

# among American gods

*by strannikov*

contemporary cults defy belief

once freshly-minted gods expire so soon—  
such gods of our own image deified,  
the saints we consecrate and canonize:

asserted gods to guide us through short days,  
these gods our declarations scarce secure,  
these gods who don't transcend our final breaths—  
anemic gods to whom blood never flows.

these gods who decorate mere preference,  
these gods who never issue stern command,  
these gods whose rules might never be erased  
because their conjured names weren't once engraved.

from silences the holy still indwell  
whose ransacked domiciles in ruin creak,  
old gods and saints discarded with abuse—  
they watch from their invisible retreats,

their silent speech the whispers in our souls  
(what souls survive the advent of our gods  
whose cults we multiply by our short years,  
our conjured gods who sanitize our fear).

in dark recesses of this morgue of earth  
where beauty of the good does not compel,  
where evil's horrors seldom do repel—  
Americ gods reign o'er from birth to birth.

if ever native innocence sees sun,  
whatever innocence be born, it's killed  
in introductions to the gods of Fun.

careers of each cute god of Fun begun  
with mindless song, with simple pastimes fueled,  
evaporating bright-toothed pleasures sung.

machines that children never understand  
are sent to youth, caressing each soft sense,  
accelerating infantile demands.

young girls and boys quick yankt from careless youth  
with toxicating brews and toxic fumes,  
by which to moan and stagger into truth,

into their darks to fuck in hidden cars,  
adult-like with their slobbers and their drools,  
with weighted guilts child-like beneath their stars.

as short days pass do pharmaceuticals pose  
more potent dares to teenaged nerves so soon  
and find impatient hungers for each dose.

youths lost to lusts for hungry, far-flung worlds—  
they're charged the standard entry fees for dupes  
for pastimed spins of animals awhirl.

as souls' abyss accompanies their deaths,  
these devotees of Fun depart their schools  
equipt with rictus grins befitting wraiths.

along the goddess Fashion's avenues  
are storefronts lit with bright-striped suits and silks

to pleasure passers-by and parvenus.

eyes salivate confronted with such bliss!  
crowds file, crowds swarm, crowds lap up all this glitz!  
each gaudy trinket hallowed with a kiss.

with “now” the only time we have on hand,  
“appearance” is the novelty of now,  
disposals of dead fashions we command.

bright alternating neon lights the Ritz,  
its marquee advertising dancehall flicks,  
its reels of doubtful memory atwist

(celebrating cults of celebrity  
conspicuous consumption guaranteed,  
displaying every worthwhile novelty).

look there! that fabled string of pearls once swung  
that 'Twenties flapper through her shakes and kicks  
(and off-screen twined the noose from which she hung).

look here! this stylish porkpie hat once crowned  
that jazzy drummer known to all as “Sticks”  
(off-screen, it hid the horse that kicked him down).

these are but two of goddess Fashion's paths—  
not all her nightmare paths are paved with rocks,  
though some indeed are sharpened red with wrath.

should Fun or Fashion fail, the trusted god  
charged with enforcing local gravity,  
Lord Mammon, weights our world with chains of gold.

no priests complain of silver manacles,  
you won't hear choirs boast depravity,  
the pious polish tarnisht tentacles.

who cannot hear cold Mammon's devotees  
sing loud and long of freedom's pieties  
from death and want, distress and dark disease,

for months, decades, for dozens, scores of years,  
these hymns of praise to this their deity,  
'til one by one each chokes with pharaohs' fears?

one day must Mammon's worship be bequeathed  
unto deserving hordes, posterity,  
to last only as long as men can breathe:

so celebrated is this evil god  
from noon to noon, its mien insanity,  
among all false and lying gods laid cold

into each marsh and swamp of blistered voice—  
its devotees too late for mutiny  
sink late complaints that gurgle 'neath their noise:

the silent scum that floats atop their screams  
conceals from every ear the poverty  
their savage spirits stir beneath their slimes.

every generation owns and owes its past,  
custodians of all who live and die:  
no god can speak to we who have no past,  
who have no future broken from our pasts.

the gods are tasked with training human wills—

from forests, out of deserts, nature wild—  
through feral zoos of feral humankind—  
they guide, inform, or tame our human wills.

they speak to us, the animals we are—  
we bipeds, neither raven, vulture, crow—  
we animals, distinct from vegetables—  
we animals, becoming minerals.

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where beauty of the good cannot compel,  
where evil's horrors never do repel—  
Americ gods reign o'er from death to death.

