The Floating Bear

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The Landscapes Below

The light wind falters leaves
in the cottonwood. Barely evening.
The rain earlier, coming again
from the West, in front of me.

Over the Jemez an illumined band of milk grey
where the afterglow lingers. Nearer,
in front, a tower
two red lights come on and off.
A set for the evening.

Below the sky
the breeze is mingled with rain in New Mexico
a small sound and an earlier evening
than in Colorado, the tiers of my country
are ascending shades, but in the descending sunlight
evening comes and comes.
On another day, before evening,
what is quickly called Time,
a darker evening.
On what kind of day,
did Beautiful Hector rise
from his bed and smile,
the day his death beckoned, was
it steel grey iron, and does the sun
shine early on Asia Minor?

Here, I've found it, said
Schliemann standing
in that silly silk high hat
saying I am the most
successful merchant
of Petersburg, a doctor
of philosophy--did he
know that for all that
he busted his ass getting
a greek wife?

Do the leaves fly up in the wind
at eight o'clock along the shadow
hills? this is all I care about
those commons. Of the busier
or more cardinal
human clash and clatter, the bong
of bells, neither you nor I care for.
Whose arm carried his armour, I asked
myself what
must he have been like, looked
down-trodden probably, as one would
today, going into battle against
all those big greezers.
And there goes Hector to work
across the plain of olives
I wonder
if it had come noon yet, Achilles
(mere discus thrower) killed that man
on the coast, shame Schliemann
did you find your pots and sherds?
Let us not mention workers
or that goddamn shit about dividing
up the land, They
who divide do so in order to
keep keep keep,
or generations:
That specific process
of standing all day by a steel window
at a lathe, forced air, which
all those Ham-tram-sick escapees...
in whatever form, not to speak of
what hybrids ach
let us leave Detroit where it is
without alarm, it is nearer Bethlehem
in a real sense, granting all strife.
You are there too, inevitably.
It all ends in not being different
than the shale stone or hunk
of lime stone, where crescent moons
of shells...we are all going to be there
it is the backyard
of eternity.

This is not college
or 1933. All academics are hopeless.
Glancing up
see to the north
on a spine of Earth
containing our rocks, the miles deep
fossil ranges,
containing the fragments of vertabraes
and dishy shells, that are really scattered
too wide,
for an eye to offer coherence
at times,
you have to use your head as an arbitor,
a relief, for it all.

Looking up then,
in this childish vastness, there are
the mica-shimmering mountains but back
and beyond the mountains, drifting
like ice-bergs near the horizon, too near
the light, and showered
by the light, too close to
the nether source to mention again.
The great undermine.
In a man's world, there is fact. One rises during the day, and for a large, but perhaps small, part of time. The chipping off of invert reality is alright: in order to peek back everyone does this. But let's not so casually. Even at all. It is no wonder where it all came from. In a sense everyone wanted to build it. Leaving aside the question of conservation, Theodore Roosevelt on one side, so & so on the other, let us also refrain from talk of function. This is not the way to reintegration.

Indeed not be too careful how we live our lives, poets are poets. In a sense, we are awfully free. Lest we appear to walk upon principles rather than legs. Fossils look a great deal alike, taken in haste from the great ranges, are more or less indistinguishable in the sub-terra ranges and mines earth-long and imponderably heavy. Let, in an awareness the different tastes of bread, methods of baking, genre of wheat, let us never go trudging back & forth across hillocks in search of a "way of like" (staff of life).

Rather go into Peru as Squieres does, for a close look, taking notes. But never be afraid to say what a clammy place Lima is, the cloud there, overhead, in one isolated spot, the thick green slime making a walk thru the streets laborious, a walking stick a necessity. Cheerfulness, is still a misleading humor. Much is literally blinding. Besides the sun. Yet I am sure you see. The hour is important.
Insofar as life can be lived
and can be stated, H. D. T.
did well to write about it.
Became then more than living, that hapless verb.
Became a survey of more than a hubub
of the days in which axes & bread,
ponds, windows, mere tools
of distraction. Although I don't
say much for the crabby writing.
I like the clarity. Nor have much use
for the temper, he was alive.

