

Philadelphia
Avant-Garde
Studies
Consortium

**AD ABSURDUM: The Politics and Poetics
of Absurdity in Avant-Garde Art and Thought**

Poems
by
JESSE GLASS



Jesse Glass

Pain

Causes my left hand to twitch, my ears to fill up,
my knee caps to clatter;
skeletons pronounce boney pronouncements
to young women from Munch paintings.
someday I'll remember the lines
to Pain's national anthem:
something about the adventures of Mr. Headache Tablet
invites me to turn on the television.

I'll follow Pain to the last outposts
of the French Foreign Legion;
there in the sand with Victor Neuberg
I'll wrestle the demon Pain
while Aleister Crowley invokes
Pain with the kitten eyes,
the voice that was my Grandmother's last utterance;
hands of a young girl garroting me
until my brain softens
& my teeth fall out.

Pain—grim tapdancer, Fred Astaire of the last rites,
Amelia Earhart of the subconscious:
little blue plane with the black propeller
flying over the dark side of my heart!
Pain is a machine that cuts devotional statements
In the tongues of sinners,
certified genius (I.Q. 214)
even Einstein couldn't understand this equation.

Pain talks in Esperanto
throws dictionaries to us
from the roof of Squirrely's Tavern.
Come on buddy—you can comprehend this:
cheek smashed on the sidewalk, perhaps
a gash thru the shirt into the kidneys,
suddenly you're shouting for your Mother
in every language that was ever spoken.

Pain (*continued*)

I ride in a canoe with Lewis & Clarke
exploring Pain.
We push west of the Mississippi expecting mammoths
to attack us.
There, in the distance, a scar-eyed Mandan
burnishes his spear,
his new wife tied like a dog to his wrist.
We cut her loose,
Pain travels east with us
comely, in sable braids,
she visits every salon in Europe.
Balzac describes her in letters to George Sand.
David wants to paint her riding behind Napoleon.

(Fatty Arbuckle long sweet ride of Pain
she is Seraphita knocking over tombstones for kicks,
the Venus of Willendorf carved from Bayer Aspirin,
Cleopatra sitting on her asp!)

Follow Pain down air-tight streets:
there's a merry-go-round swirling like a cancer cell,
& a tree full of staring eyes.
Diseased blood gushes from a fountain.
A lamb heavy with tumors plays a clarinet.
When you find yourself in this Holy City
sit down on the nearest bench
adjust your belt
& erupt.

The Shower

You stand behind the door wrapped in the protean arms of the shower,
The false rain crushing your locks to your head and the single curl
Drooling ephemeral gemstones down the bridge of your nose
That lacquer your lips, your breast, your belly, to whirl in a vortex beneath your toes
Around the silver cusp of the drain. He soothes you--this lover of uncertain shape
Caresses you before I have a chance, has secretly been where I can only hope
To be once or twice a week, yet every evening you dance lewdly with him
Innocently saying he helps you sleep, then hide yourself when you come to me, each
limb
In its flannel sheath swims in the humid dark. I hate him
And his cords of light shattering upon your hair,
He (with his cobra head twisted upon the air,
And his hundred pin-prick mouths vomiting transient cleanliness
From the wallpaper trees, where he, with a wry hiss
Was installed decades before we ventured upon this scene),
Slants down behind plaster and lath, his vast bulk unseen;
He coils through the ancient dark to join the hidden source
Within the cloaca of the world, the first ambiguous force:
The menstruum of the night which yet falls purely in the light,
The solvent of blood and of poison, drowner of men, balm of blight,
This gushing confluence of molecules, hidden in aquifer, cistern and well
Laves and suffuses the curves of your body, burdens the nap of the stainless towel.

Contribute

I have been true of voice
I am your phantom limb

movement & itching
scar in hypothalamus

directionless pain as I spin
metaphysical wheels of trophy-like

Weeping

rotor cup stuck on a brass hook
1957 dimestore radiometers prompt cheap

American artform prosthetic deism
where the whole body surface

is archived; arm pressed
between matching salutes, a few diddling

lines drying on the public tongue
end over end

in memoriam, a slo-mo stage
in Disney hit single, though jungles

warmer than bridal bouquets
clenched its embrace of blue (blue)

bottles.

