

Poems

Manuel Yang



Anti-Aesthetics for Bourgeois Times

This window of signification that
Magritte never drew breaks
crumbling under the force of
pistols shaped in heaven's
statuesque crimson. The roads
are blasted, the soldiers shoot
blood, and the lines of ashes
are as forgivable as fenestration
committed in two. I recall a
time . . . did I say "a time"? The
ancient tortures are long forgotten,
battles never finished, and what
"time" is there in this cycle of
crash & balderdash? Immobile
and memorialized, the gasoline
screams isolation & takes away
the only dignity I haven't got.
Nothing *doesn't* come from
nothing. Law of attrition. The
age--*any* age--doesn't only
does not need another hero,

it does not need another
genius either--it never did.

We were just spellbound
by the spirit of the times, a
mistaken conjugation. But
if the rulers are bad cooks,
why do we still eat their food
and call it "great"? Why do
we keep on dining on our
own flesh?

Hank and the Old Moor

Nightly, in his old age, after
a day at the racetrack and
while cracking a beer or rolling
a cigarette or sometimes
nothing, Hank wrote many
poems on his Mac, watering
his words like he and his wife
fed their cats. Was there a
method, a strategy, to his
productivity, his endless
dances with words, that
lasted until he drew his last
breath?

The old Moor died in his
chair, already the memory
of Jenny and his boils
approaching a receding
point of grave infinity,
and, of course, he, too, wrote
much, with the tip of his pen
dipped in hope, doubt, &
tragedy--and not necessarily
in that order--for what is *Das
Kapital* but a long, irreconcilable,
unfinished drama chronicling the
death & rebellion in the heart of
the beast?

Hank, to be sure, did not like this
bristling & monumental poem,
calling it once "dry, very dry shit,"
but, between Hank and the old
Moor, apart from their industry & stature,
they possessed two things in common:
recognition of work as shit and a will
to write from the perspective of
those who do that work.

A Benediction for Fundamentalists

Playful, christ-ridden bastards
in a wave of feigned desperation
take us over like flood & alcohol,
from freeways & airports, post
offices & TV stations. Worse
than bitter almonds, they are
tortured animals seeking blood
in the form of installment plans
& mortgaged offerings--loan-
sharks for God disguised as
an equal-opportunity invest-
ment bankers for salvation.
No insecticide will kill them,
only encourage that anti-
Malthusian dictum of theirs
that is more Stalinist than the
pen-pushing CP bureaucrats
now out of fashion. Christ,
grant us the patience & poison
to wrap these genuine Sodomites
in scalding brimstone & annihilating
fire down the valley where the
sheep eat their excrement and
fuck their masters for free.

Future in the Present

Dream of revolution, a shade of violet,
the coming catastrophe, nothing but silence,
a feverish wake-up call running through the streets,

figureheads broken in the bonfire,
accidents break out without conspiracy,
pure chance smashed like an exploding glass of wine,
the splinters make the barricades.
Rats escape through alleyways choked with noise & tender deaths.
All the empires in grief come to naught.
My identity is that spiraling star
witnessing the strobe lights of history's
clipped nails dispersed in a hurry.
Never to fall, never to forget.
The sweet, eviscerating silence.
They come, these sailing dynamites
without words or message.
A tortured tree in transformation grammar
of irreversible baptism of machine guns,
shooting up my comrades in the grace of chaos.
I arrange no crown made of olive branches & leaves.
The future is not yet stolen from us.

razor-blade tastes like the sun

razor-blade tastes
like the sun as i
lop off another ear
for a whore I have
sanctified in the church
of my dead dreams.

i try to signal feebly,
blindly,
to the traffic lights
strangling my eyes,
crossing hawthorne and
about to go back to a
house roasted with
suicided flies and battle-
worn bedbugs, the noise
of smog and blood and
alcohol

as another day
of grease, death,
and machine dull
my hands & eyes

from thinking
anything except the
thud, crack, and clang
of belt-conveyer smeared
with the refuse of work,
as i continue the transaction
to modern times chaplin
knew fucking nothing of.

NATO in New York

The miscegenation of intense light &
searing bombs began again last night.
So principled are such pauses of sharp
desecration before sleep moves fast
for the throat.
My soul, which is sky, has forgotten
how to dance, and I need some intoxicants
to confirm and convey
these cut-and-torn varicose veins of gnarled streets
I call, without hesitation or silence, home.
The return of the angry native.
Not these runaway's dream again.
I cannot celebrate the city.
It is too full of days smashed to
joyride flames & banshee brawls,
meanings all tucked away in a flash of a switchblade.
All our bedlam neighbors are sipping arsenic on measly social
security checks.
My discontent.
Curses.
Decrepitude.
The city is dead.
As I am.

optimism of will

passion and revolution come
like lilies burned at the stem of
a dying shepherd's lullaby.

all the bad language and
marxisms we incinerated in
a drop of a forgotten manifesto
shall not rise again with swift
incantation of apocalypse or
sudden kiss but

with bled hymenal flood of anguish
and beauty scorched from the belly
of this monstrous whale whose
intestines we have eaten, spat
out in blood, disillusioned and
calcined from dead prophecies
remembered, folded, and burned.