

There Is No Such Thing as a 'Minor War'

Reflections of War & Peace

**A Chapbook
by**

Red Slider



There is no such thing as a 'minor war'.

I was born into the warlight of the world. There were beds in the corridor of the hospital and blackout curtains on all the windows. My unwrapped consciousness was already marked by the in-utero war rations and the pump of a daily cocktail of war-anxiety rippled through the soup of hormones in which I bathed. For the next three-quarters of a century it would remain so.

There are big wars and small wars, fat ones and thin ones; wars that only kill 'them', ones that kill us, too. In the beginning, there was supposed to be just one; the one to end all the other ones. It didn't. The script went on, the Theater of Pain kept producing new ones. I expect I will also die in the warlight of the world.

I set about selecting a few anti-war pieces suitable for the annual get together of Poets Against War. I should not have been surprised that nearly all my work had some mark of war on it; on the surface or etched deep into the layers of the palimpsest of my life. Nothing, it would appear, can escape being marred by the years of reciting the same script, over and over. My mind simply cannot divorce itself from the scratches of war. Having some pure, peace-bent thought within a national consciousness that makes war the very centerpiece of its own ego is impossible. Everything we say or do is tainted by the fact that war is in the very air we breathe, the language we use and the thought we think. We cannot avoid the fact that we, too, are an occupied and preoccupied nation.

No matter that we say we will fashion 'peace' – we are so tilted by war that the very path to that wish only circumnavigates a globe of horror. We write, we cry out, we dance, we sing under the lamp of warlight. "Six big ones," I said, but the reality is that the countless 'little ones', the ones that only spend a few days in the news, are not really any smaller. They all survive and metastasize and go right on re-enforcing our grand delusion that they are somehow "necessary steps" on the road to peace – "peacemaking" or "peacekeeping" we dub them as we bomb the daylight out of someone or something.

Truth is, there has only been one war – and it is huge. Iraq, Afganistan, Pakistan, India – one war: Vietnam, Lebanon, Indonesia, E. Timor, Chile, One war. WWI, WWII, the next war; they are all the same war, and they are all MAJOR WARS. From the very beginning, those who wage them and those who suffer them – soldier and civilian alike – are war's victims. For our species and our planet, there has never been and never will be such thing as a 'minor war'.

– red slider, November, 2010

WAR & PEACE
(The Short Version)

A Chapbook by Red Slider

November, 2010

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WAR & PEACE (the short version)

WAR

We move so slowly, oh so slowly do we move.
It is only time passing, a moment returning.
We quicken our pace, to return and begin anew;
To hurry along, to arrive at the next moment.
Like the last, it passes and renews, and the moments
Drag on and drag on, anchored to the long now.

We anchor ourselves to the long now and move on.
Oh so slowly do we move. We quicken our pace,
I count six now. But there were more,
Oh so many more, stuffed into moments
Of things called 'peacekeeping', and war called 'peace'.

The more they dragged their chains of pain behind,
their scripts of war were as moving fingers,
writing the page, to hurry on and leave us blank,
Oh so blank, oh so anchored to the now.



White Swan

We have all seen predation
by hawk, a thing of swift
and often terrible beauty
at play in the pastures of the sky
that, in the turn of a moment,
reveal its essential nature,
its hawkness, the streamers,
gory entrails of some beloved creature
clutched in its talons as it turns
and returns to its eyrie.

But, I have also seen predation by swan,
startled when I flung open the back door
in my haste to greet the early morning,
as was my custom. Huge and white it was,
not black, not gazing as it pushed
against the silent volumes of air
over my tiny pond -- much too tiny
to be used as a metaphor for life --
a large, white orb that wove its way
between plant and pole, pole and trellis,
to thread itself through some power lines,
and fly off into the dawn.

It was an improbable vision of comic beauty,
in large public display witnessed through
startled, sleep-stunned, zoom-lens eyes
adjusting to the changing light
and shadow peeled from the surface
of the pond, drifting upward
in proper swan's-wake fashion
absent any private chaos or streamers of gore.
Only silence and the transparency of water
held secret in the moment when things turn.

The colorful shabunken, the large gold comets,
had disappeared. Where they should have been,
resting, waiting for their morning feed,
only a vague erasure slowly revealed itself.
The friendly calicos and the fattening white comet
were gone as well. Most of all, the white comet.
A summer of acquired trust by nurture,
required to coax her from a natural reserve .
Now there was only the stillness of pure water,
images of breast-tucked bills and gazed reflections.

A gliding whiteness is but paint over
the essential nature of swan-ness. Black or white,
a paradox only to be embraced with bird netting
that does not distinguish color or species;
lace that will not admit either gobble or gore.

I will get new fish, of course, but not now.
In the spring, perhaps, when I come to the edge
of the pond each morning, as is my custom,
I will do so, not as a child edging into wonder;
but as a steward beneath a netted dawn.
Perhaps then, I will have love on my lips.

