

# Cacophony of the Spheres

Tennessee, 1975–1980

“I discovered among the celestial movements the full nature of harmony.”

—Johannes Kepler

“There’s not the smallest orb which thou behold’st  
But in his motion like an angel sings,  
Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubins;  
Such harmony is in immortal souls;  
But whilst this muddy vesture of decay  
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.”

—William Shakespeare

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THE CHIME OF A WINDBELL

The music of the spheres  
 is nothing but a windbell  
 tinkling in a breath of summer air—  
 shards of broken glass  
 clashing against each other  
 in chromatic melodies and dissonant chords,  
 no harmony or rhythm,  
 random and without purpose.

WANDERERS

The planets too are wanderers,  
 their journey a journey homeward.

Back into night they travel,  
 to a birthplace they no longer remember.

It is to this that all wanderings,  
 all hunts, all intense searches lead.

Low against the skyline  
 a bright star begins her descent.

She follows the moon to a resting place  
 deep beneath the earth's disc.

At the outer circumference of the sky-dome  
 the tuning fork of all harmony is sounded.

Beyond that there is nothing.  
 The cosmic symphony has no conductor.

The celestial spheres begin to melt  
 into the brilliance of the coming day.

I, too, am a wanderer, vanishing  
 like a candle's flame held up to the sun.

## DIANA

The moon has a woman's face,  
 the soft pale face of a huntress.

It is she who inspires the hunt,  
 she who encourages courage.

I stand at the crossroads,  
 but a shadow in her light.

She slips down the black dome of the sky.  
 The spell of night is broken.

There are no longer any secrets.  
 The veil of clouds has been split in two.

Here is wonderment. Here is naked mystery.  
 Here my primitive fears are awakened.

It is as I die that she is born,  
 and as she dies that I am born again.

## THE HOUR BEFORE DAYBREAK

I awake to a world that is dying.  
 I awake in the shadows of antediluvian night.

One hour more and the primrose goddess dawn  
 will approach dripping her colors obscurely  
 on the broad outline of the horizon.

Since that first morning her luster has steadily faded.

It was then in times now forgotten that she  
 reluctantly related her prophecy to our ancestors:  
 "As I diminish you will increase."

Now I can barely see her when she rises  
 through the mist, the fog, and the smoke.

## ONCE UPON A CANDLE

I will blow out the candle  
 before the tallow melts,  
 before the wax becomes sallow,  
 before the stick burns down  
 to the end of its wick,  
 before only a stub remains.

## DAWN

Rosy-fingered dawn:  
 on quiet feet she comes creeping.  
 She rises before the world  
 while we are still asleep.

The hilltops are the first  
 to sense her tentative warmth  
 as she stretches her arms  
 and yawns in the eastern sky.

We suddenly spring to life  
 when her motherly fingers  
 gently nudge us to awaken  
 and kiss the crisp morning air.

The freshly aroused breezes  
 softly swirl in harmony.  
 Her colors drip between the thighs  
 of distant mountain peaks.

Blood-red the sun emerges.  
 Liquid waters of birth stream forth,  
 the daily-dying son reborn,  
 our dormant hopes resurrected.

Bursting from the motherly womb,  
 the sun laughs and dances heavenward.  
 Painlessly is the labor accomplished.  
 And lo the dawn she smiles.

## THE RISING SUN

Through the mist,  
 through the fog,  
 through the white clouds  
     beginning to solidify overhead,  
 collecting themselves together  
     like folds of bed linen  
 crumpled about at my feet,  
     the sun begins to rise.

The grass is swimming with dew  
 —bathed,  
     immersed,  
         cleansed  
     in tears of the receding night

I quietly slither through the mud.  
 I inhale the earthy smells.  
 My skin absorbs the moisture  
     through a secret process of osmosis.

I avoid the hardened paths  
     that riddle the lawn  
 where only the heartless have trod,  
     the colored clay  
     embedded with mosaics  
     of jagged,  
         sharp-edged  
                     stones.

I feel the spongy blades of grass  
     caress my tender  
                                 unripe feet  
 like an almost  
     inaudible  
                     whisper.

They wriggle like virgin cilia  
     between my sandalless toes.

## POETICA

“Whither is fled the visionary gleam?  
Where is it now, the glory and the dream?”

—William Wordsworth

Flight: chasing the shadow of a daemon  
lost in a murky glass, now shattered.  
The wind blows over an Aeolian harp.

Bound to a rock: a fire of darkness  
obscures the enticing fingers of dawnlight.  
Frolicking shades dance upon the wall.

The mute poet still clings  
to the ancient wisdom of the blind seer.  
At Delphi the voices are silent.

