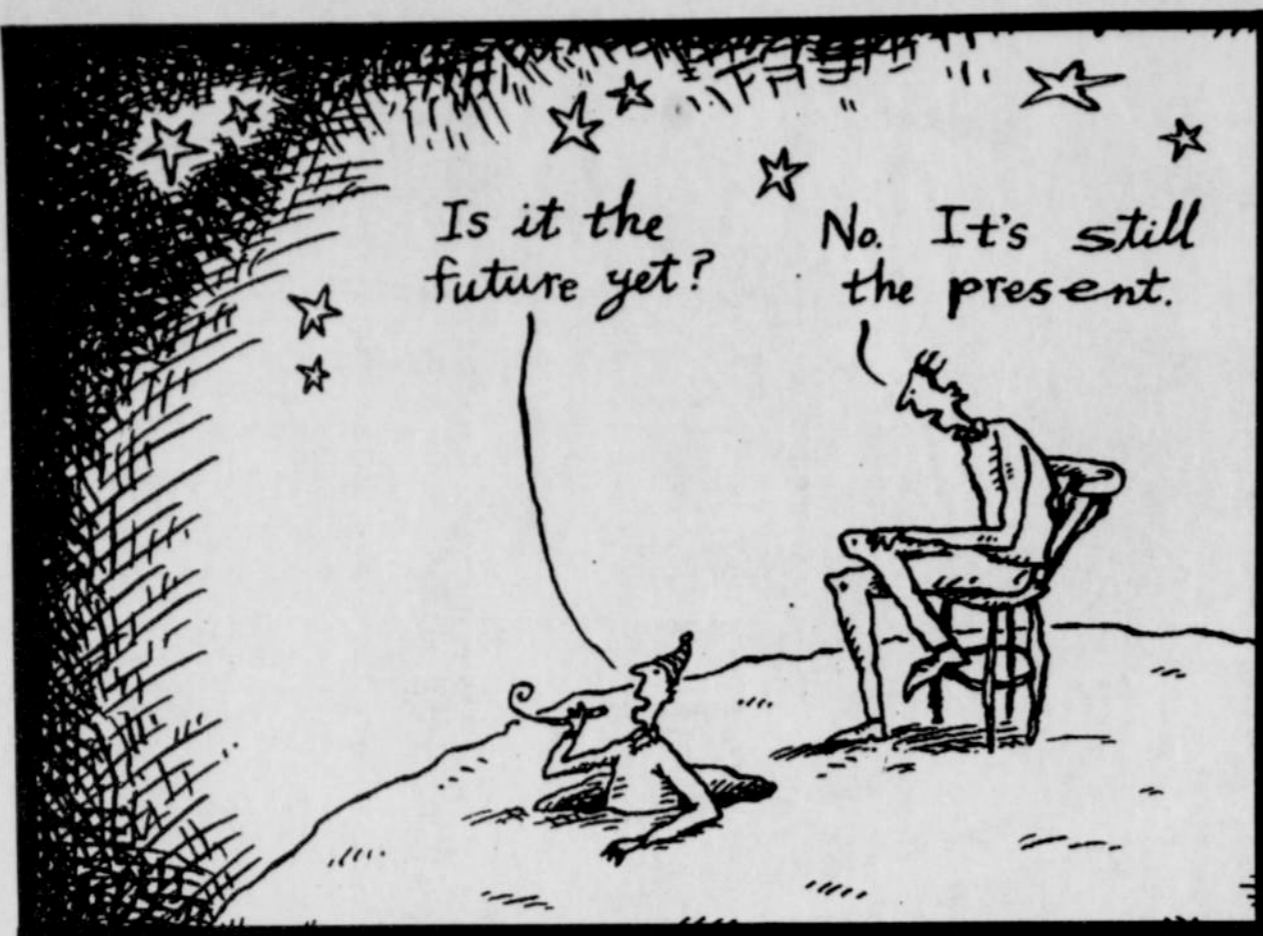


STEVEN APPLEBY



POETRY

ANCESTORED-BACK IS THE OVER PRESIDING SPIRIT OF THIS POEM

If only somebody would drill with a fingerlong rig down into my skull, and saw a tiny circle out of its bone, so pools of acid antsiness and anger can steam away; so all of the great in-gnarling, all of the bunched-up broodiness, can breathe; and so at least the day's accumulated ephemera, its fenderbender squabbles, its parade of petty heartache, can evaporate in writhes of sour mist — this spatting couple, for example, in the booth across the aisle as I'm chowing on a burger and their every more-than-whispered perturbation is, this afternoon, a further furrow worked into my mind... You know I'm kvetching metaphorically. But literalist Amanda Fielding, wielding a scalpel and electric drill, bored a hole in her skull in 1970, filming that self-surgery,

and zealously thereafter promoting the benefits of this 3rd eye, finally "running for a Parliament on a platform of trepanation for national health." The operation was successfully conducted in the Stone Age (72% of the skulls we've found reveal that the patients far survived that crisis moment), and the Chinese medico Thai Tshang Kung (150 B.C.) was said "to cut open the skulls of the sick and arrange their brains in order." A Roman physician's effects from the 2nd century A.D. include a trepanation kit in bronze, its tooth-edged bit and driving-bow as finely produced as any machine-tooled apparatus a surgeon in 2000 would wish for — when the bow unfolds it's as intricate in its simplicity as a line of true haiku. I've read a book whose major pleasure is its breathlessness

in gasping at the ancientness of various devices, flushing toilets(!) condoms(!) hand grenades(!) — the book is a grove of invisible exclamation points. These green glass beads like rain-splats on a leaf — 4,000 years ago. Bone dice, the same. The ribbed vault in this early Gothic church is a masterly hollowing-out of space — but houses of *literal* ribs, of mammoth bones, were sturdy dwellings 15,000 years ago. Rhinoplasty(!) Soccer(!) Odometers(!) "Butter [a favorite sentence] spread everywhere, once it was discovered." Though we don't know poot about the urgent stirrings in our own hearts or the dreams irrupting nightly in our own heads, we've been diagramming stars on plaques of tortoise plate and antler, we've made sky maps,