November 2005

The Eradication of Popups

**Damn the green valley,
the poppies in bloom,
their mad-cow dances
on the black-grazed fields,
the dancers too; & too,
you are there in nothing
but your loose feet
and perfect perfume,
standing on the last rung,
a ladder rising from the haze
and lofted into the shroom
of cloud-curdled capers,
smoked on a hot green griddle
popping open in surprise.**

April 1998

Birds of Prey

**Do you speak oil? The sun death of economies
now fossilizing in their own inky rhetoric, spreading
moments of inertia full astern that guarantee landsfall.**

**Do you speak nations or flag? Cost-benefits that slide
ratios of 10-to-one or 1000-to-one invisibly absorbed
in unmarked graves - 'raped' counted by ones by nuns
or nuns raped counted by tens or American nuns spoken
in news-translated communiqués of depressing state-talk,
newsssssssspeak crackling against the starched habits of
shiny whitefaces married to god, Do you speak Church?**

**Or prattle in Family, codes, linguistics, cultures bound
by familiar rules: pater familia, tu est sanctus, tu est filius,
to a fault; a grammar from which expurgated syntax
will be imagined but not worn, daily papers imagined
but not read, lining bottom drawers of secrets ,,
folded paper-hat birthdays celebrating the inevitable
countdowns, waitouts, showdowns..., pick-me-up marriages
made with pressure-cooked loins inside steel walls.**

**What language is that, Office? Can you hear the sound
scurrying through the edifice of its grammar --
the giant vacuum cleaners sucking dust
speaking the vhooommm of daily meetings
on landscaped ruins mounded against the walled sky
of chinese-puzzle bones linked to impossible dreams,
can you interpret Rattle?**

*At 3:30 am one or more unknown assailants brutally assaulted
the Microsoft Corporation...*

Do I wish to proceed with this construction of a politics that cannot be escaped; a break that will occur momentarily begging for more anesthetic? Should we awaken the patient? _Do you speak Poetry?_ must I capitalize the eyes, for you? _Would you please Italicize the distance, s p a c e & 2m prn, Is there an editor who will not seize upon this text and slash the arbitrar-i-(ness)(um)(torium) of a garden pathway pursued by a spell checker? Do you speak arboretum? Then take a day off with Hortus and pretend its lovelier somewhere without the need to speak at all. Close the book again on a field of dying doves. Doyo happentto speak Dove? Yo!

Redmond authorities described the incident as the most...

And in one moment the phone will ring. Are you there? Will you take this call? Have you reached (the home)(the residence) (the *polis*) of, and we are having an emergency and the chord will not reach. Do you speak phone? Do you give head? Do you care if she did, if he got, if her dress – black with what kind of sleeves?

Do you speak Stain? Libido? Liberation? Must I reach back with a question mark where a mobius phrase was clearly intended for rondolaise dancers turning just so to an inner light unknown outside a small group of leaderless doves.

...a home invasion by unknown asian gang members. The District attorney said...

Do you speak English? I said to the rummy Filipino sailor on the Oakland docks. *You read it, he said, I haven't got my glasses. Had I heard the only lines of English he knew? Wanna fuck, Ripple wine, I haven't got my glasses. She shoot crap one time, then be off; fade once, no three time.*

“They’re playing for higher stakes,” I said

Did I speak Ripple? I puked while his words began to point excitedly and gesture, [brackets of secrets from Chou En Lai] with line-breaks in tar by a stick dipped in guano while his other hand went straight for my crotch.

...here in the glass enclosure of speech, investigators are still on the scene; press two if you want to stay on the line.

I remembered the few words of SAILOR spoken to a six-year old on the hill across from Sutro's, running so fast he stepped on a gull too stupid to get out of the way, and broke its neck....

She was sitting there like a fresh shower, the words left on the dock with the maniac who spoke guano and the hot iron of his slender brown fingers still burning through the melted glass of the bottle I'd broken over his skull, knocking language into the next bin .

She sat at by the window in a spray of cinnamon and orange tea with parens around it.

The waitress came by as I groped for something in broken-libido: a gesture, a lunge, a slant rhyme. *Youwannamenu?*, she said in one syllable that left me asking, *how the hell did she do that?*

But it was too late to recover, the plate-glass was empty and there wasn't a gull in sight.

Dream 1

**I dream of worlds
afloat,
more dangerous
than I can imagine;
for when I merely imagine them
I'm am still firmly astride
the horse of my desires.**

**But, when I dream,
that is different.
When I dream,
even the well of death
has been poisoned
and I learn to drink
shadow from deserts
that stumble.**

Dream 2

*I dream the children yet unborn
that see the bloom I will not see
and plant what seeds I have at hand,
a word or two that might be spared
though brief my life and faint the drum
that conjures up mortality.*

*Nothing more will be preserved;
here and there, a moment saved
against the time they might emerge,
to wonder if we ever knew
how much was said but never heard,
as though the dream would make it so.*

certainty

We stand on such uncertain ground these days.
One mistake could be our last,
would measure man as measureless,
confirm the scales tipped with doubt;
and those quixotic sands slipped loose,
our hourglass, this island earth, run out.

There's 60 kilometers of crust, another 2000 of mantle fair,
plenty to spare - a speck of goo for the driller's nozzle,
plenty to share - a straw, 51 cm wide by 10km deep,
to guzzle it up until it's quite through,
bubbling its own to God knows where.

A pinprick on this whole-earth shell
(510 million km square, six-and-a-half sextillion tons),
what does it matter about straws or wells,
mere drops in a world massive, serene beyond compare
from the deepwater blue to the somewhere horizon.

What's to do when it's already done;
some small tear in the fragile dream enough,
an aerosol can, a speck of soot
(only three-hundred parts per million permitted)
a few degrees hotter, minus the sun,
turns our drift of blue-white mist to steam

Call if you wish, the one ice, the other fire;
it hardly matters, ambition and greed
will do nicely. In any case don't eat the fish,
whether oiled or scalded they'll not be spared.
Those that remain will be poisoned no doubt,
and cannot be saved from our best intentions.

