

A BREAKFAST FOR BARBARIANS

music by Ian Cusson

Texts by Gwendolyn MacEwen

1. A Breakfast for Barbarians

my friends, my sweet barbarians,
there is that hunger which is not for food—
but an eye at the navel turns the appetite
round
with visions of some fabulous sandwich,
the brain's golden breakfast
eaten with beasts
with books on plates
let us make an anthology of recipes,
let us edit for breakfast
our most unspeakable appetites—
let us pool spoons, knives
and all cutlery in a cosmic cuisine,
let us answer hunger
with boiled chimera
and apocalyptic tea,
an arcane salad of spiced bibles,
tossed dictionaries—
(O my barbarians
we will consume our mysteries)
and can we, can we slake the gaping eye of our
desires?
we will sit around our hewn wood table
until our hair is long and our eyes are feeble,
eating, my people, O my insatiates,
eating until we are no more able
to jack up the jaws any longer—
to no more complain of the soul's vulgar cavities,
to gaze at each other over the rust-heap of cutlery,
drinking a coffee that takes an eternity—
till, bursting, bleary,
we laugh, barbarians, and rock the universe—
and exclaim to each other over the table
over the table of bones and scrap metal
over the gigantic junk-heaped table:
by God that was a meal

2. You Held Out the Light

You held out the light to light my cigarette

But when I leaned down to the flame
It singed my eyebrows and my hair;
Now it is always the same—no matter where
We meet, you burn me.
I must always stop and rub my eyes
And beat the living fire from my hair.

3. Manzini: Escape Artist

now there are no bonds except the flesh; listen—
there was this boy, Manzini, stubborn with
guts stood with black tights and a turquoise
leaf across his sex
and smirking while the big
brute tied his neck arms legs, Manzini
naked waist up and white with sweat
struggled. Silent, delinquent, he
was suddenly all teeth and knee, straining slack
and excellent with sweat, inwardly
wondering if Houdini would take as long
as he; fighting time and the drenched
muscular ropes, as though his tendons were worn
on the outside—
as though his own guts were the ropes
encircling him; it was beautiful; it was thursday;
listen—
there was this boy, Manzini
finally free, slid as snake from
his own sweet agonized skin, to throw his entrails
white upon the floor
with a cry of victory—
now there are no bonds except the flesh,
but listen, it was thursday, there was this boy,
Manzini—

4. The Children Are Laughing

It is monday and the children are laughing
The children are laughing; they believe they are
princes
They wear no shoes; they believe they are princes
And their filthy kingdom heaves up behind them
The filthy city heaves up behind them
They are older than I am, their feet are shoeless
They have lived a thousand years; the children are
laughing

The children are laughing and their death is upon them
I have cried in the city (the children are laughing)
I have worn many colours (the children are laughing)
They are older than I am, their death is upon them
I will wear no shoes when the princes are dying

5. Let Me Make This Perfectly Clear

Let me make this perfectly clear.
I have never written anything because it is a Poem.
This is a mistake you always make about me,
A dangerous mistake. I promise you
I am not writing this because it is a Poem.
You suspect this is a posture or an act.
I am sorry to tell you it is not an act.
You actually think I care if this
Poem gets off the ground or not. Well
I don't care if this poem gets off the ground or not
And neither should you.
All I have ever cared about
And all you should ever care about
Is what happens when you lift your eyes from this
page.
Do not think for one minute it is the Poem that
matters.
It is not the Poem that matters.
You can shove the Poem.
What matters is what is out there in the large dark
And in the long light,

CHANTS D'Auvergne

Music by Joseph Canteloube

2. Quand z'eyro petitoune (When I Was Little)

Quand z'eyro petitoune,
M'appelavoun Nanetou,
N'en gardava las oulhas
A l'oumbreto d'in bouissou.
Le bouissou fay flouqueto,
N'en dormiguèré dessous.
Très cavalhès passèroun,
Diguèroun: "Belle, bonjour!"
— Passas, passas au lardji!
Mes amours soun pas per vous!

