

PROCESSION IN THE CLOUDS – IN THREE WAVES

By: P.J. Gibson

WAVE I

It was a day of infamy
Everyone had a story
Linked to pain, hurt and disbelief
Cameras caught the unbelievable
Eyes consumed a meal no one wanted to eat

She had been among those who stood before windows
Roof tops, sidewalks
Any platform upon which feet could plant
Seeing what would forever scar the mind
Her ears flanked by sirens, never ending shrieks
Her camera click, click, clicking
The moment of the second fall

Paper wore images
Developed in drug stores and photo shops
Posterity frozen by the hands of the novice,
The expert, and her
Duplicating this angle and that
Images... images... images
Spreading themselves across
Cover stories of magazines... newspapers
Hideous dragon faces hidden in
Dust, smoke – the dead

A neighbor first saw them,
Her developed images...
Grotesque dragon faces camouflaged in
The rising ash and soot
Contorted figures of evil
Akin to ancient horrid creatures of the past
They claimed the images
Dominated the photo paper
Drew in the spectator's eye to see
See them

A neighbor first saw them,
Then a friend and another and another
All seeing what the camera had caught

Horrific contorted faces of creatures
Open mouthed and wolfing in... souls

There in the billowing veil of
Rising smoke
And the plume of the taken

These beasts...
They had no shame, in their feast of souls

Gazing upon the photos...
One could not but hurt
Seeing the dragons, creatures... the unimaginable
Gloating as they fed

Her photos...
She keeps them
In a small decorative box
Defying the darkness inside
It is a coffin for those who had no burial
A box bearing a design of tranquility

It is dressed in a garment of soothing yellow,
Warm shades of lavender and gold
A mandala of intricate design
Centers its lid, like a sun
As gentle twirling leaves of green
Lace pink roses and sunflowers
Framed by delicate russet twigs
Life and nature riding around the box's sides
Cardinal points of calm

Only on the anniversary
Only on September eleven
Does she take box in hand
And permit her eyes to peruse,
The images
Meditate on the taken
And then, when the ceremonial clock closes
She returns photos to their serene home,
For there is no joy in this ritual
Simply respect and history

Architects vied for the honor of the 'rebuild'
A new symbol of strength
One footprint to alter what was once two
Perhaps that is why they came

WAVE II

There are things the camera's lens
Should not lasso, profit from
Lead to casual discourse

WAVE III

Standing before her window
Starring down at that which had been
An icon of the city eaten by flame and smoke
On this anniversary date – eleven and September
The movement of the clouds caught her eyes
They moved from east to west
'Odd' she thought
Their movement from east to west
And then she saw...

High in the white puff and shape of the clouds
There in the calm of a clear blue sky
A procession of people... people... people
They were cloud soul people in shapes of
Women and men
Short and tall
Fat and thin
They moved as currents of clouds
A conveyor belt of people shapes
High above the mangled soil beneath

Did they know the shift to come?
Had they... in Heaven's ethers read 'headlines'
'Architects, to alter'
Is that which had drawn, summoned them?
One last chance to peruse?

There they were there, high in the sky
A procession of souls marching above a massive hole
A solemn saunter over where they had once been
They travelled, passing over the familiar, now gone
Soul people, mirroring a New Orleans' funeral stroll
There they were hovering...

She... she dare swoop up camera as she once had
She dare not click the lens
Dare not defile this glide in the sky
These were souls of the dead

Taking their last look

Collectively...

They had claimed the clouds with their bodies
And in a solemn march, they viewed below
One last time, lowering their heads to see
Their processional was welcomed by
The morning sky and sun
They had been given a beautiful day for their
Final assembly

Others...

Those with cameras and such
Others... in the city, they must also have seen
This processional
But no photographers sold the images
No photo of them 'Crossing Over' made the headlines
The evening news, nor discourse at local bars

But others must have seen...

Perhaps it was 'respect' that conquered the moment

Just as on cue

Mirroring the hands on the clock
The moment the second tower fell
The processional began to dissipate
Fade away
The last of them had seen
Then dissolved into the clear of the blue sky
Passing into the ethers

Someone had seen them

She, alone could not have been the only to see
Someone else must have stood at windows
On balconies, in parks, on streets
In cars, on roofs, at bus stops
Others had to have seen...
The procession
And like her, they had pursed their lips for
Respect

Today

There stands one where there was once two
Things have altered the familiar
The souls had come that September eleventh
And they had seen

And said 'farewell'

She had seen their procession
And she honored them by not clicking her
Camera's lens

CONTACT:
pjgibson@jjay.cuny.edu
© 2020
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED