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diverging threads originating from a common point
By Lee Clark Zumpe

five in the morning

she quits her bed,
  she fingers the remote,
  she rests her head against the door,

she washes her face,
  she blows her nose,
  she squeezes keys between numb fingers,

she flushes the toilet;
  she checks her voicemail;
  she coughs as she takes another drag.

breakfast on the table –
  dog whimpering for food …
  neighbor’s television too loud;

eggs toast cereal juice.
  whisky bottle hits the wall.
  high heels under the coffee table,

ham sandwich lunch;
  shadows mocking her;
  she passes out on the sofa.

she taps his shoulder
  she spits on his picture
  she dreams of that long drive

gently
spitefully
  despondently

his smile like the dawn.
  sick of window-gazing.
  remembering the headlights.

headlights on the pavement,
  headlights through the blinds:
  reaching the clinic early,

dropping him at school.
  one more late night meeting.
  trying to beat the protestors,

she kisses his forehead –
  she ignores his shrewd inventions,
  trying to keep their resolve…

thankful for every moment
  declaring her independence
  trying to do the right thing.
Commercial suicide

Taking off to nowhere
No exact destination
Just a payment in full
No exaggeration

Going into it whole
Making sure to die
You said it would be yours
And you never told a lie

Now we are confused
Wishing it was a dream
But you replayed it
With every last scream

Now that you have made
Thousands of tears fall
You shocked the hearts
And the souls of all

As the rubble of life
Lays knee deep in here
The world watches in terror
As we watch in fear

Flying toward your end
And concluding your plan
You made your mark in history
And left us all dried with tears in the sand

Forever your mystery unfolds
And never a weighed anguish
The fact that it never happened
Was everyones last wish

Now crimson and concrete
Fall from the sky above
But you cannot defeat us
This nation built on love

AnGeLiStic

Time stands still
For a single
Lonely
Diseased maggot-
Making every
Bone and
Fragment
Disappear
Underneath a cry
Of lost hope
And decayed triumph
Thrown into chaos
Of disaster brought
By the choice word
Of reality
Behold the pillar
Of your broken self
The one who flies
On wings of red

Slumber

Watching
It all go away
Into a swirl
Of nothing,
But a vague relapse

Sinning inside
Wishing for a bitter
Desire to soothe
My hunger and my rage
Hoping to pass
Onto the next plane

Playing off
What it was that
I held inside to myself
Biting the skin of time
And letting it all flow out...

Hoping for a last
Embrace in dream,
Where only I can rule,
No watchers to limit me
Just eternal night and
A scent of crimson...

Biding my time
Inside this hollow
Shell, praying
For a taste of sin,
A fragrence of darkness...

Clenching and tearing,
Foaming and seething,
Crying and hoping,
For one last ray of the moon
To light my darkened face...

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From: Necropoet@aol.com
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HUNGRY AND JOBLESS

"Our members," said John Turchiano, "have never been in this position before."

"Mr. Turchiano is a spokesman for the Hotel and Restaurant Workers union in New York City. On Monday four tractor-trailer trucks from the group fed the Children pulled up outside the union's health center in Elmhurst, Queens. Nearly 500 union members and their families lined up for canned goods, baby food, toothpaste and other items that might be helpful for families suddenly thrown into an economic crisis. Worried expressions were the norm. Some of the union members wept.

"Even as they boldly confront each daunting new day with whatever reserves of toughness and cockiness remain, New Yorkers are struggling with two particularly debilitating kinds of fear. The first is the continuing terror associated with the attack on the World Trade Center and the anthrax attacks that have followed...."

"The second type of fear is linked to the growing economic insecurity that is spreading in hideous waves across the entire city. New Yorkers by the hundreds of thousands are either out of work or are saddled with the realistic expectation that they will soon be out of work. Mr. Turchiano said nearly 4,500 members of his union had been laid off, and 1,000 others are working reduced hours. He said nearly all the layoffs were directly or indirectly related to the trade center attack."

"We are only beginning to glimpse the economic toll. An enormous number of low-wage workers, many without health or unemployment benefits, have been caught in the downdraft. In the worst cases, families that until recently were enthusiastic, if not highly paid, participants in a remarkably high-flying economy are finding themselves confronted by the horrifying parlay of hunger and imminent eviction from their homes."

