disproportionate directives. Subsequently, our obligation to tolerance fades.

Writing proceeds accordingly. Words reflect influence, authority, weight. Heal slowly the confluence of money, power, greed, save for instances including Internet machinations hatching varied qualities of charm. Later, we embrace evil, throw out moral strictures.
Johannes S. H. Bjerg

white holes I - pavement

this ain't a pavement papal innocence in flames
bitte nicht hier a white hole spews out furniture
blue rabbits as long as one can see NN acts detached
she had a face (she has more) in her bag the keys to the ocean too
so banal more additives than substance
on the verge of spring here's the sleeping otter
just look at the pietá no tears from marble
in Nostradamus' stool cabinet cabbage from the past
so, ladybirds, eh? something stuck in my pineal eye
deeper messages hidden in the slug this one's from Spain
carnivorous we play with rubber balls in any park
“f*ck the heron!” “why, here?” the rest is queuing for the loo
white hole II - questions

some movements of dance then flight

segregation a political class roost cubic eggs

“mermaids? haven't seen any” the table is a mess again

“why not fall into light?” “we're sad creatures”

“why not fall into hope?” “the milk's gone off”

some of it is a beetle in a porcelain world

at the foot of a mountain an eye is born

obituaries printed on cheap paper then fish

“did she really say that?” “damn where's his aorta?”

raga Bhariav a river a river a river

settled in cones red dust from a war god's helmet

“bacon? is that what you call it?” “foreskin, hood, whatever...”
PATRICK WHITE

former poet laureate for Ottawa

HOW TO SPEAK WHEN NO WORD CAN BE SPOKEN

for Newtown

How to speak when no word can be spoken.
How to grieve when even the bells are broken.
How to shriek one note so high and pure
at the implacable heavens, even space cracks
the wine-goblet of the silence with a flash
of black lightning like a tuning fork where the roads
unravel like strong ropes, and the rivers
that were joined like one journey on the same bloodstream
at their sacred meeting place, put out their fires
and mourn the murdered children like an apple
the death of its seeds in late autumn. And the six doors
of the teachers and parents they were meant
to walk through without any locks on their thresholds.

How to comfort the inconsolable. How to heal
the expanding darkness of the eyeless starless abyss
of an open wound in the tangible absence of the flesh within
no scar of the moon will ever close. No candle
will ever cry hard enough to catch up to,
its single feather of a flame beating against
the impervious windows veiled in black drapery
for the fall of so many sparrows. Does God know?
Does God keep up with her songbirds so intimately
she knows them like an elementary school teacher
knows them like the lullabies and stories of her own childhood
she can sing in a closet to keep the horrors at bay?

Knows them by their smiles and the pink shrimp
of their fingers, knows them like the myriad centers
of the magic circles she draws around them
like rain and haloes on the ground she embraces
within the boundless folds of herself to protect them
like a lapwing from the snake that strikes at the nest.

Treachery come to the blessed. Blood
on the broken Easter eggs the sun
doesn’t rise from anymore like gold
from the albino ore of our highest hopes
fallen like fledglings from the dead boughs
of a false dawn the children sang to nevertheless
not caring whether it was true or not, knowing
that their praise was the only way to prove it otherwise.

Twenty buddhas and six enlightenment paths.
Six planets and twenty shepherd moons
smashed like lightbulbs and streetlamps
by a madman on a delinquent joy ride with death
shooting out the stars with a semi-automatic Bushmaster
when the pilot light went out on the furnace of his brain
and the cold crept in to a vacant space
where no fire burned in the ice-age of his blood
and the waterclocks of his tears stopped dead like glaciers.

We know the holiness of our children by the sanctity
we pour into them like homegrown wine distilled
from the vineyards of our own hearts, and we know it, too,
by the desecrations of the pariahs cloaked in darkness
like an eclipse had been pulled over their eyes like a stone
rolled over a tomb, come in the night to poison them
like housewells, to destroy all signs of the innocence
they weren’t brave enough to let master everything
they were afraid of bringing into the light like spiders
hanging rosaries of flies like trophy lines from the webs
of the ruptured safety nets of their neuronic constellations.

I bring wheat. I bring poppies. I bring chicory and asters.
I bring the crickets and grasshoppers of the field.
I bring maple keys. I bring cedar boughs. I bring
dolorous resins of pine and lunar goblets of morning glory
buzzing with honey, to entwine in their hair like a Milky Way
you can touch to your lips like the skin of their eyelids as they sleep.

