Fall 1984

ICON Fall 1984

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THE MALEVOLENT FORCE

He creeps like a sinister mist
Through the world atmosphere,
Seeping into man's ears,
Leaving whispers of
Hedonism
Sadism
Inhumanity.

We know he is here...

Millions starve
While the rich eat caviar
With silver spoons.
Greed, corruption, hatred,
Divorces right and left...
What's left of love?

What a world to be proud of...

Nuclear arms reaching for the sky,
Babies destroyed in utero,
Children beaten and molested,
The elderly degraded.
Organized, brutalized crime,
Rampant rape,
Where does it end?

He lurks
Like a black vapor,
Silently poisoning us
With his stench,
Waiting to drag us down...
While waters become polluted,
Forests destroyed,
Animals mercilessly slaughtered.
Lord help us all!

Do we really belong to the family of God,
Or has Satan become our "Big Brother"?

— Marilyn Patrick

— Mike Gustovich
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- Mike Gustovich
Someone Else’s Nightmare

Reality
I claimed diligently to seek him
To analyze the clues
I seemed to enjoy the chase,
Information leading to the illusive beast of truth,

I glimpsed the creature and ran faster
gaining, gaining,
About to touch the tail of truth
When—Reality turned to face me.
I cringed!
His cynical, sorrowful grin leered at me,
While outstretched hands offered flowers
wrapped around a burning knife.

But his eyes,
His ugly, rolling, crying eyes,
Within them were the faces of a thousand people.
Some I’d loved and never told,
Some I’d told, yet never loved.
Hundreds of others whom I’d never seen before—
at least not clearly—
I saw them then in a brilliant light,
Reaching out, grasping, their causes (good and evil)
Shining within the ruthless eyes of the beast of truth.

The light blinded me—I ran!
Scared, never resting, stumbling
Until I was safely buried within my lair
Of preconceived misconceptions.
There I rested,
Waiting to forget
What could only be
Someone else’s nightmare.

— Karen Derico

psychosis starts here:
We create /words
We create /arrange /the trueTH
truth is /relative
Our ideas /thoughts /are TrueTH
We create /thought
Our Thoughts are /History
History is /Fact
Our Thoughts are /Fact
Fact is /Reality
We create /Reality
Reality relies /upon /Our Thoughts

:We control /People
(there is no tomorrow)

— Joseph Michael Dudley
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Ah, Orwell

Nuclear fear,
Ill winds Covering bungalows;
Nicotine Darkening
Endless lungs--
Transmutation of Life to Death;
Erosion of humanity
Experienced at Urban Intersections--
Next, beware Suburbs!

Each of us grimaces at
Inflation shots,
Gored by Corporate Greed;
Heartless Crimes witnessed by
Television tots--
Youth without Beauty.

Funds for Future depleted,
Outreaching Neighbors passé;
Unleashed military mentalities
Rapidly create Missile towns.

Incomplete graduates
Silent Masses

Conquer space,
Overloud music the pace for
Migration to madness--
In a moment
Nothing left of our existence:
God, it's here.

— L. M. Burnham

Lone Survivor

It has been many years since I have seen the sunshine,
The green grass shifting gently on a summer's day,
I miss the soft, gentle snow as it falls silently to the ground.
Oh how my heart yearns to see the wonders of Nature!

I miss hearing the laughter of innocent children,
The songs of birds at the break of dawn,
And the pleasant sound of rain falling outside my window.
I wish I could hear the wonders of the past.

I miss the touch of the bark as I brush by a tree,
Or the feel of grass beneath my bare feet.
It has been a lifetime since I felt the wind caress my face.
Oh, if only I could feel again.

These words will vanish from the world,
Fading through the abyss with no one to hear.
There are no pleasures left to share.
Fire and despair--the legacy of 1984.

— Jill Nethers

— Shirley Sterling
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AFTER THE BOOK

I contemplate his world 
where women 
bleat their conversations 
and the allusion 
to sheep 
shocks my female 
sensibilities 
in an age 
of feminist reform...

I think of his 
sexless civilization 
where chastity reigns supreme, and I 
marvel at the multitude 
of junior savages 
spying from beneath 
the corners of each 
well-thumbed page...

I dwell too long upon 
the senseless chants and 
incantations, the rationing 
of chocolate along with 
words of endearment, 
and all I feel 
is an enormous need 
to cry...

— Pearl B. Segall

FUTURE

I know the world will never be the same 
A cruel and domineering force is here. 
It calls itself "the Brotherhood"—what shame! 
This curse has killed the love that man held dear.