"I think an awful lot of people are underestimating the extent of the disaster in New York City. All income groups are affected, but in the days and weeks and years to come the impact on the working classes and the poor is likely to be horrific."

"There are no guidebooks available on the best way to bring a city back from the combination of emotional and economic devastation."


During welfare reform lawmakers cut $26 billion from the federal food stamp program, six billion of which has now been restored. Today more than 23 million people rely on food pantries and soup kitchens for their survival.

NY Times, Nov. 18, 2001

A time for home, people, critters, weather, sweet peace, and new beginnings. Avoid the malls. Don't shop. Don't spend your wages. Just be together. The gift is the Self.

submitted by

CAROLYN CHUTE

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www.nomorejobs.org economicjustice@mindspring.com Cathlin Baker and Paul Chapman, Co-Directors

VOL. 7, NO. 9; NOV / DEC, 2001
The queering of sexes
The querying of innocents
The quibbling of facts
The quintupling of births
The quitting of scenes
The quoting of doom

"Q" from "The Last Acts of Saint Fuckyou," by Bern Porter
Collage by Sheila Holtz
KATHA POLLITT

Pennies in the Hat

As fate would have it, the very first holiday card to show up in my mailbox was from the Freedom From Religion Foundation, of which I am a devoted member and fan. It carried the witty and timely message, "Reason's Greetings." Now more than ever! Just think of the damage religious mania (combined, as it tends to be, with nationalism and patriarchy) has wrought around the globe this year, the first of the new millennium—the World Trade Center attack, the Taliban, suicide bombers in Israel versus yet more settlements on the West Bank.

And that's not even mentioning our own home-grown fanatics, like the recently apprehended fugitive Clayton Lee Waagner, who threatened to murder forty-two abortion clinic workers and who is the main suspect in some 550 anthrax-hoax letters to clinics, or the mainstreaming of conservative religious views, as in the explosion of abstinence-only sex education and theologically motivated restrictions on stem-cell research.

I've never been one for the hundred-dollar Christmas promoted by Bill McKibben—gee, thanks for the socks! and is that genuine New York City tap water in that cleverly decorated old Thunderbird bottle? Too depressing. Norah Vincent, the right-wing columnist, took McKibben to task in Salon a few years ago for advocating holiday frugality: Why, the whole economy would collapse, she argued, if Americans didn't get out there and buy buy buy. This year everyone from George W. Bush on down is urging us to shop till we drop, or the terrorists will have won. But you can please both Bill and Norah, enjoy the contrasting pleasures of spending and self-denial, do good and still get that holiday buzz from standing in long lines in a too-hot coat while carrying too many things: Simply buy stuff for needy organizations that help people instead of for your overindulged relatives, friends and yourself. For example, visit your local independent bookstore while it still exists and pick up a few paperbacks for Books Through Bars (see www.booksthroughbars.org for a drop-off location near you; or send donations to Books Through Bars NYC, c/o Bluestockings Books, 172 Allen Street, New York, NY 10002). No travel guides or romances please, and no hardcovers—choose dictionaries, fiction by people of color, science, non-US history. Or help battered women instead of for your overindulged relatives, friends and yourself. For example, visit your local independent bookstore while it still exists and pick up a few paperbacks for Books Through Bars (see www.booksthroughbars.org for a drop-off location near you; or send donations to Books Through Bars NYC, c/o Bluestockings Books, 172 Allen Street, New York, NY 10002). No travel guides or romances please, and no hardcovers—choose dictionaries, fiction by people of color, science, non-US history. Or help battered New York City, where the mayor proposes deep budget cuts for schools and libraries, by giving new children's books to public schools through PENCIL (c/o Ben Iglesias, New York City Board of Education, 44-36 Vernon Blvd., Long Island City, NY 11101).

Shopping aside, this is the year to use your holiday donations to take a stand for secularism and against all churches (and synagogues and mosques) militant. If you don't already belong to the aforementioned Freedom From Religion Foundation (PO Box 750, Madison, WI 53701; www.frrf.org), now's the moment to sign up: The foundation is fearless, tireless and clever in support of separation of church and state and opposing the increasingly bold power moves of the godly. If it sticks in your craw that evangelical seminarians are teaching the Bible as "truth" in Tennessee public schools, support the group that's trying to stop them.