My soul has left me and fled with the muses  
back to Parnassus, to Helicon’s heights.  
I await in anguish the returning season.

This mistress must be gently wooed.  
Her angelwings should never be clipped.  
Let her soar to the barren heavens!

Escape: the wind dances furiously  
beneath the soles of my thin leather shoes.  
Polyhymnia’s voice can no longer be heard.

I walk in the erratic footsteps  
of wandering hobos and immoral saints.  
I camp out with cursing prophets.

The spirits have left this bottle.  
Drunk on his own voice,  
Dionysius cries out his revenge.

Now I sleep an enchanted sleep,  
in bed with the queen,  
at home with the pauper.

Retreat: the king has been slain in battle.  
 Who will console the grass as it withers  
 in a moment of sunlight on the frozen dew?

Who could dare tame this beggar,  
 forsaken by the tantric passions,  
 who rages against the metaphysics of despair?

And who are you but an outcast,  
 standing defiant on waves of the sea  
 as the tears of heaven baptize you?

What shall remain when all is cleansed?  
 Mud is the placenta of life  
 and what we return to after we die.

#### A CONTRIVED SENSE OF SOLITUDE

A contrived sense of solitude  
 rummages through this crude array  
 of misanthropic musings.

The sinking of the earth  
 and furnace wands of magic  
 underplay the forest chatter.

There is talk of losing hands,  
 of crooked rainbows on the take,  
 of rabid moons glowing with longing.

Too far, too far! Fly the night of echoes,  
 of once-we've-dreamed-of legacies  
 of virtue, glory, and honor.

To recall the lost enchantments  
 of that day—the fire, the smoke,  
 the smoldering feathered ash.

## EMERGENCE

All colors fused into a brighter fire—  
 what can I be in comparison?

The landscape becomes transparent:  
 I see through the distant mountains,  
 through the tree-covered hills,  
 their slopes and gentle curves  
 unable to mask the undefined spaces beyond.

As yet there are only shadows,  
 only the translucent forms  
 of a world beginning to emerge  
 out of the effervescent darkness.

## SLEEPING THROUGH LIFE

The weight of sleep still fills our eyes.  
 We silently pray for the night to linger.  
 We long for one more hour of eternal repose.

We are too absorbed in the delicate mysteries  
 playing inside our heads  
 to understand their meanings.

That is why she beckons us so:  
 “Arise! Arise!  
 For soon I shall disappear.  
 Soon I will no longer be with you.  
 Can you not keep watch with me for one more hour?  
 Stave off your sleep! Remain alert!”

Laying my head back down on the pillow,  
 I return once more to dreams already forgotten.



## SUNDAY PILGRIMAGE

Yes, we are the unsophisticated sinners.  
 The beaten paths of hardened mud,  
 mosaic stones, the footprint's blood  
 have never touched our calloused feet.

We meet sad pilgrims heading east.  
 Each year they pass us on their way  
 to the mausoleum's drunken feast.

But we refrain to spend the day  
 in aimless roaming through the wheat.

The sun behind the mountain casts  
 dark shadows on the withering grass,  
 its light becoming dim and thinner.

“O Mazda! god of light and day!  
 I saw you faintly fade away  
 to cast your aura round the earth,  
 a icon of its holy worth.”

We sang such eulogies to the sinking sun  
 and hailed him as our long-lost brother.  
 Are we not prodigals come home at last  
 to our native soil, to our sacred mother?

Exiled from our adopted homelands  
 we wandered like orphans through the ripening grain.  
 Naked we ran through the wilderness glades.  
 Our bare, virgin feet were as tender as the grass.

We sojourned inward to the land of the prophet.  
 In the waterfall's sand we buried our crosses  
 so carefully hewn from Lebanon cedars.

A dogwood has bloomed here of pure lilywhite,  
 lacking the blood-red stigmata.  
 Its branches nod their consent in the wind.

The legends we dreamed of spoke dim of the future:  
A new gospel would tack us to this same crooked tree.

We built a new fire. Its smoke was our incense.  
Our sermons were preached in the light of its flame,  
as trees whispered softly their blessings of leaves  
gently falling, discreetly, consecrating the ground.

We bathed naked in a secret mountain lake,  
rebaptizing ourselves in enchanted waters.  
The breeze swept freely across our glad faces.

The babbling brook spoke her prophecies freely.  
We were the heralds of her silent oracles.  
Nature itself was our newborn religion.

The collapsed cathedrals were so far behind us.  
The spires and arches were in quarry once more.  
We escaped to such primitive sanctuaries and were free.

“O explosive creation  
what law can define you,  
confine you in shackles  
and stunt your untamable growth?”