No longer can a man relax at home. 
He must take care—Big Brother watches all. 
Accursed cameras watch where 'ere we roam. 
We must prepare to serve their beck and call.

Depression holds this nation to the ground. 
The threat of torture is our ball and chain. 
Until a cure for tyranny is found, 
Disciples of the "Brotherhood" will reign.

If Mister Orwell's prophecy comes true 
This sadness is reality to rue.

— Lee D. Gambol

The ICON would like to congratulate Lee D. Gambol on winning the Hart Crane Memorial Poetry Award. This award and the High School Poetry Contest are co-ordinated through the efforts of Professor Mary Ann Lowry.
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ROOM 101

. . . He knows, thought Winston suddenly, he knows what I am going to ask! At the thought the words burst out of him:

"What is in Room 101?"

1984
George Orwell

What lies behind the door of Room 101?
Everyone knows: "the worst thing in the world."

The answer "varies from individual to individual."
It crouches in the deep, dark subconscious like a sharp-fanged Demon ready to leap at the slightest provocation.

Pandora? Think not! Keep the door to the nightmare shut!

— Ben Adams

It is better to walk alone
than stand still within the crowd.
For symphonies are never heard
by multitudes that sing a single song so loud.

What good is life
if all go where all have always gone?
If others always answer
in the fear we'll be marked wrong.

There should be anticipation
In the early light of dawn
And excitement in the choices made as life goes on.

I would rather be an eagle
above the mountain wild and free
Than its prey hiding nervously beneath a rock or tree.

But at dusk even an eagle is called home
And his feathered mate and he no longer fly alone.

Likewise I share warm covers and hold a gentle hand
As early morning rain drums rhythms outside my semi-private land.

Just for a time I am the prey
snug within my burrow
Until my restless spirit sends me searching for tomorrow.

— Karen Derico
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1984 (?)

It's been a busy day. Exhausted, I sit down to look at the help-wanted ads in the paper for a few minutes before the children get home from school. The date at the top of the paper says October--we're three-quarters of the way through the year, and none of those terrible things in that book are taking place!

But wait . . . I stopped at the grocery store today on my way home from the OBES. Every item I purchased was printed on the list, along with the exact time--and they stamped my check with some of the same information. Now, I know they keep just the totals for their inventory control, but how hard would it be to log all the information? Any change in the family situation would be quickly noted.

And the OBES--I keep checking there because so many places have signs on the door saying they do all their hiring through them. (One of my professors says businesses run less risk of being charged with discrimination in hiring that way.) How does the employment office decide whom to send on the interviews? Even though I have previous office experience and just took all those Office Technology classes at KSUTC, they list me for production work because my last job was in a factory.

And the "Newspeak" of the ads! "Great potential!" means you will kill yourself breaking into a new territory with an unproven product. "Earn $30,000 the first year!" means you have a remote chance to--if you work twenty-five hours a day, eight days a week.

There's the bus--the kids are home. You know, change is affecting their lives too. Our parents were promised that social security numbers would never be used for identification, but the doctor and insurance company both insist on having social security numbers for them.

No, we haven't reached George Orwell's 1984 yet--but how far are we from it?

-- Lois Cline
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Rebirth, 1984

While the Lady is temporarily imprisoned within a metallic web, men scrape away accumulated grime and repair the fractured parts transgressed by time.

Liberty’s torch is being rekindled; once again men may ascend to her crown to keep watch for “what rough beast” may spring forth to challenge her honor.

— Ben Adams

LONELY IS...

Lonely is a deepening well growing deeper by the hour.
A vast gray sky that never ends, a single failing flower.
And me, I’m lonely’s shadow in a dark world of despair.
If you find her, look behind her.
You will always see me there.
Her eyes are gray and cloudy,
Her voice is husky, deep.
She demands my waking hours,
She robs me of my sleep.
I’ve resigned myself into her hands, hands that bring me strife.
For her, I am a plaything.
To me, she is my life.

— Kathleen Evanoff

— Andrea Ramsey
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— Kathleen Evanoff
Yesterday's Shadow

I saw yesterday's shadow
draped in sorrow.
She knew not her sorrow
only what must be and therefore was.

I cried.
Joy was just beyond her reach.
If only she could raise her downcast eyes
and look beyond those massive walls.
Or will she, fearing the demerits,
ever turn around and take her stand?

I longed to take her hand
and run in sun and rain,
To laugh and cry out loud
to hug a friend "just because,"
To dare to disagree
To be free
Aware of who you are
What you would like to be
And able to act upon it.