I bring human sorrow, confusion, anger, shock, horror
at the insanity of the unsymbolic inanity of the event
that enshrines the absurd in the vicious indifference of the void.

I bring a sense of empathy osmotically saturated with grief
so that a stranger’s tears can run in the same creekbeds as mine
toward the same sea that binds us like the tendrils of grapevines
on the skeletal trellises and scaffolding of our own human divinity
trying to climb up and paint roses in the wine of our creation myths.
I bring my eyes and my voice and my blood
and this encrusted paint rag of a heart that’s been
wiping mirages off my brushes for lightyears
like a bouquet of brooms in a desert, hoping
to keep it clean for deeper mirrors to see
the same stars in the dark shining after me
that I once spoke to in an interrogative language
that had to be translated into the answers of my mother-tongue
before I could understand who I was listening to.

I bring a raw apple of love that isn’t soiled by polishing
to the graves of the nascent heroes and heroines
who trusted their dreams enough to achieve great things
even within the limitless confines of such small bodies,
great victories of life in everyone of their cells,
cosmic imaginations with room for stray dogs
and wounded butterflies, grail searching light swords
among the galaxies where even the black holes
looked forward to a happy ending with a cool drink
of something garish from the watering hole of a local fridge
and vowed to show up the next day with their homework half done
to begin the dance all over again. Nothing hidden. Nothing sought.

I bring the same secrets we all know but cannot say to anyone
because our voices have not grown into them yet,
and the silence is too small to contain our most sacred syllables.
I bring wisdom in the stern of an empty lifeboat
and love in the figurehead of a dauntless maiden at the bow.
I bring the same numbness of grief that will no doubt
later thaw like frost-bit fingers into ten triggers of vengeance
when the pain begins to flow like a volcano
instead of an ice-berg nine-tenths subliminally submerged.

Off in the distance, I bring a small, tender wind-chime of a child’s voice
like a shy nightstream whispering through the woods
like a stray wavelength that fell from the stars like a ribbon
undone on a gift of light, as if she were puzzling out her wonderment
like a weathervane trying to align herself
with all directions of prayer at once as she asks me
how is it possible to hold a human accountable
for things that God can’t even explain to herself.
And I place a sheathed sword of enlightenment at her feet
and refuse to mar the waters of her mindstream
with more bloodshed, until eye for eye, we all go blind.

Sometimes the insight of a firefly is enough to astonish the stars.
Or a chimney spark from the hearth of the human heart
a whole new spontaneous order of things beginning with itself.
Let us be fire on the water. Let us make the darkness whole again
with the humility of our shining filling the empty begging bowls
of our hearts pouring even the smallest grains of our light
like a harvest of stars into the empty siloes of space and time.

Let the death of our children who have fallen from us
like the fruits of our flesh, teach us to love as they did
when the whole earth was a windfall of small miracles
and the most amazing of all, them, who saw what we did not.

Let us ask from each other the same aspirations
we request from God, and let us rejoice in the labour
of meaning as much to each other as we try to mean
to our ideas of what we’re all doing walking around on the earth,
looking up at the stars, wondering if they can hear us way down here
or see their own reflections like fireflies burning in our wishing wells.

I bring my solitude to a communal place among trees.
I bring my doubt like a stranger I befriended along the way.
I bring a lost pilgrimage of children fired up like spark plugs
to go the rest of the way on their own, as if the training wheels
had just come off their mountain bikes, and they
were flying among the contrails of the stars
with streamers flowing like comets over the whitewater mane
of the Great Square Of Pegasus running the rapids
of their creative energies heeling it bareback but unbroken
through the surf of the Milky Way as if in all ten directions
of the nightsky the universe were one horse wide,
and time were nothing but the wingspan of the ride.

Child by child, life grows at its own pace
like a celebration that’s always just getting under way
like horse-drawn floats of apple bloom in a spring parade
or when winter carves crystal chandeliers out of ice
the coals in the eyes of the snowman by the mailbox
catching fire like diamonds caught in the highbeams of the stars
because some child stared at it from the living room window
to keep it from feeling all alone by itself in the front yard.

There may be universal laws that abstrusely govern here
as if one size fits all, but it’s the mystic specifics
we abide by like the fragrance of light on a child’s hair
when a mother is drying it like a comet in the rain
after a cucumber-coconut-apricot bath wash
she just had to try like a new flavour of candy on her skin. 
Or a boy being brave as his father about a bruise.