Yet midst the twilight of our gods,  
when the sun takes its final bow,  
when the curtain falls on earth’s last day,  
Jerusalem and Athens will end their quarrels  
to meet again in sacred bliss  
and consummate their union.

Though we be filled with constant sorrow  
let us turn our head back to the east—  
beyond the pilgrims on the trail,  
beyond the barren hills of Greece,  
beyond the deserts of Palestine,  
to dream of what might be tomorrow.

Yes, eastward toward the rising sun,  
with melted wings cast back to earth,  
the all-sufficient Zephyr’s breath

fans the tongues of fire on our heads.  
 We, too, have once again become  
 haunted wayfarers in deep pursuit.

#### A PASSION

Unfulfilled, the dream remains  
 a vague, forgotten hope.

I am able to walk  
 but only with canes.

Broken bread crumbles out of my mouth.  
 Sour wine spills out of my cup.

I am Pharaoh's son, not yours,  
 offered as a paschal lamb.

I was sacrificed on the holy mountain  
 and left to die in the wilderness.

Cursed by an angel of the plague,  
 I leave you all I have.

I admit it isn't much  
 but it's all there is, you see.

It is I who have forsaken you,  
 not you who have forsaken me.

#### THE JESUS OF MY HEART

The Jesus of my heart I love  
 but not the Jesus of above.  
 The Jesus of my heart still leads.  
 The Jesus of my heart still bleeds.

## MONOLOGUE

The flesh is not weak but strong.  
 Its gentle caresses calm the tender.  
 It soothes the bewildered  
 with showers of mindless blessings.

The hour has come for judgment,  
 to discern truth from myth,  
 to smother the dead with kisses,  
 to free the damned from hell.

In my youth I needed a father  
 but now I am on my own.  
 It is time to leave the fields,  
 for Cain to regain his brother.

I need no lamp to light the way,  
 only the torch I carry within me.  
 The candle's tongue of fire  
 flickers in the scandalous wind.

It's not that I am angry with you.  
 My kiss has a double meaning.  
 I do not long to die in your arms,  
 only to hold and be held by you.

## WE MEET AGAIN

So we meet again.  
 I really did not expect to find you here.

You always stay for such a short time.  
 I never know when we will be together.

Often I have searched for you.  
 I seek but never find you.

You always come  
 when I am not looking for you.

## SOME ARTIST MUST HAVE PAINTED YOU

Some artist must have painted you  
while passing through  
the higher of Plato's two worlds.

Filtering down from the sky  
you come, splashing your hues  
on earth's dull canvas.

Colors without shapes,  
shapes without lines,  
your radiant image remains undefined.

## ON THE OTHER SIDE

You live on the other side  
of an endless sea.

What bridge could span  
the waves that lie between us?

What boat could traverse  
this infinite gulf?

What map as yet undrawn  
could show me the way?

What word as yet unspoken  
could lead me to you?

You stand on your shore  
and I stand on mine.

Yet nothing can come  
between us.

For you alone are me  
as I alone am you.

## ON WINGS OF THE WIND

Between the rising sun and the falling star  
I behold no wonder.

A hasty escape out of a leather sack—  
I am born on the gusts  
of a mild wind turn angry.

Behind me are the sandy seas of the western desert.  
I thirst in drought and fast in famine.

But here—despite the tranquil meadow,  
a soft bed of grass fragrant with flowers—  
I sleep a restless, troubled sleep.

The coruscant brilliance of the morning star  
awakens disquietude.  
My attempts to penetrate her glow  
are hindered by feeble eyes alone.

It is whispered that she will be found  
in the spaces beyond the hilltops.  
The winds brush the clouds,  
yet they get me no further.

What bridge can traverse these brooding waters—  
the face of the deep, the chaotic, the void?

There can be no consummation, no union  
between a mere mortal and an immortal goddess.  
I rest in her bosom, asleep on her breasts.  
The memory of her face fades with the setting sun.

No mansion awaits me—my soul is its own temple.  
Yet, the voices have ceased to echo  
in its dimly lit chambers.

Wax from a candle is spilt while still burning.  
The soul has exposed all the false gods of love.  
A serpent awaits me in place of a lover.

## SECOND COMINGS

Out of the east flows a gentle stream,  
 conceived in a spring in the mountains,  
 so silent and still, protected in creases  
 and folds of ravines in deep green forests,  
 away from the wind which freely sweeps  
 into the dry, parched western desert  
 where the riverbeds creep to meet the valley  
 without desire or thought of the morrow.

