“Good News”
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“It’s good news when you reject things as they are, when you lay down the world as it is and you take on the responsibility of shaping your own way — that’s good news.” This was, word for word, what Dr. Bernice Johnson Reagon told us at All Souls Unitarian Church, in Washington, DC, November the 8th, 1980, on All Souls Day. This was a Saturday, 4 days after Ronald Reagan had been elected in a landslide of 9% points over incumbent US President and Democrat Jimmy Carter, a man who had done things like raising the annual cap on refugee resettlement in the United States from 17,000 persons a year to 500,000 persons, and he was beat by 9% points. For comparison, this was 7.5% bigger a margin of victory in the popular vote than Donald Trump’s win over Vice President Kamala Harris last November.

So, just 4 days after this landslide defeat by the Reagan/Thatcher revolution, Dr. Bernice Johnson Reagon made sure to make it clear what she meant that day at All Souls Unitarian Church, lest we take away a message that was easier to dismiss as empty positivity—or toxic positivity, as we would say now. “They don’t say, it’s good times, they say good NEWS. It’s hard times when you decide to pick up your own cross. You gonna catch hell, if you don’t do it the way they say do it. But when you lay down the world and shoulder up your cross that’s what?— GOOD NEWS.”

I was four years old on that night. That night, Nov 8th, 1980, the first US death from AIDS out of an eventual 700,000 in my country hadn’t happened yet. That night, a peace treaty between Egypt and Israel had just been signed, without the participation of any Palestinians, and Israel was about to launch a large-scale invasion into Lebanon, displacing already multiply displaced Palestinians there, and killing 50,000 civilians. Despite oil shortages, there were as yet zero mitigation strategies even contemplated for global warming among the world’s governments or transnational oil corporations, though the Carbon Dioxide Theory of Climate Change, first formulated in 1955 by Gilbert Plass, a Canadian, who trained at Harvard and Johns Hopkins, was already 25 years old in 1980. A march (hīkoi) in Wellington in Aotearoa New Zealand sought to achieve equal and official status for Te Reo Māori language alongside English, and that huge effort would take another seven years to realize. And also in that year, the news anchor of the NBC Nightly News in the US, Tom Brokaw, asked a 33-year-old New Yorker of some note and notoriety named Donald Trump, “Mr. Trump, what’s left in your life?” To which he answered: “I just want to keep busy and keep active and be interested in what I do. That’s all there is to life as far as I’m concerned.”

It was for many, in the late colonial West, a strange period of oblivion. Wesley Morris of *The New York Times* describes this period 1975-1983 as characterized in America by its “yacht rock” music genre, which he describes as a period in American popular music defined by the joke that “whoever invented it and whoever's making a playlist out of these songs is basically saying that the music [and they themselves as listeners] are inconsequential and that what is communicated in them doesn't matter.” I can’t fathom the sheer gall of intending to invent a kind of music that is meant to not matter and to be inconsequential. So there was something in the air around me, and

around many of us raised in these neocolonial places, that was lured from earliest age toward permission structures for resignation, oblivion, relinquishment, abandonment to complicity, and taking false comfort—though I was far too young to identify these as such, probably until recently even.

Officially, we all knew little then about life in what was eventually, but not inevitably, to become this particular Spring 2025. And yet, we knew already so, so much about what we and our communities would have to contend with. All the key elements were there already, all of the narratives, all of the indicators, many of the real-world personae, and all the available guises for what Naomi Klein now calls the bid for an "end-times fascism". 1980 was the age when counterculture frequently turned away from liberation, and rather toward cyberculture, and began inventing startup countries and companies, special economic zones, crack-up capitalism (Slobodian 2024), and new technologies for a fortified neocolonialism.

And yes, as Bernice Johnson Reagon said, a lot of us were accordingly about to start catching hell for doing it in a different way than they said for us to do it, for being alive and loving one another in a different way. And despite all of this, Dr. Johnson Reagon had come to talk to us already on November 8, 1980, in this way about "good news", and about the fact—the spiritual fact, the theological fact, the political fact, the cultural fact, the analytical fact—that we were not allowed to give up even one bit of the discipline and the responsibility of discerning what is really real in this world of ours, of imagining where we actually stand in a massive, multiply contextual complexity.