The paradigms of the constellations might go out 
like a candelabra in the firestorm of an apocalypse, 
and the petals of the daisy chains huddle close 
to one another holding their hands together like buds again 
to ward off the eerie perils of a per-emptive eclipse, 
but it’s the life we store like dreams in the corners of our eyes 
as we glance by a child among her crayons on the floor 
proud to teach her chaos to colour inside the lines, 
delighted with the dawn if it should bring the sun back 
like a ball in the mouth of a slobbering mongrel 
that licks her face like a salt block 
just to hear her squeal with delight as she 
throws it over hand without expecting it 
to ever come down again like a childhood 
in a solar system organized by helium balloons.

Improbable concourses and course corrections of happenstance, 
alarms and guards and gates and small arms licensed to kill 
and what was visionary about the way we saw one another 
all singing in the same lifeboat together rowing for shore, 
not knowing whether we’d make it past the reefs and rocks 
like salvage or salvation, now a narrowing of our field of view 
into a mistrustful invigilation of our own kind as we learn 
to live in the shadows of the black holes and haloes 
of trap door spiders that don’t want to be recognized 
like strangers in the light of our street cameras with eyes just like us.

Let the loss of our children empty our arms of the things we were 
mistakenly carrying like burdens we took upon ourselves 
into a wider embrace of the new moon in the old moon’s arms 
like a disparate reunion of opposites in the circumpolar bear hugs 
we give each other in tears around the graves of the very young 
who bring us together to weep like bells in unison 
for the kyrie eleisons and consolation dawns 
in the swelling clarions of our clear-eyed grief.

Let us remember that it is our eyes, purged of ashes, 
though constellations appear and disappear like mirages 
on a starmap in an hourglass of pyramids and quicksand, 
that keep the fires of the stars alight on the nightwatch 
that looks in on a sleeping child, and leaves the door ajar 
where the intimate mystery of life embodied in flesh and blood 
goes on dreaming like growth rings we can understand
the infinite measure of by the enlargements of our heartwood
marked like a calendar of full moons rising in the doorway
like the floodwaters of love overflowing the starmud of our mindstreams
as if there were oceans of awareness ahead that only a child,
one hand after another, could guide us through together
like blind prophets and despairing oracles fearful of our own weather.

Let the house of life not be dismantled by inclement elements
or lowered into the grave like an orphanage for dead children
and even if the wolf huffs enough to blow it down
let us raise it again like the strong rafters of our children
blooming like the crocuses of pup tents all over the back lawn.

Let us follow them through a hole in a fence a child wide
that can’t keep us out of paradise for any longer than it takes
to be the last to enter like twenty six bodhisattvas
rising like the starcluster of the Pleiades in the east
to mark the trail of what they didn’t hesitate to reveal to us
like fireflies in a telescope with eyes full of wonder at both ends,
unborn, unperishing like the flight of hinges on an open gate
as if our exits and our entrances were two wings on the same bird
singing on the dead bough, singing on the green,
of things as there are, seen and unseen, like the blossom
of a moonrise in the orchards of spring, like leaves
in the autumn summoned like a choir to a seance
of inner fires that burn like distant stars without smoke
by the dancing masters and singing coaches of the wind
that knows each by the dawn they’ve come to rejoice in
and at nightfall, the unique inflections of the bells in their voice.
Ken Kesner

IMAGE AND INCIDENT

and how does this question
again
and still would
you
remember when
were you here
pray in melody
elations in courtyard
sunlight walls
join their language
a curse to know
for evening justices
forget to leave and
i get lost
in perfect riddles
humming hardly
a second voice
sometime to revere
then python

will our discerning logic in
a valley of this percussion is reflected
all that drama knows
everyone survives scathed
in the opiate of senses
more than countless
and even
twice than before
one creates
in this valley timing of glass
reckless origin nods
to pierce a liquid
of gesture
from notes

you

your calling after
after me words

dawning amaze

already lies forever
is fantasy or matters tell

and i’m not there
i can’t go

you’ll speak remembrance
divining in truth

elegant mural

piety
torn backwards

begin following you
July 4, 1054

On a cloudy chilly February day, well-bundled up against the biting wind, I can barely remember the warmth of summer as I stand on one of the bluffs overlooking the gray lake (unfrozen now as it may have been then in that warmer period), and realize I have really seen the stars here only once, on August 14, 2003, when the criminal (and criminally inept) electric company caused a power failure that spread to several states and parts of Canada; with all the artificial light out for the evening I could see the sky as those who lived here a thousand years ago might have seen it

