

The All-Yogurt Diet

GLEAMING LUXURY TOWERS loom over the sidewalks where shattered lives play out on flattened cardboard. That's where my cacophonous communications department is hard at work. Footsteps clacking. I am a controlling conductor with totalitarian tendencies, and the street is a counterpoint that is useful and necessary to me. It is **My Ugly Blue Danube**!

I am the King of the Yogurt Republic, the one wielding the conductor's baton—or rather, a modernized version: the fabulous truncheon! And you must stick to my sheets!

Here is the separate part of my Program—the Capital handing me the great partition, the full score, on the sly. I am the machine that types out the music in lockstep. (Lockstep, lockstep!) Music on the march—military above all else—not the kind consisting of dissonant notes sprawled against the facades of buildings.

Military music above all else, follow me in hell!

And for that, prefer the bringing to heel— More rigid and more yielding under the truncheons—seal all their mouth: into the dumpster them that fell. . .

They are there, along the sidewalk, just past the concert hall exit doors. Kept somewhat at a distance by security guards—after all, one wouldn't want to make the music lover uncomfortable. A striking contrast that immediately catches the eye. (The Eye! . . . the Eye! . . . the Eye! . . .)

One of these makeshift shelters unfolds; the person emerging from it might well be a former colleague, an unemployed person, a drug addict, an autistic person, a veteran, an ex-convict. *Who could say?* Images are an ejaculate of the Eye; only the ear welcomes a caress of life. Activating the third eye by listening to sounds. Synesthesias. Not canned sounds—dead sounds. But the sounds propagating through the air from their instrument. A guitar is one; the voice, another.

The grinding of teeth within the vocal cords, and that of the instrument. A double bass is yet another, as is the transverse flute that tears at the cheeks in its kiss of sound.

Some thoughts are still in the air, berating them for thinking as incompetent. Geez, you only have to cross the street to find work! And it matters not that the sidewalk opposite displays the same array of silenced voices. Of lives that have slowly faded into invisibility!

For only the suit or the tailored outfit matters. But a measure of what?

That of an upstart politician—which is a tautology.

So, I don't listen to "music"; I wipe my ass with its skeleton to clean off a few words.

The score played by the sidewalks—and the notes within it that clash with my agenda—are not my responsibility; let them align themselves instead with the military music of the neoliberal economy.

"I couldn't give a shit," I'm telling you.

Seize the activist and wring his neck! Ergo,

You will see—with a surge of energy— Democracy brought somewhat to its knees.

If I do not watch out, just how far will it go?

"I couldn't care less," I tell you.

For at heart, my style is all about lots of words and very few sounds; one could even say my political party is constipated—though it's impossible to decide whether the blockage is in the vocal cords or the intestines. I think it's both, and that's why we're blasting out those notes—those out-of-tune sidewalk notes. So I spit them out, and I even make mouth noises right in their faces.

Their grayish faces with toothless mouths.

My little yogurt pot is recyclable, just like its aluminum lid, but I want nothing to do with the rest: neither why thousands of elderly women and foreign domestic workers spend their lives bearing the weight of this economy, nor where the landfill for the most polluted neighborhood in a major city like Cairo is located.

I just want to worry about my little recyclable yogurt pot and its organic contents in my belly.

I am the King of the Yogurt Republic, the one who wields the conductor's baton—or rather, a modernized version: the fabulous truncheon!

And you must stick to my score!

It is within that ferment that the notes of my next speech are taking shape. All that matters to me is leaving the concert hall and letting myself be lulled by the echo of the rumblings in my abdomen.

A military-industrial march—in step, and to the beat of the drum!!!