We weren't allowed—and never would be—to stop wanting a wantable and wantably just and peace-adoring future, nor to stop building together what we needed for that future. Permanent despair—or even despair in any excess than is absolutely necessary, when our psyche feels it has nowhere else to go—was not part of a human being's job description. Heartbreak was ours, a well-felt sadness was ours, rest and idleness were ours, haplessness and indexterity were ours, passivity and doubt, sure. But despair was not. Resignation was not. Curling up, into the coziness of inner emigration, is not. Closing the heart and one's consciousness to block out wall-building kleptocrats and war-profiteers we wish never existed was not.

And that's good news: at least that's what Bernice Johnson Reagon told us that night. And we were gonna catch hell, because we knew we couldn't and wouldn't do it the way they say do it—and still stay ourselves, and still stay together in our solidarities, to still stay answerable. This is something that Ramesa Öztürk knew when she was captured on the streets of Somerville, Massachusetts, last month for signing an op-ed in her school newspaper. It's something Mohsen Madawi knew when he was lured by the US government to a suspicious-sounding US naturalization test, after he had just finished presenting a Powerpoint for his Peace Plan for 2030, for Israelis and Palestinians to live together on the occupied West Bank land where he'd grown up. It's something that he, Mohsen Madawi, still knew—that he was probably gonna catch more hell—when he came out of prison in Vermont last week, and promptly said "I am not afraid of you, Mr. Trump". These people knew that some of us are going to jail, and then prison, and then somewhere worse where we will entertain the notion at least once a day that the people who were supposed to love us, and protect us, had forgotten us—even though we know that's not true.

While I was getting ready for this visit with you, I was thinking with some remorse about the specific contortions my own emotional fitness has have taken on in these last two years, and about my shaky or shaken relation to the systems of responsibility in which I'd like to think I live. Honestly I've felt a little like I'd lost some guiding signal, some coherence, some connection, perhaps lost a signal that I'd never quite acquired in the first place.

I fled the United States the week of the 2020 Presidential election because of Donald Trump and because of the 77 Million people who saw fit to trust him with the leviathan power that is the United States government. These are people of whom I am, as a queer and Disabled person with multiple everyday vulnerabilities, quite afraid—more so apparently than Mohsen Mahdawi and Ramesa Öztürk are. Moving away from the US to the lands colonially known as British Columbia, Canada, I was quickly calmed by the continuous presence on CBC radio every morning of comparably normal, humdrum everyday news stories—petty burglaries, fentanyl spikes, clergy scandals, disappointment in self-dealing Ottawa leaders, battles over oil and nickel on Indigenous land.

And I flirted for a good long while there with the idea of closing down my signal to only those local concerns, redesigning a diminished Real around what I thought my heart could handle. (Of course, that list of news items on CBC radio isn't exactly a walk in the park.) I bargained with the idea that it would be good enough at this point in life to hospice this world, such as it is, into and through its manifold unwanted futures, doing so from a writing table on a quiet island in the Salish Sea, a place governed by alleged progressives who were pious about their green capitalism, and subtle about their hostility to affordable housing and adequate mass transportation and city noise and the unconditional rematriation of Indigenous lands.

In fact, some parts of decolonial theory, when I read them opportunistically, abetted me in my attempts to climb into this kind of wistful vigil, of saying goodbye to the future of this world before it could say goodbye to us. I began to joke a lot about my retirement date of June 30, 2042, which is a Monday, and I champed down on this dim vision as a modest triumph in a life I never expected would last even this long. I find in certain rough seasons, like these ones, that it's tough to spot the necessary evidence of how exactly the puzzle of my emotional and spiritual life is actually working, or if it's working at all.

I don't know about you, but for me it's not simple. I can't just pose myself a probing question and wait for the answer. I need some specific kind of evidence that lingers on that strange outer layer between self and world that is so often prompted to live constantly under siege conditions. My thoughts themselves just don't cut it: they're too full of the stories I wish were true, the idealizations, the projections. So I look to the emotions sometimes for the truth of the matter.

Ask any of my friends, for instance: and they'll tell you: I am not a cryer. I grieve death and loss silently and stoically, almost inappropriately. But, it turns out, I cry almost automatically when I hear the recording of the human crew of Apollo 8, orbiting the moon for the first time in 1968, and when I can hear the tense but beautiful matter-of-factness with which ground control in Houston narrates its "period of longest wait" before reestablishing contact with Apollo 8 and the human beings aboard it.