And I imagine the sight in the sky on that long-ago Fourth of July, more than seven hundred years before the birth of the nation, maybe even before the birth of fireworks On that night, a glimpse of the past, a past that had taken over six thousand years to get here, was first seen: the death throes of a star, the nuclear explosion of nuclear explosions, a supernova, producing a FLASH of light bright enough to be seen here day and night for the next twenty-three days, and bright enough to be a big part of the night sky for two years after initial visibility, and still bright enough to be seen today, albeit only with a high-powered telescope, as the Crab Nebula
And the natives of this place at the time, whose individual identities, whose group identities, whose very language have now all been lost the myth-mists of history, what did they make of what they saw?

Did they have special sky watchers to catch this immediately? Did they have religious leaders to interpret it for them, or were they on their own? Did it confirm their cosmology, or was it so jarring that it led to great changes right away, producing something new under the now-bright sky? (Such changes probably happened elsewhere: the new worldview that led to the building of the city and culture of Cahokia, which may have radiated the several hundred miles here in a short time and even called to some here to head for the now-sacred place; and the Great Schism on the other side of the world that occurred shortly after the supernova also)

Would such a sign even be seen today; if it were, would we even take it as such?------

February 18, 1940 (and some backstory)

The events of this day had been building since at least the previous October when the past at the time died, and probably well before that: a combination of international politics, church politics (at all levels), and ethnic animosities along with an anti-authoritarian streak, a streak that was contrary to stereotype. The parishioners of the Holy Redeemer Catholic Church in Collinwood, on the city’s east side, would not be meek and obedient as the local Church hierarchy expected and demanded

Said hierarchy
wanted to install Vincent Caruso as the new pastor, and
the parishioners objected, for a variety of reasons
(some too esoteric for a poem, or anywhere outside a seminary), but
near or at the top was the hierarchy's insistence on imposing imported priests;
the parishioners objected to "the foreign influence in the parish
and to the foreign priests they often get"
Caruso showed up on January 16th, alone,
and was politely turned away

The head of the diocese was not amused, and
he didn't deign to meet with anyone from the parish until two lay representatives,
Mrs. Helen Sanzo and John Trivisonno, mentioned financial improprieties in the parish
that they would discuss with him over the phone
A meeting was held January 31st, to no avail

The next attempt to install Caruso was on February 11th:
this time
he wouldn't be alone,
he would be escorted to the church by a disliked diocesan functionary
Again
the attempted installation was politely refused
The third attempt, on Sunday the 18th,
would not be polite on anyone's part

That day was a typical February day weatherwise:
the high would reach 36 degrees,
there was already snow on the ground,
more snow was forecast for later
Caruso was again accompanied by the hated functionary, and more:
Knights of Columbus members parading the neighborhood in full regalia
(inviting targets for snowballs thrown by neighborhood children), and
(seventeen cars from the Cleveland police carrying a contingent of sixty cops,
including a deputy inspector of the department
(the only person who would be injured here today was one of the cops,
burned when the teargas bomb he was carrying broke in his pocket)
A crowd of 1,500 assembled quickly, notified by a female Paul Revere (who was on foot and eluded capture), Mrs. Josephine Del Zoppo, who rang bells alerting the neighborhood to what was happening at the church, even the police presence and the diocese's threat, and imposition, of punishment, had no effect: Caruso was again turned away.

The local papers had a field day:

"Prelate Brands Riot at Church 'A Mortal Sin' "

"Parish Put Under Ban as it Rebels"

"a shrieking milling crowd of 1,500 men, women, and children"

But it was three-strikes-and-you're-out for Caruso and the local hierarchy. Despite the punishment, the vast majority of the parishioners wouldn't budge; collections dwindled to almost nothing, and pressure from above as well as below, along with the approach of Easter, forced an acceptable settlement: an American-born priest, Father Ferreri, was given charge of the parish, and the incident was gradually swept from the collective memory and the establishment's 'official' record, until being resurrected decades later--------
Some Depression Scenes