Yet, that would make her less a person.
She would likely go to hell.
So she keeps her eyes downcast
doing that which she is told.
And tomorrow?
Tomorrow there will be another star
For "doing well."

— Karen Derico

IN MEMORIAM

Against bittersweet October fields
shrouded purple and gold in memoriam for you,
the hitchhikers waited scorning funeral black
for jagged jeans and jaunty gypsy skirt.
Backpacks, guitars and exuberant youth
on their way to a concert of "The Grateful Dead."
Are the dead ever grateful? Are you?
You who were born too late
would have enjoyed these relics
of the searching, seething sixties
as did I who was born too soon.
We talked of relevance
and the meaning of life,
no one much does anymore,
but on the meaning of death
they were silent.
We parted ways
they to continue on in the sixties,
and I to return to the eighties
and duty,
and responsibility,
and my aching need of you.

— Gloria Alden

LOST REALIZATION

If I had realized that yesterday
Was only to be a memory today
Of things and people gone—
I would have acted in a different way.

— George A. Wood, Jr.
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EULOGY 1948–1984

In 1948 George Orwell wrote a novel. He could not foresee its fame or the impact of his words. In 1948 I was so young; the tender age of twenty. My life had just begun. I made vows that meant forever, to love, honor and obey. It was a small ceremony—quiet, but beautiful to me.

George Orwell named his novel, “1984.” This was a year I had not thought about, nor could imagine in my time. Now 1984 has come upon us and brought the truths of which George wrote. He did not live to see his fantasies; he has gone to another plane. But for me the year has a different meaning. The vows are gone forever; they echo through the years. Love, honor and obey are just words, empty and without feeling that was once so alive. When I hear them spoken now, I smile quietly to myself. For those who repeat them cannot know just what tomorrow will bring. But in their bliss they cannot care. 1984 is a new life begun for me, a victory as a reborn self. The person I could not know I would become, so long ago in 1948.

— Betty Hall

Andrea Ramsey
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The Language of Genocide

George Orwell in “Politics and the English Language” argues that it is insufficient to say that a decadent civilization is reflected in a decadent language. Rather, language is “an instrument we shape for our own purposes.” It may become “ugly and inaccurate” because our thoughts are, but this in turn makes it easier for us to become foolish, inaccurate, evil, and, finally, makes it possible for us to become inhuman. Political language, designed to make “lies sound truthful and murder respectable,” can also make pure nonsense seem scientific. Orwell suggests that the language of orthodoxy can reduce the speaker to a machine, with the brain’s not being involved and with the mind in a “reduced state of consciousness.”

In 1984 Orwell invents Newspeak to provide a “medium of expression for the world-view and mental habits proper to the devotees of Ingsoc,” a medium which at the same time “made all other modes of thought impossible.” George Steiner in Language and Silence points out that the collapse of German into Nazi jargon, sometimes called Nazi-Deutsch, parallels the loss of human feelings under the “pressure of political bestiality.” His description of language moving into dissolution is very close to Orwell’s description of the same thing. Steiner says:

Actions of the mind that were once spontaneous become mechanical, frozen habits (dead metaphors, stock similes, slogans). Words grow longer and more ambiguous. Instead of style, there is rhetoric. Instead of precise common usage, there is jargon . . . . The language no longer sharpens thought but blurs it.

Just as language can be used to reveal what is true, it can also be used to hide reality. Orwell’s Newspeak is an effective weapon of control, since communication takes place through language; and those who control communication control the state, as Big Brother well knew. When one can see the logic of “War Is Peace, Freedom Is Slavery, Ignorance Is Strength,” then one can doublethink, and when one can doublethink, one can burn first books and then men. Joseph Goebbels told the 40,000 students of Berlin University who were watching the burning of books, “These flames not only illuminate the final end of an old era, they also light up the new,” and the new was summed up by Himler’s summation to his men that the Nazi party “had the moral right, . . . . the duty . . . . to kill this people, and that in German history “this is an unwritten and never-to-be-written page of glory.”

Writers and intellectuals found themselves on the run—some say as many as 2500 went into exile, among them Kafka, Brecht, Musil, and Rilke. Klaus Mann observed that he could no longer read new German books, adding that the language had become polluted, and Thomas Mann wrote an open letter to the Dean of the University of Bonn which read in part,

The mystery of language is a great one; the responsibility for a language . . . . is, in essence, human responsibility . . . . Should a German writer . . . . remain silent . . . . in the face of all the irreparable evil which has been committed daily, and is being committed in my country, against body, soul, and spirit, against justice and truth, against men and man?

