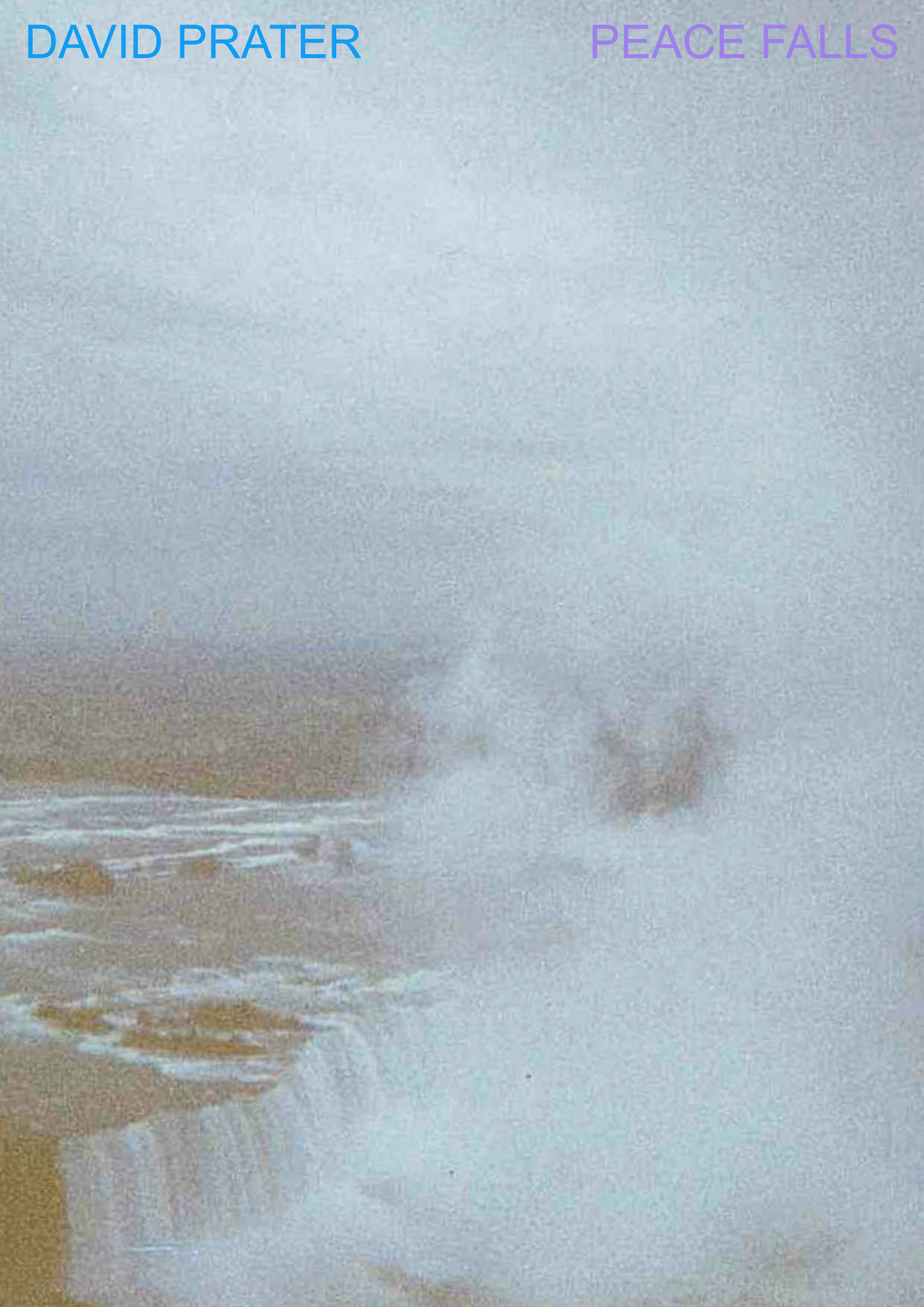


DAVID PRATER

PEACE FALLS



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PEACE FALLS

SIXTEEN POEMS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This collection was originally written in 2002. Since that time, a number of these poems have been published in *various journals*. A number also later appeared in *We Will Disappear* (papertiger media, 2007).