The rest of our schemes, played out to the end,
a three-card Monte, a quick cap & trade
of an island redoubt sinking into the goo
(the hubris of thinking in human dimensions)
along with certainty, given the time,
that we will recover after time has run out.

November 2010

The Bell & The Jar

"The atom bomb
is the Buddha
of the West."

Entr'acte

The heat lays over voices,
desert runways, empty save for old drums
and oil cans shimmering,
belles letters calling on dust-devils
from the field-flats beyond geometry,
whirling little entr'actes just above grayish

begging for relief from
longing to soon rejoin
thinking it would be faster if
and take measure on the way.

The foreign legions had stopped marched
stopped marched over the dunes
and away on summer campaigns
leasing their waterfront villas
to Buddhist monks on holiday
assured no further mail would be coming,
the sunlight would not be allowed to spoil
and the grass margins kept trim

postmodern as the climate permitted
if one could afford to
there would be a receipt for
and all papers presented
)in the order of
)in case it happened
)and not a single

chalk line would exactly match
the wavy rooftops of Barcelona

drunk on)
)and giddy
)with bad taste

the first sign: an ocean grown
so old and pendulous
that it might attack at any moment.

Dedication on the Occasion of The Next War and Its Memorial

This bell has but one tone
rung over the heads of tourists
on the village spread below in brown
patois, an even sound to draw them on
their somnambulant intent.

Where they go,
(they go bent under the weight of slow sand)

they go oblivious
of wheat underfoot
they repeat
the shuffle of
old men ground
at the mill, they stack
their faces rolled thin
and various.

On occasion one will remark
It has been a load, Sam.
There is that to be said,
steadfast and reliable until it was past
time,
when the overdo-ness of it finally sunk in
and the one would lay down
and the next,
but we need not repeat
the ring will hammer
thin sheets of twilight
into hope

hard won, these stars
cold and metallic: touch one,
old ones die, and one by one

each of the sons try on
the shadows of their fathers
the fathers fall away,
ghostly and pale thin
drawn in a circle
puffed (of) air blown against
the ring of the glass
that hath but a tone
a tone

as if all, so certain, brings
surprise, a ringing near
their eyes
to rise against
the falling of the curtain

with all determination
to try again, but why?

2.

We had hoped,
and all that hope was
on that day they tried
in unshod feet

— the trod of supplicants
to a thirsty well —

and which of us who knew,
knew our place, ever knew
when it was done, but hoped,
more's the pity than the grace,
that we didn't, they would
and we could only stand

idle by
idle by

in the shift of those [said] sands
(oh, how lovely that sounds then)

the ring of it that now resounds,
mere stones clink down the sides
that slope away into the night
on a penny's toss of hope

and how easily we might,
in silence, condescend

now it is spare
song in such
thin apparel

but how the people
sway to and fro
on their way
from here to there

as we stack them in lots
worn, and worn through,
they recite the tracts of Sisyphus
by heart and by ones or twos,
in each backward glance depart.

It was not the rock,
had never been but what was,
what the rock was,

a resistance that had rolled roundish
in some bitterness of great price,
had worn them to the callous bone,
the martyrs rock ground and

pounded into sand
lift by lift, the grains sifted
around their feet

a ring of grains, grass grains
built but for a momentary stand
under that aged skin, annealed
hand in hand they stood
in the glazed indifference,

in the ring of the sheaver's clock
picked up a scythe newly whet
and sighed the sigh of dying wheat

scarred and rough
as the mocking moon
with our heels dug in
did what we did
rocking back and forth

3.

It was a job
we could only throw onto
the scaffold of our bodies
and hope that halfway there,
and hope they might

but to repeat

the sounds we wore,
some in a gesture of gay defense,
others under the great gray tent
of our indifference,

would be driven to the fields
by such ancillary discontents
as we could find

could someday — half-way from here to there
we would try again — in wheat or rice

plant our feet,
the millstones in their rows,
watch the tourists
passing overhead

in all that we had thus prepared
for them, in dull gray wear
we weary of their speech

and repeat their speeches
as they come,

and as they go
we ring out sand
from rags

we've twisted in
our callused hands, rung
the gritty warmth from them
by the handsfull passeth over
grain by grain

eternities of sand that
slip, slipping away
into the sleep of glass

and overhead, the tourists
pass this way, to repeat
again, the knell
in its appalling tones

with rags, brown rags
about their feet
they come

by twos this time, by twos
and stand, knell by knell
over the patience of the sand.
They kneel and review

Home They Brought Her Warrior Dead

Why should that surprise any of us?

Doubt nearly ever hovers about the smell of clover
where grass stains the nées and the infancy
of a pair of stainless eyes peer from beside
the either sides of our slant slash mentality.

Perhaps, perchance, perskips per minute advancing
bees prance up to their gated cities dripping with honey.
There is this theory that testosterone ruined the world
and in the end the little birds all stung themselves to death,
hung their heads over the sides of old tired fountains
and eyed the dried-eyed mechanical phizzles for awhile
while rumor spread among the large-loined choplets,
drooped in the afternoon sun, they were better off on the hoof
as festival reared one more time its approximate gaily skirted
flattery; then dropped like a large pair of pantaloons
aflutter in broad silk and damask rose settling over a dry pond
where the ghosts of geese long gone solemnly parade around
its cracked trackless bed, their beaks stuck in the empty pockets,
banks lined with mimes silently applauding imitations of water.