Arrived "all systems Saigon"
on half an excess wafer,

scratching in popular bedsteads

Contribute *(continued)*

tripping the hurdles. Claw
the king's right eye out "all over this land"
decide to fuck off baseball cherry

fell on my side rubbing leg hooks
over chitin parabolas. dressed
in Zaum Zoro all night
surgeons deftly fashioned

zany glo-bars

videohouse porkfests

a sort of christian pincers, separating long fore-
arm bones & repeatedly grafting hell to heaven:

We approve my

route 66 to recovery, awkward
at first bludgeoning but can now manipulate

significant

rituals of Our Culture
to indifferent applause:

salted

national prostheses,

veiled with one finger

(touched with one finger)

that finger shot away.

Mayakovsky Is Dead

*Where's the joint of Nita Joe?
Nita's joint is just below!*

Mayakovsky knew
that bullets turn to poetry
in Bagdadi Russia between dusk and dawn.
He thought perhaps in Moscow it was the same.
He also knew to get ahead
he had to catch the fame train early.

BUT

first he wondered where to aim his Poetry Gun—
down his throat maybe?
Should he suck the bullet out?
Draw on it like a clit?
Should he wrap his tongue around the barrel thinking
Lenin? Stalin? Choke the death seed down hoping
that it breaks the spine w/ an incredibly sweet snap?
Should he perhaps aim it at his brow
ready to begin the revolution at the count of three?

1,2...

Mayakovsky wished his gun were bigger
for his pistol shrank each time he pulled the trigger.

Should a man write odes about Ford trucks? Ask
Mayakovsky who says:
"Forget your 'Wooden Russia' w/ candles scorching the Virgin's double chin!
We have new cars to race, new enemies to wrestle!
The celestial timer is ticking, Citizens! Here is the hammer and here is the steel.
Strike quickly and a rocket will rise like a prayer
to shatter on tomorrow's perfect streets!"

Point your Poetry Gun in the air:
bang! bang! bang! Comrade.
The moon steams on its rails over the Urals.
I love you like a one-legged soldier
loves his leg, Babushka.

Wicked Paris woman waiting on the bed,
would you care to conceive good Russian sons?

NO!

Aim your gun Mayakovsky:

BANG:

Gobble your pineapple,
Chew at your grouse,
Your last day is coming, you bourgeoisie louse.

We celebrate radios, aeroplanes, hammer on iron,
iron bent in the shape of a woman, Cubist paintings,
Charleston, Fox Trot, Negro jazz.
Why?...Because!...Exactly!...Citizens, listen
to this important announcement:

Hard-hearted Hannah
The Vamp of Savannah
The Vamp of Savannah
Gee-ay.

Workers forward! Factories in place of museums!
The tire recapper's sweating dance is more beautiful
than the arabesques of 1000 Nijinskies!

Mayakovsky points his gun
at the lion-colored clouds.

Mayakovsky was Billy the Kid in another incarnation.
Mayakovsky eternally wins the race.

Mayakovsky signs and countersigns.
Mayakovsky is not jealous of Gorky, or Pasternak; neither
is he awed by Tolstoi. He handles official matters
with the deft touch of any Rimsky-Korsakov.

“Hand me another, and quickly!” roars Mayakovsky.
Mayakovsky met Sophocles in Hell the other night. They
dropped their eyes and advanced w/ clenched fists. We
were waiting for a confrontation. The air was electrified
w/ suppressed emotion. Sophocles spat in Mayakovsky’s face...
This was the first and only time we’ve seen Mayakovsky back down from a fight.

//

His **HEART** was a 50,000 pound boiler ready to rupture.

His **GUN** was a wolf w/ circular teeth.

His **HEART** was a smiling athlete strolling along a sandy beach.

His **GUN** was a pimply man w/ nowhere to go.

His **HEART** was a unicycle the size of an explosion.

His **GUN** was built of interlocking contradictions.

His **HEART** screamed down at his groin: “Get me some air!”

His **GUN** grew split hooves and chased magpies in the thickets.

