

On The Brink of Peace

Peace. What would it look like?
Smell like?
Taste like?
In recorded history have we seen it?

The rusty camera shutter of history shudders its doubtful reply.
Behind its viewfinder a human eye blinks away a single tear.
This arid landscape permits not even the free flow of tears.

Many a dusty, smoke-choked, bleeding plot of land this world has seen
Filled with the mangled remains of poor souls
Trained from time immemorial to fight for “a better world,”
Trained as perverted musicians employed by the Symphonia Discordata,
under the musical direction of the venerable Herbert von Carrion.

For 5,000 years this maestro has reigned imperious!
5,000 years! 5,000 years of behavior I would not want
to attribute to an infant!

Yet the gauze eye-patch through which we view our ages
shows this puerile conduct to be the common wisdom of the day,
Historical inertia
Historical nausea
“What *has been must be* in perpetuity
World order *must* be preserved. ”

I'm sorry, maestro, I didn't quite hear you.
Did you say world order or world ordure?

Under this world ordure, the world spins her weary way,
Mourning for her children's horrific errors.
Yet her children believe they are improving her lot,
Fighting to better her future,
Fighting to remake her in their own image.

Always fighting, these musicians of the Symphonia Discordata
Each war a prophecy of those yet to come,
Each victory the hollow trumpet call from the Symphony's brass,
Every ten to twenty years returning to the brink,
Returning to the perpetual motion piece scarcely pausing to think.

The earth pleads with the musicians of the Symphonia,
“Please don’t try to save me or make me better,
I’ve been taking care of myself for a long time.
Maestro, it is only your ordure that makes me ill.
Dear musicians, you can play with or without the maestro.
Can’t you choose another opus?”

Maestro von Carrion replies “But my dear earth,
Some war is inevitable, *some* war has a moral cause,
Some war is necessary,
Some war is just!”

“Ah, just what?” replies the earth. “Just war?
There *is* no just war. It’s just war.
And you musicians, you gave your trust to this man?
That’s fine, but remember that he’s guidance, not the rule.
And you, maestro, maybe you could share your baton?”

The camera shudders again, as the earth asks:
“In all recorded history, has any war resulted in peace?
In all wars, didn’t everybody lose in ways too horrible to recount?
In all wars, have you not created new borders to bitterly dispute?”

“And what are you on the brink of?
Maybe if you would work instead of fight,
Maybe if you would play instead of work,
Maybe, *just maybe* you might be on the brink of peace?”

January 19, 2003
— Robert Hieger