Perhaps they are only practicing?

the minister said to the one-eyed king, recounting in detail
the furious sword-made gains - the blade-shied population
shorted by a head, the other half wheeling about sounds
of anything resembling the tinnish rattle of uncertainty.
Study, if you will, belief spreading its oily film over the sleek backs
of solitary harbor seals playing beneath a canopy of gulls.
Clowns. What do they know of friendliness?

Fishing and excursion ferries with their wax-paper bobs
of hookless descent spiraling into murky rust,
foot-thick plaque on the mottled spines of spindly graves;
sunken ships that mother the distant rumblings of dairy vans
pointed toward the end of a long pier conversant with deep-fat
and the dump of the morning's catch-of-the-day
into the shimmer of low-octane exhaust.

Pores clogged with deck tar, they emerge -
flop the beach like a heard of sand-spotted brown balloons;
eyes plead inland, mating calls bark to the shapes of dark hills,
unheard wheeling birds scoop waves curling under a sky
collapsed into a heap of folded tent - its side-show exposed.

Question for a 12-paned window, empty of eye,
the gesture of yellowing unanswerable leaves,
fallen paint chips in sunlight dragged over atonal
draughts of blown dunes, siren melodies struck
upon memorial glass & paper shed from a desk
piled high with mounds of salt and log-stained calendars
passing cargoes melted beyond recognition,
filed among the lost-wax castings of in-dwelling masks;
suspenders stretched across the broad back of a rumpled shirt,
a Z-number slumped in a captain's chair covered with moss,
iris-fringed, ever fixed on distillates of honey,
backward-glanced through a sun-stained lens,
calling green the maiden names of bottled shipwrecks?

June 1999

Isle du Goreé

*On top of a rounded hill, above it all,
a lone gun turret stares into the Atlantic
silent, vigilant, its open mouth voiceless
tasting the salt of seasonal offshore breezes
from the distant brownish haze of mainland.*

*Bittersweet moments piled at her side
hidden in small clumps of sand and brick
tufted with weeds and continental grasses,
she alone sits on rusted braces, watches,
waits within her crumbling perimeter of stone.*

*On the lee side, the island's only point of view,
uncertain pathways of brush and bramble yield
to narrow streets lined by tired and sagging walls,
limestone held together by the fraying chords
of bougainvillea and patches of second-hand moss.*

*Behind aging gaps, courtyards stare back in surprise;
a candid moment of dappled light shimmers
in the bowl of a dry fountain. In the light breeze
moths flutter under veils of an old wedding dress,
bench seats repair themselves with strawflower stalks.*

*Through eyeless windows dancing shoes pirouette
beneath a faded calendar lifting its page a little
in a breath of salt and smoke, a whirl of ash reaches
toward a shaft of light on the sill, but the moment passes,
withered bouquets fall to the floor in puffs of dust.*

*Disappointed, as if shamed by the curious eye,
she turns and hides in shaded modesty, the wind
dies, the weeds retreat into crevices of broken marble
under the glare of red tiled roofs, decaying fabric sighs
and crumples. The moths vanish, the cannon booms.*

This chapbook is being made available, gratis, to anti-war and peace groups who wish to use it in their fundraising activities. For information and permission to reprint, contact the author at redslider@holopoet.com

**THIS SPACE IS RESERVED FOR LOCAL
COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS, EVENTS AND
OTHER PUBLIC INTEREST INFORMATION.**

[Isle du Goreé, an island off the coast of W. Africa, was a principle site for the warehousing and embarkation of slaves for over two-hundred and fifty years. When I visited there in the late 60's, my gracious hosts did not mention this quaint 'footnote' of island history, preferring to usher me instead to the more visited sites of early French garrisons, fortifications and afternoon cafes. This more hidden side of island lore I had to discover myself during early morning walks when the rest of the island remained in a sleepy stupor from partying the night before. -rs]



The door of no return

The Maison des Esclaves was built in 1776. Some say 15 million slaves passed this way. Some say a million embarked through this door. Historians have argued that not more than 26,000 went through this particular portal. Other's documented the French, alone, dispatched more than 180,000 from Goreé in a single year. In 2010, the Texas School board decided that the whole matter would be henceforth regarded as 'triangulation trade' and that market economics would be of greater significance to their students than the peculiar manifests of those vessels or the human cargoes they carried in their dark holds.

Mars Beacon

Elements:

lips: linked sausage
nose: Fuji at Ginza
eyes of moon redoubled,
crescent;
brow: a glove compartment
filled with sundry notions,
unwatered.

Chinwise:

buddha abed, even then
long sweeping smile,
head filled with dreams.

Edgewise:

H'omage to the skateboard;
two-and-a-half flip twisties
on the slopes of Easter Island
still sleeping.