Cover image: David Prater, 'Peace Falls' (2002)

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AMERICA
THE BLOODY HOLLYS
BUSTLING
EMPIRES BETWEEN
EXHALE ON MAIN STREET
HOLDING PATTERN
EMPIRE STATE (ICEHOUSE)
GREEN GODDESS
IDENTIKIT NATION
WE MISS YOU!
NEW COMPOSITION
PEACE FALLS
RATTLE & BUM
SLAM!
UNMARKED HARLEM
(ON THE TOMB OF)
THE UNKNOWN WAITRESS

for V.

PEACE FALLS |

“We didn’t really
realize what was
going on in Europe
until we went to Japan
and Australia ...”

Cyndi Lauper, quoted in
Edward Dorn, *Abhorrences: A Chronicle of the Eighties*

AMERICA

please
do
not
put
anything
into
this
toilet
unless
you
have
eaten
it
first

THE BLOODY HOLLYS

we're the upstate reincarnation
of Radio Birdman's AC/DC nation
if a stage needs amplification
why pause for self-congratulation?

our white shirts impeccably tailored
we're cut from the same cloth as sailors
we dream of the next Norman Mailer
our chord changes will never fail us

death to the swamp blues & Pixies
wear g-strings & start screaming Dixie
pump bi-carb & snort all the trixie
get bloodied & start feeling frisky

for we're after the bellows not rhyming
concerned not for critical timing
with new cred we're nickel & diming
invisible pop charts we're climbing

BUSTLING

on the streets & the subway
discern the bustle of conversations

in the soul food cafe gravy
taste the fried meat flavour bustling

in the park, through the haze
see the bustling squirrels' business

after the parade, on Broadway
police bustle—do not cross

in the curt replies, inquiries
ignore the bustling self-obsession

in the evening, this aftermath
fill your houses with bustling activity

at the crossing over, the tide
bustle like you mean it—be bustly

EMPIRES BETWEEN

just as the sand in the zone
where it meets the sea is wet
so too my heart in this terminal
or that economy class reflects
the between-ness of things
the false empiricism of old bones

see an entire empire laid out
before someone turns it forever
into a ballooning & bloated
donkey's carcass that will never
deflate or cease expanding on
course with the crashing wars

cynicism's volatile as semtex
morphing into the plastic now
of rubble the beards of surfers
brand new t-shirt cash cows
& the gritty stubble of death
wrapped in shrouds (not syntax

EXHALE ON MAIN STREET

America hands me a business card.
I clutch it gamely
& exhale there, on Main Street,
dreaming of Toronto—

everclear city of my childhood's
TV programmers!

—just 2 hours & a Maple Leaf away.

I stick to Molson,
almost shouting “Bienvenue!”
at the Canadian border guard,

a red stamp all I retrieved
from an afternoon of breathing
on that pitiless Peace Bridge.

HOLDING PATTERN

She calls & I'm placed in a holding pattern.
Tuesday gets exfoliated in a tub. Our future
talk listless as an air wing's random blubs.
We tuck chins under sub-machine woofers,
space-age tugs. A tarmac beckons & aches.
The inside of Essendon's lo-fidelity transit
severed, pending government intolerance.
International Roast industrial relationships
float alongside, like homing seagull tail-flaps
glisten, like oily origami manoeuvres taxi-ing
on a still runway. I hail this premature flight
ejector's translucent pilots gloating up there,
somewhere above the Airport West tramway.
Sounds of the 1970s riots decelerate again.
We are experiencing the new turbulence,
a tailwind swept homewards like 2000 new
jobs & hopes of terminal redevelopment.

EMPIRE STATE (ICEHOUSE)

You find a tape deck & I'll find a buyer;
my rhythm is faltering my accent dire.
We can get together in a new empire
far more majestic than Sydney's (toaster

Build me an icehouse, a new greengrocer;
imminent crisis in the state of Formosa.
Iva, never met ya before: come closer.
Hey little girl, sliding down that (spire

Queuing for skyscrapers out on a wire;
stroke dawn's ego; yeah, ride it higher.
Touch me there, way down in the fire
but no promises: I'm an empire state (liar

GREEN GODDESS

It's more than passive aggressive—
in fact I'm green with its goodness.
Though it hurts to admit to jealousy,
I'm chuffed you strangled Christmas
trees, & th Tindersticks, like this year's
Strokes or 1980. Somewhere, up there
above the fairy lights, a goddess grins,
holding useless water buckets. She's
tempting Blair to bring in the army!
Like a committed unionist (that guy,
Fawkes, was merely incendiary) not
an anarchist. Not very Christmas, is
it? Not very fun to be called heroes
on hundreds per week short of fair
wages. Now a comfortable new howl
is just the same old story: defend
our homes, then fuck off & be merry.
Christmas? I hope you burn in hell!

