



Haikus d'Etat
Erik Naaman

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Erik Noonan

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Omerta Publications
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omertapub@comcast.net

For Charlotte

The Crack in the Bubbly

Venice
Genoa
Holland
Britain

When finance cannibalizes production
and excretes its returns in a hedge

fund

it spells messy moments ahead
for hegemonic power!

Boot Camp Fitness (Von Clausewitz in
Activewear)

During peacetime
an encoding of norms
in terms
on loan
from the field manuals
of military doctrine
exposes
civilian life
as the stalemate
it's always been

Society
is continuous
mutual
aggression

Economics
decides the sides
government
turns the dial

Overton & Walwyn

It doesn't feel relaxing
this air
which sometimes wafts
into the mentals
from towerlike stacks
teetering outside
an open window
whispering
*what in former time
was done by war
and by
impoverishing
of the people
our latter princes
have endeavored to effect
by giving them
ease and wealth*
putting into practice
a theory
of government
predicated
on the idea
that control
rather than
regulation
secures
not individual rights
but quiescence en masse
a condign enslavement
if they go along with it
when given the choice

Jarred back to the real
out of a so to speak
occupational miasma
one resumes life
among other humans

Collateral

Anyone
who thinks
these conditions
unique
and unprecedented
should consult
Proudhon

“Buying
for 3 francs
what’s worth 6
selling
for 6 francs
what’s worth 3

“between commerce
thus defined
and theft
American style
the only difference
is size of profit”

World doesn’t turn
nor do globes
a planet does

Every
majority
puts us
up

POTUS

sprang coatless
from his limo
tiptoed over
some building
tops
and dove into
The Politician
a William Hogarth
cartoon

where presto!
he became
the ghoul
who squints
at broadsheets
and sets
his hat brim on fire
with a candle

No femme
in khakis
grins
thumbs up
from those pages
instead
“the trajectory
of American foreign policy”
streaks
across his sight

like the twenty-mile arc
of shells
from the *Iowa's*
16" guns

or like
the decline
and fall
of immoderate
greatness

or like
the shape
of a stiff schlong

Is that curve
eternal?
No
Can it speak?
Yes
What does it say?

“We don't do
the D.C.
party scene
that circus
doesn't apply
the press corps
figures
I'm aloof”

Once More Into the Catamaran, Good Buddy

Although it's true
he could
not very well
have been playing
at the House Speaker's
regular club
the Chief
Exec
cut short
his day
on the links
and punched
the clock
so as to get
a drone's eye view
of the assassination

They ordered in
a sandwich
platter
from Costco
for that
Sitch Room
takeout
As the
helicopter
went down
potato salad
cold cuts
froze en route
open mouths
on pause

A people
that delights
in merciless
enforcements
of caste
and the
melodrama
of contemptuous
gesture
deserves what
it gets

In this case
a Commander-
in-Chief
who says
of Cairo,
the Belgian Malinois
they'd brought
to sniff out
their target,
"I gotta meet
that dog"

Verisimilitude

Halfway through the bit
About special friendships
I found a knee,
Laid out my hand
And cut in:
“Your Royal Highness
How would it look
If I went back home
And informed the *Post*
You have clammed up on us
Withholding evidence
Which could facilitate the capture
Of militants who intend
To destabilize our economy?!”
Air ducts hummed
Fronds deferred
A lanner stood in its hood
My host sat aghast
As if I was a kid
With bad table manners
And he was my granny
This didn’t matter.
For one thing, I knew
The tart crackle
Of repartee among staff
Aboard the return flight
Would supply a crucial note
Of *truthiness* that had been lacking
During our stay
(Not like we weren’t pickled
The entire time).
In other words, I knew

People who “write”
About jobs
Folks like me do
Adore coarse verbiage e.g.
“We got nuthin’
They just shined some sun
Up our butt”
Which was hot *Vanity Fair* copy
Even as I spoke.
RIYADH VANITIES
COME TO DUST IN VEGAS
A *Syriana* scene
What counts
Isn’t the way
We’re in cahoots on my end
But how the phrase guys
Spin their story
So every stiff who doesn’t think
In the US of A will buy it.

Esprit de Press Corps

Having spent uncountable hours
Pulling morgue quotes trawling stories
Buried deep on the sports wire
For use in what I write
Offstage while white people packed in
Like Vienna sausages applaud
With dire fervor as the candidate stands
Shotgun bends under the sun visor
Waves clambers up to a mic dais
Then declaims the same speech thrice daily
I stare into blue-gray perm nimbuses
And wonder: What gives?
Why does this cipher empty as walnuts
Set everyone so ill at ease?
Does he have no pinky's worth
Of skeleton in his closet?
Tour bus seats mean face time
Our job is to contrive fictions
That neither corroborate nor
Contradict the ironclad campaign
Consultants' flimsy horse race
Script but just render it better
Entertainment for home viewers
The guy one row back records
Tomorrow's spot under his jacket
We pile out for an avail at which
During remarks pertaining to an opponent
A bird smacks the plate glass
Full speed so our man says
"He's trying to get in. Do not let him in."
I occupy the dim outskirts of this
Later because one grand gets you

Lawn access and gab with old ladies
In Stetsons and platinum oil rig earrings
Who paid the full pop to dine
Indoors when the jaw and coif
Appear onstage behind some rope.

