

We Were the Love Generation

All you need is love
- John Lennon

We were the love generation in that century
of war and atrocities our lives spent chasing our tails
from bedroom trade deals to boardgame currencies
of cultural and intellectual capital
antique mating rituals in modern undress

driven out of the cities — out of our minds, with luck,
afraid they too had been made, had, by the killing machine —
not knowing if we'd gone mad or were the few still sane
in an insane bankrupt out-of-date defunct civilization
unsure where how or if to draw lines

between fascination imagination and hallucination
or how to conceive a reality unadulterated
by such stuff as the mindsets and memes we were born into,
cookie cutter refills for entry level positions
accessory to the crimes that sickened us *ab ovo*

Impelled by sex-crazed genes to perpetuate our kind
in a shrinking already-overpopulated world,
exercise our lunatic notions of liberty
within the maze of dead ends and vicious spirals
prescribed by nature and enlightened self-interest

refugees from free-market evolution
trying to find a way out from in under,
to get behind the sense of loss at the outset —
the skipped first beat — the zero constitutive of the sequence
but still empty — the heart's desire to overcome

the problem blind monads have communicating,
the slim chance of recognizing who or what
besides reproductions of our own alienation
(cunning configurations of puritan prohibitions)
we keep bumping into on our shortcuts toward death

War incorporated in us: innocence lost
at an early age down on our knees, eyes closed,

hands clasped at the back of our necks, holding our breath,
unable not to see nightmare mutants
taking over the plutonium forever earth,

street smart before puberty about things
then still nameless to us — racism,
sexism, ecocide, genocide,
gross national products, fundamentalist
religion in bed with fundamentalist economics

ladders of knives in each others' backs legs spread
face to the wall hearts on our sleeves stars in our eyes
individualist egos on the one hand utter
schizophrenia on the other — dog eat dog
business class anarchy in a race to the bottom

A civilization so fundamentally sick
with self-hatred and afterdeath-wish idealizations
preached by perverted religion that for centuries
nations have slaughtered each other in the name of their gods,
applied their technical genius to ecological mayhem,

brainwashed their children to internalize the insane belief
that the greatest pleasure our short lives offer —
the ecstatic sharing of our mortal bodies and minds,
the mutual satisfaction of our sexual needs —
is a crime except in the cause of conjugal procreation,

shame and guilt passed on generation after generation
for feeling what human beings feel when not morphed
into Artificial Intelligence cyborgs
a-, bi- and polysexual but absent
any trace of heart to heart connectivity

Starting with Auschwitz and the Bomb, everything everywhere
all at once too fast to keep up with,
always already the catchy phrase of those in the know,
no substance verbal, nominal or fundamental,
no eternal truth, abstract ideal or recourse

no stability or solidity, just flux:
a confluence of embodied perceptions and perspectives,
matter not immaterial but as a matter of time,

a physical, biotic, social and psychoactive
global sit-com in turbulent terrain

metaphysics and physics, cosmos as well as chaos,
cellular autonomy and spontaneous
generations requiring maps both geometric
and topological, a luminous ethic
adequate to both information and imagination

Running naked from the killing fields, bombed-out dreams,
deflated passions and kindred abuses left us
by age after age of progress, one pyramid scheme
after another built on scooped-out hearts of the captives,
before crumbling from the waste of natural resources,

looking for a place outside the solitary confinement
of atomistic society in thrall to a mythic
autonomous some say eternal known unknown,
a verdant fruitful place copacetic with the vision
looping behind our newly opened eyes:

a body politic of expanded consciousness,
an unselfish sense of self as loving, caring,
a symbiotic process and integral synergy
inhabited like our bodies and minds, flesh and blood
by multitudes of indispensable fellow travelers

A Postwar Postclimate-catastrophe
civil society built on safeguards
for individual liberty and diversity
in the broad sense, diversity in political, social,
intellectual and biological respects,

admitting the fractal, local, contingent and circumstantial
into the equation, the felt along with the merely conceived,
to transform (with less linear ways of understanding
and other decentralized ecological perspectives)
the abstraction-riddled techno-feudalism ascendant

since the Industrial Revolution, to balance
that dominant calculating ambition for the optimum,
greed, gluttony and lust for the maximum,
with a giving, loving governance of the biosphere,

desiring not all that we can but what is good enough

No, love isn't all we need: necessary
but insufficient because no matter how much we love,
shit happens. We need all the help we can get:
Eros handing Hermes' caduceus to Amor,
desire's impossible dreams brought to sweet fruition,

from infantile preverbal body language
to infinite empathetic intimacies,
from bonds of friendship, family, fellow-feeling
and all the other varieties of social love
to visions of boundless benevolence granted by love divine

so individual self-identity, selfhood,
self-esteem, self-love may better withstand both
relentless algorithmic anonymity
and ego's own self-destructive Self/Other
dialectic of alienation and hyperinflation

Knowing as if by instinct to try to keep tight rein
on the military and constabulary, to update their orders
so they stand at temple door and civic gate
as guardian demons, occult presences to avert
sadism, war and blood sacrifice

Knowing as if by genetic compulsion to try to keep
pulpitry and bigotry far removed
from affairs of state and heart, yet believing
governments should be consecrated to our own
in-group's principles and tenets of faith

Knowing despite ourselves, in our guts and spine,
the need to counter *prejudice hate injustice and greed*
with *beauty grace compassion and love*, core values
having nothing to do with theft exploitation
competition ownership or power games

But like infants who don't know how to control themselves,
we delight in doing what we do just because we can,
mindlessly extracting, consuming, manipulating
whatever we find, excreting our waste where and whenever

the urge takes us, fouling our nest with our own defecation —

greenhouse gases, micro- and macroplastics, toxic
scum in our air, water, food and bodily fluids,
environmental mayhem in the name of ungodly profit
buying into *bigger is better* and *the more the merrier*,
perpetuating the real world war, the war

against the Earth, our real estate, not for sale;
every civilization in history literally
eating itself out of existence, unwilling to admit
that endless growth is the way of the cancer cell,
that the good life is not something to have but to do

that information isn't knowledge, knowledge isn't understanding;
that in times of plenty or scarcity, come hell or high water,
self-restraint is seldom inappropriate;
that oneself is a multiplicity of selves,
a swarm of intransitive verbs looking for personal nouns,

identity a community recognition award;
that we exist only in each other's existence,
solipsism literally unthinkable;
that every life is a cosmos every death a cosmic loss
every consciousness a treasure house, a thesaurus;

that our essential obligation is not to ourselves
but to this relationship we've let go to hell —
soil smothered waters poisoned air choked
family ties and animal spirits broken —
this mortal world this home we share with each other.