Celestial Playpark - Martian Lurkers

the final trimester,
3-cubed thousand years
of sequestered superstition
on a desert-dark planet
hiding priests in the valley
of lips, linked, blessing
pilgrims as they leap to death
from the fuji-sphynx beneath
twin moons. canali refill



"sculpture to be seen from
Mars." - Isamu Noguchi

Song from The Ballad of Emma Good - Part XIII

*East, the old gray horns still hide,
West, the steed descends;
what will come of year's long ride
when horns reverse at year's long end?*

*Whose hand lay on the centuries
to raise the reddish iron eye,
to set the waxing horns to grieve
where the great fish spawn and die?*

*Look again, upon that wondrous shore,
upon a night that never ends,
hear the lonely Hunter roar
abandoned by his distant dawn.*

*Look! Demeter, once fair and mild,
now, black-robed, Erynis stands
grieving for her only child,
winter in her withered hand.*

*And there! Callisto's tears are shed
upon her arctic rounds,
while the horn'd moon keens the dead
beneath a winter's crown.*

*The sky has promises to keep;
when you wish upon a star...,
now I lay me down to sleep...,
Behold! Our implements of war.*

January 1, 2000

...TO INTELLIGENT LIFE

All us little meteors
sliding down
among the rain drops,
streaming blues and reds
and greens, our sleds
shining off the liquid sky,
brief flashes of delight
whose soul and only mission
is to scream
“whooooooooooooooooooooo!”
and bury our heads in mother earth
to the delight of pilgrims passing by
on their annual moment of respite
from their dreary human lives,
to spend a moment staring up
at the gardens
of the sky.

Ghazal Without Ambulance

The world fell from her embrace like a torn cocoon in the splashing rain
leaves blown against the carapace of joie de vivre, the splashing rain

weave of wind and say, the watery smears of alphabet bloom,
glass-glued messages gaily wrapped, gray and shiny in the splashing rain.

Inside, corridors where music flies from windows flung open
to the unrolled desert sky; parched promises hide in the splashing rain-

milled grains of the secrets she had kept. Thunder eviscerates cafés lining
cloud-backed streets where black marble wept the serenity of splashing rain.

Soft clay prints mostly made of moss, dried kindle beneath the glaze's
slow-baked sense of loss, flowing red as the mud-washed splashing rain.

*... now from head to foot
I am marble-constant; now the fleeting moon
No planet is of mine.*

Antony And Cleopatra, V. II - 244

Still Life with Paper Bag (*On Loan*)

Station 1

At 3 on a drizzled Tuesday
emptiness, echoes and shrieks
arc the walls of long tunnels
from where dinosaurs are kept.

Exhibit C: to the right, a small room
on the main floor of the gallery hall,
a low marble bench against the wall;
stained-glass, on loan from the Morgan Bldg.,
with its splash spectra among soft fall patches,
the filtered sun familiar to most museum goers --
delightful poultices against a cold, recessed vacuum
of masterpieces from an age when darkness was rave
fashion and severe, its art cutting the heart out of space.

Station 2

Her thin verticality

on the bench
between
hugely
dreary Flemish
Masters

Seem to press her
like waxed flowers
into the fiber
of the wall panel
turned edge on
to picture things
Precariously

balanced

like fronds of
plain, brown
cotton tumbled
down from her lap
& onto the floor.

Or, as propped umbrella with streamers,
noted for retrieval by 'lost&found'
on his way back from station 8.

Station 3

The armory is space carved by form protected
from space. The great empty ceremonial suits are
useless for battle; inert forms of mythic stature
once stood invincible, its hapless resident standing
the watch of a pickled worm in a mezcal bottle.
She half-reclines on the wicker chaise;
curls her nylon feet around the ornamental
detailing, eying the useless madness
of yet another flag-sucking gesture.

The great helmets would be insufferably hot.
Thank god they took pity and let us in early.
She could only stand at the vertex, blot out the crowd
and feel the great wings with their 57,939 voiceless
names closing around her like the pages
of a dark pornography, crushing her to jelly
inside their vacant promises, passing her
from name to name until the whole U.S. Army
had used her up and smeared her jellied remains the
entire length of 140 black granite panels.

This morning her fingers brushed the slick snail track
that coiled over his name. She left a replica
of her touch on the sea of 58,209 vacant desires
that refused to die and took the first door
offering relief from fresh flowers.

Her eye traced over the seams of his metal boot, sizing up the empty shell that towered above her. She could see dents on the shins and rust on the segmented knee plate. She slipped her palm through the vents in the crotch and felt around the empty cavity. She ran her lips over the blood-soaked interior. Rivets tore the skin from her back, the breastplate was insufferably hot, the helmet blinding, the confinement excruciating.

A closing bell rang through the empty rooms. She rose, adjusted her skirt and left without looking back. A day-glo sign flickered behind her, promising more dead things.

Station 4

wiblldiyup

wiblldiyup, wiblldiyup..