Soft Sell

Unbeknownst to him
he got involved
in the ultimate
buyout
stakes higher
than ever before
his client was The
Establishment boss
and all
their target
acquisition
would oversee
an annual budget
of trillions
super committees
underwrote the deal
everything
about it rocked
that is
right up until
he felt
spread across
his nerves
like the scuttle
of many
robo spiders
the bad news
no one had let him in on
not how the item
was him
nor even how
nobody

checking him out
fainted from sticker shock
but how he himself
qua commodity
he was nothing more
than pure shelf life
a mothball
amid the ivy league
turtlenecks
in the party cloak room
no haze
that palmy evening
he powered down early
climbed into
the compound
aerie
gazed out its embrasure
watched offshore
accounts accrue interest
as the sun set
on an era of legalized
fraud
and over nightcap
opioids
he sighed
for bygone days
when you could
break away
on your Gordon Gecko
trip
without any care
why a pissed off
electorate
might not go for
being addressed

as if they were
delivering prunes and pâté
to the boardroom
he wept
pink ticker tape
he saw red
worms uncoil
under the real
rain
it purpled
his organless body
the deep blue walls
of his skull
turned bottle green

Obiter Dicta

Abnormally crass
NY Times
Books section
9/12/01
“What should those
who have lost
friends and family
in yesterday’s
terrorist atrocities
read?”
I don’t know
looks like
no one
pays poetry
any attention
at least
outside
a few
that already know
it has no inside
refer the poets
in turn
to Richard Price
*Observations on
the Nature of
Civil Liberty*
Part II Section iii
“Of the Policy
of the War
with America”
*And yet
we imagine ourselves*

*ill used
in truth
we expected
to find them
a cowardly rabble
who would lie quiet
at our feet
they have disappointed us
risen
in their own defense
and replied
by force
they deny
the plenitude
of our power
over them
and insist
upon being treated
as free
communities
this has provoked us
and kindled
our governors
into rage
1776
notebook
entries
pages apart
collapse
years
the only
method is
empathic*

Former Poet in San Francisco

Why is it
that now and then
someone
in whose writing
his own time
appears
as a grotesque
caricature
describes
with the selfsame writing
this time
so accurately
one shakes one's head
in misplaced
embarrassment
on behalf
of an entity
which can be said
to exist
only after
everybody present
has moved on?

Intermittently
but for their words'
obsolescence
the anarchists
knaves
heretics
rejects
ancien régimistes
and

bedlamites
d'antan
turn out
to be as one
with the
model cites
downtown

The other day
for example
at magic hour
when I stepped back out
onto the grid
of a now
aubergine sky
having again
taken up my post
in the plush breadline
since morning
to no effect
Jonathan Swift's
Discourse
returned on the brain
in hyperbolic reverb
amidst
the contract furniture
nourishment units
and other junk
appertaining
to an insecure
workforce
that drifts
beneath the spires
and finials
of this latest

neo-mercantilist
spasm
like the virus
through a machine

*For let
Speculative Men
Reason
or rather Refine
as they please
– he says –
it ever will be true
among us
that as long as men
engage
in the Publick service
upon private Ends
and whilst
all Pretenses
to a sincere
Roman Love
of our Country
are lookt upon
as an Affectation
a Foppery
or a Disguise
(which has been
a good while
our Case
and is likely to
continue so)
it will be safer
to trust
our Property*

*and Constitution
in the hands
of such
who have pay'd
for their Elections
than of those
who have obtained them
by servile Flatteries
of the People*

Suddenly
though it's 312 years old
and doesn't rate
a blip
on the linguascape
that sentiment
felt American
like televangelism
and Spam

All at once
it seemed
the extrajudicial
torture
of dissentient proles
abroad
and the tinsel
demagoguery
tolerated
by consensually toilsome ones
stateside
both serve
the same end

As I left
at last
through glass canyons
devoid
now of those words
and yet
thronged with
their future
the pellucid
tones
had already
given way
once more
to the
noxious glare
of murk

No Thru Traffic

These we called "words." – Michael Slosek

If art were part
of life
one more item
in the epic catalog
Material Culture
& life were
a super art
then the poem
would be realia
you could pair
with any other
choice at table
for a dash
of tears
& sweat

That bland flavor
is an acquired taste
like the emotion
or tranquility
of another person
& also like them
is a function
of the mutation
of instinct
with age

Vicarious states
give off an affect
the apparatus

brands and sells
there are people
who call that trade
in gratification
& fulfillment
Art

The legion
of versifiers
write
as if
having survived
into old age
people
who still bother
reading poetry
do so
because it goes
with food
& drink
not because
in a poem
the hope
that someday
pain & pleasure
will mind their own business
stands forth
with distinct contours
dignified
rather than bleary
smeared obvious
mumbling
the thwarted half-measures
called Life

