

Three Poems

Paul Murphy

IN THE LUXEMBOURG GARDENS

The sideways disenchantment with the night
Is a subject of remote interest to me.

When my handgun gesticulated wildly
In La Rue Victor Cousin,
In the Luxembourg Gardens
We stole off to the Parisien
To see the busts
Arranged in verisimilitude
With depictions
Of the French Revolution
For sale at one hundred Francs, plastic
Eiffel Towers, T-shirts with the logo
'Vive la Revolution' plastered on them:
Where were Danton, Robespierre, Marat --
Heaps of junk in the mini-markets
Rotting fish, heaps of rotting meat,
The Morrocans bartering for bread,
Brown haired girls carrying fish
To the vendors, tradesmen,
Egalite, Liberte, Fraternite
Was the garbage of history,
Gone with the soupstains
The ashcans, David's Napoleon
Rode through the Tulleries,
With the Army of the Revolution
A ghostly battalion
Of waifs and unwanted
The unelected inheritors
Waited for the milkround.

REMEMBERING *THE HILL*

Those were days of liberation; I walked down Wardour Street
Looking for a job, getting nowhere, remembering *The Hill*

And *Lady Chatterley's Lover's* unbanning, as if that dour
Nottinghamshire face appeared at the dolequeue, or walking with
The crowds to Camberwell, a manuscript of 'The White Peacock'
Stuffed under his coat; I strode to the Tube and disappeared
Into the Underground's haze: those were the days of Ol' Ez,
The Modern Movement, Lawrence died in Vence, Ez got gaoled
In Pisa, Ole Possum strode above them, a banker's ledger stuffed
Into a scroll of poems, Nobel Prize, OM, no rewards for the men
And women of the Revolution. In Russia Sergei Eisenstein made
The first film, 'Battleship Potemkin'. Within two years montage
Conquered the world: Picasso, Dali, invented Cubism, Surrealism.
Manifestos appeared everywhere, exhorting, coercing. Hysteria
Gripped the world, as if it would explode under the severity:
I strode out of the Tube, into the Isle of Dogs, under the river
Into Greenwich, remembering 'The Hill', those days of liberation.

REVOLUTION, REVOLUTION

At the gallery of high unstudied art
We dined with the ruling elite
Who were unruffled
To see the toilers
Pressing noses to panes
Demanding to see the Titians
And leprous Michaelangelo.

So we made revolution
Bombed Municipal Galleries
Dynamited Libraries
Incendiared schools, colleges and clubs
Thousands of old statues
Van loads of paintings, books
This was no affectation
This was the day we had waited for.

After the Generalissimos, Tsarinas etc
Had been dispatched, we created the new film
Kino, montage
Pudovkin's *Storm Over Asia*
Its anti-thesis *October* and *Strike*
Kerensky as a peacock,
The new poetry, Men with Movie Cameras.

Trotsky's Agitprop train wound
Into the Don basin and the Black Sea
Red troops cleared the villages
Forced the Kulaks to their knees
Eyes bound,
Heavyfighting with the Czech Legion
In the Dnieper and Pripet marshes.

Lenin's summation on film
Turned the Formalist Poets
Into film-makers
The Anarchist Vertov
Was political trouble for the NEP
Man, *Man With a Movie Camera*
Bombed at the Box Office.

Brownclad NKVD men
Cleared the cinema
With automatic fire
A greater political opponent
Was Sergei Eisenstein, his film
Ivan the Terrible and Shostakovitch's
Opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtensk*.

The cinemas were cleared
The intellectuals went to the Gulag
The banning of subversive journals
Fell to Yagoda 'malignant dwarf'
Who was in his turn
Bumped off by Stalin
Fifty years of history

Largely wasted, built on the hopes
And fears of the proletariat
Who rioted again in Gdansk in '70
Prague, Budapest
The years wound in, much butchery
Little sense.