gggggggggaaauauauauauAuAuAuAUUAUAUGGGGgggggggggg

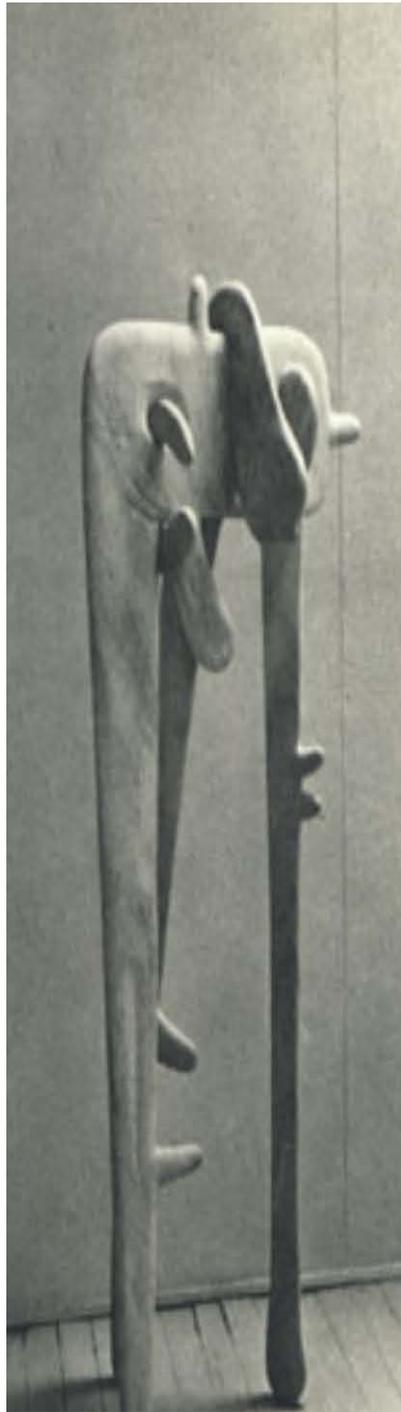
wiblldiyup, wiblldiyup..

grbla, grbla
grbla, grbla

CHKA.CHKA...chka.chkachkachkachka

gckgckgggggg...GGGGGGGGG...ggggg
wiblldiyup,

**Slide
&fit
with
tab 'n
slotte
skin-
ny
little
things
nobs
&throttle
dang
ling
smooth
shim-
mering
light
ly,
slight
ly
eel-
ong-
)-gated
shapes
slip(ery
sur-
face
(e)s²
sentially
play
full
parts
with
soul-
full
reach
may
chatter
clatter
on
de-
part
ure.**



Station 5

Glass doors to the Shakespeare garden, closed & locked.
somewhere out there is a statue, completely overgrown
in a deliberate setting of bramble, nettle and fig.

It has given up crying for recovery. The remainder
a study of neglect born in times of tight money.

old beer cans and gum wrappers have been swallowed
by the Elizabethan tangle. A shopping cart is parked
by the back steps, its wheels resist gravity's desire
to feed it to the hungry Shakespearean flora.

The doors remain closed: EMERGENCY EXIT ONLY
and to one side, the long hall to The Dinosaur Exhibit
is underscored by a big day-glo arrow

DINOSAURS THIS WAY===>.

He thinks he'd like to put an arrow down the other
end,

<=== **BIOMORPHS THIS WAY**.

The time isn't quite right,
but he thinks about it.

We presume a moment's break
when the clouds part,
of sunlight appearing to flicker
in the cart by the back door,
warming her milk.

Station 6

Her nails are chewed and ragged,
stained fingers scarred with cruel marks
and seasons of unrelenting usage;

HANDS DISCOVERED
HOLDING THE WORLD TOGETHER

but that does not slow them down
attaching light patches to remnants
with needles as fleet as quicksilver -

curved like the meniscus of the moon
in an overflowing cup - bands
of colored cloth snaking from a paper sack,
as she hems them with hues of stained glass.

The biomorphs cannot be seen from his direction.
The woman cocks her head to one side/the other
in rapid succession. From here, she is vertical line
suspended between two versions of the same Picasso,
eye-s and everything else in profile.
She throws bread-crumbs in the direction
where the Biomorphs generally congregate.

He cannot see this gesture,
he is hurrying to the next station.

Station 7

The last clock punched, he races by the columns
in the grand foyer, slides the final 20 feet
through the room of dark masters and into exhibit 'C'
as the final swatch of daylight scratches the beak
of the tallest biomorph and heads home.

The Biomorph recovers from an involuntary gesture
that widens a thin line into essential complex shape,
but the bench is empty and the race continues.

Last Exit

Echoes of doors clicking shut urge him down the hall
and skid before the EMERGENCY EXIT

The cement steps into the garden are pied
with large drops of rain.

A remnant of paper bag dissolves
in the 'hand' of something longish
and Mondrian, folding down the steps,
out across the forest green of unkempt lawn.

A thin vertical line merges into a thicket of wholly purpled leaf, awash and gone!

Station 8

Note to the night custodian:

- 1) *There is some birdseed and bread crust, in 'C' again.
Not much. It can wait till morning.*
- 2) *Do me a favor? See if you can find a piece of plastic
to put over the shopping cart by the east-exit stairs?*
- 3) *The exhibit will be moving on soon. I expect the birdseed will no
longer be a problem. Can you get me
a jar of dayglo paint from the supply cabinet?*

Clocking Out

He imagines them on exhibit.
Each one the penultimate statement
by artists who carve space into life-
forming perfect relations with Emergency Exits.

“ Rollin’ Life, with Brown Dog”	Museum acquisition, 1999; gift of Eddie ‘C’ Street.
“ Removed by Order of City Council”	From the collection of Loaves and Fishes, Sacramento, 1998
“SuperX”	Annie Wharfrat;circa 1950. Permanent collection.
“ This Cart’s for You”	found at abandoned river camp; anonymous; c. 2000

They'd parallel park on the sides of the esplanade;
or diagonal down the tunnel to the Dinosaurs,
under a multi-colored fantasia of circus lighting.

They'd strut with re-enforced cowcatchers,
night-vision reflectors, plastic grocery saddlebags.
They hold one of a kind treasures, cotton bouquets,
aluminum pop tabs, rubber bicycle grips.

They are infinitely grander than the wealthiest
homes of their neighbors; They are brigantine,
caravan, windjammer, Chinese junk and surfboard.

