

10 :: ALL OF YOU HAIRLESS APES

In the distance peasants dance
There's a whiff of failed romance
Up ahead there are these vague amorphous shapes
Sniff the light, all of you hairless apes

Survival on savannah plains
gave us huge, unwieldy brains
But there is no receptacle to put our sadness in
for cruelty reason can't explain
You hear the choking hiccup
of a klezmer clarinet
But you can always forget

After all, we are such careless apes

God once glanced on earth below
saw bombs sparkle like fresh snow
rolled those huge, universe-weary eyes to space:
"Even I can't understand that race
these grand, ignoble apes."

All songs written by Chris Warren
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Photography: Corey Bowes
(except banana/chimp)

contact: info@chriswarren.cc
416-923-9046

www.chriswarren.cc

LYRICS



Chris Warren
Beautiful Ruins

01 :: MEMORY IS WATER

Memory is water, you know, running back, if I
plunge my paddle into it, the canoe doesn't move,
I hack and hack away at it, but the waterfall's behind us
and it's closing in fast

In behind your eyes there's a landslide of coal
where one strong goldenrod stalk survives. There's a
mountain stream with streetcars drowned
under the shattered glass, and a riverrun of salmon
spawning on the swollen lawn

A handclap, a stone, quails rustle in the jimmygrass
There's a sunrise shot and a swift dog sent
spinning to retrieve it, winged
The rattle of cobblestones stirring like a thousand teeth can be heard
when I lean intimate your ear
when I lean intimate your ear

You came back to me shattered, like a ragged leather scroll
from another stratum of another era, something less than whole
Intolerable pain cracks your face like lightning over a clear night sky
Lightning streaks, mascara streaks, black
lightning on the pallor of your face

Memory is water, you know, running back, if I
plunge my paddle into it, the canoe doesn't move,
I hack and hack away at it, but the waterfall's behind us
and it's closing in fast

No thing about your landmarks is what it seems, your face is replaced by a furnace
The furrow of your brow is overflowing, the bridge long swept away
And the list goes on and on and on and on and on and on and on and on
And the list goes on and on and on and on and on and on and on and on

I want to know why your hands collapse, like friable lichen, like cigarette ash
Being with you now is just like a miracle
I haven't seen you since I sent my tongue to be recycled

Memory is water (you know) running back
if I plunge my paddle into it, the canoe doesn't move
I hack and hack away at it, but the waterfall's behind us
and it's closing in fast, it is closing in

I hold your face like the blood-black dot sun burns into eyelids. If I
turn away, I turn away, only to see it again:
knowing, disliking, desiring, adoring, afraid—afraid

I wait for you gradually like a waiting cat
whenever I see you it's
From the back
From the back

Memory is water...



08 :: SOMETHING (THAT FEELS) NEW

Someone is fighting outside our door
the cricket and the wind chime
I couldn't say who's winning
but what's lost is time

The breeze through the open window
washing over our naked skin
Your fingers reach to touch me
and then we begin—we begin
something
something that feels new

You look at me speculatively
I answer back your gaze
What use is human language
if your heart's full of praise—
heart's full of praise, for something
something that feels new?

Did it only take five million years
of natural selection
to create a face like yours?

The rest of the humans chase around
like lunatic chimpanzees
full of their self-importance
(I guess that's our disease)
But right now we don't mean anything
we're part of the landscape here
This is our chance to get a sense of
how things once were
how things were, when the world
when the world was new
the world was new

09 :: OUTSIDE TIME

Maybe it's because I'm from a slightly
ridiculous country
and everyone's so proud of where
they were born—slightly accidentally—
that I feel I have no face, I have no place,
I have no race

When were you born? How guilty
are you of letting time roll under you?
When will I be.... When will I be....
Am I already ridiculous?

Am I supposed to be hip, or try to be
up to the minute?
Better to be outside time than to be
crucified by it

Outside time, out of my mind
Out of the skin I was born in
Outside time, out of my mind
Out of the skin I was born in

Who's in control,
manipulating these elements?
Sometimes you think it's just
improvisations and accidents
A series of next moments, like dots
in a painting by Seurat
The moment's in there someplace, it's
the next moment of your death

Outside time, is it a line
Is it a knot or a network?
Outside time, is it the last
Is it the first moment on earth?

I used to be the kind of man
that would laugh at a man like me

This preoccupation with where and when
you happened to be born—
it's too humiliating
It's better to be outside time

Outside time, out of my mind
Out of the skin I was born in
Outside time, out of my mind
Out of the skin I was born in

07 :: THANKS....AND SORRY

Thanks....
Thanks....
For lending us these abattoirs with endless stalls of meat
Thanks....
Thanks....
For rending us these waterways into which we excrete

Bye-bye blue whales, bye-bye narwhals, hawksbills, dolphin, salmon, cod....