With Christian fundamentalist churches on the offensive against reproductive freedom for women, don't forget The National Network of Abortion Funds (c/o CLPP, Hampshire College, Amherst MA 01002 www.nnaf.org), an umbrella organization of state and local funds that finance abortions for poor women. Help from the NNAF can mean the difference between sickness and health, unemployment and college, staying in an abusive relationship or starting a new life—or even life and death.

And remember Patricia Hussey and Barbara Ferraro, the two Sisters of Notre Dame who resigned from their order after the Vatican came down hard on them for signing an ad in 1984 affirming that Catholics had many different positions on abortion? They're alive and well and living in Charleston, West Virginia, where they've been running the ecumenically based Covenant House (1109 Quarrier Street, Charleston, WV 25301 www.wvcovenanthouse.org), which helps people with AIDS, the homeless and the poor and works for public school reform and other progressive campaigns in Appalachia.

With the economy officially in recession, joblessness up and tens of thousands of welfare recipients about to hit their five-year lifetime limit on benefits, there's no time like the present to support poor people's activism. The National Campaign for Jobs and Income Support is the coalition of grassroots groups that is leading the fight around the reauthorization of welfare reform coming up in 2002 (1000 Wisconsin Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20007 www.nationalcampaign.org).

Finally, the World Trade Center tragedy has fallen particularly hard on the service workers and undocumented immigrants who toiled in the towers: They or their survivors have gotten little out of the millions collected by the World Trade Center Relief Fund and the Red Cross. Thanks to welfare reform, which bars even legal immigrants from most federal safety-net programs, non-citizen mothers now suddenly sole heads of families find themselves ineligible for many essential benefits. To help now-jobless workers from Windows on the World restaurant and the families of those who perished there, you can make a tax-deductible donation to the HERe NY Assistance Fund (Judson Memorial Church, 55 Washington Square South, New York, NY 10012 www.helprestaurantworkers.org).

Checkbook running on empty? If you have e-mail, you can sign yourself and friends up with ProgressiveSecretary.org and finally keep that New Year's resolution to stay in touch with your Congressperson. Founder Jim Harris and crew research and produce dozens of e-mails each month on issues from Arctic drilling to racial profiling. If you approve the contents, they'll send them to the appropriate authority in your name. There is no easier way to make your opinion known—one cynic of my acquaintance compared it to spinning a prayer wheel. Hey, right-wingers out there! e-mail progressives many times over, and look at the way the country's going—maybe they're on to something.

It was a terrible year, but it's almost over. Reason's greetings!
From a stone bridge I watch old men fish
the river from rowboats as gray as the mist.
Hunched with work and age,
the lean arms of the fishermen are slow as if
bone and muscle might otherwise turn to ash.

Yesterday the bloated body of a boy surfaced,
where women wash clothes along the shore,
downstream from where little girls urinate in the murky water.

Two policemen dragged the boy out with tattered fishing nets.
He lay on the ink-black mud for hours,
a death stare fixed on passing clouds.
The fishermen pay him little heed.
They have seen it all, they say.

They have been here forever,
The fishermen in their bones,
like ghosts of the river mist.

For those who still believe that the world is flat,
I now know why.
The river is as ancient as it was five hundred years ago.
It will still be as ancient five hundred years from now.

By afternoon the rowboats float by the boy,
one after another,
fishing lines taut in the water.
A fisherman pulled in a line only to unhook a shoe.
With barely a glance he noted the boy was barefoot.
So he tossed the shoe beside his body.
Then drifted on down the river.

- John Christopher Weil
august pounced on us like a stalking panther
lean and insatiated
narcotic eyes teasing us into confidence
until

sure, there were moments rustling through our past
like rats in the attic
little earthquakes
minor storms

before you got off the plane
I knew it was over
you strained to keep the illusion sovereign
for a few difficult days
until

whatever happened in new york
festered in your belly
grievances and sour gripes
you were ready for a new menu

it slipped out in the form of a whisper
laced with suitable tears

you always feigned emotion

by october you were gone.

I began writing poetry and prose in high school. Presently, I am pursuing a Bachelor’s Degree in English at the University of South Florida in Tampa. To date, my work has appeared in dozens of publications in the United States, Canada, and Australia. My most recent publications include the following poems:

“Candlemas” in Penny Dreadful.
“Wavering” in Little Brown Poetry
“Luna” in The Florida Villager
“Making Love” Ibbetson St. Press

I also have work set to appear this year in Alembic, Möbius, Nerve Cowboy and Nomad’s Choir.

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