

Masque of Anarchy

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by Barbara Boyd

I have been thinking a lot this week about Percy Shelley's poem, "Masque of Anarchy,"¹ which is one of my favorites. If you haven't read it lately, or haven't read it ever, you should, because it is a kind of universal reflection on our present situation.

The poem starts with stanzas describing, in bloody and incredibly sensuous detail, what the tyranny of anarchy looks like. Shelley is reflecting in the first part of the poem on the massacre by the British government of those rallying in Manchester, England to reform a corrupt government in August of 1819. The event is called the Peterloo massacre. It was the occasion of a full cavalry charge into a crowd of some 50,000 people.

In August of 1946, Lyndon La-

Rouche witnessed a similar, savage revelation of the nature of Empire when British troops opened fire on a mass rally for independence in Calcutta, India. He never forgot this most vivid demonstration of the nature of Empire and spent most of his life defining how such entities could be driven from the face of the Earth.

In the poem, Shelley portrays allegorically, in the poem's first part, the sins of such a tyrannical government as the actual breathing souls of various government ministers, horrible dominating vices which hide under the masks of what appear to be human features. For example, he portrays Lord Castlereagh as the mask of "murder," Fraud is in the form of Lord Eldon, hypocrisy is Lord Sidmouth. And he recounts other sins disguised in as human beings, as he says, "All disguised, ... / Like Bishops, lawyers, peers, and spies."

¹ Percy Shelley, in his November 14-18, 1819 letter to Leigh Hunt, referred to his poem, not yet published, as the "Masque of Anarchy." Later editors have frequently changed the name of the poem to be "The Mask of Anarchy."

Anarchy himself is a symbol in the poem for the character of the tyrannical government which always claims as its motto, as the poem struts it: "I am God, and King, and Law!" Anarchy's "white horse" is "splashed with blood," reminiscent of the Death that rode a pale horse in "Revelation." He is followed by "hired murderers," loyal bloodthirsty soldiers whom Shelley associates with those who took part in the killings at "Peterloo."

That phrase, "I am God, King, and Law," was what the American revolutionists thought their British mas-

ters thought of themselves, arrogating to themselves all of the powers of the universe, the state, and the civil society within the state. Be-

cause this does not conform at all to the actual lawful nature of the universe, Shelley declares it irrational, heretical, and reflexively evil. That is anarchy, and Shelley makes his point more powerful by associating anarchy with a government—which most people would think of as polar opposites.

This is how modern British oligarchs think of themselves. It is exactly how our elites in the United States, admirers of the Queen and the Royal Family and all things imperial think of themselves. The best examples of courtiers presently, are Barack Obama, Kamala Harris, and Nancy Pelosi. I don't believe that Joe Biden has a capacity to actively think, if he ever did, but allowing him that, he would join this motley crew. How else could someone think of himself who effectively sold his office for the millions of dollars his son captured in corrupt schemes in both Ukraine and China while sitting as the Vice President of the United States. I am God, and King, and Law. He apparently believes himself protected by his elite masters, and permanently so.

How else could these people be thinking if they can

EDITORIAL

conduct an election solely based on drumming up hatred for Donald Trump, participating in orchestrating race riots which they seem to be able to turn on and off, while never appearing publicly, and refusing to answer direct questions about their clear plans to completely alter the Constitution if elected.

Now just when everything looks very dark and pessimistic in Shelley's poem, hope appears, first in the guise of a "maniac maid" apparently resigned to an awful fate, but that is not the nature of hope. A new force, like a most powerful force of all of nature, gathers strength. Anarchy lies dead and his horse flees, grinding "to death the murders thronged behind." Shelley is clearly telling us something here about how hope and optimism are characteristic of actual natural law, that they are a force in the universe. The impassioned speech, made by a new voice, takes up the rest of the poem. The transition begins with this declaration:

37

Men of England, heirs of Glory,
Heroes of unwritten story,
Nurslings of one mighty Mother,
Hopes of her, and one another;

38

Rise like Lions after slumber
In unvanquishable number,
Shake your chains to earth like dew
Which in sleep had fallen on you—
Ye are many—they are few.

Shelley goes on to examine the necessary character of those who must wage the fight against tyranny: He writes:

52

What art thou Freedom? O! could slaves
Answer from their living graves
This demand—tyrants would flee
Like a dream's dim imagery:

53

Thou art not, as impostors say,
A shadow soon to pass away,
A superstition, and a name
Echoing from the cave of Fame.

He makes the free character one who creates a livable material condition, fed and never immiserated by poverty,

one who loves and that at the highest level like Christ, one who seeks and exemplifies justice, one who checks the excesses of the rich. He says:

63

Science, Poetry, and Thought
Are thy lamps; they make the lot
Of the dwellers in a cot
So serene, they curse it not.

64

Spirit, Patience, Gentleness,
All that can adorn and bless
Art thou—let deeds, not words, express
Thine exceeding loveliness.

He then issues a call to arms to overthrow tyranny, having characterized poetically, the character of the warrior who can prevail. Here is how the poem ends:

90

And these words shall then become
Like Oppression's thundered doom
Ringing through each heart and brain,
Heard again—again—again—

91

Rise like Lions after slumber
In unvanquishable number—
Shake your chains to earth like dew
Which in sleep had fallen on you—
Ye are many—they are few.

Now I have written a lot lately about how Lyndon LaRouche thought about people's war, the ability to overthrow tyranny even if the tyrants seem all powerful and dominate the media. LaRouche, like Shelley, believed that 99% of the road to victory consisted of culture—the idea which Donald Trump has talked about in the form of reviving the ideas of the American Revolution and of Lincoln against the so-called critical theorists and critical race theorists who want now to reabsorb the United States into the modern British Empire.

It should be clear in the Transition Integrity Project, in the military revolt which Colonel Richard H. Black has talked about, in the entire sweep of events which have happened since Donald Trump won the election and before that, that our opponents are intent on extinguishing the sovereign United States and its

culture. The most important step in that is erasing our actual history and heritage in the European Renaissance.

There are many immediate tactical weapons which we can wield against them—the declassification of “everything Russiagate” is an obvious one and it will lead right back to the oligarchs, the British House of Lords being one formation, who insisted first against Trump’s election and then against any Second Term. We must do this and campaign for it and not accept excuses. But, quite frankly, anyone who is thinking already knows this story.

The question becomes, how will you use what you know to defeat the coup and bring about fundamental change for the public good? The fundamental weapon is the issue which both Shelley and LaRouche addressed. Can we elevate the American

people to the state of mind actually necessary to vanquish this foe, a state of mind in which they are emboldened by optimism and hope and do not bend to the pessimism, fear, and atomization, the weapons our enemy seeks to wield?

That is why a concerted campaign over the next two weeks to demonstrate how our current crash programs, like the Artemis Program and Operation Warp Speed, can transform the economy and the spirit of our people, programs which represent one of the most critical weapons in the counter coup.

That is why a sustained attack using our actual history, as elaborated by Lyndon LaRouche and his collaborators, represents just as urgent a priority as the battle to turn the enemy’s lies about this President on their head and show their true source. That’s the topic I think we all need to be thinking about.