

Please note: The poem *foam* contains coarse language, mention of suicide, mild sexual references, and content that may make certain readers uncomfortable. Reader discretion is advised.

foam

at the hour of birth i was blinded with foam in my eyes
crying with grief unable to look at the sky
on a black friday thirty years in the past 1

foam hangs from the century's mouth foam
in the bank vaults foam howling
in the wombs of mothers in the lead-lined bunkers 2
foam in the pink-tinged bidets

no bolt from the blue can undo it: it flowers
it covers the length and breadth of the earth
with its maddening snot: no fire no sword
can stop it it's endless no fooling there's nothing 3
that does it no plan no hatchet no secret device
it's too sweet it rises up from the depths
and it foams it smirks and it foams

slip me a brotherly handshake you sellouts
your fingers flecked with warts shell fragments diamonds
subsisting on obscene subordinate clauses 4
deliver your adams apples to my judasbite
your foaming soap hearts and your bank accounts
stained red with haemoglobin: pull me down to the ground
as far down as you as the other gobs of phlegm
in that professional muck.

i'm here any day of the week a fire-eater like you 5
like everyone else: standing on my corner from nine

to five taking painful shots of my own fire
for ten bucks a day kneedeep in foaming status quo
between carburettors and street lights

hear o hear

who hollers god bless you out of the foam? 6
who tells me to hope? and what should i hope for?
who slips me a clammy brotherly handshake?

all right get off it i'm not one of you
i'm not one of us: i somehow got to be born 7
when the riot squads turned on the hoses: i somehow
started to howl no fooling alone without brothers blinded
on a black friday in a pink-tinged bidet

and why alone and why pink-tinged and why 8
not and why no fooling

who doesn't schluck his own fire? who
doesn't wade through piles of clipped fingernails?
who doesn't leave an oily loophole in his contracts? 9
who waits to be saved? and by whom? and from what?
who doesn't bolt endless food with sincerest best wishes?
who doesn't get taxed? who hasn't caught
the cry of fear at the stockholders meeting?

who doesn't have a lung made of plastic? okay then 10
who's ever been through a factory? who
hasn't got that smell in his throat? who
isn't divorced? and why not?
who's never sent a picture postcard from capri?
who doesn't fuck around with history?
who isn't sorry he's living? and why not?

and why not? who doesn't say and so forth? 11
and why and so forth? who hollers for help?
and why help? and why why?

who doesn't know that he's croaking? but why all the sweat
if nobody dies from it? who isn't a walking tachistoscope? 12
who doesn't have handcuffs on his mouth
and a saniflushed brain? but why all the sweat?
why all the sweat about royalty checks? and why not?
why all the sweat if the garbage cans blossom with peacocks?
and mystical roses? no fooling why all the sweat?
why all the sweat with this foam?

o fire-eater with the heat turned off slip me some skin
o mummy in your mummy cloth of pink-tinged foam 13
god bless you

deliver your bubbling gullet to my kow-tow
for behold i am one of you
i'd like to strangle you in your own foam
because i somehow still happen to be living 14
somehow i'm tough as some old cripple
who calls himself no man who somehow
gets by and won't die from it: tough
and without an address and cold as the sky

so get going get moving what are you waiting here for? 15
for the el-train maybe? for the non-reparations?
for the tax-deductible deluge?

the fix is on the last judgement 16
company cars deliver the popes
in their foam-flecked tiaras

over red-hot telephone wires brokers are bobbing their
heads
in the sweat of their pig-leather faces:
the class struggle's ended the victim's 17
sprawled on the floor in his fat:
liquid holdings: foam in the rose-coloured eyes
moldy banners and barricades wrapped in cellophane
propped in the showcase: while from an antique jukebox
the international drones: a beat rock and roll

the chiefs of staff play golf out in space
beyond the sound barrier progress
reviews the ranks of its housebroken scientists 18
castrated cashiers in the federal reserve sing
arias dripping with foam: till the rapturous clubwomen
peel the chinchilla wraps from their deep-frozen bosoms

cadillacs tear gas and barracks
for africa s & h stamps 19
for the free world's waterlogged bellies

and why not give prizes for tits? hollywood
ass in the rose-coloured foam: striptease 20
of the western world from dortmund to san diego

no fooling why not? and why not build
launching pads? should our kids maybe 21
have things better than us? why all the sweat?

why all the sweat when the prize lodgers crawl under the 22
rugs
and take bites out of the woodwork and chew up the want
ads?

why all the sweat? and what can we do with them? what
can we do with the widows?
what can we do with the communists? what can we do
with everyone
who says holderlin and means himmler with everyone
who pays off rockets and cops in installments who makes
movies
and fucks and connects? what can we do with the
archbishops?

