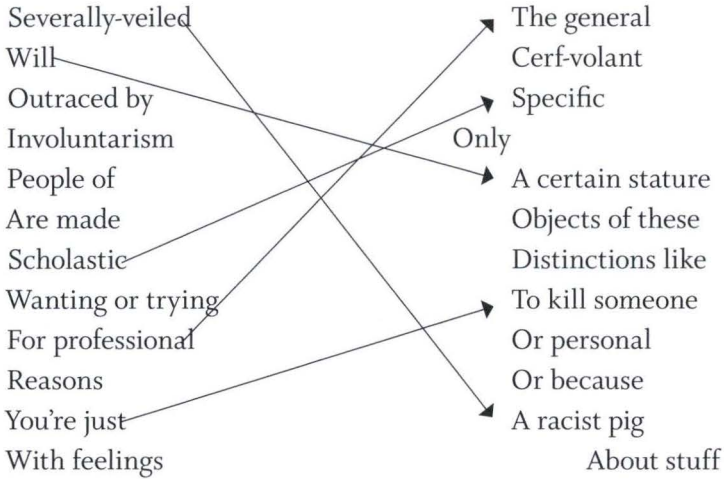


JASPER BERNES / from *We Are Nothing and So Can You*



Are not these our properties?
The sad passions, sapped by a system of weights and measures?
Some hate takes and some hate breaks.

Looted fitteds fly through the air,
As if we were graduating
Into the terrifying unrelatedness
Of these things and bodies
As if a bank were just brick and glass and paper
Animated by an archaic, insane script.

But now that we know that every
Atom of the world is outfitted
With a tiny extradimensional camera

What use can we have for remembering
To die here and there 24 times per second?

I'm sure my nonchalance will rescue yours
Wearing some kind of decorative trauma

But now the white baby stroller
Emerges from the fog

And we start to run

Surviving off the continuous passage of its moment of realization, transferred, hall by hall, like the angel of death above the marked doors of the Israelites, a tone blown-out to mere topos. Humanity thus inevitably sets itself only such tasks as it is able to convert into a series of off-on switches. It took us months. We were meticulous—replacing every pair of eyes in every painting or figurine or sculpture with a 0 or 1, with love or hate, death or life, truth or falsehood, capital or labor (the content hardly mattered); replacing the genitals with transistors; the mouths with capacitors; the whites and yellows with fine arrays. It was almost ambiguous, in the river, our genders awash. It was our Sphinx, our pink remind. It made the whole history of art into time that answered its own question—like, why is there something instead of nothing? And when will we finally win? How much is left? It reduced Paris to Is, New York to New, Los Angeles to Los. 19 20 21. But since it answered only with light or sound it required a myth to be explained. This is that myth.

The times of things describe the circle
“He was raised by wolves”
“And Swedish au pairs”
“And a dark cloud whose
Intercommunicating vapors. . .”

The times of things avant la unbecoming
Whimper at the scabby heart of the matter,
Decentered carousel of hand and eye
There is a new version available
Whose tangents describe
The turning spit of sovereign abstraction:
An hour is an hour is our
Face planted in bright dirt and.
The red thread of lived activity
Woven into white ticking
And stretched across the sky
Until the smolder and suffer of bildung
Removes the ding-dong from the dull
Bells of arrival and we use the buildings
As giant bongs or Mao Zedong
Machines or medial
Porquería, time not as translation
In space but height or falls
Above the slough and thrill
Of discontinued parts
Let x let yet, let y let then, let all
The knotted, wrung-out, loveless
Rates decoct as crystal and as crisis
All that rises without at

Or would we? Were we not the ones who—in the swerves and gaps of history—transform general will into a kind of general was, into the dailies and rushes of counterfact, the epic fail, man-nation? Or would the 500 years experiment find at its limits not just capitalism or class society but the human form, not just the speaking ape but all the carbonated sacs of self-reproducing logos that foamed out of that old, terrible constancy? You stood stupidly in the field. Your brow was like the focusing ring of a camera—you could tighten it around a tiny color and the foreground would flow back into a kind of low tide of the mind where the old oppositions seemed to dissolve, lengthwise, heightwise, now-wise, into the non-identity of cell and circuit. Would it have been meaningless, then—the communist impulse, invariant baseline of those final human centuries, banished and expelled, crushed and restructured and dusting the bedsheets of the hospital ward, yet still arising, again and again, with all its clamor and naming? Shouldn't we have simply hastened on the end, cheered on the hot, whirring metals of the computers in the basement? The frequencies collecting in our forehead did feel good—we understood it not at all at once, the bright reasons flashing like stairs in the dark. We drank it up. And then we fought as hard as we could.