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Proclamation

A BRIDGE, FOUR WALLS, and a rafter for the lone and homeless poets as they roam through foreign lands to the many centers of the Jewish people's exterritoriality. Literary diffusion.

I do not mean: mere talents, poets-in-the-making, or their publishable wares. Now is not the time for literary experiments. A generation is bleeding from the throat; puking from the mind. A lacerated age running or writhing in convulsions (winners' or diers' throes). Disruption in the depths. Smoldering on the plains. And the gifted ones are sparks, invisible in time of conflagration. They are but loners, confined in narrow places. Not to be confused with those whose spirit was nurtured in the Sturm und Drang and whose minds cleaved unto the universal: Man-You-Are-Numbered-in-the-Millions.

We proclaim the millionfold head-and-heart-individualism: the heroic Man of Wounds who stands in all his glory, as large as the earth, all eyes and ears and lips, with his 365 veins pumping into the life stream—deeper, deeper.

Individuals of this sort are the clearest manifestation of the paroxysm. Their bodies convulse under the weight of the black global pain that they carry on their bare backs. Glowing worldview. Idea-cluster. Man, world—in all the centuries' permutations.

And there *are* such among us. Poets who are whole, with heavy heads ablaze and spirits horror-tested through expanses. Poet-beings who out of their own bones carve the granite image of the caverned treasures of days and nights' experiences—hoarded on all the roads of the world.

The gates are thrown open to the Four Winds, whither the eternal pilgrims stream, sons of unrest, children of the pure union of universe

and man. Albatrosses of Young Yiddish Poetry. Spiritual sustenance: their own flesh, veins, and nerves. Their drink, in goblets of their own marrow: pulsating blood. And black Sabbath bread—our showbread—suffering. What else is missing in the kingdom of sacred poverty? We, the carousing caravan of God's paupers. Albatrosses. Poets . . .

Blessed be our sorrowful mothers who begat us in this world and in this age! Though woe to this world and to this age in the gaping mouth of infinity, whose tongue burns on the Saharan crossroad: Eldorado—Nirvana.

Renewal. Upheaval. Revolution of the spirit. Exaltation—and more. Of course. So it goes. With them and with us. All the literatures have been overrun in their classical stagnation. Idyllic daydreams and the poet's elegiac quietude have been devastated by a whirlwind: WHAM! A roar issued forth from the gaping-mouthed Colossus—Man with a million heads (according to Grosz: like a machine; technological age!). The fate of the old books—the fate of the Gothic churches and Roman towers: petrified pasthoods. Horrible to behold. *Even the roads pass them by in a run.* World and red century hurtling downhill. Optimists fix spectacles over their eyes trying to conjure up intuitively (for the time being) a glowing bit of new moon in some far-off horizon. Meanwhile, the sun is setting, and the world drags the red, creaking chariot of the bleeding century to its final rest. Downhill with the rotting heaps: generational excrement.

So it is. Whether we want it or not. We remain as we are—with gaping wounds, with veins exposed and bones undone after the howitzers and Hurrahs, after the gas attacks, the shells of bile, the opium, and surface water: nausea. With dusk foaming at the lips.

Thus: the brutality in the poem.

Thus: the chaos in the image.

Thus: the protest of the blood.

Cruel. Chaotic. Bleeding. It's nightfall. In our worldly towers, the tables are set with spiritual food for the losing generation, and a black Sabbath bread is our showbread. An age is celebrating a red feast marking the close of the world's black Sabbath at the feet of the Past. Behind their backs loom large black crosses. *Such songs must be sung.* Cruel. Chaotic. Bleeding . . .

Perhaps the song will be different following the birth of the new moon, and laurels shall yet rest upon the Albatross-heads of the poet-heroes. So far, however, we're naked. Disheveled. Exposed. A horror-and-

shame evangel of veins and bones of the waste and wild generation that stands on the crossroads: Eldorado—Nirvana.

The proclamation came in seventy languages: down with the hackneyed—and especially—with limitations in the creative process. Introspective conception. Greater depth. Everywhere—and in our midst as well—spokesmen for free and naked human expression have sprung up, those who always await a crisis, then grab the bell cord of idolatry—and the air resounds with the news of a poetry styled in insanity.

These are sharp-witted, tricky creatures. “This kind of writing is called: modern?” “Fine. So we’ll write modern.” Scale the plaster! Down with the roof! Forward march over the sea on spider-web bridges! Sure thing! Why not? It sounds confused? That’s just the point! Mankind! This is how *I* see it . . . And turning to the head, he says: Head, think up something truly weird. The more absurd, the better. Total impossibilities. Think, head: I have horseshoes on my feet. (Logically, then) I am a man-horse. (Logically, then) I pull. Whom do I pull? C’mon head, you can come up with something! Head thinks: a wagonload of iron . . . Sure thing! Why not?

And so on, and so forth. Imitation. Pseudoexpressionism. Cheapest imitation, sacrilege to one of us. One of us is hurt to the core. And the result: almost a whole generation of young people from the cities and towns is “suffering” from literariness. Suffering from modernism. Can you name an upstanding young man who does *not* carry around a pack of expressionist poems or ideas?

Ask any adolescent:

“What’s expressionism all about?”

And the kid will answer with a laugh:

“You wanna know about expressionism? Expression, you see is . . . hmm . . . is when you write about craziness, you see . . . you can say anything you want . . . but not in any plain way . . . it’s gotta sound strange . . . don’t you see? . . . it’s re-vo-lu-tion, you see.”

In fact, you don’t see a damned thing, except this: that from now on a table is a bed, a hand is a nose, a shoe is a cloak, and a stomach is a butcher’s block—sure thing! And why not!

I want to put a stop to this anarchy once and for all. With every fever in my body’s bones, I shall do battle against the desecration of an expressionism wrought in blood and marrow in seventy tongues. Against the vulgar imitation: pseudoexpressionism. Against the concealed falsehood of talentlessness that hides behind the sacred veil of modern

poetry. Against a plethora of uninvited specialists stuffed full with their enlightened-heretical erudition: Such-and-such is new and such-and-such is not new.

Rather: for the free, bare, blood-seething human expression.

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Translated from the Yiddish by DAVID G. ROSKIES