He was deprived of his doctorate and remained in exile.

New linguists and propagandists were at hand, however, to make language the political weapon Orwell had demonstrated it could be. Hitler was an expert manipulator of language to achieve ulterior aims without any regard for truth. Philip McMahon explains that his triumphs as agitator came from “an instinctive sympathy with the inarticulate longings and inner convictions of millions of his countrymen and an ability under conditions of hysterical exaltation . . . spontaneously to voice what his hearers already believed.” He utilized anti-Semitism and the underside of language—the rasping cadence, nebulous jargon, hysteria, obscenity—and the response was “Heil Hitler!”

Carrying out his work, Goebbels’s Ministry of Propaganda and Enlightenment supervised “some 2500 publishing houses, 23,000 book shops, 3,000 authors, 50 national literary prizes, 20,000 new books annually. Libraries increased from 6,000 in 1933 to 25,000 at the height of the war, and over 43 million books were donated to the Wehrmacht.” However, no literature was produced and the only best seller was Mein Kampf. The German language had ceased to be the language of literature and had become, instead, the language of hell.

The techniques used to anesthetize the brain, condition the senses, and defend the indefensible are similar to those described by Orwell in “Politics and the English Language” and used by the Ministry of Truth in 1984; euphemism, semantic changes, the use of the passive voice, depersonalization of the victim, transference, slogans, the literalization of cliches, the invention of new words and the degrading of others, and, throughout it all, jargon.

Euphemism served the Nazis well. The “Law for the Over-Crowding of German Schools” (1933) denied Jews education, and the “Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service” (1933) denied them government jobs. The “Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor” (1935) was the infamous Nuremberg racial law. Hitler’s plan of improving the race through mercy death or euthanasia (1939) was called “Eugenic measures”; the measures were mass extermination of the deformed, insane, sick, homosexual, aged, and racially undesirable. The names of the organizations which carried out their work kept the public from knowing what was happening. “The Reich Association, Hospital, and Nursing Establishment” located and processed the patients. The “Charitable Foundation for Institutional Care” handled the financial operations, and the “non-Profit Patient-Transport Corporation” moved the patients to the euthanasia centers. The patients were assembled in “Observation Institutions” before being shipped to killing farms where their “socially unfit lives” were given “dying-aid.”

As time went on, more and more euphemistic terms were used for graver and more inhuman offenses, and ordinary words changed in meaning to inhumanly extraordinary. So many semantic changes were occurring that language rules, Sprachregulierung, were set up to disguise actions from knowledge of the actions. Members of the Security Service, called “bearers of orders,” changed to “bearers of secrets.” Aktion (process or action) came to mean mass killing or the herding of people for transport to killing centers. “Labor in the East” was synonymous with “resettlement” (aussiedlung) was synonymous with being sent to death. Behandlung or Sonderbehandlung, which meant simply treatment or special management, came to mean mass killing. Even the playful word sprieten, meaning to splash as from a fountain, came to mean
The Language of Genocide

George Orwell in “Politics and the English Language” argues that it is insufficient to say that a decadent civilization is reflected in a decadent language. Rather, language is “an instrument we shape for our own purposes.” It may become “ugly and inaccurate” because our thoughts are, but this in turn makes it easier for us to become foolish, inaccurate, evil, and, finally, makes it possible for us to become inhuman. Political language, designed to make “lies sound truthful and murder respectable,” can also make pure nonsense seem scientific. Orwell suggests that the language of orthodoxy can reduce the speaker to a machine, with the brain’s not being involved and with the mind in a “reduced state of consciousness.”

In 1984 Orwell invents Newspeak to provide a “medium of expression for the world-view and mental habits proper to the devotees of Ingwoc,” a medium which at the same time “made all other modes of thought impossible.” George Steiner in Language and Silence points out that the collapse of German into Nazi jargon, sometimes called Nazi-Deutsch, parallels the loss of human feelings under the “pressure of political bestiality.” His description of language moving into dissolution is very close to Orwell’s description of the same thing.

Steiner says:

Actions of the mind that were once spontaneous become mechanical, frozen habits (dead metaphors, stock similes, slogans). Words grow longer and more ambiguous. Instead of style, there is rhetoric. Instead of precise common usage, there is jargon... The language no longer sharpens thought but blurs it.