July 1931
The voters had approved a bond issue
for $2,500,000
in the pre-Depression election
in November 1928,
with
sixty possible uses for a large outdoor stadium
outlined during the campaign,
including
possibly the hopes of hosting the Olympics,
definitely
without a firm commitment from the city baseball team
(with the exception of one year,
neither
the baseball team nor the later football teams
played there full-time until 1947)
And
after almost three years,
after the deaths of two workers,
after only a twenty-percent cost-overrun,
with the distinction of being the first publicly-financed facility
in America (certainly of that size),
the Stadium was ready to open
The first event would be a heavyweight title fight
between Max Schmeling and Young Stribling,
to take place on July 3rd
There would be ceremonies the day before,
hyped to the hilt in the local papers

"Stadium Dedication Is on the Air Tonight"
broadcast on the city's radio stations,
including
the first radio broadcast of the official weigh-in
of the two participants in a heavyweight title fight
And
there would be stultifying speechifying:
the Stadium would
"be an enduring local monument"
"the scene of great events inseparable from the name of Cleveland"

And boosterism masquerading as news would continue:
on the day of the fight a special section of the paper
touted,
among many other things,
the use of aluminum in the Stadium's construction,
saying
it "will always appear shiny",
surely
news to those who remember its dirtiness and dinginess
only two generations later
(another prediction
elsewhere in that day's paper would be equally accurate:
"BANK STOCKS GAINING STRENGTH")
There were several fights on the undercard, the only name of note being Two-Ton Tony Galento, who would go on to fight Joe Louis at the end of the decade, though in an omen unnoticed at the time, one of the other fighters was named Battling Bozo. The Stadium was filled to less than half-capacity, the gate was the smallest for a heavyweight title fight since the Rape of Shelby eight years earlier. (as Yogi Berra would say later, if the people don't want to come, you can't stop 'em; and in a deepening depressions you didn't even have to try to) The promoters took a financial loss, and the Stadium would be a financial albatross until it was torn down in the 1990s----

The Panic of 1877

Sounds like a momentary (and possibly unwarranted) crisis of confidence in the eternally robust American economy, the word depression always reserved solely for the Great Depression Caused largely by financial shenanigans of those who then made the masses suffer for them (sound familiar to early twenty-first century readers?), the downturn was still going strong four years later, yet those who were still working (albeit irregularly) finally got fed up with years of wage cuts and having those reduced wages further nicked and dimes away.

July 22, 1877 (the 91st anniversary of Cleveland's coming here), the train men, following in the footsteps of their compatriots nationwide, blocked sixty-four engines and two hundred-fifty rail cars from leaving the Collinwood rail yards, taking care to put the livestock in one car out to pasture so as to avoid the usual accusations "It is the experience of mankind, that a heart and conscience can only be put into business corporations by force of public sentiment"

The modest list of demands,
framed in the following manner:

"Resolved"
"That the ten per cent reduction be restored to all employes [sic]"
"That no man be discharged for participation in the movement, but all receive their rights as heretofore"
"That all train-men be paid overtime for all detentions over ten hours"
"That firemen and brakemen be furnished with monthly passes on the divisions where they work"

Lest modern readers think that last demand out of line, the testimony of one striker:

"Why, I may be ordered to take an engine down town, and for the down trip I am paid sixteen cents I then have to return to Collinwood as speedily as possible The company don't give me a pass, and I have to come out on the train, and pay my fare, twenty-five cents What do you think of that?"

Public sentiment thought the strikers' demands were reasonable, and the public was largely on the strikers' side And this enabled the strikers to fight the usual strikebreaking machinations, including the newspapers publishing train schedules, to just about a draw The men went back to work on August 3rd, having gained some small concessions, and the anti-labor hysteria went dormant for a while-----

Another decade, another depression, dubbed with the usual diminutive Panic; this one began in 1893 and was still growing stronger the next year Red-baiting had come into fashion after Haymarket, and was used extensively here after mass demonstrations by the unemployed, several thousand strong,
on May 1st and May 2nd, 1894

"Remember,
you will not be missed"
said an employer of those who walked off the job
to join the demonstration

"AN OUTRAGE"
(though the newspapers tried to have it both ways:
workers were either too strong,
or
they had no will of their own
and were at the mercy of a few agitators)

"The first duty of government is its own protection"
(something I somehow missed in my readings
of the Constitution)

"The city is practically under martial law"
(the dream of many an alleged democrat)

"No More Gatherings to be Allowed
on the Square or on the Streets"
(freedom of assembly be damned)