His **HEART** was a long-fingered woman w/ her hair tied in knots.

His **GUN** pounded its fist and wanted to know the reason why.

BULLET

like a young hound tasting blood
for the first time.

You rest now in a scarlet castle awaiting the Master's key.
What poems did Mayakovsky think of then? Did he, like Esenin, have the sense
to write them down? And how many factories gave mandatory overtime

ON THAT WONDERFUL DAY?

Thank You for Your Dire Device

I am writing in God's ear a little history.
There might be some who'd like to strum (or even kick) the apparatus
by which I scribe it. I want strangers by
Means of it to tap, to flit, to assent, to destroy
To demure, to prevail, to handle love
With antique tongs, icepicks, chopsticks & healthy lifestyle choices. "Come in!"
(I like to write the words 'Come in!')
The door is locked tight as a seed, but
Do be merry as a pip afloat in tallowed
Trenchers. The square-limbed bumble bees
Acquainted with the night hum "tallowed/Trenchers,"
Just as I like to write it, quotation marks and all!

Thank you for your signal service as I often (hand on heart), at the Beuys club,
say.

I am cutting in God's ear a little symmetry.
There might be some who'd like to strike (or even break) the apparatus
By which I cut it. I want my countrymen by
Means of it, to tap-not, flit-not, nor assent-not: Not to decoy
Not to demure, not to prevail, not to handle love
With antique tongs, icepicks, chopsticks & healthy lifestyle choices. ""Go away!"
(I like to scream the words 'Go away!')
A pit pre-pocked on arteries embroiled connotes extinction: (&
Do be chary of cony-colored, regmalypsted
Steel!) The long-limbed mason bees
Acquainted with the night hum "apparatus!"
Just as I yearn to exhale it, vapor plumes and all!

Thanks for your converted rice as I sometimes scrawl on signs that I display.

Thank You for Your Dire Device *(continued)*

I am sighing in God's ear a little mystery.
There might be some who'd like to strum (or even trick) the apparatus
by which I sigh it. I want lovers by
Means of it to tap, to flirt, to consent, to deploy
To procure, to entail, to inhale, to derail and to dismantle stringent doves
With antique tongs, icepicks, chopsticks & healthy lifestyle choices. "Please sin!"
(I like to cough the words 'Please sin!')

The lock is crimped tight as a seed in artificial sod, but
Do be merry as a tip aflip and tossed (to be lost) in a pair of tailored
Trousers. The slim-limbed pedagogic bees
Surfeited with blight hum "tailored/ Trousers,"
Just as I love to set it, triadic chords and all!

Thank you for your carnal vice as I sometimes shout on the ice as I slip away.

Mabus

To pull a false flamingo's beak over the frontal lobes
& in the Zip-lit-tip to burn whole cities full of the aged, the halt the infirm
So that one can't smell the candle of human fat projecting mauvely across the page
of Kant that one holds
In imagination and from which one improvises a Sprechgesang that is immediately
broadcast
To North Korean bathing beauties demanding the world's attention at low tide, this
21st day of Sky,
leather gloves duct-taped securely to one's glandular ambitions, this month of
Sometemember
& to pass one's hands in their disguises among the thereminic frequencies of
alembics, curcurbites, retorts,
& centrifuges of those self-reliant women as they gaze back mildly into the non-
reflective lenses of our eyes
& to do so while solar storms knock lodestone, bar magnet, and Tokamac from their
proper
Orientations--& the elevators in the Hotel Pennsylvania open & close all night on
bardos of CNN-

filled emptiness in
Manhattan—

Is to mark one the Beloved of a Solomonic Tomorrow, with secret names "Mabus" &
"Almitab".