Just as language can be used to reveal what is true, it can also be used to hide reality. Orwell’s Newspeak is an effective weapon of control, since communication takes place through language; and those who control communication control the state, as Big Brother well knew. When one can see the logic of “War is Peace, Freedom Is Slavery, Ignorance is Strength,” then one can “doublethink,” and when one can doublethink, one can burn first books and then men. Joseph Goebbels told the 40,000 students of Berlin University who were watching the burning of books, “These flames not only illuminate the final end of an old era, they also light up the new,” and the new was summed up by Himler’s summation to his men that the Nazi party “had the moral right, the duty... to kill this people, and that in German history “this is an unwritten and never-to-be-written page of glory.”

Writers and intellectuals found themselves on the run—some say as many as 2500 went into exile, among them Kafka, Brecht, Musil, and Rilke. Klaus Mann observed that he could no longer read new German books, adding that the language had become polluted, and Thomas Mann wrote an open letter to the Dean of the University of Bonn which read in part,

The mystery of language is a great one; the responsibility for a language... is, in essence, human responsibility... Should a German writer... remain silent... in the face of all the irreparable evil which has been committed daily, and is being committed in my country, against body, soul, and spirit, against justice and truth, against men and man?

He was deprived of his doctorate and remained in exile.

New linguists and propagandists were at hand, however, to make language the political weapon Orwell had demonstrated it could be. Hitler was an expert manipulator of language to achieve ulterior aims without any regard for truth. Philip McMahon explains that his triumphs as agitator came from “an instinctive sympathy with the inarticulate longings and inner convictions of millions of his countrymen and an ability under conditions of hysterical exaltation... spontaneously to voice what his hearers already believed.” He utilized anti-Semitism and the underside of language—the rasping cadence, nebulous jargon, hysteria, obscenity—and the response was “Heil Hitler!”

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the spurring of Jewish blood. Prisoners sent to camps in the East carried papers marked Rückkehr unerwünscht, meaning “return unwanted,” a euphemism for death. One phrase for the “Final Solution” was die Endlosung, which meant the totality of the killings. Kapos (boss or head) came to mean sadistic camp guards; Muselmänner were those who were totally exhausted, unable to work, and the first to be selected; selection was the choosing of those for deportation and/or death. Appel or roll call came to mean hours, sometimes whole days and nights, standing in the elements waiting for what horror was to come next. Einsatzgruppen were mobile killing units, and the Sonderkommando (special command) were prisoners assigned to deal with the corpses. Chimneys, ovens, furnaces, smoke—all came to be associated with the word processing, the cremating of human beings, the Final Solution. Frequently names of abominations became code names and then moved on to code numbers. As Otto Friedrich in an essay in Time pointed out, “Killing reached its apotheosis in Nazi Germany, and so did the language used to avoid saying so.”

Nazi-Deutsch abounds in the passive voice, as does all bureaucratic language. There is no subject committing the action, no visible agent. Instead, phrases like “the handling of the problem will meet with certain difficulties” assign responsibility for the deeds to vast, impersonal forces. “We” or “I” or “John” does not handle anything; handling simply takes place. Expressions such as “prompt Aryanization is to be sought” through the “elimination of undesirable elements” combine euphemism, jargon, and lack of an agent in order to flatten out both meaning and individual responsibility. Such rhetoric becomes obscure and often elevated, abstract, and impersonal: not an instrument of precise communication, but one that restricts thinking and orders conduct.

As the perpetrator is depersonalized, so is the victim. Alexander Donat’s own survival story, The Holocaust Kingdom, is filled with language spoken by the Nazis in which the Jew becomes an “imperson” like the impersoners of 1984. Donat remembers a roundup with the Germans shouting “Alles ruiner! Alle Juden runter!” “Everything downstairs! All Jews downstairs!” He cannot forget the “humiliating impersonality” of that “Everywhere” where “Everyone” was called for. Donat recalls an SS officer gesturing with his riding crop and saying, “All that” to the right, meaning the human beings waiting to be directed where to go. Those to be destroyed were called “specimen” or “materials,” and Kogon reports that camp guards wanting to know how many prisoners to expect asked “Wi Viele Stücke,” “How many pieces?” Steiner also quotes a party manual stating the Jude, the Pole, and the Russe were putrid, two-legged lice which good Aryans must “squat … like roaches on a dirty wall.”

