

THIS MAN IS DANGEROUS. WANTED FOR MURDER AND CRUELTY TO BIRDS ON THE FOLLOWING COUNTS: —

For the Spitting of Finches, seven to a skewer;  
*item*, for Disfiguring Thrushes by means of inflation;  
*item*, for Insertion of Feathers in Blackbirds' nostrils;  
*item*, for Unlawful Detention of Pigeons in Cages;  
*item*, for Felonious Snaring of Innocent Pigeons;  
*item*, for Flagrant Misuse of Traps and Decoy-devices."

So much for Philokrates.

But as for you, spectators,  
we give you warning.

If any boy in this audience  
has as his hobby the keeping of birds in cages,  
we urgently suggest that you let them go free. Disobey,  
and we'll catch you and lock you up in a wicker cage  
or stake you out to a snare as a little decoyboy!

CHORUS

How blessed is our breed of Bird,  
dressed in fluff and feather,  
that, when hard winter holds the world  
wears no clothes whatever.

And blazoned summer hurts no bird,  
for when the sun leaps high,  
and, priestly in that hellish night,  
the chaunting crickets cry,  
the birds keep cool among the leaves  
or fan themselves with flight;  
while winter days we're snug in caves  
and nest with nymphs at night.

But Spring is joy, when myrtle blooms  
and Graces dance in trio,  
and quiring birds cantatas sing,  
*vivace e con brio.*

KORYPHAIOS

Finally, gentlemen, a few brief words about the Prize  
and the advantage of casting your vote for *THE BIRDS* —  
advantages compared to which that noble prince,  
poor Paris of Troy, was very shabbily bribed indeed.

First on our list comes a little item  
that every judge's greedy heart must be panting to possess.  
I refer, of course, to those lovely owls of Laurium,  
sometimes called the coin of the realm.

Yes, gentlemen,  
these lovely owls, we promise, will flock to you,  
settle down in your wallets for good and hatch you  
nice little nesteggs.

Secondly, we  
promise to redesign your houses.

See, the tenements vanish,  
while in their place rise shrines whose dizzy heights,  
like eagle-eyries, hang in heaven.

Are you perhaps  
a politician with the problem of insufficient plunder?  
Friend, your problems are over. Accept as our gift  
a pair of buzzard claws designed with special hooks  
for more efficient grafting.

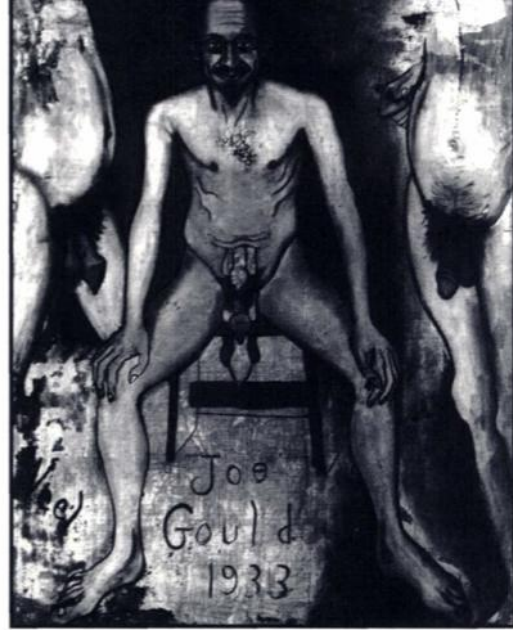
As for heavy eaters,  
those suffering from biliousness, acid indigestion  
or other stomach upsets, we proudly present them  
with special bird-crops, guaranteed to be virtually inde-  
structible.

If, however, you withhold your vote,  
you'd better do as the statues do and wear a metal lid  
against our falling guano.

I repeat.  
Vote against *THE BIRDS*,  
and every bird in town will cover you with — vituperation!

END OF EXCERPT

— TRANSLATION BY WILLIAM ARROWSMITH



## A STATEMENT

Alice Neel

Being born I looked around and the world and its people terrified and fascinated me. I was attracted by the morbid and excessive and everything connected with death had a dark power over me. I was early taken to Sunday School where the tale of Christ nailed to the cross would send me into violent weeping and I'd have to be taken home. Also I remember a film they showed at the church of the horrors of delirium tremens that quite unnerved me and prevented my sleeping for many nights.

I decided to paint a human comedy — such as Balzac had done in literature. In the 30's I painted the beat of those days — Joe Gould, Sam Putnam, Ken Fearing, etc. I have painted "El Barrio" in Puerto Rican Harlem. I painted the neurotic, the mad and the miserable. Also I painted the others, including some squares. I once, many light years ago, married a Cuban and lived in Havana where I had my first show. Then that all dissolved and in the thirties I was on the W.P.A. turning in a painting every six weeks. I had a show at the Pinacotheca Gallery during the war and later two shows at the A.C.A. Gallery. I never knew how to push myself and still don't know how. Like Chichikov I am a collector of souls. Now some of my subjects are beginning to die and they have a historic nostalgia: everyone somehow seems better and more important when they are dead. If I could I would make the world happy, the wretched faces in the subway sad and full of troubles worry me. I also hate the conformity of today — everything put into its box —

When I go to a show today of modern work I feel that my world has been swept away — and yet I do not think it can be so: that the human creature will be forever verboten. Thou shalt make no graven images . . . □