

THE LORD GOD HAS WORDS WITH THE CHOIR



by Michael Finley

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the best minds of their generations sauteed.
Down with the poets, commence the crusade.
Line them up and start shooting, mow them down in my name.
Begin with the successful ones in the same towns as you,
the men and women in salons who know
that if they were in any real place
and not some jerkwater parish far from Rome
they would be nobody at all.
The people who get endlessly recycled in anthologies,
panels, talk shows, the works,
they who have started to take it for granted
that they are the spokesmen for nature's art,
the voice of the flowers, the agent of the wood,
and talk and mince like boneless politicians.
Have them get ready to bathe.
Then get the street poets who might have amounted to something
because at least they had energy
if only they'd set aside being mad at people who've done them no harm
but that would mean losing the attitude
that is their weapon of choice
in an unworthy world so forget that.
My apocalyptic friends, you would not know an apocalypse
if one bit you on the ass.
The pagan poets -- find them, tell them
the Lord God Jehovah says --
BOOGA BOOGA!
The surrealists -- find them! Tell them who would make madness
an artform that I won't let them be crazy.
Hobble their imaginations, hamstring their minds,
let them be prisoners of syllogistic logic,
unable to free-associate or make the jettes of thought
that make them feel superior.
The solipsists -- let every reality be real except theirs,
let their mirrors explode and the shards eviscerate them,
In the hall of death let them be hamburger.
I want files of dadaists turned into actuaries,
hauling their crossbeams up the ancient hill.
The suicide poets -- dig them up,
and reshape their mouths into smiles,

hang lobster bibs around their necks,
put them to work doing community service,
for the people they shucked off and the examples they set.
The myth poets who walk in the shadows of shadows,
drive them out into the light,
invite them as guests to our poem pogrom.
And the introspects who do not get out of bed
until every dream is written down, rouse them and tell them
I have something nonmetaphorical to share with them,
Real spikes and real nails, and borken teeth and broken bones.
Call in the botanical poets and the bird poets from the fields --
naming things and reporting on their noises and smells,
and in all matters particularizing,
imagining this is what I do with you --
find them, mulch them, restore them to their world,
the rich good manure of poets.
The social poets who don't write much
but never miss a party,
tell them they won't miss my party,
I've got them on my list.
With a bullet.
The alcoholic poets with the hair-trigger responses
and faltering follow-up,
who sought refuge in the weak stuff, spirits of grain,
their flame will be smokeless, clean and blue.
Tell the writers of confessional poems their penance
shall be infinite fire throughout infinite time.
Tell the poets of rhymed verse my favorite poet is Whitman,
because of the resemblance.
Tell the feminists about my long white beard.
Tell the writers of love poems I hate them.
Tell the poets obsessed with rhyme and meter
that a clock is ticking
in their asses, and their hour of glory is nearly come.
Light ovens, start fires, pitch boil till blackness
fills my nostrils like perfume.
The smoke of a thousand poets in residence,
who communicate in surreptitious form
the lack of respect extended them in departmental meetings

because they don't know anything anyone with a brain
 lodged inside a skull would pay \$100 an hour to learn.
 Feed to the reaper the country poets who drive into town
 to depict the horrors of the street in verse.
 Feed to the incinerator the city poets who take the highway out
 to bless the headwaters and mouth the names of dead medicine men,
 whom I personally know,
 and who if they saw you standing there, spiral notebooks at the ready,
 would split you down the middle
 with an adze, or an atlatl,
 they were good honest people don't you know.
 Torch their jackets with the patches on the elbows,
 string up and debowel their pedigreed dogs,
 bring me the beating heart of the ceremonial poet
 assigned the dedications of new gymnasiums
 and alumni center parking ramps,
 flay the chancered workshop poets who labor with laser
 and page the world with simultaneous submissions
 of the same thick verse a hundred times over,
 a backbreak of postmen, a slaughter of spruce
 and for what, some pointless exercise in imitability
 that gives pleasure to neither reader nor world,
 slack stillborn refraction of art,
 a bag of vomit from an unclean mouth,
 vanity everywhere, top and bottom,
 fetch matches, fetch torches, fetch fire.
 Rage, quake, pestle, shout,
 all the pretty ones blotted out,
 Women poets ploughed with lime and the men enriched with manure,
 Invite every glad spirit who puts down the words,
 the terribly timid, who confide the only truths they know
 to incomprehensible lines that no one will read,
 O, their fragile courage moves me so,
 how do I attend to the business of keeping the bodies in motion
 and the atoms charged
 knowing they are having a bad day in a dormitory in Pennsylvania,
 heap them high like hosannas of unexercised flesh.
 Death to the clay-faced outdoorsman who writes in a cabin
 deep in the woods by the light of a candle and trust fund.

Death to the radical poets who assailed the princes
that I myself had installed,
making their jobs even more impossible and unpleasant
than I had made them to begin with
O you who make life difficult but sleep in till ten,
draw tenure, clink glasses late into the night,
You're highly regarded, you're very well read.
I grind your bones to make my bread.
My prophecy is plain, my prophecy is pain,
my prediction mass graves and smoking soil,
nutritious to the earth beyond all reckoning,
they that held such store in words
instead bequeath calcium, nitrogen, zinc as their gifts,
their limbs interwoven in a tapestry
that puts the lie to their individuality,
O, that one there, row four hundred, two hundred sixty-fifth from the right,
did you know he was a genius, a genius, a genius, a genius!
My geniuses are cloth.
Come to my supper and sit at my table,
hens and chickens stewing in your broth.
I turn all your whining water to sangria,
all your crumbs to angel food.
You are fit and right and meat to me.
Climb inside the warm abode I have prepared for you
for a trillion churning years.
As you are creators
and as I am creator
let us now be as one,
alive
in the
LAVA
of language.

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