More often than not these last years, I think I may have been living in the feeling of what the US National Aeronautic and Space Administration calls an LOS, a Loss of Signal, a profound but subtle experience of anxious depurposing, without the anticipation of reacquiring any signal from the other side. And this is why, I think, I come completely undone when I hear the Apollo 8 recording. In 1968, Capsule Communicator Major General Michael Collins put it this way while he was monitoring the Apollo 8 trip to orbit the moon. First, he described waiting for a "combined crew-ground go/no-go decision", after which 1:30 seconds would need to elapse until LOS, Loss of Signal, between ground and the capsule. Then the crew on Apollo 8 said to CapComm Michael Collins, "Thanks a lot, troops, see you on the other side" and then they disappeared from communications. And Collins then said "We've had Loss of a Signal with Apollo 8 at 68:58:45 seconds; we will watch with continuing interest the AOS clock here in mission control. They're traveling over the backside of the moon now at 7777 ft per second. Now we're in our period of longest wait," said CapComm.

This period of longest wait was eventually 45 minutes and 51 seconds. I think, when I try to make sense of the emotional, moral, spiritual, political, and economic contexts of the last two years, I realize that I've felt for almost my whole life that I've been just holding on in this "period of longest wait", where the spacecraft is on the dark side of the moon, and I've forgotten whether and when to expect to hear from it again, to reaquire its signal. And this period of longest wait—for peace, for justice, for sanity, for joy, for the beloved community—is a certain kind of hell that we've been catching in various forms all this time.

The good news, though, is that we have no other choice than to always insist on reacquiring that signal. Of feeling its loss, of living the full consequences of its loss, and then moving heaven and earth in our hearts to get it back. And I think, when I look at this Spring School program that is a prayer book anticipating that Peace Must Prevail, this is what we're doing together. Insisting, never tiring too long, never re-tiring from that insistence.

In some ways, though, I think this Loss of Signal and this "period of longest wait" was the engineered result of a deliberate and largely successful strategy in geopolitics to scramble the signal for young people like me, like us, and to replace it with some other kind of feedback loop of oblivion and confused resignation, in a time of complex doubt about this, our only world. From the early 1990s I got schooled and scolded in a subtly evangelical fashion about what political realism was supposed to entail, and about what was instead rather a kooky idealistic vision of things, which marked you as "not getting" it about the how things had to be done in the real world of politics. It seemed being that "out of step", or untimely, or naïve, or uncompromising, was a bigger sin politically than being wrong, or ungenerous in heart, or opportunistic in thought.

I was encouraged in this age to fall in love with tv shows like the West Wing and House of Cards, which seemed to fetishize pragmatism and compromise, and which turned complexity and nuance into an elite insider purview. In this kind of regime, being out of step with pragmatism and financialized realism was almost an ethical error, and it reflected poorly on one's seriousness in the world. I suppose this is one of the things Bernice Johnson Reagon meant when she said "you gonna catch hell if you don't do it the way they say do it."

My own schooling of liberal political and fiscal realism was fueled, I think, by what Rachel Greenwald Smith calls “compromise aesthetics”, or the conviction that, as she writes, “contemporary art is at its most socially relevant when it forges compromises between strategies traditionally associated with the mainstream on the one hand and those associated with experimental departures from the mainstream on the other.” Observing this trend in literature too, the poet Ron Silliman has recently asked, “Why is it that so many young writers are conflict averse in a world in which conflict itself is inherent? What is the attraction to not taking a stand?”

So many of us were raised on a type of fundamentalist centrism that viewed compromise on things like peace not only as one legitimate path toward, but also as the only kind of analytical stance that made any political sense. One of the realms where I think these phenomena of political realism and compromise aesthetics is utterly illuminating but constantly overlooked is in the realm of what I’ve been writing about so much over the last decade, namely monolingualism, and the consolidation of a monolingual realism to the exclusion of multilingual epistemology about critical matters in our shared present geopolitical moment, where we say in languages like English that we intend to build or cultivate peace and justice. I really like what Judith Butler once wrote about this in 2019, which was: “Monolingualism—or what we can call monolingual conviction […] intensifies the sense that whatever we utter or write in this language is immediately generalizable.” (And by “this language” I’m pretty sure Butler meant English.)

So when people hear me coming talking about multilingual this-and-that, sometimes they think that I’m talking about it because I like languages or something. No, the prize in all this work isn’t languages themselves, nor their wonderful poetries and musics and traditions, but their access to truth—informational, conceptual, political, and cosmological. That’s what languages do, they access truth. This is a point Nadera Shaloub-Kevorkian made a year into the war on Gaza when she said that the Anglo-German word “rubble” was just in no way adequate or even realistic for describing the living devastation of Gaza.