A lotus will bloom in this sandy sea,  
 now rocked by waves of gusty tempests.  
 In the coolness of its shade and shadow  
 the lingering grains of dust will gather.  
 They too will burst with the scent of heaven,  
 sprouting petals exploding with sweetness.  
 In the east the morning star of Venus  
 will rise and eclipse the newborn sun.

## ABANDONMENT

All recollection has been consumed.  
 Aspirations spiral skyward in flames.  
 The sterility of unchanging names  
 betrays the lily yet to bloom.

Would I deprive it of its recreation?  
 Shall I kiss its petals when they open,  
 allow the silence to remain unbroken?  
 forsake the lure of my imagination?

Do we only perceive what we half-create?  
 Shall the lily still be called a flower,  
 if it never blossoms full of grace?

My rhymes shall never limn its power  
 Its magic over me prevails.  
 I shall only speak when seeing fails.

## IN THE GARDEN

In the garden we danced a simple dance  
 round an earthen pot over the fire.  
 Our limbs swayed with the wind  
 as we stretched our arms upwards,  
 embracing the blueness of the autumn sky.

I touched your almond-colored skin.  
 I smelled your herbal-scented hair.

It was for love that we laughed,  
 for foolishness that we cried.  
 But we died when the melodies ceased  
 to be breathed in the stillness of that silence,  
 when the last amber leaf lilted innocently downwards,  
 then fell on our track, embedding itself on the trail.

We were so brave in the springtime, though,  
 when the sun and water played recklessly at our wild feet.

Then, we danced beneath the spray of a child  
 skirting on the waves.

## THE DELIGHTS OF NEW WINE

Joy alone can never satisfy the hunger  
 or quench the thirst which remains  
 when the elevated flesh from the field  
 has been ground and broken into fine white bread  
 cast upon the waters and eaten in contemplative silence,  
 washed with the drippings of the ripening vine,  
 unspoilt by decay or the yeast's fermentation—

too holy a food for the hungering masses,  
 too rich to be sold, even given away,  
 too intangible to fill this deprived aching belly.



## MORNING PRAYERS

I say my morning prayers  
 just as my grandmother taught me.  
 I implore the sun to be with us  
 in breathless unvoiced prayers,  
 to give us her light,  
 to guide us as we journey  
 further and further from home,  
 the mountains becoming  
 smaller and smaller behind us.

## INVOCATION

Sun:  
 Make me warm.

Make the grass grow  
 thick.

Make the trees green  
 with leaves.

Let the fields glow  
 with light.

Give us both  
 your light and shadow.

We are young,  
 too soon unremembered.

In you  
 we see ourselves.

In ourselves  
 we see each other.

## TURN OF THE SOLSTICE

Another turning of the solstice,  
another change of perspectives:

Glistening clusters of snow  
melt in the heat  
of a new-born sun.

She, the once-frigid woman,  
warms to the prospect of  
sensuous endeavors again.

He, the old man,  
awakens to the possibility  
of re-found love.

Thawed by returning rays of sunlight,  
by the lengthening of the days,  
we bathe in a fountain of youth.

We no longer age but grow younger  
until we are children again.

At first we felt uneasy.  
Then we felt uncertain.

But now we are rejuvenated,  
eager to run haphazardly  
wherever the rising steam leads us.

We have died and been reborn  
not just once but many, many times.

Our lives eternally recur,  
perpetually renew themselves  
in a cycle we may affirm  
but never escape.

## HYMN TO THE SKY

I stretch my arms out from heart to the sky  
 but she, the unembraceable one, eludes me.

I grasp at the outer fringes of her drapery  
 which fall on the distant horizons.  
 I reach for the farthest corners of the globe  
 saturated with drizzling patches of light.

How could I ever hope  
 to measure her proportions?

All my thoughts, all my unholy categorizations,  
 all my notions of the way things ought to be  
 are shattered in the expanse of  
 her being, my being, our being together.

## LITANIES OF SPRING

I will sing the morning litanies of spring,  
 perform the afternoon labors of summer,  
 grow weary when the harvest moon climbs the autumn sky,  
 die alone on a winter night when others are sleeping.

I will see my soul float down from heaven  
 and dissolve into numerous disparate pieces,  
 like flakes of snow clustered on the ground.

Then the snowflakes will whirl again  
 and ascend the evening sky.

They will return to a cloud that no longer exists  
 and beckon us with the message  
 that in spite of the eternal changing of the seasons,  
 it is spring eternally, eternally spring forever.

## BEFORE THALES

I sit alone on top of a hill. On one side is the wilderness, on the other side the city.

To the left is a blooming tree. I watch a rabbit running. I hear the song of a lark.

To the right I see a house. I watch a man walking. I can almost hear the voices of the children playing in the fields.

