



Clockwise, from upper left: Charb, Cabu, Wolinski, Tignous, Honoré.

Christopher Bernard

A Refusal to Mourn the Death by Gunfire of Five Cartoonists and Seven Others at *Charlie Hebdo*, in Paris, January 7, 2015

We shall not weep, shall not rage, shall not lament—
we shall laugh, and not a bitter laugh,
a laugh from the belly, a loud and giddy
laugh that knows no bounds,
splits our sides, shakes us like jelly,
makes us dizzy, gasp for air,
a laugh that almost makes us want to die—
but we don't die of it:
we live because of it,
we live in the heart, on the waves of this laughter,
we laugh—chuckle—chortle—giggle—we can't
stop it—STOP IT!
Nope! We soar across the sky, like shrimp shooting backwards,
airborne on shrieks,
hysterical as angels
laughing at those poor devils

who don't know how to laugh for the sheer cracked fun of it,
who turn everything into anger and hatred,
into spite and resentment, who poison life with their hatred,
who are messengers of death, bringers of death
with their terrible pride and hatred and anger,
their refusal to look in the mirror and giggle,
because life and love are wonderfully absurd,
but there is nothing more absurd than death,
and nothing more stupid, beside the point, ridiculous
than murder and its bloodthirsty family, battle and war:
they can't laugh, so they kill,
they will never know that laughter is love of life,
is life itself, and whenever we laugh, life
triumphs. No:
we shall not weep, we shall not rage, we shall not lament—
we shall laugh like the angels as they welcome these twelve into paradise.

That deep thunderous sound (do you hear it,
shaking up things in the background?)
is the Old Man undergoing the tickling treatment—
first a grin, then a giggle, then a chuckle, then a chortle,
then a titter, a guffaw, wheeze, sneeze and the bees' knees —
it's a hurricane, it's a typhoon:
hold on to your hats, ladies!
hold on to your heads, gents!
Those guys must've just shown him that cartoon
where God's in a bar, saying to the barkeep,
"Technology! I keep saying, 'Fiat lux, fiat lux,'
and the goddamn light won't go on!"

Christopher Bernard is co-editor of *Caveat Lector*. He is also the author of several books, including the novel *A Spy in the Ruins*. He is a regular contributor to *Synchronized Chaos Magazine* and writes the poetry blog "The Bog of St. Philinte."