We can't be forever waiting for the appraiser.
In America every art has to reach toward some
clarity. That is our hope from the start.
With a very new, even surprising
element, (a continent is a surprise)
made this our reservoir of Life (not living).
Not looking back as the sluggish beast Europe
at a residue of what was merely heaped up
a prepared mound, caves to go into.
Excavation.
Our possibility is to sheer off what
is only suggested. And make anything whatsoever.
Holdable, even breezes and gasses.
Which is possibly ugly.

It is a real mystique. Not
a mystique.
It doesn't even require a tradition therefore
ridding ourselves of that cribby functionalism.
But the Comstock lode was mined in the same old way,
that's not what was meant. You will always
import old world people to work your conventional mines.

Somewhat funny: everyone is well off.
But they are apt to say anytime--
don't show me the way to anything but myself.
Can that house stand?
Of course it can any kind of house
will stand. Principles are very misleading,
och once you have found one or two
you can build a library let alone a house.
Take 1931 - 1941 as a decade. It is funny now,
so effete. When you see one of those old
people riding a horse with a red saddle
through the streets saying "times change" --
What a lie. They do not change. Or,
haven't lately.
They also say "well, Stevenson
speaks well, is at home
with ideas (yi)...why can't it be
why can't we have a good man
what the hell is wrong, son of a bitch
I'd like to tear somebody's throat out
Geezchrahst, but he does speak eloquently."

And the Younger Generation
they are even funnier. Castro.
The beat revolutionist. It is
suddenly as if Machiavelli hadn't existed
hadn't said a word, didn't tell us everything
on the subject worth knowing
for ever. From now actually unto eternity.
That any slov can suddenly ride up in a limousine
and tell us anything, is
one of the world's true wonders.

One cries for the night,
when such figures are a little obscured
at least it is a moment when the seeing
of this slime
is a little obscured.
It comes on in the late afternoon of the spirit,
one comforts one's children and looks aimlessly out
the window
for perhaps the last time. A friend comes and perhaps
one talks on.

This is a record of these days.
Sometimes the days end happily
in scotch, this is rare, and when
the invitation comes and you are actually there
on your way to the bathrooms of the rich
(the stool is the exact height Lewis Mumford proposed)
for relief you see there is so much left,
and that an untampered bottle waits
in its oak or hickory case
farther back, casually, by the window.
It will never end, busy people are busy importing it,
and no matter how far, the desert, the mountains,
the river, the sea.
At this point I am thirty. Yesterday a man my elder accused me of doing nothing. You could work, he said. Transfer of knowledge: much like the stranded semi one sees the flares, but there is no chance to see the cargo.

That dissemination I, or you, are on the last diminishing end of, where we all receive covered goods.

It is like a protection racket. Temptation is so manifest even a justice can see it. Ride a beautiful horse with a red saddle through the streets. But starkness too is manifest. There are no silver hounds at our feet. Once in Dodona perhaps...but not anymore.

To the North we traveled along with other cars. The day was hot, the desert rolled before us and in our way we marveled at faint buttes the horizon was a tapestry that day. Contours, even driving I saw much of its passing aspect from the cockpit of the car. Cloud's shadows, the changing colors, dark green juniper and looser colors, the dun of terra the sharper brown of rock mounds and to Taos we finally came.

I didn't know we were to see a wonderful man. Only my experience this afternoon standing in God's waning light at the end of San Francisco street, the children in Disney's hands, Sleeping Beauty, I saw Christ in a kit. A travel kit.
You were to zip open the case
there was the Cross laid
in the middle with a gold Jesus
in another depression of the foam rubber
was a bottle of water, on the other side
there were candles too.

Looming over, gigantically
in the same window
a smirking Christ
made effeminate as always
incredibly long and slender toes.
The hands pointing to
a decorated rough heart.
Holes pierced his hands.
Incredibly long fingers like the toes
curled hair
but the smirk
perhaps more just than I then thought.

The picture:
three people walk
upon an automobile
lined street,
an overdraft of my senses
coming from
our lovely Earth.
The tallest
the man in the center walking
a beret
on his head
a beret a beret --
the boy,
in a sailor cap
old world habiliment
hand on a sign
the foot of the boy on the image
of our lovely Earth
he can feel it, the concrete covers it.

The woman, on their left.

At the curb,
the licensed car -- California
sits there, California
far away.
The woman on the right.