Behind me the leaves of the trees are weeping like a woman. The wind is consoling her with gentle words.

In front of me I smell the fragrance of the flowers. In the air is the aroma of baking bread drifting to my nostrils.

Here with me the blades of grass are scratchy as I sit on them. The food I have brought with me tastes good.

I am at peace. I have no thoughts, only a thousand undefined sensations.

What I experience, I experience immediately. It is only when I return to my room that I think about them.

I am before and after life. I care as much about what happens to me after I die as I did before I was born.

There are no solutions; neither are there any problems. There are no answers; neither are there any questions.

## THE NIGHTMARE

At first there was only the nightmare,  
 then the sweat, the awful stinking sweat.  
 The bed sheets are sopping with it.  
 I crumple the pillow into a soft wet ball.

Swampmud sticks to our boots like glue,  
 We peel off damp shirts and trousers  
 that never dry. We brush the dirt off  
 our brows with swampmud on our fingers.

No place to sleep, no place flat enough,  
 no place dry enough. Demons are everywhere,  
 as thick as the mosquitoes. And who  
 can bear the heat, the god-awful fires of hell?

Martin, O Martin, my little brother!  
 Remember the time we went swimming?  
 With teeth-chattering smiles, our skin was  
 tanned purple by the icy-cold water.

We tried to sink to the bottom of the pool,  
 but never reached it. We dunked ourselves  
 in the name of the father, son, and holy ghost.  
 Our feet were cut on the riverbed stones.

Then we sunned ourselves on the rocks  
 like two blue lizards, slick and shiny-skinned.  
 Martin, O Martin, my little brother!  
 How could you possibly forget?

## AN ENCOUNTER

It all began with a shimmer in the water.  
 Then everything started to shimmer.  
 Shimmering walls, shimmering streets,  
 and I began to shimmer with them.

## NO ONE

No one can to no one go  
 and no one else will follow.  
 Will no one wait an hour more  
 when no one has to suffer?

And no one really understands  
 why no one will confront her.  
 This no one who returns his hand  
 to no one does not wonder.

## AMNESIA

Yes, to have forgotten, to see each familiar face  
 and each familiar landmark fade as if once dreamed  
 of long ago, lost upon the waking in an unfamiliar place:  
 restless for beginnings and for what has never been,  
 yet hungry for the bitter roots which then it seemed  
 were always too intoxicating for a quickening of the pace  
 and somehow too removed from each sorrow suffered then—  
 this amnesia of the waking, as if fallen out of grace.

## ON BUSINESS IN TAHITI

I have elbow rash  
 from sitting in my armchair.  
 I wonder if it's contagious.

Wearing Bermuda shorts  
 and sunglasses, sipping iced  
 tea on the rocks, I ponder  
 the eternal questions:

Where do we come from?  
 What are we?  
 Where are we going?

## THE UNTIMELY

### I. *Communal Outpouring*

Communal outpouring bated words and halt  
 to say afraid linger tribunals chore dog  
 paltry couched seem hate curdling whisper  
 dissolve to care and purpose cling unto  
 yet boredom state of resolved and hisses  
 surd awaken pouches let recall the border  
 rare a go still shake the goodie and kiss  
 revolvers on arms loose for embellishment  
 then to the hellish forget and mutiny.

### II. *Underway*

Underway unknown sundered out of sapling  
 gone dance the gown tones running groves  
 split wrist and roots chasing to holy  
 bridges over prairie cannot to wondering  
 globes like boots of wrestle unto pioneer  
 hairy ridges fictions quicken of spirit  
 prayer out for to long water sink desert  
 utopian answers like no place to cherish.

### III. *Track Moon Red*

Slivers the track moon red and silver  
 statements ill-fed jackal howl trifles  
 till Aaron unbled waits unto fumes  
 said when for comes quivers scowling  
 wanting arrows to wish and star find  
 wait cow and drowning go not the seek  
 of maroons overbending ideals cold scream  
 now errand quean rifles spill and black  
 hither stop run out everything comes.

IV. *Scorching Summer*

Scorching summer a plain simple grass burnt  
 blackberry vines the sun set ways change  
 tuft weeds tumble patches worn denim blue  
 fading a days to rotten cluster fermenting  
 soar-like pride in mushroom hemp fires  
 glow the wine smoke forgotten haze clouds  
 blistering and wind eagle higher creep  
 ride son sand warrior sleeping never.

SUICIDE AT BENARES

Visions creeping up the empty skull  
 the ponderous burden sown  
 in the seed of a deliverer,  
 born as a fruitless tree,  
 marching to the lions  
 to join the shredded lamb—  
 no one else would touch him.

