

Poems

David Bruzina

The Politics Of Soup At The End Of The World

By the house at the midpoint of the world's edge,
the fire is burning nicely. There's a big pot hung
on an iron hook hung from an iron chain hung

from nothing. The Chef is there with his heavy ladle.
The soup has been going for centuries, smoking a little,
bubbling a little around the edges, smelling so delicious.

Everything's in there: onions, beef, mushrooms and salt.
Fish heads to strengthen the stock. Pepper to give the juices
a little bite. There are also more exotic ingredients-the Chef

is no slouch. He's got Russians and Jews,
Arabs and Catholics, Germans, Spaniards and Serbs.
He's got Zulu in there with Hutus and Tutsi.

He's got the indigenous people of Brazil and a whole bundle
of American Capitalists. He's got Chinese, Turks, Koreans
and Tibetans. He just added a couple of extraordinarily ordinary

citizens of France. Already the latter are getting soft,
bits of them are breaking off and swimming around in circles.
There's a pile of bowls on the grass. The Chef is stirring

the soup. He's lifting ladles of soup and pouring it back,
watching the steam rise and the smell-the smell is like a chord
of excellent music. High in a window, the dinner bell is rung.

We are all coming: soup for the wicked, soup
for the righteous, soup for the ones in between, the ones
who are cautious, the ones who like to think a little, first.

The Inventor Of Capitalism

The mind was a hand that went groping
among the stromatolites, picking
at heaps of wet dung, rolling
mud into balls and flicking them
into the ocean. There were no thoughts.
There was no place to keep them.
The fist leaked. The thumb
was an irritant. Everywhere the hand
went there were temperatures, seams,
and liquids of changing viscosities;
there were good textures. The thumb
wanted work. The thumb wanted numbers
and tools. It liked to say one and five.
I liked to protrude and be noticed.
It poked its print in the wet black sand,
it pried at the cracks. It pricked
itself on a sea urchin, swelled
and never went back. There was a Greek
who cut off his thumb for the steel bead
that sat in its joint, praying.
No one remembers his name.
There was a click in the back of his head.
There was a thin wire reeling itself
down his spine. Could I become
a deity, he wondered. No one took him
seriously. No one knows
which poor child found the severed thumb.

The Politics Of Soup (Symbiotics)

We woke up to the morning of mornings,
to water and salt and minerals, bits of vegetable matter,
woke up like little mouths from the most unequivocal sleep.
Educated in hunger and nothing else,
we nibbled the hairs from each other
and fastened ourselves to each other's bodies, sucking
the thin juices, the chains of protein and swallowing them.
Those of us with teeth chewed.

Even the plastic husks, even the transparent membranes were eaten.
Still, it was only when one, swollen, ambitious,
with fins perhaps and eyes like a fetus's eyes, swallowed
the other whole and the other decided to live
there-it was then that politics became critical.
The one issuing warnings and threats down its own primitive throat.
And the other responding, revolting,
drawing lines inside that gelatinous body,
talking back from inside, setting terms and threatening revolution.

Thank You Lord For The Love Of Fat

Because the rich are rich,
they want elaborate coffins.
Wood of the tree. Silk
of the shroud. Silver handles

carved by Paul Revere.
Meanwhile, a small boy

eats eggs benedict
for the first time and suddenly

believes in God. What
will he become? A peach-picker,

a diplomat, traffic-cop, priest?
On a slow, blue fire,

the copper pot bubbles.
The waiter shakes the table-

cloths. In a dim corner
of the parking lot, the boy

is shaking hands with someone
in a tall white hat.

From The Book Of Kitchens

From the book of kitchens came
a last wail and squawk.

The cook had left for Jamaica.
The waiters had sacked the cupboards,
stolen the coffee and torched the rice.
There was chaos in the stew kettle.
The oven window was cracked from within.
(Who crouched in that hot cupboard,
escaping memories of Czars;
broken and basted by no one;
cooked to a fragrant, accidental, perfection?

(After the gleam on the butcher's knife
and in his one good eye?
(the winged hope grown clumsy?)))

Float a candle on the broth.
Chicken of souls.

Work

On the screen of my ceiling, hands
flutter like moths, paired
and agile, detached or maybe
the wrists are in darkness. They hover
in flocks in a spectrum of dirt colors,
dragging rubber shadows
over my body, their fingers
twitching, squeaking with finger-oil.
I see a pair jiggle
and itch and circle and dip
towards another and two sets of hands
clasp and fall in a four-handed
fist, through tiers of gradual
light, past mirrors and clocks
and the edge of my bed. There is
no sound of impact. I

would stand if I could. I
would tilt the light, allow it
to spill past the dip and rise
of hands, past the edge of my bed
to where I've imagined the lumped
floor littered with dead
hands rotting and drilled like cheese.
Maybe the light would reveal
them instead, merged into new
shapes, centipede-like
with fat legs and palm-shaped
plates on their backs. Maybe
the light would gleam off an ocean
of finger flesh and liquid
skin, a quivering soup
lapping the legs of my bed,
swelled the precise volume
of four hands every fixed period
of days or weeks or years,
gnawing the paint, melting
the plaster walls, preparing
a slow and inevitable flood.

The Egg

Meaty
gelatinous bread

of the embryo. Stolen
in the world's first crime.

Sucked while some one sobbed
and wailed, while another nursed

an impotent pride and in the trees,
predators fought

to maintain their composure,
drawing maps and inventing pots

of boiling water. Salt's lover.
Pepper's lover. Crackable

stuffed stone. Heart of my belly.
Biscuit of patience.

Agate of serenity.
Filbert of unshakable optimism.

Token of universal pre-memory. Egg,
as I prepare to walk among

the cowbirds, opossums and snakes
of this pecking, tooth-sown world,

I offer you the worship of my tastebuds,
the unassailable cradle of my gut

and the promise that tonight while sprinkling
parsley on your stewing mother,

I will praise and remember
your elliptical, original architectural glory.