

Four Poems

Sidney Alexander

Buddha

Fat Buddha sat upon a shelf
and held his belly in his hands,
his squatting, involuted self
lay heavily upon the lands.

The lamas in procession wound
up rocky Tibet's temple hill,
and spun the prayer wheels round and round
and thus appeased fat Buddha's will.

Ascetic monks, their yellow skins
drawn taut about a withered jaw,
beat drums, ate straw, and slept on pins
and thus fulfilled fat Buddha's law.

They clanged the bronzen temple gongs,
they stood upon their shaven heads,
they warmed the chilly air with songs
of supplication to the dead.

Fat Buddha clapped his fourteen arms
(the symbol of fertility)
Ten thousand monks spun round their charms,
and starved of excess piety.

Philosophers of Buddha's haunch
sniffed incense rising from the bowl,
and traced in wrinkles of his paunch
the implications of the soul . . .

And then one day the angry poor
dismayed the metaphysic wits . . .
Fat Buddha hit the temple floor
and smashed his fourteen arms to bits!

Fat Buddha, Oh fat Buddha!
you are dead dead dead . . .
and Tse-Tsin with a polished hoe
is reaping corn instead. . .

A Letter to My Wife

Loving in these times
is planting seeds upon the hillsides of volcanoes.

Have you not wakened at names
in sleep? mutilated shapes of heroes?

Does he lie coiled in caves
of your brain? war the sharer of your bed?

the prophecy of knives
you saw? the horrible dream of the greenish dead?

Suddenly at the kiss: laughter
over the coffee: pervading our privatest marrow:

up like a spar on water
remote from all but us: invading with sorrow—

the world plunges in fog:
no panic, darling, precariously cling.

Our rose is blooming at
the brink of imminent lava: yet petals sing.

The Egoist

Harmonia of stars and beat of bells
cannot impinge upon him—for he dwells
within the bubble of his ego: green
and bulbous microcosmos in a storm.

He sees the sprawling world through concave walls
distorted to an image of himself . . .
What? begging hands are pressing at the pane?
He readjusts his bloated purple tie.

What if they press? . . . He is secure, ensconced
against that meager froth and foam. Thus in
a temple he himself has blown, he sips
salvation with his cigarette and tea—

drops a fitful eucharist of ash,
mourns the pennies he has paid for sin,
blows some smoke against the rounded glass
to stain away the poor who peer within—

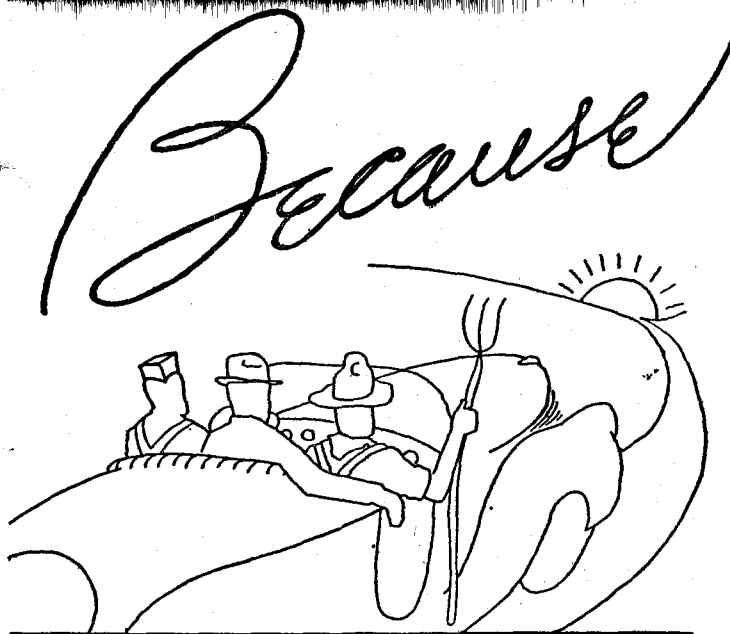
Wall Street—Dusk

The flawless sweeps of such white buildings
to the sun, congeal a logic
one with pueblos and with pyramids.

Labor long ago piled brick on brick—
like us, populated empty skies—
like us, swarmed up to the sun—and fell.

I think of Anselm with his dusty hair,
and see emerge above brown Trinity
the timeless syllogisms of the stars.

Yet, all your Ultimates are impotent to stay
the logic that shall burst these moneyed stones
and clamor for a sun that never was.



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I LIKE AMERICA, by **GRANVILLE HICKS**, page 122

BECAUSE WE LIKE AMERICA, New Masses will continue to help the members of the awakening middle class "examine candidly" their own position.

(As we did recently in *Liberal Arts and the Marginal Life*, by Motier Harris Fisher; *Who Is the Little Business Man?* by A. B. Magil.)

● We will continue to keep you informed of "the transformation that is now going on."

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(Earl Browder's series on *Concerted Action vs. Isolation*; his debate with Frederick J. Libby; *America Can Halt Japan*, by Paul G. McManus.)

● We will continue to point out how unnecessary is the misery you see around you and what can be done to end it.

(*Homes for the One-Third*, by Sidney Hill; *We Speak for the Unemployed*, by David Lasser; *Labor Unity and the Elections*, by John T. Bernard.)

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