Transference of popular and religious loyalties to the Nazi party caused the people to follow the directives of the party as they would have followed the directions of the church, to hold Hitler in the same position as one would hold God. Thus, sacred terminology was used by Hitler, Goebbels, and others to establish the dogma that “the Fuhrer is always right.” Words such as Offenbarung (revelation), Glaube (faith), Unsterblichkeit (immortality) and Gnade (grace) “theologized politics and secularized theology in order to politicize it” (Rosenfeld, 133). Rosenberg points out such fanaticizing leads to the “substitution of the slogan for more logical or rational forms of speech” (132) and those slogans such as “Ein Reich, ein Volk, ein Fuhrer” or “Das Reich ist der Fuhrer” lead to passion and mindless obedience but not to thought. Passionate, progressively formulaic thinking finally leads to the magical, almost liturgical rhythms of “Deutschland erwache, Juda verreck”. “Germany, wake up. Death to the Jews.” Michael Hamburger, in discussing the Freiburg University address, points out some of the resemblances it shows to contemporary political usage, and, I might add, to George Orwell’s 1984. The word used for students becomes Studentenschaft, or “studentry,” or the German student. Other words, as Geist Schicksal, and Wesen, meaning spirit/mind, destiny/fate, essence, seem designed, according to Hamburger, “to convince the young scholars of Germany that their freedom consists in conformity, their will in obeying the new laws.”

Watchwords of the SS became such slogans as “My honor is my loyalty,” or “one must be superhumanly inhuman.” Wendelgard von Staden, wife of the former West German ambassador to the United States, remembering the damage done by her parents’ generation, says in her book Growing up in Nazi Germany: “Our feelings had not mattered … You are nothing; your country is everything. This had been hammered into our consciousness. Self was unimportant. … When we reached adulthood … we were left with a sea of destruction … of millions of people murdered in our name.”

Words were invented to name the new techniques, as Vernichtungs-wissenschaft, the science or art of extermination, or Lebensborn (fountain of life) which was the Germanization of occupied territories. Words were made obscene, as the prisoner was asked, “What was the name of that whore that shat you into the world?”

And finally, metaphor became reality. When figures of speech such as “holding a knife to the throat,” or “shutting his mouth for him,” or “putting salt in the wound,” become literal actions, then the metaphor comes to life and dies. Prisoners had knives held to their throats, their mouths sewed up, their wounds thrust in salt. The metaphorical richness of language was being ground under the heel of Nazism into a state of brutal literalness.

Elie Wiesel in “Why I Write” remarks that “words lost any previous civilizing function:

The language of night was not human; it was primitive, almost animal-like shouting, screams, muffled moaning, savage howling, the sound of beating … This is the concentration camp language. It negated all other language and took its place.

And all this was recorded, catalogued, put in the records—words saying what no mouth should utter and no writing should inscribe. Stenographers took down the noises of fear and agony of prisoners being tortured and experimented upon. There were regulations for the number of lashes and words to shout when mothers were being separated from their children: “Heida, heida, juchheissara, Scheissjuden in den Schornstein!” (Hip Hip Hurrah! The shitty Jews in the chimney).

And there was also silence. Karl Kraus, editor of Die Fackel (“The Torch”) for thirty-seven years, did not put out a paper for nine months after the Nazis came into power. Finally he put out an issue of four pages with a poem he had written: “Don’t ask what I’ve been doing all this time. /I remain silent; and don’t say, why . . . . The word fell into a sleep, when that world awoke.” Paul Celan notes that when language is under assault, the word is “no longer a
the spurring of Jewish blood. Prisoners sent to camps in the East carried papers marked Rückkehr unerwünscht, meaning “return unwanted,” a euphemism for death. One phrase for the “Final Solution” was die Endlosung, which meant the totality of the killings. Kapo (boss or head) came to mean sadistic camp guards; Musselmans were those who were totally exhausted, unable to work, and the first to be selected; selection was the choosing of those for deportation and/or death. Appel or roll call came to mean hours, sometimes whole days and nights, standing in the elements waiting for what horror was to come next. Einsatzgruppen were mobile killing units, and the Sonderkommando (special command) were prisoners assigned to deal with the corpses. Chimneys, ovens, furnaces, smoke—all came to be associated with the word processing, the cremating of human beings, the Final Solution. Frequently names of abominations became code names and then moved on to code numbers. As Otto Friedrich in an essay in Time pointed out, “Killing reached its apotheosis in Nazi Germany, and so did the language used to avoid saying so.”

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word; it is a terrible falling silence.

Steiner states: “Use a language to conceive, organize, and justify Belsen; use it to make out specifications for gas ovens . . . and it will cease to function.”