Lengthly
in back, the descending shadow lines
along the buildings sit
my sighting
in grey sunlight
within this polished paper
without ever hoping to touch it
without my fingers
on the fragile fire-escapes
the black lattice-work of New York City.
Without being there.

The woman carries
hanging from her shoulder
something from Tepic
my friend these years
yet whom I have seen
but one time,
during an almost quiet week
where the street
and descending shadows
the hulks
going back out,
through a door,
going back out
down stairs.

Now, they all walk
in front of me
like a far away call
not cavalry upon plains
but the silence
from a sidewalk, looking down
the feet are so visible
as the automobiles herded in lines--
gross impinging
at rest happily.
No fear have I
but I have the picture
propped here against a quart jar.

The woman,
hers look, remain so young.
A stratum of the
presence of man.
Three others:
one real-estate merchant
one owner
one bystander (buyer?)
in the lot below.
The disposal is so complete
is quite unbelievable
the manner in which they dispense
with out world, i.e.,
how did we come to invade it, how
did we get here, where are we to go?
At least, up here
in the house, as "objects" -- renters
when will it come?
One month, or an hour,
the disposal.
They seem to have it all in their hands.
The adobe is 100 years old .
I am thirty
my wife thirty-two
3 children -- one 5 (boy
one 8 (girl
one 10 (boy

The striking thing
the power of falsehood, I hadn't believed,
yet the selling is going on in that vacant lot
below, where Lot's wife, looking on
would again be turned to salt.
This world I did tread upon is
in their waxed palm. whole sections
not only gold coins, stick to it
and are raised up into the air.

Befouling all other worlds.
"That coyote put a deal of real-estate between
himself..." and whatever. That's Mark Twain writing.
But worlds do come together, like science
and as science, the cartoon anarchist
black cloak
and great-rimmed hat
renting a hole where they stand
(remember to light the wick)
deeds and surveys and plan.
They are so pale
looking from the car window
goong by,
the glance is sideways
that roar, the jet
not fast, no jazz,
and not high, so close
to Earth, on it in fact
the dancing arm flung up
to rest on the back of the seat,
but the paleness, they are
another race. One wants
wants to go with them in the seat
surging ahead although there would be nothing
duller.

As we came down
into the green pines
the sharp bushes raking our faces
greeted by cooler air,
the children ran on looking
for a table.
Walking on the path
I saw alders again. Very good.
We were on the revolutionary Earth--
"Take this table" the woman called
from under the tree and we walked over
to sit down, as they moved their things
to another table, where an old man sat.

He wore a green shirt, otherwise
he retained a solitude, his lean ankles crossed.
And the hair done up in back
with simple white tight wound cloth
and girding his hair and forehead
a patterned handkerchief, a forelock hanging
over, the longer hair bobbed around his head.
There was a chipmunk stealing wiener's,
the fastness a cartoon movement, was such
a difference looking from it to the man.

Borrowing a light from their fire
I stood and smoked, the women joked
pleasantly, laughing much, it would
cost a dime for the light, it was going
to rain, they had just performed a dance,
they might even scalp us (noticing the
whiteness of the children's hair). But the Old Man
hardly smiled, at least one couldn't tell,
the grimness of his lips, I felt my scalp tingle,
did it engage his memory?

But having had a light from an ember
and standing there, I marveled at the beauty
of men who have long hair. Yes, it is quite
different. Their world. I am sure they tread
upon an Earth I don't. And I would like to.
Not facilely, or for long, but to be with them
for a spell, the chatter
of the woman really distraction, everything
they had, gone up in smoke. It must have been their idea
to camp, imagine, indians camping.

Playing indian. They take too lightly
their breed, forcing me to take too lightly
what I am. But ah,
the man is so old, has emphatically not
made the change as they
in their tapered pants.

Was not thinking of any catechism, at all.
Very little concerned if everything changes to cobalt.
And wouldn't have yearned for the lime-secreting pre-
cambrian
algae, not using lime-stone, as a product.

But Beauty is remarkable in that you
can never return to it. It never
exists again, once having been there.
And this instant I relate; this long
haired, slow to look creature, sitting once again
ankles crossed at a bench -- only their heads remain,
from the gullet down, that dull gondola,
the automatic body, is just like ours
would you believe it, scoffing wiener's
and 7 up.

-- Ed Dorn