



Source: John Gray, 'The death of this crackpot creed is nothing to mourn', *Guardian Unlimited*, 31/07/07.

Tags: religion

Writer/s: Rebecca Schneider

© 2008 Barbara Campbell and the writer/s

She'd been raised in a home and a town and a country that paid lip service to phrases like 'common decency,' 'basic respect,' 'human rights.' So, in fact, she wasn't prepared for the New Millennium when she woke up, almost ten years into it, and tried to peer at it through her window. What she saw, or, more accurately, couldn't see, defied the comforting descriptors she'd learned from youth. Common Decency, Basic Respect. None of them, she thought, could continue to apply.

What she was looking at, and not seeing, seemed as if alive. Perhaps her neighbours were right. They had long been telling her that what she couldn't see, everywhere around her, was He Himself. *He* was there. Brute fact, they said. Basic given, they said. Benevolent, they hoped. Being.

Perhaps. But for some reason this morning, unlike yesterday or the day before or the day before the day before—she thought she'd try and see for herself.

Cautiously, she drew the curtain open. She drew the curtain but she left the window shut against the possibility that He might cross the threshold into her room. She kept the window shut, that is, as if perhaps her tiny panes could keep His omnipresence at bay.

And after all, and who's to say—perhaps they could.

In any case, with the curtain aside, she made her effort. She leaned forward and almost knelt. She moved her nose and left cheek right up to the glass of the window, careful not to breathe too hard against the pane, careful to try and give visibility every chance it might have to succeed.

She peered out, then, into Him.

For a long time, she simply tried to focus—to look past the pane into what clearly was there but unwilling to submit Himself, to outline, to reason, to articulable sense. She'd told herself before she began that if she dropped her focus for even a moment, she'd lose all access and see only the thin outlines of the pane itself: a warped aspect in the old glass and a couple of careless unwashed finger-printings. But if she kept her focus *through* the window, she hoped...she hoped...she hoped...

He was, for sure, dense. Dense seemed the best descriptor, even if she still could not say *what*, precisely, it described. Dense! And: All at Once! For, looking out the window, no time seemed possible. How could there be time, she thought, when there appeared to be no 'between' anymore? For time to pass there must be an interval, something to articulate one moment as this moment, so that another moment could be that moment. But staring into Him it seemed that she saw only the vastness of Everything, without a single Something to distinguish.

Oh dear, she thought. Oh dear. In fact, that thought was so bleak she almost fell through the floorboards or out

the door crack or between the window and the sash, merging into Him herself—But then, in the nick of time, her nose bumped briefly against the pane, and she laughed a bit while bobbing back to her senses. She was forgetting, she remembered, that she, at least for now, was part of the scene. She was a kind of between, being, as she was, at her window. If she was on one side, the denseness of Everything was still, at least for now, on the other. So! Yes! The pane was between. And what a relief! With something to be between, there was at least some kind of interval. So...she thought...proud of herself again, she had rescued time! At least for the time being.

Again, she worked to focus. She thought: It seems as if He had rolled in overnight.

This was not impossible. Millennia have taken less time. Millennia appear to take place tidily in history books that sit, all of a piece, on shelves. So, she reasoned, they might take place in one long evening, or perhaps, as sometimes seems to happen, in a single drawn-out hour. For it did indeed seem as if He had rolled in as she slept, thick as he was, and dense: more stew than soup, more soup than meat, yet none of these things and more.

Of course, if she were honest with herself she'd have to admit that He can not have been sudden. He'd had to have been accumulating for centuries, gathering Himself to Himself over a great time. In fact, she'd *heard* Him. She'd been hearing Him for a long time now, just beyond the windowsill, scratching sometimes, too, at the door frame. Poking, even, through the floorboards. He'd make a kind of constant murmuring din, a state of static like overly rehearsed sentences. But this morning, as she tried to see Him, to *account for Him*, He was deafening. His bombast was a blanket over everything, without a thing left outside of His sound wave. He was air but too thick, water but too thin. He had covered her street, her country, her world till He seemed to have become its condition. He was loud. He was constant. He was dense and heavy. He could spout the 'End' of this and the 'End' of that and He could point fingers at whomever He pleased declaring them precipitate of said 'End.' His name was now God and that name had moved in to befog with illusion, to thickly settle on almost everyone's lips, behind almost everyone's eyelids, scrawled throughout the neighbourhood on almost everyone's doormat. And whenever He made a proclamation, and He made them constantly, they fell from her neighbours' lips like conviction. In fact, His babbling force of *conviction* had grown bigger than He was Himself, and He was Himself enormous, obese, and obscene.

Somehow, somewhere, He had acquired the force of fear and fear's faith in indistinction—acquired it like a heartbeat, like thirst, envy or dust, and it drove Him now—it accrued Him to Himself like glue and pushed Him forward without direction. Into her.

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Rebecca Schneider.*