English Translation:

*When I was little,
They called me Nanetou.
I watched over the sheep
In the shade of a bush.
The bush had little flowers;
I fell asleep beneath it.
Three horsemen passed by,
They said: "Hello, beautiful!"
— Pass by, pass by and stay away!
My affections are not for you!*

4. Hé! Beyla-z-y dau fé! (Hey! Give Him Some Hay!)

Hé! Beyla-z-y dau fé!
Lou fé de la feniero!
Lou fé de la feniero!
Hé! Beyla-z-y dau fé!
Lou fé de la feniero!

English Translation:

*Hey! Give him some hay!
The hay from the hayloft!
The hay from the hayloft!
Hey! Give him some hay!
The hay from the hayloft!*

5. Postouro, sé tu m'aymo (Shepherdess, If You Love Me)

Postouro, sé tu m'aymo,
Souladjé lou mió mal!
Croumporès uno raubo,
Un poulit dobontal;
E lèys autrès postourélos
N'auron pas un oytal!
Ti ouli ouli ouli ouli ouli oula!

English Translation:

*Shepherdess, if you love me,
Soothe my pain!
I would buy you a dress,
A pretty Sunday one;
And the other shepherdesses
Would not have one like it!
Ti ouli ouli ouli ouli ouli oula!*

6. Tè, l'co, tè! (There, Dog, There!)

Tè, l'co, tè!

English Translation:

There, dog, there!

7. Uno jionto postouro (A Pretty Shepherdess)

Uno jionto postouro

S'en anava au pastrejar,

A l'ombra d'un bouissou

S'en anava reposar.

Un pastre la trobèt

E li diguèt: "Bonjorn!"

"Bonjorn, bèl pastre,

Que fasètz aquí?"

"Veni per vos veire,

Per vos dire bonjorn!"

English Translation:

A pretty shepherdess

Went out to graze her flock,

In the shade of a bush

She went to rest.

A shepherd found her

And said to her: "Good day!"

"Good day, handsome shepherd,

What are you doing here?"

"I came to see you,

To say good day!"

8. Lou diziou bé (It Seems So)

Occitan Text:

Lou diziou bé

Qu'es pas tant mal!

Lou diziou bé

Qu'es pas tant mal!

English Translation:

It seems so

That it's not so bad!

It seems so

That it's not so bad!

ANCESTRAL VOICES

Music by Bramwell Tovey

I - In Arcady

Texts from Keats' Ode on a Grecian Urn

In the dales of Arcady

what men or gods are these? What maidens loth?

What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?

What pipes? What timbrels? What wild wild ecstasy

So Happy Happy melodist unwearied forever piping,
piping

Ye soft pipes play on, unwearied forever and ever
piping, piping, piping

In the dales of Arcady what men or gods are these?

II - The Last Bison

Texts by Charles Mair

Strange men who ravaged our domain and ringed us
around with fire.

Pale enemies who slew with equal mirth the
harmless or the hurtful things of earth.

So yielded our vast multitude and scattered to barren
wastes, for still the spoiler sought and still he slew us
there.

My spirit fain would rise and prophesy. My vision
sweeps the prairies wide.

Naught be naked wilderness is seen and grassy
mounds where cities once had been

The earth smiles as of yore.

The skies are bright cattle graze and bellow and
bellow on the plain

And nations roam o'er native wilds again

My burden ceased and now with head bowed down
midst these gath'ring shadows I die

III - The Letter

Text from Canadian government archives

Dear sir,

Sow the seeds and separate, isolate, educate,
assimilate – separate, isolate, educate, dominate.

Sow the seeds and forcibly, effectively kill the Indian
in the child.

Yours respectfully,

IV - Bring Light to the Truth

*Text from Canadian government sources and UN
Declaration on Indigenous Peoples*

Bring light to the truth. What happened to you, what
happened and why?

The burden has been on your shoulders for much too long.

A sad and terrible legacy.

Who died? How did they die?

Where are they buried? Why did they die at all?

Bring light to the truth. What happened and why?

They had no right to dignity.

No right to live in freedom, in peace and security, the right to life.

Bring light to the truth. In Arcady what men or gods are these?