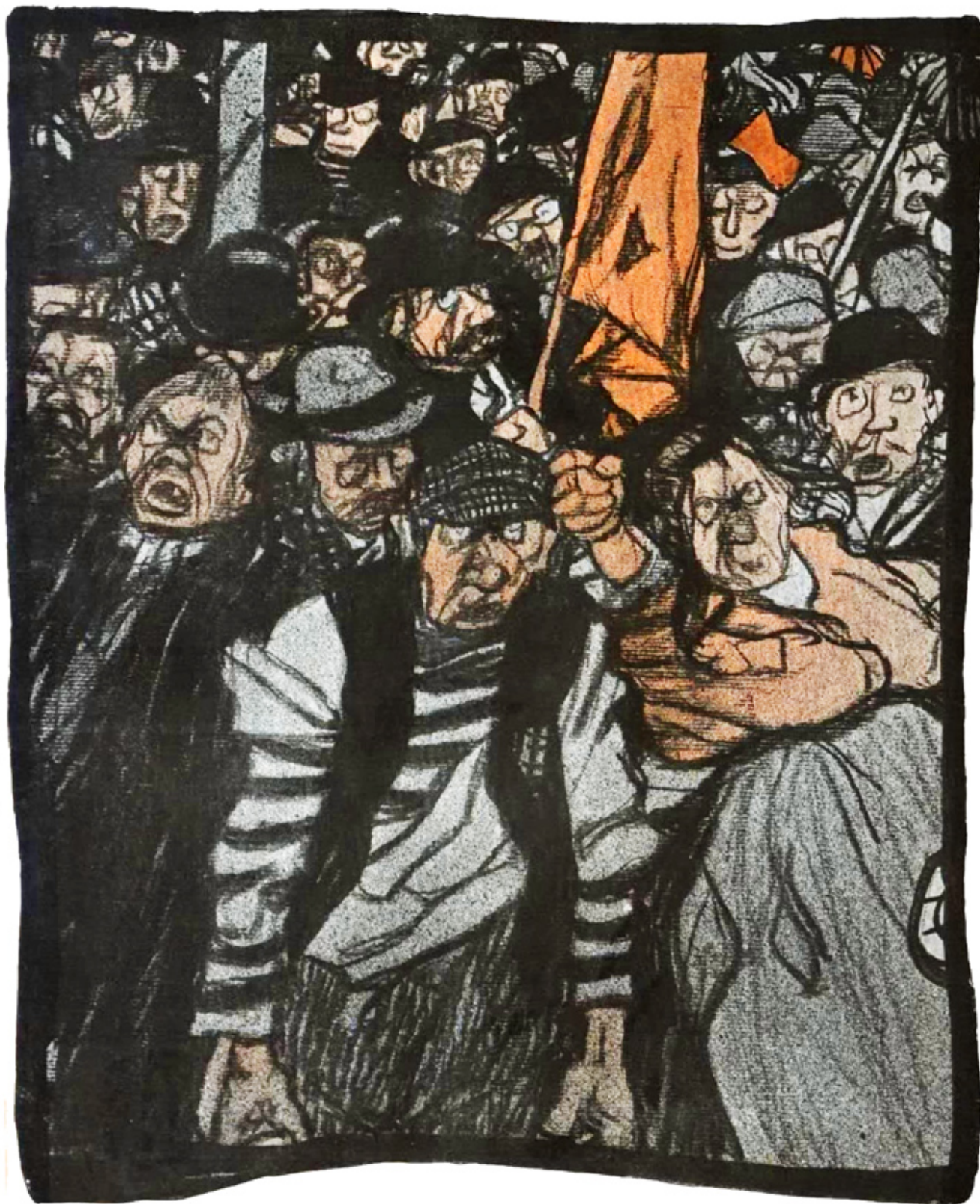


# Three Poems

by [Brandon Marlon](#) (July 2020)