The Arabic word ashlaa’ أشلاء, she wrote, refers to all the scattered body parts and the dismembered flesh and bones around her, around us. Centering and interpreting the war and the world through this word ashlaa’ (instead of mere rubble) “unsettles the totalizing perception of annihilation” by insisting on (among other things) on lifting up the bodies of the beloved dead, of burials for the dead and proper handling of human bodies. In a way that “rubble” does not, ashlaa’ makes meaning out of Gazans’ loving acts to collect and protect the scattered dead; to re-member the dismembered. “How can we understand Palestine?, writes Shaloub-Kevorkian, “We have to start with its people, even as ashlaa’.” Insisting on ashlaa’ as the central term, rather than “rubble”, means a whole different and uncompromising assertion of what the world is, and therefore of what is essential for building peace in it.

Rediscovering a responsibility to ashlaa’, and to an uncompromising commitment to this kind of real world beyond English is, for me, a key to that experience of Acquisition of Signal I did not quite understand I’d been yearning for. The sane and adequate—and very normal—word ashlaa’ is a utopian element on the horizon, not despite but amid, and with, the suffering and complexity it calls forth for recognition.

It says: “We have lived and we have seen and we have loved rightly and we have carried our dead, even as you have wanted us to disappear.” You don’t get that truth from the word “rubble”, which is much more about property and buildings.

Every word like this that we have not learned to use adequately yet is a glimmer, and if you will a burst, leading us out of the narrows of the alleged Real we’ve learned to accept. It is a throwing-open of the consciousness, the unafraid receptive consciousness, for what the phenomenologist María del Rosario Acosta López calls a grammar of the inaudible, una gramática del inaudito.

I think maybe one of the reasons why compromise aesthetics and political realism made their home within me so effectively over the course of my early and now mid-adulthood was the mistaken presumption that justice and peace were somehow the prize result on the other side of an ability to be shrewd and timely and up-to-speed and informed and articulate, to be of the moment and never caught out by its manipulations and opportunisms. Like, to be a kind of elite, high-performance athlete of political information, immune to disinformation and sentimentality and simplistic interpretations.

Of course, this kind of idealization was a recipe for failure and exhaustion. But maybe this kind of ideal, this kind of hypervigilant timeliness was systematically leading us away from the real world of collective experience anyway. The political anthropologist Ilana Feldman writes about the power of what she calls “untimely optimism”, to explain how and why people in the midst of injustice and brutality and ashlaa’ can sustain ongoing commitments to institutions and relationships whose failures and impunities they know very intimately and have no illusions about.
And who are able nonetheless to resist being haunted by the prospect that their endurance of those failures may appear to reflect unfavorably upon them.
And she explores what may be accomplished through nonetheless maintaining such commitments emphatically, even within a general context of acknowledged failure and betrayal.

Feldman notes a 1951 statement from Izzat Tannous, General Secretary of the Representatives of the Palestine Refugee Committees in Lebanon, writing to the UN Conciliation Commission for Palestine [UNCCP], in which Tannous wrote already, in 1951: “The refugees wish to place on record their bitter disappointment, doubts, and fears in the earnestness of the United Nations to carry out their decision and redress a small part of the great wrong done to them.” 70 years later, Palestinians’ ongoing refusal to disappear accomplishes what Feldman calls an untimely and sometimes even a nonaspirational perseverance, an optimism at the end of the world.

There are versions of this powerful kind of untimely optimism in Ukraine, in Palestine, in Colombia, in Indigenous North America, in Scotland, all over. And they are so much more than wishful thinking, or accentuating the positive, or ignoring reality. They are the essence of reality. This untimely optimism against apparent evidence, says Feldman, consists of three features: a fearlessly repeated refusal that is not afraid of repetition itself, an apparent out-of-phasedness when seen from an external vantage point, and a refusal to be tethered only to the present.

On this idea of out-of-phasedness, Feldman draws from the work of Beshara Doumani. Displaced from Haifa by Zionist paramilitary groups in 1947, Doumani writes about his own experience of Palestinians’ perpetual, tense out-of-phaseness (2007),

which he describes as a “temporal lag whereby the Palestinians are continuously [seen as] one or two steps behind in their approach to events.” The international community has been so busy for a hundred years manhandling what Palestine is and means that actual Palestinian people have to spend their precious and besieged time chasing the most recent kind of external interpretation, whether it’s statutory, narrative, or libidinal.

