

**IMPROVEMENT**

by

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Poetic Licence, often the refuge of inventive swells, has become Poetic Justice for the proctors of improvement. Expressive rhetorical complaint has become a popular style of address. We've learned to share, or at least jointly table, our rapt accusations. Not Going To Take It Anymore is as much the bag lady's animus, if not mana, as the harried executive's. Compassion, sought from society at large, is the expectation of the folks who find their individual worth overlooked. Now that snobbery is impermissible, the looked for deference is a right. Love itself has taken on the usufruct of entitlement, especially for women and children. Hence the advent of the Lovemonger, out to trash any vestige of disdain, vanity or self-complacency, particularly that weighted with formidable physical sanction. Pride of place would be an imperialistic relic.

Well, I must confess I've never thought much of the common man, long suspected of being unique only as a snob, altruistically setting out to rid himself of even this single advantage over his earthly companions. You don't die out on grounds that might incriminate or shame you — you keep moving in as many directions as possible. Only when you're finally exhausted and desperate do you try to cash in your conceit — convert your delusions of grandeur into delusions of commensality. However, these lineups are now impossible — the folk waiting to be fed physically, emotionally, culturally, spiritually, atavistically, et cetera; you tend to collect your headset and split. What's worse, the unmasked sluggard is today often hissed as an inveterate punster. There really is no path above reproach in a land where fewer and fewer are denied opportunity — where for more and more the only place to go is up;

where no one is prevented becoming a drudge to elevate his station in life. Most anyone can work like a swine in a free country, even an idiot. Naturally you resist the risk of comparison. Verily, what bright lass or lad would suffer such confusion or indignity?...

The Gods may have tried helping those who might help themselves but fewer and fewer seem willing to risk the embarrassment of being considered so halt or hoodwinked. Only when the rise above the common hutch appears uncalculated, effortless, and what is decisive, indifferently acknowledged — only then is the unmistakable nonchalance of genius apparent, and the way of the unmolested, if they stay out of dark lanes, revealed. Being 'cool', or parsimoniously insouciant, is the cult of Neo-predestination — the defrocked quintessence of Rap. Observant beings know all about that.

In plain song: It is exceedingly easy to love people, according to the modern idiom, i.e. give them all they claim to need. The hard part is to get people to put out, to extend themselves. The buzz phrase about controlling one's own body is simply obtuse — no one wants the bother — all subservience and inconvenience banished with a wave of the applicable prestidigitator's wand. Government is the looked-to numinous shepherd, the stubborn social order the heartless unruly goat getter. Indeed, only the fascist mentality seems to expect that some people actually work at what they may dislike having to do. And the suspicion of being a fascist in the progressive West today is as prepossessing as giving AIDS to the unborn.

In the early Sixties, Esquire Magazine commissioned several experts, in and out of the social sciences, to write 'On the Possibility and Desirability of a Permanent Peace'. (Not a watershed work.) Without exception the essays were exceedingly pessimistic for those who might welcome such a state. Yet the desirability of a Permanent Peace does not figure in today's exaltation of improvement: the question itself is no

more an option. The thinking has become so partisan that Lovemongers have blurred the distinction between force and violence. The very idea of a just war, except perhaps against stolid white men, is now a veritable oxymoron in the Lovemonger lexicon. To the Lovemonger even a patently aggressive person (rapists excepted) may not be adamantly resisted unless the fight is chastely 'fair' — egregious cost, loss and embarrassment on all sides, inviting stalemate — insuring that acrimony becomes a growth industry: what person, state, race, ethnicity or nationality doesn't harbour a festering *idée fixe*, the gadfly bite of at least one galvanizing grievance? We can also add the female sex to the major protagonists of state, race and nationality, because modern women or 'wymen' have decided they too are in a state of siege. A recent report from a Canada Commons Health and Welfare subcommittee was entitled, The War Against Women. Not from Islam of course, the Religion of Peace, but from essentially white Christian men. A unilateral declaration, perhaps to ease the fuss of mobilization and conscription.

Still, the Lovemonger has difficulty assigning blame, because that would require a limit to tolerance and the imposition of a circumscribed morality that discourages 'creativity' — the great indexed lyric for all Lovemongers. When up against efficiency, improvisation becomes the humane excursion. No circumstance is so unyielding, no creature so humble or stolid that some form of empowerment, entitlement, mentoring cannot be invoked. Somewhere a place for us, away from toil and pother and ineluctable humility: you're okay, I'm okay. Maybe poor in body, mind and spirit, but as capable as anyone of despising humility. At one time — when in doubt try servility. Doubt and guilt seem now ungainly Siamese Twins.

Is it not surprising the concordance of consensus seems so elusive. The irony is that the more people are solicited to complain — to an extensive media watch — the more things in life can become intolerable,

especially tolerance of the one thing that offsets the frenzy, the status quo: the necessary resistance to change when change itself is not a necessity. Once begun, the entire globe looks inhospitable. All buggerishly moving of course, both the drama and the climactic pity of it all. Catharsis itself seems destined to become an elitist imposition. Or, in the modern vulgate, the pricks to love and promise gravitate into vast Black Holes.