*Les Manifentants, for L'Assiette au Beurre, 1904.*

## All the Rage

To protest police brutality and injustice,  
I did what anyone occupying the moral high ground would do  
and looted a 65-inch plasma TV from Target,  
which should teach those uniformed brutes a thing or two  
about the repercussions of systemic racism and  
which looks frigging awesome in my living room.  
You should have been there, the streets teeming  
with the rageful fevered by smoldering resentment,  
hooligans and gamines honorably rioting to resist inequality,  
jiggering with padlocks, bashing in windows like a boss,  
diabolizing law enforcement and sticking it to the man.  
The sheer nobility of it all leaves me speechless, even now.  
Sure, I heard afterwards that on the newscast  
they described us as temerarious and foolhardy, but so what?  
Hell, my own folks called us every name in the book:  
hoodlum, scofflaw, scapegrace, malefactor. Big deal.  
All I can say is that from now on I'll be binge-watching  
Judge Judy in high def, and they ain't invited.  
Main thing is, we made a strong statement and  
let the establishment know what's what.

Damn shame that an innocent victim had to die  
just so my boy Mikey could finally lay his hands  
on Playstation 4 but, shoot, that's how it goes sometimes.  
Maybe someday the utter unwisdom of it  
will seep into our consciences and stir regret,  
but don't bet on it. Caring about and coveting  
are two sides of the same coin,  
and those of us short on coin  
will take whatever half we can get, best believe.  
Besides, there's just something about tossing Molotovs  
and committing arson that gets the adrenalin going,  
know what I mean? I'd do it again in a heartbeat, because  
Larceny and Pyromania Matter.  
Anyway, it's safe to say we put the cops on notice.  
We run things, things don't run we!  
I love the stench of righteous indignation  
in the morning, don't you?

Leaves from Paradise

With their power, tradition holds,  
Elijah the prophet cancelled  
the poverty of Rabbah bar Avuha.

I would hand one to you, ma'am,  
curing late-stage disease,  
making a mockery of your prognosis.

Another would I offer you, sir,  
and soothe your sorrows,  
the aching loss of ones loved.

Friend, you'd take this from me  
to erase resentments  
corroding for decades.

One I'd reserve for you, dear,  
effacing then replacing fears  
with calming peace of mind.

Last but not least, just for fun, I'd give one  
to the Angel of Death, who'd surely savor  
a sublime whiff of bliss.

## Election Season: Televised Debate

Only out of a sense of obligation did I tune in  
to this seriocomic harlequinade, a banquet of bunkum  
featuring ideologues slinging contumely,  
making claims spurious if not specious,  
gainsaying the accomplishments of their colleagues,

this one a scurrilous cur, that one ineffectual because effete,

the next louche and, per the tabloids, scabrous,

each flanked onstage either by an orgulous ogre

or a bilious churl with a vinegarish disposition

or a fatuous upstart belching talking points

or a hidebound establishment candidate

afraid of being worsted then ousted,

the lot of them treating us viewers as little more

than halfwits, mental pygmies too obtuse

to recognize piffle even in high definition

on a wall-mounted flat screen with the volume cranked up.

Shoot, I was glued to it for hours for the same reason

fans ogle pugilists bloodying faces for purses of cash:

any affray affords vicarious pleasure.

I was eager to see how it all went down,

to note with interest who would prove

exceedingly savvy or at least unexceptionable,

who would deliquesce in the spotlight

with the cameras and pressure on, what

special pleading took place, which contenders

would whipsaw the frontrunner.

All this is redolent of the Roman amphitheater:

you could almost taste the sweat of those clearly  
circling the drain, desperate to avoid relegation,  
and I felt willing and ready to garland the brow  
of the impressive with fresh laurel.

In the event, I was exhausted by the hokum  
that ultimately left me underwhelmed and instead  
I recollected Incitatus, who in hindsight  
and despite his classical equine countenance  
increasingly seems as if he may well have been  
at least as good a consul as all the rest, after all.

## [Table of Contents](#)

Brandon Marlon is a writer from Ottawa, Canada. He received his B.A. in Drama & English from the University of Toronto and his M.A. in English from the University of Victoria. His poetry was awarded the Harry Hoyt Lacey Prize in Poetry (Fall 2015), and his writing has been published in 300+ publications in 32 countries.

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