

Over the Transom

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 anarchs
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

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onto the grid
of a now
aubergine sky
having again
taken up my post
in the plush headline
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*

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*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

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As I left
at last
through stained 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

Erik Noonan / San Francisco, California