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Two Poems by Yonas Admassu

The Circus

I once heard a poet say:

"To that which lies on the other side
of the Great Beyond, one should
gracefully bow one's head,
Give It a Name, and let It rest."

To such a Wisdom, I have always been
a willing captive.

But what kind of wisdom,
in this our day, do I hear and see,
which I lack the power to understand;
this wisdom, so eloquently flaunted,
so ticklishly grand!

In the once-proud homestead,
In the now-remote ancestral land;
Where yesterday's spirits seem
too embarrassed to tread.

Pray tell, for instance,

why we must jump every time others yell;
why we must dance every time they sing;
why we roll, and we fall, and wiggle and flip,
as at every crack of the trainer's whip;
why on our heads we stand
and trample upon the multitude
that we somehow believe to be below us,
while turning their shelters into circus tents
(and declare we have built them palaces!)
in which we extend our generosity to the beyond,
generating endless series of clownish performances—
to an equally endless train of curious audiences—
to whom our existence means nothing or little—
providing laughter that feeds on our tears.
And, the Irony of Ironies, why
but we ourselves offer to foot the bill
and leave them all the tips.

Thankful That They All Came!

Mighty High 'n Jivin'

A friend and I went
 For some libation,
 After a hard day of toil and sweat,
 To relax our aching muscles,
 From the gruelling heat of the day
 And the unrelenting grip
 Of the Work Machine,
 It was friday the thirteenth.

Where we usually went
 Our throats to wet,
 And lots of heat to vent
 They called the moment "attitude adjustment hour."
 Elsewhere, in adjacent bars and across the street,
 It was known by its more mundane appellation
 Of "Happy Hour."
 But this place we went to
 On Friday the thirteenth was
 Cool, conducive and all;
 Had class, if you know what I mean!
 Because you went there to adjust

Well, we went, my friend and I,
 Talked about things and stuff,
 But above all discoursed on several politics:

*[We cursed apart-hate
 We fleeced Margaret
 We hated Ronald
 Scoffed at George
 Admired Mikail
 Celebrated Nelson
 Expressed apprehension
 About Europe being united
 Smelled disaster of the homeland
 Being disintegrated
 Supported the intifada
 With still more on our agenda]*

Nothing unusual, that,
 For Friday has always been a politicized event.

Now that we adjusted enough
 We decide not to overstay our welcome
 In that domain.

So we turned to cultural files
And remembered pasts
Under the spell of which
We recalled our "Lions"
Whose majesty was enough to scare
The lion's shit out of the jungle itself.
And, as the summer sun went down
And the street lights were too weak
To keep everything else in sight
We regretted that we were born idle cats
Who've lost any use at all for their claws—
Cats that have long since fallen into
Strange habits
Of weekly visits
To manicure shops,
Like Heathcliff, Garfield, and MORRIS.
Relishing our adjustment

We then decided it was a moment
For several more politics—
This time, the future—
For some prospects.
Boy, were our visions full of light,
Infinite, glowing, and bright
Like the Comet itself.
Intense.
Unrestrained.

So, we each said how
We were going to do a lot,
Once we got the chance.
How we were going to distribute our knowledge,
All free of charge,
To schools and children,
Peasant and worker,
And women,
Though not necessarily in that order;
To educate the "MASSES"
Who apparently "suffer" from an "ignorance"
Of what hit them in the first place.
Teach and Preach
Through the written word,
To tell them what I'm afraid they already know—
They've been oppressed.

Once this was settled,
 We prioritized and panoramized
 Our plans.
 We could see miracles happenin'
 A vast dominion openin'
 Where even mice could bring forth mountains.
 For what else are visions about.
 So, we decided, for instance:

*To open a publishing factory
 In which to turn our myths and tales,
 Our rituals, superstitions and poetry,
 Into moving pictures.
 (like the comics and cartoons here)
 In order better to communion with the MASSES.
 Then will do geography and math
 Do Science and philosophy,
 Do psychology, and do discourse;
 Then we 'raise'
 Their consciousness.*

Neither agreed nor disagreed
 On this issue, quite a revelation as it seemed.
 The both of us simply nodded heads
 To indicate a meating of the minds.

Then remembering
 That we were overtaxing ourselves,
 And aware, as the minutes ticked by,
 Of the need for another adjustment,

*Went some place and did drugs
 Watched some t.v.
 Where we saw a commercial
 About invisible girls on invisible beaches
 In invisible bikinis riding the tides.
 We felt mighty good 'n high.
 About the eventful day we had.*

My friend went to the music machine.
 I went home and scribbled this.
 That's all there is to it.

Friday was indeed a political moment!