IDENTIKIT NATION

diet by collective amnesia
eyes by liquid THC
leash by voluntary dingo
logo by bandanna republic

visor by the new bloc
puff jacket by fabled nor'easter
mouth by lust & the sex issue
genitals by design

wristwatch by sniper
attitude unknown
soundtrack by soft jazz
elegant by mistake

hair by punky brewster

WE MISS YOU!

Under the blood red subway leaves,
the spangled Madonnas of 66th St
shed miraculous tears of vengeance!

Coz we miss you! Like an ATM slip, or
something like you; the Graeco-Roman
subway tiles just joined the NYFD!

Coz we need heroes! In our aftermaths,
shuddering at these short straws—
as children draw us dandruffed hats,

clocks frozen over, red second hands
slit across jersey's little wrist. Coming
down in a cornfield intact, huddling

under silver. Seagull's wings, the long
night follows. Encore, staggered salute.

NEW COMPOSITION

daydreaming allowed as long as it's passive
down on the corner of Sunrise & Massive

a life wide-ruled, this time we're elastic
out with the new as we say in the classics

PEACE FALLS

Someone turn Niagara off.
I'm waiting for the peace to fall,
listening for its dull ricochet
against the war-weary morning.

You'll hear me before I appear,
though my epicentre is right there
in front of your sleeping noses,
curled up like homeless wishes.

When you sneezed, who then said
"Bless you,"—a peace-infected stranger?
You might already be a corpse
were it not for my immunisations.

Someone turn Niagara off.
The peace I seek is louder still:
it requires ten years of silence,
then a boom, to break the monotony.

RATTLE & BUM

Previously it held Pringles (his extended can);
now it resonates with microscopic jingles—e.g.
“We’re shuttin’ U2 down!” or was that Orange Co.?
No place for rock concerts (let alone a bum!).

Cocoonin’ (Roman-like) shield, cardboard box,
a hidden face betrayed by what Bono’s croonin’.
Rap on skinny knuckles, for I am a target (stung)
No place for patronising Irishmen in this ghetto!

“But i still haven’t found what I’m looking for—”
(money). Say hi to my friends in Poughkeepsie!
Free food for the homeless or just plain hungry.
I am no tour bus junkie, thank you, too (honey).

“Let’s move ’em on out!” Saddle shoppin’ trolleys!
Make the twist, shout (strap on American quilts)
boil over! The empty stadium’s hidden treasures:
cigarette butts galore, collectin’ them fo’ pleasure.

SLAM!

Hell-bent, spent, relentless, immune
to the edicts of the so-called poetic government: WHAM!
This is your legs-up honey—
pass me a barrel of small press.

Engage, enrage, camouflage your age,
croon to stare off the so-called block blues: BAM!
Last drinks, mud-guts—
get off my new page.

Intuit, don't do it, live through it,
canonise free speech & so-called soft blades: SHAZAM!
Wake *down*, spring picket—
coz this old mike just blew it.

Emote, devote or free float,
pretend until the very so-called end & then: SLAM!
into the bright superstructure of now;
but please just make it matter, people —

they'd be grateful for it.

UNMARKED HARLEM

The concierge was a boxer once;
sleek & mediated as his city,
he hailed delirious crowds but
now apartments line Lenox like
blood in a glass menagerie. Born

magnificent, unmarked Harlem
rises, gliding by on plush maroon
seats, prowling the avenues for
naturalisation ceremony papers,
the soundtrack: Senegal, 1978.

The door pops like a safety clip;
it's safe & automatically rising:
unmarked Harlem's new dawn
fanfare, the unnamed clubs off
116th Street. At 5 a.m. the crowd

morphs into shutters & blocks:
unmarked Harlem, spurning the
door-lock wager, guns through
Queens for a blazing glimpse of
another African-American dawn.

(ON THE TOMB OF)
THE UNKNOWN WAITRESS

In a bar jammed with arseholes
she stood out like a well-timed joke:

the glint I might have seen
 in someone else's eye
covered her entire face!

She was a lens flare
in a state where bison floated,
or grazed,

& I, a dim corner of a field
that was last year in England.

She sculpted sunshine after hours —

slapped backs with an aggression
only partly inherited from *Cheers*.

My glass, forever half-asleep

beneath her smile
a new world order:

spare change for her tomb.

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