

## ARCANA

They invented the printing press out on the plain  
this morning; Constantinople fell in the afternoon.  
I suppose they'll discover America tomorrow. What  
a lot of running around they do.

– Kenneth Patchen, *The Journal of Albion Moonlight*



### No business like ...

There was a giant ponderous on stilted legs, bidding his time till he'd finally outrun those plastic packages of Brussels sprouts that just wouldn't die (and over his music you could hear bombers drop fire in five-foot stanzas).

There was a reservist with a guitar and the way he spat out the bullets sounded just like a night on the Delta.

There was a walking jukebox on the West Bank belting out 'White Christmas' and saying, 'I'm entertainment, even when Nature fails,' conversation over.

## All chemical

The Word looked up at a slumming comet whose tail dragged a dozen mythic astronauts in its wake, old Texans all, who'd spent a thousand years mouthing unborn ballads into the big empty.

The Word catalogued old tenements as it slipped along the paper walls, a red ink snake sinuous around a cool-walled chamber, flickering fork-tongued yearnings over a porcelain rose and a wood-etched manifesto.

The Word wrote itself into a revolutionary thrill-ride over the cliff's edge and was first to split the hairs of an argument on razored stones, the first to hear how friendly the gunships really were.

## Whiching

If there's a little truth in truth it's this drop of rain searching for an umbrella, a peyote dream bullet through the skin of a criminal face down in the sage, a cross-boned line in white dust stilling blood on a green-backed gully while the wind cries in a circle and tells stories of how the vanishing bottle choir changed the ave for a wind that turned north to embrace river droplet reflections, call back Maria, scatter through possible worlds to make one dollar a cause.

## Discipline

The birds rouged their cheeks and sketched a courtly bow to the Bentham brothers.

They sang 'Hush Now' with nine-millimetre percussion backing and echoed strains of a jazz contagion across the high green valleys of a country that finally got famous by burning itself slow over a civil war blaze.

They hit Grenada in formation with the memory of Saigon etched through lightning in their fore-brains and picked through the pale stretched skin of a boy out of the closet down to the skeleton.

## Meat country

The sausage king lounged in a villa, blew smoke rings in the shape of Martha Raye's last dream of Broadway and slipped a waltz under an arch of bologna through a two-inch layer of fat on the cobbles shining a cheap pickup line at the moon.

Somewhere under the town, all the vanished children gathered over the ancient bones of dynamited coolies communion style under a cleaver-wielding stone image of Our Lady of the Primal Rib, proving this was meat country pillaged straight from an emperor's gut.

## Oracular

The Latin writ on the priest's severed tongue was  
a hymn to:

smokestacks,  
Maxim guns defending a teacup empire,  
a half-million terminal films of soldiers in step  
    (rifles on shoulders and eyes shining on  
    a future whose Rockwell paintings and  
    nuclear reactors have bottled a limited-  
    time offer to rise up  
                                up  
  and ... )



## Trysting

Frozen paramours curl spoon-fashion in the wreckage of Ultima Thule, a community of walls trading in politic silence where men court their brides through a stone-tap argot and the young conjugate a verbal empire-waisted limelight of spinning cane and suckle at a raw culture of revolving restaurants sovereign over four compass points, their assimilation tied not-yet to Fanon's leg overboard.

## **Bullish**

Product placement behind the explosion of signs directed a civilization's march into a random recall of the blood-speckled past, flanked by faithful shepherding tanks into unyielding dreams of blasted corpses powdered under the treads of freedom.