from before we even understood the link of sex to birth. And if our coin-op slot machines can be ancestored-back to that Greco-Egyptian contrivance of Heron of Alexandria (by which a dropped-in-place 5-drachma bronze piece starts the portioned flow of a worshipper's ablution-water)... if *ancestored-back* is the overpresiding spirit of this poem...we are the progeny of stars, we are their original core-born elements in new recombination, densed and sizzled into sentience and soul. I can't imagine the interior tumult driving Amanda Fielding and her followers, but I'm not surprised our smallest human units were created in explosion, speed and void. My friends

are not the kind to drill their heads and rid themselves of troubles by decanting. Even so, I've seen them consider their restless faces in the mirror and wish for *some* release. Our daily dole of woe is unrelenting. In this burger joint, in the Booth of a Thousand Sorrows across the aisle, they're arguing still. Outside, the snow provides each tree with a clerical collar — this couple is arguing. Outside, the setting summer sun makes each tree a flambeau — this couple is arguing, they'll never stop, their joys have been prodigious and their anti-joy will balance this or more, the hands with which they make their hard points in the air are hands of oxygen and nitrogen and argon older than dust or salt. It's midnight. How emphatic we can be. How long they've been at it.

~ALBERT GOLDBARTH

REPORT AT THE END OF THE MILLENNIUM

Since the decline of communism
The poor are more forgotten than before.

Revolution is no longer in vogue:
It has been substituted by crime.

*Let them care for themselves.
We don't want a welfare state.
The multinationals will provide jobs
Opportunities with their free market
Say the hoarders.*

*They privatized all the national treasure
Including their homeland
Their mothers and sisters.*

This is the report.

At the end of the savage millennium
While the politicians congratulate each other
The clergy reaffirm ancient rituals
Ivory tower academicians count the hairs of angels
Physicians become merchant speculators
And poets circumnavigate their belly buttons.

~ANDRÉS KISS-BERGER

RIPENING

*The Avenue of By-and-Bye
leads to the House of Nowhere*
~CERVANTES

There is a mind in you no magic
Ever worked that is not your own.
The pattern blazoned in your skin
Disarms even the darkest sorcery.

