

Ode on an Oil Can

[a modern parody to Keat's "Ode on a Grecian Urn"]

I

Thou prostitute from prehistoric time,
 Thou black echo of extinction, product
Of ruined evolution, who canst thus express
 An era sealed under an air-tight lid:
What fossil grains slick thy lubrication
 Of stone or bone, or of both,
 In refinery or sands of Iraq?
 What molecules or moments are these? What reptiles loath?
What tragic fall? What struggle to live?
 What pipes and drills? What wild desires?

II

Staying home is sweet, but going out
 Is sweeter; therefore, ye deep drills, drill on,
Not for want of utility, but, more important,
 Drill for the necessity of no need:
Fair youth buying the Toyota, thou canst not leave
 Without checking thy oil first;
 Bold yuppy, never canst thou spend too much
 Though crediting near the goal—yet, don't stress;
Bills can be paid, though thou works night and day,
 Sunday wilt thou shop, and add more credit.

III

Ah, happy, happy malls! that cannot close
 Your shops, nor ever bid the sales adieu;
And, happy consumer, unworriéd,
 For the moment spending for something new;
More happy want! more happy, happy want!
 Forever filling and still to be full;
 Forever scratch, and forever itch
All sucking fermented desire deep inside,
 That leaves an account empty or over-drawn,
 No Orange Julius, and a parched king.

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IV

Who are these coming to the repossession?
From whose castle garage, O IRS man,
Take'st thou that "Beamer" valued for image,
And all her spitting pistons with oil dressed?
What city by foaming river or acid sea,
Or' factory built with noisy citadel,
Is clamantly striking tools, this smoggy morn?
And, metropolis, thy streets in decades
Will silent be; and not a honk to tell
Why thou automobile, can e'er return.

V

O cylinder shape! Fair tin! With label
Of luring logo and attractive design,
With super coupon and the guarantee;
Thou, appealing form, dost tease us to think
Forever will be: Liquid Dinosaur!
When quart after quart shall generations waste,
Thou shalt expire again, in midst of others' survival
Than yours, an expenditure to man, to whom thou say'st,
"Survival is slick. Simply slip and fall,"—that is all
Ye need to know, and all ye should know to need.

—Miquael Gaio, 1991