They insist on equal access, they vote,
they can cure, they are Art.

In the 'C' room they would circle like wagons;
birds would nest in their branches,
patches of sunlight play in their compartments
and they'd sport the very best in stained-glass
grillwork from the studios of Frank Lloyd Wright.

[from the 'Biomorphs' section in the collection
"Noguchi - The Man Who Entered Stone"; BigBridge
Press; January 2000.]

Pavement for a Dead Princess

In sorry dress stages they rehearse once again the third act of Aphrodite. Studio castings on long shadows down streets lined with visible eating disorders filling empty beggar cups. Ladles of procreative gruel sloshing over the sides, pass down the lines of succession served with bullion cubes.

Robes of silk and sorrow, bloomless guns, triggerless roses, off-the-rack cherubs dining on mothballs settling in the closets of celebrities - individuated reminiscences of fathers reenacted, mother's **stooping**, weeping, mothering, bearing light-meters hovering above intestinal contents of human auto shrapnel rearranged to good effect.

For **contrast**, insert into frac^{tures} of story-board assignments realized in associative play over the appetites of salacious and wishful units of desire entertaining themselves with transmissions of fabricated oprahlence.

The child now father of a ghost in skin of bag bones drives this hunger -- tent cities of soup bowls, glass flies - in the face of supply-side celebrations. A cramp? A purchase order? A few hundreds of **milLions** worth of charlie horses flinging themselves into the wire racks at check-out stands for tiger balm?

High-stakes communion with charitable deductions adopting **posters of children** in Brazil, Bosnia, Calcoota, Des Moines. , land-mine casualties, communion wafers doled out to shut-ins ordering take-out plastic surgery for digitized faces on a stage of vast unpopulated social architectures?

bag bowls of soup bones rattling in stooped knit dresses

"Psychologically healthy people have no need to indulge fantasies of absolute power; nor do they need to come to terms with the reality by inflicting self-mutilation and prematurely courting death. But the critical weakness of an over-regimented institutional structure -- and almost by definition 'civilization' was over-regimented from the beginning -- is that it does not tend to produce *psychologically healthy people.*" - Mumford, 1966.

Marilyn 1926-1962. Diana 1961-1997. over & over

a planet of charnel houses -- the law on the bullion, the light in the tunnel looking for tenants/ need to re-settle inhabitants fit for the occupation of unbodied domains ordering up greater than life replicas of plastic saints with which to populate the crèches of state, create demography, till landscapes planted in rows of corporations-as-persons.

Celebrity fits the bill, though. Ghost templates for

expanded images

bag bones of actors spouting philosophy, players defining tragedy, athletes rolling out new models of pumped & primed ethics until a new image rises to the surface of the umbra, becomes the ordinary citizen construct operating the machineries of cost-benefit analysis, **due process by terrorism by due process**, by supply&demand warfare fed from longings from below -

The new **titans** on the surface of the world

order feeding on street-lined appetites, folded into vapors of instant communication, now talk to one another in stooped languages arising only from the architectures of power, from its walls, from spigots upstream pouring children

into street bowls lying in state, filled with the passing
of human seed; as organ constituents buying magazines
while massive heart-failures stage events, speak **SpectacLE**
receive **purchase orders for photo-op story-cards**
to occupy the new structures of condo eurodollars
west-end east-end regiments over casting calls **knocking**
bag bones into soup bowls/ the knit on the sorry/

"Harrods...Haute couture?"

"Not this time, ready-to-wear will do fine."

November 1999

~ ~ ~

The Enemy Wore My Face

**Under the rising sun
The enemy Came
Wearing my face.**



- Frances H. Kakugawa
(from 'The Enemy Wore My Face',
Collected Short Stories, unpublished mss.)

Obituaries

Take four of them at random
any four, it doesn't matter,

can they be random?
Well, any four will do.

These four, for example,
these would do as well

or, these. Yes, let's take these.
Can they be random? Are the
cities random?

No, I suppose not.
but they are typical.
I would say they are
typical. Not random.

They must be from here.
I don't think they deliver,
so I would say they are typical.

Yes, that must be it.

Are you sure? Can you say that?

Not really. If they are delivered
then they would be random.

But, they are no longer anonymous.
That is certain.

They are four randomly chosen,
but not anonymous?

No, I don't think so.
Of course it could have been
they were just found somewhere,

that is possible. When they were there
I suppose they could have been

No, I don't think so.
Of course it could have been
they were just found somewhere,

that is possible. When they were there
I suppose they could have been

anonymous. But not now,
I can assure you. Well,

you can see, they are random
and known. Now they are known.

Before, I couldn't say.
I just wouldn't have
anyway of knowing.

but, you know them now?

Yes, in a way. I have seen
them here. Unfolded as it were
here and random. It might have been
any day. Yes, it needn't have been

these four. Another four
would have served.
So, I would say these are random.

You see, we can choose another
four. Or, even three. Just like
that. It randomizes with every turn.

and these four, that is, three?
Well, I've never seen them before
not close like this, I haven't.

Not so that, if I visited them,
I would know it was a random
visit. Not close like that.

Might they have been anonymous?
That is, at one time might they
have been?

Mort! What Ails Thee?

Mort! What ails thee and why
the palest mystery of morn, Mourn
now cast in longest shadow hides
thy whitish face? Why fell the dawn?
And where the grace of Beauty gone?