Each night you watch the stars
As if you could by contemplation
Find where you began and begin again
Improvisations of the future's past.

The figure in the stars is a changeling
And its true face is no face
Whose memory lingers more clearly
Than the pale hair of your wrist bone.

What is it vanishing?
It will come, not to another,
But to itself,
The dark beyond the stars come to light,

Not to discover, but to imagine
You now as you will be then
Amid the thistles and the stars.

~JOHN BUCKLEY (D.1999)

LOVE CIRCLES

*For me
it was love at first sight.*

*A blinding flash of light surrounded me
as the shadow of my future approached me.
Inexpressible joy leaped to my throat
as our hands, hers and mine, grasped in circles
emanating warmth and welcome, then parted...*

*From that moment on, my burning soul has never been absent
of this dark-eyed, black-haired woman of Havana,
where beauty reigns supreme, sensuous and dangerous,
where passion and compassion intertwine
in tender moments etched in memory forever.*

*My love
for her is eternal however long it lasts.*

~ARTHUR HONEYMAN

SUNLIGHT

In the beginning
This world, one world, all together rise in joy
A new day has begun
The sun rising over the hills
Bursts of light streaming towards the mountains and valleys
Crawling into cracks and alleyways
Pull open the shutters.

Now
In a smog-covered world the sun glints
Muted by fog, car smoke, cigarette ash
Dead and gone are the days when the sun could
Run through your hand like a stick of melting butter
And make patterns on the floor
No longer can the rooster crow at the break of day
The deer frolic and romp in the sunny meadows

Dead and gone
Gone and dead

No!

These days are still here, with us each day
Hiding behind every curtain and shutter

But they are only there for the ones who
Take the time to sit and listen
Forget the endless traffic jams and smog
The cars and bicycles clogging the streets.

Relish now in the sun's warmth and
Bring your mind back to the days
When sunlight was your neighbor.
Hush now...

It is only there for the ones who stop to think.

~MARGIT BOWLER (AGE 10)

RECIPE FOR DUST

All come from dust, and to dust all return
~ECCLESIASTES 3:20

From chaos in kitchens
comes this meal.
Out of memory, cookbooks, chance
the mixing, boiling, baking done.
Out of jars, cans, bags, and wrappings
these ingredients released.
Out of pantries, freezers, cupboards
the containers gathered.
Out in gardens, down on farms
this food was nurtured, grown.
Out of earth these gardens tilled,
the farm fields plowed.

Earth, mud, dirt, the soil,
always underfoot, mostly out of mind,
of sand, silt, clay and humus made,
where the dead all come undone,
a dark world abounding with being.
A good loam is more space than solid,
more precious than gold.
Podzols raising ancient forests,
deep black prairie chernozems
under fields of soybeans, corn,
rich alluvial muck of marshes,
the thin gravelly skin over bedrock,
bright with alpine flowers,
clinging flood plain clays
amended with compost and sharp sand
to begin a garden plot.

In Spring, the soil a womb, warmed by sun,
pregnant with swelling seeds of sunflower, broccoli, bean.
In Fall, a grave, chilled by rain,
where the hungry host of earthworms, sow bugs, grubs
dismember the dead and replenish the placental soil.

And what is the soil but the stuff of stone, the dead,
worn down, at last, to dust.

The recipe for dust
calls for mountains,
a world for the mountains to be formed on,
a star to hold the world in gyre,
a galaxy to bear the star,
a universe to give birth to galaxies.
And for that you will need:

A bowl
vast, empty.
A spoon
long handled, strong,
And nothingness *although void will also do.*
Fill the bowl with nothingness, the void
and stir *the stirring is essential for success,*
and stir *it's all in the wrist,*
and stir *you must be patient,*
and after stirring, stirring, stirring
out of the empty stillness,
will burst the pulsing spin at an atom's center,
swirling out galactic spirals, eddying into stars, a sun,
an Earth with mountains wearing down to soil,
a womb,
a grave,
a grace:

*To the gathering and scattering
of dust*

~JIM DOTT (THANKSGIVING 1999)