Jacob Glatstein in a poem “Without Gifts” writes:

I'm poor, I can't bring you any more gifts,
I come to you with empty hands.
Long ago I threw away those phrases with beheaded meanings.

It's as hard to return to old-fashioned words as to sad synagogues.

Words have never sicken so young.
And Nelly Sachs writes that “All words in flight . . . and time loses its knowledge . . . . Where to find those words / which a universe piloted into silence. O-A-O-A / a rocking sea of vowels / all the words have crashed down.”

Syme in 1984 exultingly says, “It's a beautiful thing, the destruction of words.”

Landforms and Imprints in 1984

There has been some erosion.
Yes, presidents can be assassinated,
and, yes, we can fight unholy wars,
and (oh yes) we can lose.
The grim, relentless tide of time
has ground against our yielding shore,
and we gaze at the new shape of the coast without recognition.

Held-fast beliefs have been torn away.
They have gone South with our jobs and our people,
been slain with our leaders,
found false and hollow as our heroes.
Our hearts have been emptied again and again
by the loss of innocence,
and we hold nothing in our hands but a fist
without purpose.

— Michelle Griffiths

THE PEACEMAKERS (1984)

The Peacemakers came to El Espino,
Their gunships flashing and blasting,
Vilma Rodriguez screamed as her young Julio
was felled by a passing volley.
Felipe Arce, a field hand, was dead
in an instant,
Carla Sanchez lay bleeding to death
in the dusty street.
Angel Hernandez still struggled for life
and then,
Suddenly,
Stopped.

Father Paul came running,
begging the heavens to end this madness.
And then came the quiet.
The skies emptied as quickly as the
death ships had first appeared.
Raining a holocaust on a sleepy Nicaraguan village.
Only the wimpering of a child.
A cry of a baby lying next to his dead mother,
And a distant barking of a dog
Broke the silence of midmorning.

Back home in the land of the Peacemakers
People cheered this victory over
the embodiment of evil
And clamored for four more years:
Four more years of peace and good will
to all.

— John Allensworth
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Translation of a Nightmare

Oh, Winston Smith, leap off page 245! Present me with a sign you understand it was all make-believe—simply an enormous literary hoax—a sign, a warning, lest we allow all good sense to atrophy as limbs rendered lifeless from disuse. Show me

You hold no grudge against your Author (he who allowed your birth into so monstrous a life). Prove you harbor no deep-seated pathological pain about to burst at any hair-triggered moment into an explosion that would swallow us all Alive. Tell me this please, Winston, before the polls open Nov. 6 and I cast the vote that could make it all be

True once more in '84.

— Pearl B. Segall

And now a word about PROGRESS

We have increased our life-span threefold and learned to produce food for all with a paltry percentage of the population, but we have not found a way to stop OLAN MILLS from calling every 3 months to get us dripping from the shower for the latest pitch.

We can put a man on the moon and predict tornados and earthquakes, but we cannot save ourselves from the regular interruption of our lives by FRED ASTAIRE announcing our great fortune of winning 10 free tango lessons.

We have conquered tuberculosis, polio, diphtheria, whooping cough, and the rising of the lights, but we cannot stem the assault of the aluminum siding salesperson on the other end of the line as we are rushing to go someplace.

Every age has its dreaded tortures, plagues, wars, catastrophes, vermins, abuses, and cruelties: ours is the TELEPHONE SOLICITOR, whom (like roaches) modern science cannot irradicate!

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http://digitalcommons.kent.edu/icon/vol19/iss3/1
In the spring of 1984
I stood by the lectern in the gray room
Where the windows opened to a field of grass and great trees,
And the quiet was broken by the rumble of traffic
Passing along the rim beyond our cloistered world.
The trusting faces looked up at me,
I said, "Open your books to page ninety-four.
Let us read of the death of the soul of a man
Who longed for love and learned to betray it,
Who longed for truth and learned to deny it.
This is the vision of 1984."
In the spring of 1984.

And the children were eighteen, dreaming of loves
Made of candlelight and music, made of the gold of spring,
And of futures bright as new pennies spangled on green grass.
They shifted on the hard wooden chairs and listened politely
As I spoke of betrayal and war,
And their thoughts wandered to Saturday night.

Jean raised her hand—Jean of Irish-blue eyes and Irish-rose skin:
"People are good. God is above. And I will live nearly forever
And raise six beautiful children, and my husband will love me always,
always."
The young voice quivered with feeling.
"Why did you make us read this book?" she asked,
In the spring of 1984.