"Coxey and Browne have had an inning
with the Washington police,
and
the bluecoats are masters of the situation"
(as are the bluecoats here)

   thus

"The only signs of life
about the heretofore boisterous and active place
were the bluecoated defenders of the peace
who were stationed about the different portions of it
and amused themselves with juggling their clubs"

Xenophobia was ever-present,
even though,
as the newspaper reported,
the speaker
"was talking English"
(of equal intelligence
on display on the same page of the paper,
a report saying
"One death from smallpox at the pest house
need cause no alarm")

And
the paper reported a speaker's subversive comment:

"these men surged through the streets
in order to show the world
that they are unemployed
but willing to work"

to which

the status quo,

through

its unofficial (?) mouthpiece,

offered

the status quo's ever-unchanging response:

"There is no place in this city
or on the continent of America
for any such doctrine"----

May 14, 2012
A Monday,

and

the official opening of the first
of the state's four new casinos
(legalized in 2010)

And

though the current depression
(again not named as such
through the use of new euphemisms
as "The Great Recession")
is in its fourth year
(though things seem to be
improving incrementally),
as in

all other depressions named and unnamed
the vast majority are still doing decently
at the very least,

and

on this night hundreds at least
wait patiently in a line that snakes
around a couple of blocks,

wait
to be let in,

a few at a time,
to the casino's temporary home
in one of the departed downtown department stores
(the permanent home to be elsewhere downtown)

An event with saturation media coverage,
complete with idiot-in-the-street interviews,
in all the various forms of media

An event with heavier-than-usual
police protection

(at least
in the downtown district
and for the benefit of out-of-towners)

An event to be commemorated
in the collective memory
(with
the usual consumer crap:
get your limited-edition coffee mugs and t-shirts)

Later, after the saturation media coverage has moved on to something else, after the downtown police protection has returned to the usual levels, after the amount of out-of-towners has returned to normal levels, those who perhaps aren't doing as well during the current depression will take advantage of those who are-----
Instant coffee

Half past seven
the sound of seagulls
screaming across the sky
awakens me

The swift locomotive
of consciousness
slowly ripens above
a dense forest

I step out of bed and the visible
world gathering in the hand
of morning coolness and
other thunders appear
No roof over head

A poem for Karen Bowles

I was strolling the icy
winter day raindrops
anonymously singing
in my head discreetly
tapping with my feet
calmly and patiently
trying to understand
the empty apartments
naked of furniture and
life being erased
the holes become
fragments of what will
happen if the bird’s song
darkens parting the air in two
above thunderclouds.
The TV news said

Friday has
tits own rituals
after work
everybody
runs to a chosen
place to sip oblivion

How enduring
the week has been

All of us obedient
to the virtues of fear
and what a lot
of sand in the dessert.

Moreover,
there were falling stars
and a meteorite
injured a thousand
people in Russia.

In the church of Rome
an old absolute ruler
resigns his post
some call it blasphemy
others shame.

Meanwhile,
bankers add blue
rings of smoke
to other reveries; waters
shine dark in the unmoving air.
Lightsome

Today I was happy
I forgot about
the pains that will
be my guests again

A blend of loneliness
friendship and desire
after a heavy cold winter
the sun was breaking leaves
with the sound of small
unhallowed laughter.

Folded- arms

Hours pour
onto me

church bells
sway a signal

sparkling metal
across dirty fog

I stand, a shield
far from stillness

empty space
waiting beneath.
Paulette Turcotte

I want to taste the new spring buds

I want to taste the new spring buds of the douglas fir,
locate the sound of ancient forests on my tongue,
from my heart and my singular frame, suspend time,
from the root stocks, drop into
timeless summer, feel the heat
crease my face, as it would,
eke out a mystical transcendence
as happened that morning when I heard
the sound in my own room\when I awoke
and someone had resurrected a whole forest
that was in my space, my hall,
now, and green needles trembled and
lush wet ferns swayed in the unimaginable breeze,
I heard the slow awakening of birds and light
and sound in trees,
and waist deep in ancient grass, I felt
my own roots dig in, hold
from the beginning and some nights, too, when the trees fell silent,
in every corner covering every niche, every space on four walls,
and windows, words words words, as I peered into the dark
and glimpsed a brave new creation in these burnt out chambers of my heart.
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COMMENTS & SUBMISSIONS

Submission and comments should be sent to Klaus Gerken, Chief Editor at kgerken@synapse.net

Submission must be in the body of an email unless otherwise agreed on.