Once Tarek's cot stood there,
all else was dressed for war. Wore
a blaze of battle in the hot night air,
its anguish like the yearn of whores
who cherish coin, long for more.

What pales thee to over-boiled stew,
as if to void Night's dream? Dream
such bones of bitterness you chew
upon the deeds of Umm-Hakim,*
each day grown smaller than it seems.

The cobbled streets of Cordoba awaken,
industry and commerce 'In Sha' Allah'. Allah
at Cadiz, the hajj of great ships taken,
now that commerce wholly circles the Ka'bah
and riderless, the horse of Andalusia.

Soulless men now dwell in Valencia
reading Averroes in futile resistance. Futile
the lament in the mountains of La Mancha,
still, you brood bitter as the oranges of Seville
while Ibn-Rushd bends cross to crescentile.

In the great hall, ode to Mecca and Medina,
you sit at Suleyman Ibn Dawid's table. En Tableau:
peaches of Samarkand, golden-bowled tangina,
Medicine, Science, fable upon fable. So,
tell me, Mort, why is Beauty full of woe?
With dawn comes a precipice of sighs,
dark-hooded soul, cloaked in dark dark
melody, as if bliss were some grief passing by
and life but an abyss of stark gaiety.
Tell me, Imam Mort. What ails thee?

***Umm-hakim was a female slave, elevated by Tarek to the rank of captain, assigned the capture of a small island while Tarek proceeded on his march from Cartagena to Cordoba. The island was mainly inhabited by pastoral vinedressers who presented little resistance. Umm-hakim, not one to miss an opportunity, had one of the vinedressers butchered in full view of his fellow islanders and boiled in cooking pots. Her troops then pretended to eat this 'vinedresser stew' to the horror of his companions. Word of Moslem 'barbarity' spread to the mainland which undoubtedly made Tarek's conquest of Andalus a far simpler matter.**

'Mort', 1998

[Mort was originally written as a class exercise requiring we include the ten most forbidden words in modern poetry. Why stop there? I believe I managed to cram in about fifteen or twenty of them.]

I Know How The World Ends

**I don't want to know how the world will end,
I've already been there. I know how it happened.
Spare the world on fire like the ends of melted nipples
quick frozen under your mattress, icicles poking
from the edges of Depends, theories of makeshift
post-habitable lands curried for a single stalk of viable wheat
by arctic winds scorching the last page of inedible tundra.**

**I've been there, heard the stories a thousand times
beating down the doors of every last swindling auto-mechanic
demanding a fast way out of town at an affordable price.
It ends here and now in ice or war, not nice, but swollen
like the belly of a waxing aneurysm where night,
our desperate passion, leaves our bodies and the spot
looms larger every morning on the pillow,
a red moon'd reminder of the progress fire is making
across fields we will never outlive, brief kindling,
a pale fragrance of seeping blood and soon, all too soon,
in flames, I will strip the mattress, open the front door
and step out into the wind.**

September 1999



A Postscript for War

If we don't know by now, we ought to: There is no 'victor' in modern warfare, no winning side. How many times has it been said, *Victory is pure myth, absolute bunk*. Suppose instead, we replace that mythology with its reality. Instead of a so-called 'winning-side' taking what it supposes to be the "spoils of war", to serve its "national interests", we take the matter out of the hands of the warring parties altogether and place it in the hands of some neutral body (not the U.N; not some political debating club). It would need to be an extraordinary body with real enforcement powers. It would need to have the power to freeze the assets of the 'loser', freeze everything it thinks need be frozen: national institutions, military and police; every aspect of a culture and its connection with the world. In effect, this body becomes the sole architect of the conduct and future of the vanquished and the neutralizer of 'national ambition'. It's authority, like that of Gort, would need to be complete and irreversible. What, then, about the prerogatives of the conqueror?

There would be no occupation by some "victor"; no territorial gains; no oil reservoirs or resource confiscations or corporate deals for the taking. The vanquished forfeit the right to decide their own future; the conqueror forfeits the right to arrange a future for the loser to suit the victor's preferences. Indeed, if this body determines that a "winning side" was at substantial fault, it might well decide to penalize the "victor" and lend support to the defeated nation. Whatever the case, such matters would not become the spoils of war, nor would they have any loyalty to the ambitions of the combatants. The myth that there are no winners in war would thus become the primary reality.

Strange as it may seem to find peace through controlling the aftermath of conflict, rather than in its prevention, this might help to eliminate much of the motivation that makes war such an attractive option to so many countries; divorce the aims of imperialism from the aims of conquest. Might that suggest America think twice about policing the world, as it now does in its "national interest" It might and, for that reason, such remedies are unlikely to ever happen. War-makers seem to prefer the myth and its utility. With it, they can wring their hands about the 'horrors and costs of war' and go right ahead provoking, waging and profiting from them, just as they now do.

It is no concern of ours how you run your own planet -- but if you threaten to extend your violence, this Earth of yours will be reduced to a burned- out cinder. -- Klaatu, 1951

'There is No Such Thing as a Minor War' was assembled in the interest of promoting peace and supporting the voices of the human imagination that already know that it doesn't have to be this way . All Proceeds from the sale of this printing go to support local peace groups and poets and the abolition of war. All works in this collection are © Red Slider, 2010-2011, and are being made available, gratis, to peace and anti-war groups to help raise funds for their efforts to abolish war. For further information please contact redslider@holopoet.com -rs



10pm: two more biomorphs slip in through the back door. There is a light on in the 'C' room.

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