How does a teacher answer? The sudden flash
Back forty years, to 1944
And Anne of Amsterdam, beneath the eves
Finding such secret sweetness, finding love
Beneath the boot that crushed her.
Anne, patron saint of every happy heart,
Who died believing in the green, the gold,
And left the words, "People are really good.
In spite of everything, people are good."
The innocence mocks those of us grown old
And trembles through the decades for the children

— Elizabeth Hoobler
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GLOOM AND DESPAIR

They would have us believe—
These purveyors of doom and despair—
The world’s going to hell in a handcart
And we had all better beware.

Crime is rampant and out of control
And muggers lurk behind every tree.
Murderers, thieves, and swindlers abound,
And they’re all out to get either you or me.

A nuclear war is surely inevitable
Destroying the earth, maybe space, too.
If the Russians don’t get us, China will,
Or maybe Botswana or even Peru.

Pollution! Another horrible worry!
It’s enough to fill us with shuddering dread.
They, those invisible they, are defiling the air,
The water we drink, the earth that we tread.

And we all know computers and robots
Are taking our jobs away,
The ones that haven’t already left
For Mexico, China, Japan, or Malay.

The interest rates are soaring higher,
Our country is bordering bankruptcy, too.
It’s costing more and more just to live,
And the IRS wants more revenue.

Butter and sugar and meat are taboo,
Mustard and tuna and various pills.
Smoking, of course, is strictly forbidden,
All causing cancer or other dire ills.

And the schools, oh the school situation,
Is a lamentable case indeed!
Teaching evolution and sex without prayer,
And now little Johnny can’t read.

But I, the eternal optimist,
Smile at strangers, and eat what I please,
And to enter the field of the teacher
Took out long loans with the greatest of ease.

— Donald L. Lord

— Gloria Alden
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And muggers lurk behind every tree.
Murderers, thieves, and swindlers abound,
And they're all out to get either you or me.

A nuclear war is surely inevitable
Destroying the earth, maybe space, too.
If the Russians don't get us, China will,
Or maybe Botswana or even Peru.

Pollution! Another horrible worry!
It's enough to fill us with shuddering dread.
They, those invisible they, are defiling the air,
The water we drink, the earth that we tread.

And we all know computers and robots
Are taking our jobs away,
The ones that haven't already left
For Mexico, China, Japan, or Malay.

The interest rates are soaring higher,
Our country is bordering bankruptcy, too.
It's costing more and more just to live,
And the IRS wants more revenue.

Butter and sugar and meat are taboo,
Mustard and tuna and various pills.
Smoking, of course, is strictly forbidden,
All causing cancer or other dire ills.

And the schools, oh the school situation,
Is a lamentable case indeed!
Teaching evolution and sex without prayer,
And now little Johnny can't read.

But I, the eternal optimist,
Smile at strangers, and eat what I please,
And to enter the field of the teacher
Took out long loans with the greatest of ease.

http://digitalcommons.kent.edu/icon/vol19/iss3/1
Flying over the harbor, as I very often do, I was anxiously awaiting that familiar, yet awesome, view. I had remained fairly current concerning her new face lift, but had momentarily forgotten, my mind had gone adrift. Then suddenly I saw her and snapped back to reality, the familiar sight I knew so well looked unfamiliar to me. The scaffolding that encased her created a strange view indeed, and seeing her in shackles brought to mind her famous creed:

Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses, yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door:* 

I thought of the Orwellian theory and I find it very remote.
I choose to believe in the Lady and all she has to promote.

*Emma Lazarus

— Grace Owen

— Mike Gustovich
Liberty Enlightening the World 
or Optimistic Me:

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as I very often do, 
I was anxiously awaiting 
that familiar, yet awesome, view. 
I had remained fairly current 
concerning her new face lift, 
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Works to be considered for publication are submitted to Mrs. Hoobler, ICON faculty advisor. She substitutes, in place of the submitter's name, a number; thus only she knows the identity of the individual authors. Each staff member is then given a xeroxed copy of each submission to be considered for the current issue. After final selections are made, the staff's copies are returned to Mrs. Hoobler and destroyed, thereby prohibiting the circulation of unauthorized copies of anyone's works. The final step in the selection of material is the staff selection meeting, when the ICON staff in its entirety meets to discuss and vote upon the final selections for publication. This choice is the sole decision of the student staff. Only after the final selections have been made does the advisor reveal the identity of those individuals whose works have been chosen.

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SERENITY

— Bonnie Metzendorf
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