THE AWAKENING

Now is not the time for weariness.

Through the window of my room  
 the morning is gray with mist.

Through the windows of my eyes  
 the miracle is about to occur.

These borders,  
 these boundaries  
 must be transgressed!

I crawl through the heavy frame of the window,  
 out from the heavy frames of my eyes  
 into a world I have never seen before.



## SUFFERING NARCISSUS

Dissatisfied with the garden's pleasures,  
 the womb can no longer hold the infant  
 yearning to taste real fruit.

Cutting the cord to be fully born  
 he learns too soon that his body will decay  
 and return again to dust.

It was not he who barred the portal,  
 turned away by the flaming sword.  
 To return! To return to the gushing streams!

In vain a tower of confusing words  
 is built and crumbles as he tries to cling  
 to the barren sky above him.

Now he wanders through the undulant dunes,  
 pausing to view the holy mountain  
 surrounded by broken rocks and tablets.

Urged on by unkept promises  
 he seeks a land beyond the river  
 where he may sit in peace beneath his tree.

Having lost a battle that could not be won  
 his blood is spilled on fertile plains.  
 Death still finds him wanting.

He tried but failed to become a god,  
 to crucify this beloved twice-born self  
 which so enjoys its suffering.

## PROOF OF THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

God is love and love is God.  
 If love exists then so does God.  
 They exist in exactly the same way.

## ROSEBUSH MARTYR

Trickles of sap  
     from a thorn bush  
 crown the skull  
     a circle of red.

Willfully drawn to  
     the damp night air,  
 to the garden,  
     the trial, and  
 tombs of the dead,  
     the barefooted martyr  
 in sackcloth and ash  
     gazes unrestrained  
 at pools of bright stars,  
     shimmering images  
 grown cosmic in scope.

A romantic, a poet,  
     a rebel with visions  
 of paschal sacrifices,  
     he watches impassively  
 as an angel of death  
     passes over the deep.

One goat escapes  
     to the wilderness,  
 offering no hope  
     to the damned.  
 The other is slain  
     and eaten, its blood  
 sprinkled on the altar.

No eternal verities  
     summon us to courage.  
 Swords cut our wrists.  
     Spears pierce our sides.  
 Our eyes are sunken  
     and hollow. We fall  
 exhausted, crushed  
     beneath the wheel.

Mock our dreams  
 until we see unaided  
 what, in essence,  
 we really are—  
 comedians for your  
 twisted pleasure,  
 shadows of discontented  
 schemers without stars.

No one else may guide us,  
 neither gods  
 nor mighty tyrants.  
 Mindful souls  
 can be neither tamed  
 nor imprisoned.  
 We exercise  
 our will to power,  
 defiant unto death.

#### EULOGY TO JUDAS

A parted garment cloaks the broken rocks  
 as if a frenzied wind in rage had swept  
 its careless musings back again and wept  
 dry tears of beige in downy, matted locks.

Each webby wisp of camel hair still mocks  
 the pockets where the vermin once had slept.  
 They, too, it seems, for fear could not accept  
 pastoral scenes of shepherds with their flocks.

Dusklight paints a glow around his head,  
 his neck pulled taut like a marionette  
 by woven strands of mangled silver thread.

A fly descends and finds the skull is wet,  
 yet dancing nimbly as though it were not dead,  
 a sacrifice that could not pay the debt.

## IDEALS IN MOURNING

We no longer bow before  
 images we have carved  
 in the shade of a dark wood.  
 Our senses perished when  
 dust from the shattered glass  
 mingled softly with the earth  
 and floated away in ripples,  
 stillborn and drowning.

## UNDERGROUND

The moon is fading over the tombs  
 in which the relics of mariners are buried.

The weary sunlight has been swallowed  
 by the shade of perennial clouds.

I return to the shadows of my cave—  
 an oubliette carved beneath the fountains.

The mountains have lost their rainbows.  
 They swiftly tumble and are washed into the sea.

I plunge deep into the dark murky waters.  
 The depthless chasm envelops me.

I am carried away by a stenching river  
 flowing forever to an unfillable sea.

Mystery cannot be captured in a box.  
 The quintessence of beauty cannot be distilled.

I ride madly on a boat with no helmsman,  
 guided only by stygian visions.

The black of the tunnel admits of no end—  
 yet onward, onward I travel.

## A RESPITE

How many times have I  
opened these doors?

How many times have I  
coupled the remaining  
guests together?

How many times have I  
been sent off looking  
on long futile nights  
that never seem to end?

## APOLLO IS DEAD

Maenads rip apart  
seers and prophets,  
fall down in revelry  
before the god of wine,  
worshipping only spirits  
that ferment their senses  
in new revelations.

