

Christopher Bernard

Millennium

OFERTILITYOCATASTROPHE

O TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

*whore-gorgeous, slink
like a python gazelle,
impeccably bestial,
elephant-tusked, snaking
insanely green-eyed,
pink-tongued, radiant,
mongrelizing many-colored,
impossibly grin-moaning,
out of the*

nightfall

already come and gone, bellylaugh groan dancing:

drop like a match
down a dark airshaft,
nail of light scratching
the porcelain night,
out of the jaws of the
Crab Nebula
to the nightclub
moonglow of a filthy street:

lustrous one, lonely one,
moist as an apple,
white amethyst and
tamarind bitterness
stinging our tongues
with expectancy,
form out of the bones of the
superfluous dark,
in the cold fog foamed in
the collar of the sun
that chants with your white
breath, blackly inviting,
almost-sad merry singing,
nearly blue with yellowness,
*and wring the storms to come
from your mermaid-like hair:*

*platinum-browed, silken-hipped,
sigh, cry, bye dying,
your veil shot with foxfire, hungry with pearls,
dance your flash fire of famine and sex
to the hard rock of sky war and the hip hop of LOVE
as you shake time's bells with your belly and thighs:*

*advance toward us from a straight horizon
like a caravan out of a sea mirage,
turbulent with sea fog, emerging like the moon,
rising from the waves like a ball of stone
toward the night's wasted thighs.*

*Half lust, half warning, half promise, half-disgust,
you we escape into like gas~
we dance at the vacant all-night set
you twist and untwist at like a club queen at dawn,
playing with our suspicious and naive eyes
like so many spiders among so many butterflies.*

Birds flood to you out of some canyon in the
dusk
of portents, laughter, headlines, advertisements,
lies,
a flag of a hand drifting past us,
just out of reach, with fury in its eyes.

Distantly your anxious castanets clap
clikchrrclak clikchrrr in the damp bodega-cellars,
winey with dogs and sucked-out pig bladders,
at the vanity show of under-rehearsed DREAM
rancid with the smell of relentless sunrise,
the all-night drunk of a stone-mouthed time~
her belly blown
like Getto glass
with you inside her
making signals from the womb.

Something like a perfume of roses and tar
will drift from the scarf that tightens round your
neck
like wind twisting a hawthorn of mock moon and
fire;
you reach to the altar above our heads
and burn the ledgers like a pile of blossoms:
"You end ZERO, ZERO
this dead, dead time

*this dead century
white in its bed of red."*

Carry us,
siren, balefire, unseen,
to your bed where we dream we are ashes' dream,
pelvis of wreckage and flame, knowing nothing
of any FUTURE at all,
time beginning to burn as you fall
in a rain of cinders and lethal starlight,
like a mantle of flesh to bury us
in the unceremonious night
~your iron tongue on the ice flint
LIKE A KNIFE ON STONE~
as *it* fills our nose throat ears mouth EYES
with the xenon from your dying *star*
and pieces of the shattered bowl of the *sky*
~comet or *man, woman* or meteor~
all compacted into ONE,
shouting down the beast-tangled rivers of the sun
erasing them into memory:

fertility catastrophe

o twenty-first

century

The Ghost Fleet of Suisun Bay

Huddled like chicks on a cold morning
under the feet of the sun:
boxes of wet vacuum
squeezing into squares of shadow
under a sky smiling like a blank check:

defeated, humiliated, aging,
corpse-leaning, froglike
with dragon flies on their tongues,
pancaked into seclusion
and hypocritical nightmares
of security ~ like so many of us.

Mothballed veterans of the subprime,
warlike vacuities of dehiscence,
wrecks that avoided pitfalls
onto mud bank or reef
only to wallow in safety
like houseboats moored in a swamp,
they missed the grand detour
into battle, cyclone, Captain Death Wish,
the screaming myth and the headline,
they safely decline to mortality,
blankly shocked at their own squalor,
their prudent declension toward death:

birthpangs
squawking behind cocktail napkins,
the perverse once witness of flocks
of frothing crows and trash gulls,
limping between the Farallons
like gimpy whales:

tucked into the seasonal bay
like a gaggle of otiose and obsolete senior
citizens,
wintering for decades,
they rust and pollute and decompose and flower,
giving their discharges
like sick babies,
rotting under their nanny, the grinning sun.

The train passes them hourly, the commuters
yawn,

peck at their laptops, flip through their
newspapers,
yawn,
check out their email, text message, dither, yawn,
glance at the ghost fleet, blink, shrug, squirm,
yawn,
between the morning launch and the wreck of
evening.

(Excerpts from this poem appeared in Christopher Bernard's
film
The Ghost Fleet of Suisun Bay, posted in the Winter/Spring 2011
CL.)