

Cantos

Poems

by

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(Sufi Ahmed Murad Chisti)

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This is not an isolate island
Nor ours an agglutinative language:
Radium—and the empire of the atom is no more;
Einstein—and the autocracy of Euclid withers away.
No longer do we sarcophagize in cubic huts
Nor skeletonize our souls in Plato's structures.
Plastics blitzkrieg the Holy Crystal Empire
With multitudes of rhythms and counter-rhythms
And the togetherness of man and woman
Bulldozing traditions,
Steamrollering vanities,
Questioning our mamelukisan verbiage.
The new equinoctial expressionism,
Dawning and damning,
Lighting, not blighting,
Brings total emancipation
Instead of Strontium 90.

Flow freely with the universal stream,
Listen with nostrils and heart
And the whole shall be filled with wisdom;
Overtones of new estheticism

Shatter formal ties and formats.
Hail the verse coordinate to the jet stream!
(In San Francisco preserve your cable cars
But elsewhere
Semanticize speed limits
And parade to electronic music.)
Fill the back bay with old clutches and brakes,
Explore the cranial lobes
As well as distant galaxies
And tell us, in the intervals between silences,
The meaning of it all.

II

Little blondes from east and west of the Oder
Anathemize memories of unlamented Adolf
But admit no black-hairs to their Green Table,
Blueprinting the future,
Phobiating interplanetary invasions,
Dreading pandemic psychoses
Or the rise of the non-Caucasian majority.
Athenized America sequesters the Delian treasury
(Or the International Banking System)
Fulminating against Moscow's Neo-Iranian despots
And both, with antithetic, antisemantic maximologies
Prevision a superior universe (for blondes),
That tempers be controlled along with Strontium 90.

Justify genocide at Geneva
(Skull-drum vivas from Budapest or Algeria,
Cadenced applause from Pretoria)—
Jet propulsion: horse cart: We: Tilsit.
Tops perish from cancer or heart-failure,
Bottoms from pellagra or inertia;
Wonderful indeed the brotherhood of the cemetery,
Or the blood-bank.
Press 1959: Berlin ...
History 2009: Johannesburg or Monrovia.

III.

Let us discuss the Peace of God,
Or Newton's hypothetical rest,
Or Nirvana as proclaimed in the Benares sermon
(Omitting commentaries by post-graduates
Ex-Heidelberg, ex-Leyden, ex-Park Avenue);
And having witnessed revolutions—
Physical, economic and psychological,
We perceive the same problems.
Let us recognize the illiterate Hui-Neng
Not as interpreted by Zowies
Who place the Sutra above the Tripitaka
And themselves above the Sutra.
Shall we discuss those revelations of the unschooled
Rammed into our aesophagi
By the pedeltelarians
Leaving the same problems
Fifty billion prayers—no answers.
Did you ever watch the teletype
Of God?

IV.

After Hiroshima
A not so secret weapon:
Electro-magnetic smiles emanate from Dai Nippon,
Penetrating defensive mechanisms,
X-raying supergaussian armor,
Travelling unhindered.
What now superscientists?
How now Tilsitian diplomats?
Their rheostatic bows produce superenergetic laughter
Till Army, Navy and Air-Corps are emasculated.
(Did you ever hear of Jesus Christ?)

After Hiroshima
The alchemy of stench
And attar of stinks from real Zen Masters
(Japanese, my friends,
Conquering without looking,

Epitomizing the Beatitudes.)
Did you ever hear of Jesus Christ?

V
To Robert Creeley

When you are in love you grow older but not wiser
While I, in love, grow wiser but not older.

Horses have legs and love each other,
Aeroplanes move in three dimensions to fecundate space;
Read quatrains in the stable,
Sonnets in a canoe,
And take your writings when visiting the Taj.

VI.

Dance, poets, to Cartesian choreography,
For even God has discoveries Riemannian space;
Let philosophers stride to their colloidalisms
While confining liturgies to prismatic prisons.
Pottersfield bed-rooms, quatrains, ice cubes and squares,
Ride the scenic railway in Moebius' worlds
Beyond flowery rosettes,
Quadratics and empty imaginaries.
Remove brackets and scaffolds,
The soul is no longer confined.
Amy Lowell, what are patterns for?

VII

I once studied Zen under a Japanese monk
But can not tell you what he gave me.
There was an illiterate patriarch,
The sixth in line after Bodhidharma—
Not being among the brevetted elite
I am forbidden to speak of him.

But I may live like him—
That is Zen.

I once studied Zen under another Japanese monk
But can not tell you what he gave me.
He taught how to keep silent—
That is Zen.

I once studied Zen under a Japanese Master
But can not tell you what he gave me.
With him there was no giving or taking,
No master, no pupil, no self—
That is Zen.

VIII

The atoms were having their colloquium
And one metal said:
“When I am cold I can keep warm
Because of an ever increasing capacity for electrical fire-water;
The greater the cold, the greater the capacity
So I am never uncomfortable.”
Then another metal said: “That is so;”
And another and another and another.
When the chairman called the question many hands were raised
But Carbon dissented by showing her feet:
“When I am overheated I keep cool
Because of an ever increasing capacity for electrical fire-water;
The greater the heat, the greater the capacity
So I am never uncomfortable.”
Some said Carbon was queer,
Some believed she was crazy
So they put her to all manner of tests
And in the end
The majority was satisfied that she was normal.