## I AM THE ECHO

I am the echo of the weeping dark void.  
Your voice is consumed in my emptiness.  
Your light is blown out in my shadows.  
Your sun is extinguished in the inevitable night,  
illusions dispelled in the advent of absence.

I am the wizard who shoots milky streams  
from a magical wand into depths still unknown.  
Seers awaken with dew on their lips  
and mistake it for honey on the wet morning grass.

## GOTHIC RUINS

Kick at the dust with tender feet  
splintered by glass and slickened mud—  
the crust of a crumbling splendor.

Awake to the dusk, to the burning grass,  
to the twilight's idols, the seamless patch  
which binds the shredded curtains.

The fallen spire, the rusting latch—  
who shall break the red door's spell  
when hell's bright portals open?

The tension of the wind and fire,  
the incense smoke, the censer's ash—  
my psalms betray the tower's whore.

This kiss, my gift, this last embrace  
of waning power from sweating palms,  
has spoken shameless thoughts.

My rain-drenched schemes have dried untouched;  
their blameless ochre blushes seem  
to crush the flying sparrow.

You went so swiftly past my sight,  
the shifting scenes which lament the morrow—  
a gothic night, a dream expired.

## THE BRAIN SET FREE

The brain set free is insanity—  
when cerebral daydreams  
burst forth like spring flowers,  
oozing past the broken skull,  
rising like a saint  
on an ivory mountain  
naked in the morning sun.

## WIPE THE SLATE CLEAN

Wipe the slate clean.  
 Remove the clutter.  
 Polish the windows,  
 translucent with grime.

When desire becomes will  
 attributed to the stars,  
 the voice within us  
 can no longer be heard.

All myths are truths.  
 All truths are myths.  
 Another story told is  
 another story listened to.

## PRIMITIVE EYES

Primitive eyes behold the rising towers.  
 A tin bird flutters noiselessly in the sky.  
 Babble rises to fluorescent-blue clouds.  
 Prayers to an all-seeing god go unanswered.

The fortress spells confusion to the heart.  
 Tears of a cypress never fall to the ground.  
 Beacons blaze in the enchanted night-dome  
 through the fog and the haze and the smoke.

## A WISP OF SMOKE

A wisp of smoke  
 rising  
 from an extinguished fire  
 burns the eyes  
 yet is pleasant to those  
 who have accustomed themselves  
 to these tears.

## THE ORGAN DANCER

“...der Jubel der Brusts qualvolle Töne entreisst.”

—Friedrich Nietzsche

Her harmonies draw me deeper and deeper  
 into her sanctum beyond the red door.  
 This seasoned passage lies stone-cold and damp,  
 frigid with longings for warmth and attention.

Wide vaulted arches are lost in dim lights.  
 A candle illumines the shadowy form  
 of a figurine dancing beneath the pipes of an organ.

The dancer prepares for the glad celebration  
 when fugitives and prodigals all shall come home.

To shed this old skin and rekindle those fires!  
 Let this seed not be spilt on the ground once again.  
 Though smaller than mustard how tall it can grow!

St. Anthony falters at a glimpse of Teresa,  
 with an arrow above her held ready to plunge  
 into her heart with a life-giving thrust,  
 broken, yet pounding with the spear in and out.

O mystical union! No longer a vision  
 you sway in the folds of your gossamer cloth.  
 Silhouettes of your body throb on the walls.

Chants from the choir ring sonorously skyward:  
 Here is the joy of all human desirings.

The fingers play hard on the stiff ivory keys.  
 The feet pump the pedals in steps up and down,  
 captured—seduced!—by angelic enchantments.

We peer at the waves of her pulsating drapery,  
 rising and falling in rhythmical rapture.  
 We weep when we hear all her gaspings as sorrow—  
 the spiritual lapse and the vainness of flesh.



## THE MUSE

I lick champagne from an argentine chalice.  
 On its patulous mouth my wet tongue remains pressed  
 while my mistress, the Muse, reclines in her palace  
 the lace of her gown hanging down at her breast.

She lies in repose like a queen of the sun  
 and sips azure wine while inebriate waves  
 dance all around her, the rainbow-draped one,  
 who smiles each time that her gown misbehaves.

A single black band binds her ochre-gold tresses.  
 Musicians attend her with songs and ballades  
 as she graciously yields to the charming caresses  
 of angels and cherubs, the maids of the gods.

I patiently wait for her red lips to soften  
 and wrap a warm kiss round the straw in her glass.  
 The breath of the vineyard returns to her coffin  
 whenever the winds of the gods deign to pass.

As she quivers a droplet will fall to the ground.  
 Like dew in the morning it makes not a sound.

