POEM

The Last Judgement

Frank Graziano

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The lines in his brow know that the time of the Tiger must come before the time of the Lamb, that there are words other than those that fill the mines with children and the colonies with soldiers in red coats. The engraver's burin cuts lines in the metal. The contours of the world are etched in the acid bath, his veins in the boards of the walls.

Walls around us. Walls within us. Shut in we speak to a wall we speak to a wall within ourselves.

2.

William Blake's wife lifts the clothes-iron from the stove, carries it to the table. Heavily it slides over the damp shirt over warm white cloth. His thoughts are so heavy. They have stuck in the clothes that are so full of thoughts that they will never be really clean again.

She comes to him lies down beside him on the bed. Their shoes meet under the bed in front of the china pot with the green garland of flowers. His sex presses in between her thighs among soft curly hairs, presses into the moist cleft where the Universe is created, slippery wet walls becoming tense and then lax. The Universe pulsates with their movements from star to star from darkness to darkness.

Freedom comes flowing in through their nostrils, opens doors and shutters, draws the wind through the chimney kindling the fire. A gust of wind goes through the houses, shakes them so that the pans fall down from their racks.

Only their heavy breathing separates them from the darkness until it too begins to breathe violently dies and is born again, is filled with light growing up around them. Another house where the sky comes flowing blue through the windows where the clouds glide through the rooms, the floor greens and is covered with flowers when his semen falls on it.

Quivers and creaking from the bed, soft liquid running between their thighs. For a second it was they who made the Universe grow, who made men rise and continue their journey, roots of trees press deeper into the earth for water.

3.

The same grey-headed God his muscular body covered with silvery down. The same white Goddess made pregnant by a flow of stars. The same rain between the furrows. The oxdriver's cry forces the plough through the soil with the power of brown muscles.

The same sun chained among the boughs of the trees. The same face nailed to the trunk of a tree. The same blood on the wet clay making everything move forward making the new Albion rise from the sea of Time.

4.

With the shutters wide open their house is filled with light. Their brains are burning like overheated lamps, burning the air in the room, lighting up the whole city. Giant cats come out of the alleys showing the tattered men the way home.

It is the beginning of the time of the Tiger. The cries of the masses flow in through the windows.

When the walls are falling within you the walls of the Bastille will fall. When the walls fall within us we become a single living force that rifle bullets cannot harm not a river but a sea like time, not a river but a sea.

Tomorrow or a thousand years from now we will open the roof hatch and arise our faces turned toward the sun, arise from our houses as from murky wooden coffins. Tomorrow or a thousand years from now we will live the lives we were meant to live. William Blake blows out the candle. Tomorrow we will color the pictures, he says.

Gunnar Harding
Translated from the Swedish by Gunnel Tottie

THE LAST JUDGEMENT

1.

Sometimes fishermen haul in their nets, or an ox tongue curls to lick a word from its eye, or from the earth a diaphanous rain
takes flight, Be there
someone says,
so the stars reappear
like hands full of milk, glowing
like barley
thrown on a fire,
like lenticular breasts
gnawing holes
in the sky, through which the summoned dead
slowly walk.

2. And a book falls open.
Fishermen
sort the load from their nets:
stars
in one basket, the filetable
silver disks in another,
and in a third
light wrung from the moon's
scars, which at night
soothe themselves in darkness.

3. Christ
is seated on the bronze throne,
and behind Him
the meaning of bread and water,
wine
with the waterbrash odor
of blood, the night unravelling like a scroll.

And the benches
are lined with the bearded elders,
each alike
having lived through death,
having the same opsaclonic gaze
of linemen
who, for injury, upholster the bench.
The sun is up.
But a ghost moon rises
from Christ's head, where angels arch their wings
in a P. And there are infants
and virgins
who are the nipple's hope, and lovers who
when they kiss
become clouds touching, they are
I think

in some sense
castaways, always pity
in the luciferin air of fire,
and in the pity
a trumpeteer angel
with lungs, and in the lungs
a psalm
that mingles faith
with blood, that rises and blossoms
with fire.

4. A garden:
doves peck an apple which is a fist
of wine, the branch
and Man's hematoma.

ELI! ELI!
screams Araunah,
the Jebusite, but a flint
leaps out

against the tongue
of Man, and an angel
with a sword
saws fingers from their hands,
chords
from their silent and bleeding
harps, gouramis
from their tropical waters.
And somewhere
a red sea ebbs in a crater, stumps
tumble down
through the smiling dusk,
then ELI, ELI,
this time rising
in a bubble
of blood, an apple, a plum,
a flame
that in a church
driffs from its candle,
floats
like a scarlet moth
toward the light, then
bursts, an erythematous ounce
of hope, against a brittle and stained-glass window.

5. At last
the melanotic once
upon a time
the day
loping happily off
like a lamb, the fish-souls soaked
and sorted in their baskets:
black bass in
one, salmon and blowfish on the cooling
moon,
which the earth full of sperm
comes to kiss.

And even though
the blind have visions of breasts,
and even though the mute
find loaves of bread in their mouths,
and even if
we cover our eyes completely,
and seal
the vintage blood of the heart
with wax, there would
still be

a virgin
in a pitch pool
digging, burying a key untinted
by blood, and there would still be the book
of Shem & Noah & Japhet,
and Christ
in disgust filling the book
with worms, and with disphasia
and a tear engraved with I am, even though there's
no one
who isn't.

--from The First Book of Og, King of Bashan, poems
written after Blake's illustrations for Blair's Grave.

Frank Graziano