Verily the wisdom of the chemical elements is greater than that of human psychologists.

The atoms were having their colloquium
And one metal said:

“When it is hot I glow,

The greater the heat the more I glow
Until I become quite dazzling.”
Then another metal said: “That is so;”
And another and another and another,
When the chairman called the question many hands were raised
But Selenium dissented by showing her feet:
“When it is cool I glow,
The cooler it is the more I glow.”
Some said Selenium was queer
And some thought she was crazy
So they put her to all manner of tests,
But in the end the majority was satisfied
That she was normal.

Verily the wisdom of the chemical elements is greater than that of human psychologists.

The atoms were having their colloquium
And one metal said:
“When it is bright I shine,
The greater the luminescence the greater my brilliance.”
Then another metal said: “That is so;”
And another and another and another.
When the chairman called the question many hands were raised
But Phosphorus dissented by showing her feet:
“When it is dark I shine,
The greater the opacity, the greater my brilliance.”
Some said Phosphorus was queer
And some thought she was crazy,
So they put her to all manner of tests,
But in the end the majority said she was normal—
They that walked in the darkness saw a great light.

Verily the wisdom of the chemical elements is greater than that of human psychologists.

The atoms were having their colloquium
And one metal said:
“I am the same yesterday, today and tomorrow.”
And another confirmed and another and another—
The non-metals also confirmed and the gasses,
Especially the inert gasses.
So the chairman declared:
“It must be unanimous so there is no need for a show of hands,”
But Uranium showed her feet in dissent.
Then they crowded and argued and harangued
Like eleven against one at a jury sitting,

But Uranium replied: "I am never always the same,
I am not being but becoming. Being is becoming."
Some thought she was queer,
And others said she was too crazy even to test

Though in the end their sense of justice prevailed.
When the tests were over they cried:
"We were all wrong and Uranium is right
And normal and the only honest one among us."

**Verily the wisdom of the chemical elements is greater than that of human psychologists.
The stone which is rejected has become the corner-stone.**

IX

Can a man think like Univac?
Can a person pour into the hopper of his being
Facts, figures and experiences,
Look at them impersonally
Like the chemist watches reagents in his apparatus,
And let the final product speak for itself?

Can a man permit his thoughts to operate,
Knowing that in his higher mind
An alchemy conducts the processes
Without the intercession of his ego—
That controlled experiments
Keep us safely on the level where we are,
Guarding us from retrogression
But preventing any further progress?

Is there not within the recesses of mind
A self-sustaining retort
Which synthesizes, integrates and distils
Perfuming the products of its kilns,
Blessing us where we have been dismayed,
Soothing our ills, removing inhibitions,
Expanding life to its proper arena?

Must we investigate, like Michelson and Morley,
Placing ourselves within the cosmosphere,
Unaware that thereby there can be no law,

No moving all-pervading principle
Because of this interfering cam,
This monkey-wrench throw into machinery,
Trying to see the eye and think the mind,
Unheeding the havoc it provokes?

Univac answers because of its power of integration,
While non-answers to problems are preordained
When the alchemy of life is thwarted
By self-imposed suppositions and interventions,
And thus economic and social operations

Remain within a maze, to be unsolved
Because of lack of impersonality
And faculty of harmonization of differences.
Is not man greater than his inventions?

X

The unliving rattle bones,
Not voices in a wilderness,
Nor anthems from a church—
“Cry” in South Africa,
“Howl” in San Francisco—
Drum ... drum ... drum ... drummmnmmmmmm.
Lazarus to Jesus: “Come down here,
There was no room for you in the inn, **then**;
But the new housing, now.”
Drum ... drum ... drum ... drummmnmmmmmm.

Jesus joins Lazarus at his table
(Some day no doubt Lazarus will visit Jesus)
Salvation Nell:
It can not be, it can not be,
The scriptures say it can not be,
The script insists it can not be,
Who can gainsay the script?
Jesus : May I enter into Hell
Salvation Nell?
Salvation Nell: It can not be, it can not be,
The script insists it can not be.

Drum ... drum ... drum ... drummmnmmmmmm.

Platonists enter the tavern,
Science comes from the cavern,
The womb is the tomb and the tomb is the womb
(Bass drum background: Boom! boom! boom!)

The Negro cornetist blows jazz,
The saxophonists give him the razz,
Trombone exercises, banjo improvises,
Drum ... drum ... drum ... drummmnmmmmmm.
A new symphony of the tomb,
The dancers are still in the womb,
Lazarus shows he is able
To conjure Christ to **his** table,

Out! out! damned spot, the police will raid!
What do we care! Let's have a parade!

Togetherness and hallelujah,
Jesus joins Lazarus with a big hurrah!

The unliving rattle bones,
The unliving mumble tones,
Three days of Jesus in hell
Despite Salvation Nell.
Then praise to God:
Lazareth does come forth!