Amid their relatively simple bid to stay in their homes and lands—or, more audaciously, to go back to those that were stolen from them—Palestinians end up having to attend to absolutely everyone else’s stories about them before they can ever get around to their own. The tragedy of this, beyond the ongoing murderous displacement itself, is the foreboding feeling Doumani describes that what Palestinians like him say about themselves often lands outwardly as irrelevant to the broader geopolitical moment in which they are construed, or at least as secondary to the Big Picture everyone is zealously creating around and about them.

So we might take a look closer at such allegations of out-of-phasedness and see whether it is quite the folly or error that monolingual political pragmatists, these alleged realists who speak of rubble and rivieras, think it is. One person who was also frequently out of step, always on the wrong side of some regime or predominant vision of political realism and timeliness was the Jewish German theorist Ernst Bloch, sometimes referred to as the pugnacious philosopher of hope. Bloch argued that humans always already have a type of consciousness that he labeled the not-yet-conscious, formed by the impulse of hope in which inklings of what humans could become manifest themselves (Zipes).

He described this inherent feature of us as das noch nicht bewusste Wissen, and the simple German word he used for its indicators out in the world was Vorschein: anticipatory illumination. One commentator on Ernst Bloch named Gert Ueding put it this way: “The not-yet-become of the object manifests itself in the artwork as one that searches for itself, shines ahead of itself in its meaning. Here anticipatory illumination is not simply objective in contrast to subjective illusion. Rather, anticipatory illumination [Vorschein] is the way of being, which in its turn wakes utopian consciousness and indicates to it the not-yet-become in the scale of its possibilities.” Bloch also did not associate Schein with mere appearance, nor “vor” with the prefix “pre” that suggests something coming before its appointed time.

Rather, this is the kind of imagination, the way of being we need and have, everyday, says Bloch, in art, in politics, in relationships, in our ongoing language learning, in our very consciousness. This is our Reacquisition of Signal to a future peace. These Vorscheine are not scarce, they are abundant, there are thousands already in this very room. (I was thinking earlier about the RIELA acronym and how it could just as well be Illumination through Education, Languages, and the Arts.)

Insistence on reacquiring signal to these anticipatory illuminations is the way we can hold as many contexts together as possible, when we desperately need, as we do now, to become expansive and abundant in our belief in a future in and for this world. And this is what, in another context, Ezra Klein and Derek Thompson point to in their new book *Abundance*, when they call out some of more miserly and escapist aspects of consciousness on the broad political left, which has focused too much since the 1970s, they think, on staving off unwanted futures and being too inclined to accept the notion

that scarcity and critical negation need to be the idiom of the present and near-term future.

Klein and Thompson insist that we learn again on the left—in matters as diverse as housing and scientific innovation, and perhaps languages and arts too—to aspire to more than merely parceling out the meager present, that we vie for a new "Arts of the Possible", to invoke Adrienne Rich's beautiful essay from 1997, to a kind of joyful militancy that does not believe we purchase our beloved outcomes in the future with suffering and sadness today, but with an abundant ever-readiness for love and justice, even profligate generosity of heart.

Check out what carla bergman and Nick Montgomery say about this in their book on *Joyful Militancy*, and it's a bit of a longer quote: "In many currents of radicalism—especially certain strains of Marxism—radical theory tasks itself with directing the course of struggle, pointing the way forward, or handing down instructions and fixed ways of being. This kind of theory generates necessities or suggestions to be implemented. Theory directs practice. Either this, or theory is tasked with critique of the world, of practice, and of other theories: it is supposed to reveal the limits of current struggles, discover the mistakes and flawed ways of doing or thinking, or reveal the root of oppression. Often, both these modes of theory generate positions defined in opposition to others. They give us things to be for or against. But there are other modes of theory. Theory can also explore connections and ask open-ended questions.
It can affirm and elaborate on something people already intuit or sense. It can celebrate and inspire, it can move. We want a kind of theory that participates in struggle and the growth of shared power, rather than directing it or evaluating it from outside.
We are after a kind of theory that is critical but also affirmative. Rather than pointing to the limits or shortcomings of movements and declaring what they should do, affirmative theory hones in on the most transformative edges and margins."

So these are the kinds of utopian edges and margins, not quite utopias themselves, but utopian elements that we can and must spot and affirm everywhere in their essential abundance. When we do so, it is realistic of us to do so, it is multilingual of us, it is generous and practical of us, it is full of recognition and love and, yes, of the kind of peace that is a hatred of war and its many meaninglesses. Taking Bloch's word Vorschein (or anticipatory illumination), we can even suggest another word, a Vorfrieden, anticipatory peace, or pre-peace that we can spot coming, as in a state of readiness for peace and an anticipatory stance that insists on perceiving the utopian edges and margins necessarily latent in the present moment that are indeed the Vorscheine of peace itself, despite and with the ashlaa' everywhere around us.