Thank you for the wondrous and varied forms of life that replenish themselves
for us to consume
Thank you for giving us the desire to kill
almost equalled by so much that lives

Thanks....
Thanks....
For giving us what cleverness you need
to burn your house
right down

Bye-bye great apes, bye-bye lions, polar bear, rhino and wolves
We'll keep your memory alive

Thank you for a bottomless ocean. Thank you for this spacious planet
which takes so many to fill, and for the deep places and for the dark places
where no one lives still, for we'll need them one day
Grant us dominion over all the universe
and place at our disposal all the resources your munificence can conceive
to use as unsparingly as we have this earth

Thanks....and sorry
Thanks....and sorry
We'll be sure to shut the door behind us on this mess (whatever's left)

Thanks for bushmeat, thanks for oil
Thanks for all that air and soil
Thank you for keeping us truly ignorant of the force through which our own
bodies heal and clean themselves so that maiming, torturing,
imprisoning other creatures will never seem too grave a crime
And thank you for turning away those seconds that we need
to expunge our neighbours
Let God and our religion keep us separate from them
For the holocaust of animals there is no Yad Vashem

Thanks...thanks...thanks...sorry...sorry....

02 :: YAFFA'S IN HER TWILIGHT YEARS

Yaffa's been around a long, long time
seen lovers come and go
dreams built and broken, though
Yaffa doesn't know or mind

She's lost her fangs but still retains her grace
Yaffa has a face framed by orange fur
and the strangest purr
no other feline makes

Yaffa used to be a warrior
tormenting mice, disappearing for nights
now she's glad to spend all day
on the floor

She's just an animal—but then
that's all I am as well
no greater and no less than Yaffale

Yaffa's been a good companion
So glad I met her
I'll never forget her
I know I'll miss her when she's gone



03 :: HOLE ON BLOOR ST.

An improbable majesty's lent
to the shabby buildings on Bloor St.
by a Cheshire sun as it simpers sallowly down
There's a strange phenomenon here
though very few can see it
even the pigeons tip-toe delicately around

There's a hole on Bloor St.
where Rebecca used to be
for a block or two around the Future Bakery
Oh, you should have seen the kindnesses
she did for strangers on the street

If your life's like a thin membrane that's
stretched around some chaos, you can
join the atmosphere here where people mill,
seemingly equally lost

But could she understand what her life was?
Do any of us?
We're busy. We're busy. We're busy
Death stands like a strange new structure
that birds use without question to fly by
to rest on, to nest in
But as the Anishnabe guy said,
beneath his breath: Be happy, be happy
on your journey, Rebecca

Rebecca filled a space in the world
but you can lose yourself
Her laughter still weaves threads in between
poverty and wealth, poverty and wealth

There's a hole on Bloor St. where
Rebecca used to be
Peopled by those who construct a common
memory. Her face blooms with enthusiasm
for the power of words and simple melody

04 :: DUBIOUS ELEGY

I remember Stan Demonsky with a flat, expressionless face
He could cut you up with those sarcastic comments he would make
Always seemed preoccupied by some annoying thought
that he had as he looked at you, but he never brought it up

The Last Resorts was his first band, the last The Kensingtons
(He was always in these bands that had these
self-defeating names)

The last I saw him was at his rundown place in Chinatown
A relic of Toronto's eighties Queen Street underground
Stan bashed out those chunky rock chords
as if he was a star. He jumped around like Peter Townsend.
The resemblance ended there

Stan Demonsky had a face that pain resided in
It was a quiet tenant, but it paid its rent in skin

Stan Demonsky's hands were always stained by printer's ink
He had a business on Atlantic—it seemed to pay the rent
When my friend David said he'd died of too much heroin
I thought that was a stupid way to die
But not, may be, for him
for him

05 :: SIMPLE CHILD

Born that way, a simple child, he's never going to change
Whatever plans you made in life you had to rearrange
He looks at you so patently, this complicated man
Born into a world that you
could never trust to take up his hand

This world that eats itself, the world of humans
who always complicate the simplest emotions

There he is, your simple child, he's reaching for you now
And asking not much more than you'd
reserved for him somehow

Moment by moment
years pass
clear water over glass

It's not as if there was no frustration
no pain, no obstacles, no
complications

He taught your simple heart a love it could never have endured
when he was just a simple child
and couldn't say a word

He's your simple child

06 :: BEAUTIFUL RUINS

I stepped off of the train
I looked around me—all was uncertain
Somewhere somebody screamed
Shadows were struggling behind a curtain
I looked around—everything was changed
Where was I standing, who
was I standing for?

I walked into the beautiful ruins
of the old temple, under a full moon
Shadows long as a human fell from the rubble
Hey, what am I doing?
What have they done, what happened? I cried
Who broke the altar? Who brought division here?

I took up arms against my homeland
I chose my weapon and joined up with the partisans

All books, each trace of culture burned and destroyed now
We just have each other, striving
out on this desert, the natives and exiles—
above us, the vultures

I took up arms against my homeland
I chose my weapon and joined up with the partisans

