

Tom Bradley

Two excerpts from *Energeticum / Phantasticum: a Profane Epyllion in Seven Cantos*

...I'll show you oinking, knuckle-dragging scribes
a musicker who's never been content
to write and weep in wait for Armageddon.
He'll mount, conduct and play the Antichrist
in his own made-from-scratch Megiddo war.
Unfearful to delicudate his dreams,
he calls the bluff of chaos unrestrained.
He recruits his own Dominions, and his Powers,
and annihilating Principalities.

His week-long rite of "omni-art" absorbs
the fivefold consciousness, with *mana's* self
and *dharma* to make Theravada's six.
(Kinesthetic-motoric's done by dance.)
Multisensory yet agraphemic,
unglyphed, his revelation's played by heart.
No racks for scores, but elbow rests with hookahs
edify his cellists and their comrades.

His fonts are couriers of wine, not sense.
His sérifs cling to trumps, not consonants.
His poem's unpunctuated but for tambors.
His typography is letterpressed in quavers.
His composing stick's a shimmering baton.

I give you Levi's sound proselytizer,
the Frater's man in cranial concert halls:

Alexander Nikolayevich Scriabin!

If literature is glued between matte covers
or shat upon a dead machine's display,
Scriabin's mass demands a mighty gorge
in Himalaya's crystal stratosphere.
It's celebrated in a protean zone,
a cathedral built, or birthed, for the occasion.
This fane, like unicellular protozoa,

will writhe and swell, as counterpoint requires.
Scriabin says, "It will not be constructed
of one stony species, uniform,
but will modulate with my *Mysterium*."
The architecture's further rubberized
with psychoactive aerosols and tints
projected from *claviers de lumières*.

Typecast in the role of Celebrant
Scriabin rides his lectern in the apse
of this gaseous and hierophantic temple.
He goads and taunts an orchestra of thousands
to scrape augmented sharp-eleven chords.
Unruly gangs, antiphonal mixed choirs,
their eros uncontainable in words,
regurgitate the Demiurgic ichor
from larynxes, both super- and subhuman.

Swelling, sweating in the corbelled vaults,
bells the size of yacht hulls, gold alloyed
with electrum from Ezekiel's ecstasy,
are hung from cumulonimbic fixity,
seeded and imbued with metric tons
of yellow sandalwood and cinnamon,
benzoin, resinous storax, galbanum
in bonfires kindled by the praying mob,
who, on the seventh day of group orgasm,
become cloudlike themselves, unknowable
from entheogenic mists that melt the murals.

Everything's tympanically tormented
by the Roosky's agonizing Mystic Chord.
The planetary chassis struggles hard
to free itself from quartile iterations:
D, F-sharp, B-flat, E, A and C.
Promethean acts of will, grace and mercy,
self-sacrifice, plus devilish technique
by Alexander Nikolayevich
absolve parishioners' Purgatorial pique
into a stable F-sharp minor triad.
This sonic normalcy brings down the beat
when congregation, clergy, all commixed,
like scent in a boudoir, are atomized.

It's not the Night, but the *Soirée* of Brahma.

The mystery achieves Puranic purpose:
humanity's abject annihilation,
and hatching of a wholesome race of Houyhnhnms
from primordial soup that phosphoresces
in pools on pulverized cathedral pews.
Scriabin, having braved the Manvantara,
is reborn in the Golden Satya Yuga.

~

...A mind unprecedented of its kind
has coagulated out of sheer aether
throughout the latest two millennia.
In human history's overlong context,
this mental mutant comes off more grotesque
than Abigail and Brittany Hensel rolled
in one décolletaged and skin-tight singlet.
Distinguished megalomaniacally,
its sense of self enflamed and crusted over
with growths apparent as the Elephant Man's,
this monstrous self will look upon the world
to presuppose a somewhat larger Self:
the Sole Proprietor and CEO,
the Licensor and Manufacturer
of Abso-God-Damned-Lutely Everything.

When first confronted by this brain infarct,
the Romans were so flustered, they recoiled
in self-defense, enlisting carnivores.
Carpophorus the *bestiarius*,
the Empire's master wrangler, hustled lions
(and, even more effectively, mastiffs)
to dine upon some homonotic vectors
of the large and lonely God bacterium.
And later, in a camp near Buchenwald,
the *Oberaufseherin* quarantined
descendants of the folks who would be blamed
for incubating God's original strain.

These days, with skeptical modernity's
benumbed and chloroformed metaphysique,
this God is bearded as a vaporous freak.

Dead Hitchens and Dick Dawkins thump their sternums
to moot the only two alternatives
discussable in their cosmology.
On one hand, they inform us, fearlessly,
there sucks a spirit vacuum round the earth
more nearly perfect than the void of space,
as it contains no dark material.
(Smart money's giving odds on that denial.)
The other hand shoves forth this grand burlesque,
this narcissistic Abrahamic tool.

The crazed Aghori mendicant who gnaws
cremations on a Varanasi ghat;
the Shivwit squaw who, mescalinal,
will waltz her red bliss in the Utah sand;
the chaste Theosophist whose ragas move
his fellows on the Pasadena bench;
the salary-man of Ōsaka, sardined
on bullet trains a full six hours each day:
these honest heathens would dismiss your Dawk,
your dead Hitch, and their dialectic, too,
as, on one hand, counterintuitve,
and weirdly infantile upon the other.
And so would Monsieur Eliphaz himself,
our universal *Prisca Theologue*.

"A spirit vacuum," did those atheists shrill?
In all the ancient towns and times until
Descartes' emission of nocturnal doubt
that marred his weekend on the blue Danube,
all people knew the air is flocked with souls,
as Philo Judaeus sang in *On the Giants*.
Not just the air, but dirt, and flame and rain
pullulate promiscuously with Mind
and tendrils of anthropic consciousness,
a good proportioning of whom would loom
too monstrously for uninitiate eyes.

In orders, ranks and sub-varieties
come Limniads, Pookas, Clurichauns and Sylphs.
Their unseen universe resembles zilch
if not a gander down a microscope
at dribbles eyedropped from some hidden ditch,
or Erythrean scuba videos
shot by snorkeled, jelabbed Hashemites
whose Board of Tourism would exorcise

the seaweed-swirling Gulf of Aqaba.
Amoebas, sea slugs, gryphons with wet wings
in clouds arise from Mussulmannish seas
to jam our telescopes, our lungs, our minds
with superfine materiality.

Bio:

Tom Bradley has published twenty-five volumes of fiction, essays, screenplays and poetry with houses in the USA, Great Britain and Japan. Various of his novels have been nominated for the Editor's Book Award, the New York University Bobst Prize, and the AWP Series. *3:AM Magazine* in Paris gave him their Nonfiction Book of the Year Award in 2007 and 2009.

His journalism and criticism have appeared in such publications as Salon.com, and are featured in Arts & Letters Daily. Denis Dutton, editor of the site ("among the most influential media personalities in the world," according to *Time Magazine*), wrote as follows:

Tom Bradley is one of the most exasperating, offensive, pleasurable, and brilliant writers I know. I recommend his work to anyone with spiritual fortitude and a taste for something so strange that it might well be genius.

His latest collaborations with illustrators are *Elmer Crowley: a katabasic nekyia*, *Family Romance*, and *We'll See Who Seduces Whom: a graphic ekphrasis in verse*.

Energeticum/Phantasticum: a Profane Epyllion in Seven Cantos is Tom's second book-length poem.

Further curiosity can be indulged at tombradley.org