what can we do with the unemployed geniuses who fall
whimpering out of their windows? get them out get them
out in the rain
in the deep rancid foam in the madhouses
in the prisons in the lobbies of congress 23
where the spit of liars runs down the walls
and where else? in the cast iron crematoria maybe
or just let them rot down at customs: at the
goddamn bureau the goddamn bureau the goddamn
bureau of customs

and what can we do with ourselves? and the crowds
that fill up the football stadiums crying 24
for coca colas and bloodbaths: what can we do with them
what can we do with god? what can we do with his
holy likeness sitting there gobbling up glass splinters?
volunteer him into the army: into the foam

into the maddening black and pink foam 25
into the whinnying foam-sloshing foam

let go get your hands off: i'm somehow still living
i somehow got to be born 26

and i know this taste of chlorine and lead
can't you sniff it under the whipped cream?
you stiffs that keep lapping it up in your coffins
heil hitler god bless you: this taste
of auschwitz in the café flore in doney's:
of budapest in the savoy: of johannesburg where?

and why and so forth? and why the birth
of some bloody quintuplets right there in the papers?
the eruptions of turbulent ancient volcanoes?
these coronations and riots? the hell with it 27
ditch it no fooling: these spring floods
that none of you die from: you die on the can
when you realize that men eat each other
no fooling: that each man gobbles his neighbour

and why not? why no gingerbread hearts?
and no free market tips for the council of churches?
so okay why no mocha? why no coma?
why no amuck? nobody dies from it 28
you die in nato no fooling from too much fat
in your hearts: in a cabal of acolytes
in a foam-rubber skyscraper in dusseldorf
you die on the can no fooling
when you realize just who you are

so buy your air-conditioned coffins with the built-in toilets
verily verily price going up whoops 29
you wind up with a throat full of steel wool
what are you waiting for? stuff the diamonds in
under your shirt: shove the can opener in and the
harpsichord

shake your nemesis down for a lump sum payment
and pack your bags pack the securities in
pack in your gasmasks pack in your bellies
buy geiger counters and old masters
buy little boys and bequeath them
your juice while it lasts
buy up monday buy up the ocean 30
buy up branflakes and bombs buy
the geniuses out at the airport
buy poison and wait till i
smear it over your affluent tongues
(it'll kill you or give you a charge)
buy up some kulcher and roll it around on your gums
like a life-saver: play the crummy swiss market
sit tight why not? sell out stand pat
cash in sign over pay off

and why not? why no headhunters
in furlined convertibles? why no vats 31
full of monkey glands for the fancy clinics?
who here should throw the first stone?

who doesn't live through the mainline? who hasn't cracked
open a skull at the crossroads? so okay
who isn't mixed up with the international mucous 32
membrane cartel?
who doesn't know what waschzwang is? who isn't called
pilate?

open up ditch it enter the federal fuzz the marriage guests
cometh
the congressional medal of honor steps forth: the mixed 33
chorus the latest statistics

7

the heavenly bridegroom and the general strike
open the gas-jets amen fear and tremble

god bless you: head for the bars for the brink start singing
*bis dat qui cito dat god help you: flags up
si vis pacem para bellum strip down sprawl out 34
in saecula saeculorum

they won't stop they die a little bit more every minute
but never completely they talk dumb they go on and on
about doomsday: with the pointer at zero 35
they still slop their caviar still splatter
egg white over the walls of their cell
faretheewell my honey my intercontinental fart
faretheewell
they breastroke up rivers of gin and chanel
smelling of foam and clogged pipes it's too much!

it's mad: no bolt from the blue can undo them
no rilkes can save them no diors they stink 36
to high heaven while bach weeks screech from the jukebox
they wear masks made of mayonnaise and putty
they stand in the shadow of death still killing each other
with fire extinguishers gas pipes and inter-office reports

let go! ditch it! from this i know nothing
i'm not one of us i'm not one of anyone 37
keep off with your hands i'm alone let go

i don't want to change you god help you 38
it leaves me cold it's really too mad

*Latin translation: "bis dat qui cito dat": he gives twice who gives promptly
"si vi pacem para bellum": if you want peace, prepare for war
"saecula saeculorum": unto the ages of ages (eternity)

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o brothers in foam o prelates o eaters of fire
o boards of directors sprung from the waves i'm watching
you
cooling it thinking it out for myself asking
verily verily where will it end with you?
foam-blinded soap hearts where will it end? And why 39
down in hell? and why not? and what makes you
scream for johann sebastian? and what
gives you noses like mine? and why should the future
be foaming so sweetly? a blood clot away out
in the rose-colored sky

okay call me no man: say that i'm no man's kid brother
from no man's land let me break loose so at least
i can rest from all these live people: 40
let's make out that i'm not one of you that i'm not one of us
that i'm free from all that, from us, from this foam,

this snivelling smirking sweet tasting foam 41
that hangs from the century's mouth that rises

higher and higher and swells in the bank vaults 42
that smells in the honeymoon beds in your poems and
why not? in my own foam-flecked heart

while it swims around blinded in boiling foam
and gets rusty and swims 43
immortal as a paper clip

further and further 44

into the rose-colored future 45

by Hans Magnus Enzensberger

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