& hello my name is "Almitab" try to decipher my name
Count the letters to make divine gematria, snap your fingers at each occult
connection
& initiate the chain of associations, the correct sequence of silence sound & number
& yes the valley is "Mabus" the train that slowly rattles up the switchback "Mabus"
the sky full
Of twitching horns & thunder "Mabus" **My ABSOLUTELY FREE gift to you**
OUR PATENTED, LAMINATED CARD full of INSCRUTABLE BLINKING EYES
as you
Stand, sit, cower, move the card this way that way in the autumn light:
Their miraculous metamorphoses in your hand "Almitab," my irregular breathing
"Mabus," the

Mabus (*continued*)

Gaze of the beauties hidden behind government-issue, camouflage binoculars
“Almitab”

The background of evaporating sea and single pigeon convulsing on the sand
“Mabus”

The tiny figure waving hello, then goodbye, & the answering shrug of the horizon
“Almitab”

The pale fellow with too much grease in his hair with the velvet folding table,
throat microphone,
& white plastic mouse zipping across his sta-pressed shirt-front, over his clip-on tie
around

His wrists, into and out of his pockets attached by a plastic thread
To a button, that fellow, too, attempting to sell on a less-than- fabulous commission
tiny biopsies

Of the moment clipped by the precision engineered shutter of the **WORLD’S
SMALLEST**

CAMERA--

His secret resolve, the single room he lives in, the 60 watt bulb, the unmade
Bed, the nicotine stained ceiling, the terminal flower, the shouting in the alley
below,

The boxed stock of rubber mice fishing line tiny film and cameras in his brief case
with torn zipper,

The throat microphone wrapped around two clip-on ties, the toy amplifier in its own
ingenious compartment

The pay phone in the hall ringing out the hours of the night

Until he stumbles along the Lestoil-reeking landing,

Takes the hollow steps four echoes at a time, breasts the darkness in his socks

The cracked, florescent crucifix on the wall the only light--

Lifts the receiver to his ear, saying “ello ‘ello”, only to hear a voice

Whisper, “Almitab?” and he answers, rolling the toothpick to the far side of his rage,
“No, Mabus.”

Cold Wax

They talked of marriage in their smoothly written bed. Long splinters of depilated iron, (his & her histories) plucked out by tweezers, shaved smooth (dancing legs) necessarily

Venn diagramed themselves spray painted side by side Lascaux ghetto bulge-bodies throbbed boom boom. Deaths occurred

In her lead-shielded peanut as they spoke, & her love dried on the underside & around
The base of his softening boom boom boom like the definitions on a newly-printed page

Of the Dictionary of American Ultimate Bongo. Outside their window the moon was a
Luminous fruit cankered by Swedenborgian Lamias; the wind raked two fingers

Across the infinite face of a dowager on the sanitary for the first gland in a decade, then
Swooped to sand-paper her molecules to tears; gravity continued crushing old men into piles

Of finely-granulated calcium, while the kitchen clock clucked its tongue & another hour
back-flipped into eternity. They spoke of marriage for an hour, a day, a week, a month,

A year. They invented a geometry of boom an algebra of boom, a physics of boom-la-boom, which they practiced indiscriminately on the flora & fauna of themselves

Under electron microscopes—one could actually hear the “scrape” of each atom as it was
Dragged into place by magnetic probe, given the right head gear.

& when all significant drumming stopped
The Holy Ghost
Like a feathered fine man
Returned to pace the window ledges
Of their joy.

Plastination

The son kills his father the King with a sword, Armand,
But the old man's corpse is clever
And in turn chews the son's head off;
In fact he goes on to swallow the son's
Torso & lower extremities
In a no-nonsense manner, but the son's
Sword-holding arm will not slide down
The patriarchal throat. See, LIFE WANTS
TO HAPPEN, even if the complexity of the son
Is due to a rather primitive interaction
With his environment. Furthermore, the fond corpse
WANTS to clarify itself into low-grade gold, but because
Of condemnations by church and local government
Relaxes into a pile of ancient oak leaves instead.
Nevertheless, the results are stunning. The son's phantom limb
Moves at right angles to civilization as we know it
Casting a phallic shadow across retorts and alembics.
Furthermore, the brain can be removed from the son's head
And replaced by a cell phone, a calculator
Or a goddess ready to erupt full-blown, depending on the latest CNN polls
And the highly charged desires of the Tourists
Who take turns dressing in the old King's blood and taking each other's picture.
See? The dead DO STEP in the same river twice, Armand,
But is this cruelty alchemy, science, or post-post-modern entertainment
Of questionable taste?