To be in this state of pre-peace, anticipatory peace is also to become even more an expansive and uncompromised subject, fearless and unabridged, because a subject is a subject of desire, a desire for peace. There is a historical precedent for the word Vorfrieden, but it means a preliminary treaty, as in a peace treaty. So it makes sense that Piki Diamond, an expert on Te Tirirti practices in organizations describes the bilingual Te Tiriti Treaty Aotearoa New Zealand itself as a peace-making. But I want to mean anticipatory peace as a state of readiness, an abundant and capacious joyful poise for justice in the coming moment.

So yes, it's good news when you reject things as they are, says Bernice Johnson Reagon, 4 days after Ronald Reagan was elected by a landslide. It was good news on

November the 8th, 1980 and it is good news today, May 12, 2025. And this “things as they are” in quotation marks meant not our beloved real Real world—the multilingual, perseverant, holding together of ashlaa’ in the most grievous moments of loss and suffering. “Things as they are” had been narrowed to mean an organized monolingual neocolonial version of timeliness that persuades us we have lost our signal to the Real if we fail to compromise, if we fail to “get it”, if we fail to accept the phases and phrases dictated to us by the “international community” as we entertain taking on the most subtle norms of end-times fascism, of compromising with them. These dictates are more and more coming from an owning class of techbroligarchs who have already left this world behind, invested instead in creating bunkers and exit capsules for the wealthiest, for fortifying bunker states for the end-times, because they do not believe that our relations with the land and with this planet and each other and with other beings is reparable.

So let us never agree to be irreparable in this world. Let that be key to our definition of peace and justice in this world. We/I/you/it/they shall not be irreparable here, in this place. Thinkers like Bloch and Feldman and Doumani and Bernice Johnson Reagon help us remember that there is always in this place a way to reacquire a signal to peace, rather than just skidding along chasing mere timeliness and pragmatism. We can spot and share the anticipatory illuminations around us, the utopian edges of a horizon we cannot yet be conscious of, a pre-peace, a vor-frieden, which is indeed there, objectively there, and yet not quite promised to us, if we are ultimately not willing to live close in with it. I see this kind of illumination in the multilingual Real, the truth that is announced to us when a word like ashlaa’ in Arabic asks a generalized monolingual Anglogenic notion of “rubble” to step aside.

This is our kind of good news. That this pre-peace is all around us, illuminating the way to what is waiting but not inevitable, to a grammar that is inaudible but immensely here with us. I want to finish up with a bit of a mash-up from an Auden poem about Sigmund Freud. Freud isn’t quite crucial to understanding the poem, but the “he” in the poem refers to Freud, if you’re curious. But the poem reminds me of the necessity and pursuit of the illuminations that are ever there, even in the very midst of mouring and anguish. So you can feel free to replace “Freud / he” with anything you like, with illumination, or some word in any language that matters deeply to you when it comes to peace.

> When there are so many we shall have to mourn,
> when grief has been made so public, and exposed
> to the critique of a whole epoch
> the frailty of our conscience and anguish,
>
> of whom shall we speak? For every day they die
> among us, those who were doing us some good,
> who knew it was never enough but
> hoped to improve a little by living. […]
>
> He wasn't clever at all: he merely told
> the unhappy Present to recite the Past
> like a poetry lesson till sooner

or later it faltered at the line where

long ago the accusations had begun,
and suddenly knew by whom it had been judged,
how rich life had been and how silly,
and was life-forgiven and more humble,

able to approach the Future as a friend
without a wardrobe of excuses, without
a set mask of rectitude or an
embarrassing over-familiar gesture.

No wonder the ancient cultures of conceit
in his technique of unsettlement foresaw
the fall of princes, the collapse of
their lucrative patterns of frustration […]

[H]e quietly surrounds all our habits of growth
and extends, till the tired in even
the remotest miserable duchy

have felt the change in their bones and are cheered
till the child, unlucky in his little State,
some hearth where freedom is excluded,
a hive whose honey is fear and worry,

feels calmer now and somehow assured of escape,
while, as they lie in the grass of our neglect,
so many long-forgotten objects
revealed by his undiscouraged shining

are returned to us and made precious again;
games we had thought we must drop as we grew up,
little noises we dared not laugh at,
faces we made when no one was looking.

So welcome, or welcome back, to Spring School! Thank you so much for being here!

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