## HAIL TO THE WITCH

Hail to the witch! The great white witch!  
 The wretched mother of each damned soul  
 that cries in anguish for the sacred head  
 whose sides have bled of blood-mixed water.

For all who truly seek have sought her:  
 heaven's tramp, the god-laid bitch  
 for whom the church bells ever toll,  
 who tempts all men to share her bed.

## BEFORE THE DELUGE

Before the deluge, the great mother was queen.  
 She crept through the streets and slept in the alleys,  
 midst the ruins and trash of aghast village dwellers.

Each blood-stained door she quietly passes,  
 seeking the fragrance of innocent children  
 bathed in the rose-scented waters of virtue.

She would see him out playing in meadows and gardens,  
 disobedient boy who had wandered so far  
 from the quavering walls of his crumbling home.

At night by the well the sad villagers gather.  
 The priests in their masks descend from the hills.  
 A fire is lit in a large earthen pot.

Skyward it blazes as if she were there.  
 A monotone chant barely muffles the pleas  
 of a mother and father to an earthbound creator.

The queen, hearing everything, stands there in silence  
 as the drum skin is struck and the dancing begins,  
 slowly at first, then bursting with frenzy.

When the orgy is over no dancers remain.  
 Morninglight filters its way through the smoke  
 of the smoldering coals and the opium ashes.

A priest plucks a bone from the fire of yearning  
 and dashes it seaward not saying a word.  
 The gods are no longer persuaded by prayers.

One woman remains on the banks of the rivers,  
 on the shores of the oceans, the coasts of the seas.  
 The perennial waters flood over their limits.

While clutching an emerald she drowns in a flood  
 that cleanses the valleys of their stench and remorse,  
 and is reborn as a god in a simplified world.

## A SLEEPWALK

“Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting.”

—William Wordsworth

Burning heat off the streets  
 beneath the December snow  
 here is the inner warmth  
     of a thousand smoldering suns,  
 a fire united with all that burns.

I burrow beneath my upturned collar,  
     one hand holding the flaps together,  
 the other cradled in the torn pocket  
     of a coat that no longer fits me.  
 I have no reason to hurry.

The old men simply wait, watching me  
     careen from one side of the street  
 to the other, making no attempt  
     to conceal their smiles  
 when I curse the hole in my side.

With worn and bleeding fingers  
     these vagrants in the gutters  
 pick out tunes on severed shoestrings,  
     sing their cracked-voice songs,  
 and tell their tattered stories.

Their music is inaudible.  
     The breath carrying their words  
 frosts over in the freezing air,  
     adding mist upon mist to the fog  
 surrounding the lamps they sit beneath.

Do not be mistaken.  
     There are no muses here.  
 The shouts of corner newsboys  
     and jingles of storefront mermaids  
 no longer ring through the streets.

I look up beyond the niches  
 where the old men hide,  
 above the looming towers  
 of concrete and steel  
 to a sky I cannot see.

I search in vain for some hint  
 of a winter night transcending the ash  
 and the dust and the urine below,  
 for a heavenly body of stars and light  
 hidden from my earthbound eyes.

I flee the old men and imagine myself  
 running through open moonlit fields,  
 stripped of my clothes in spite of the cold.  
 I blunder into an enchanted forest  
 where a transfigured maiden is standing.

I would kiss her innocence, run  
 my fingers through her honey-gold hair.  
 And she would laugh unrelentingly,  
 unashamed of her purity, as white  
 as snow falling in medieval meadows.

The incandescence of her raw body,  
 so crisp, so chilling, so chaste and unwilling,  
 fills the darkness with a cold warmth.  
 For all who seek her, she offers a haven  
 from the terrors of an indifferent universe.

Rainbows flow from her slender hands.  
 I accept her gifts, both good and evil.  
 Tears intermingle with radiant smiles.  
 Together we sing sacred motets. There is  
 music somewhere. Somewhere at least.

The illusion shattered, I remember now  
 that I am not in the woods but the city.  
 Steel pipes jangle in an erratic breeze,  
 an uncertain cluster of tubing  
 tapped by the fingers of an icy night.

I listen for but a moment  
 as the melodies float away into the sky  
 like a leaf fallen into a stream  
 that flows where it must unthinkingly  
 to destinations no one knows.

The wind is wild and untamed,  
 an animating force that brings the dead  
 back to life, that splinters the oak,  
 that helps the tender sapling  
 unpretentiously touch its toes.

I, too, unwillingly yield to the winterwind's  
 dangerous breath and frenzied rage.  
 The sacrament is defiled. Hopes are dashed.  
 The colliding spheres come crashing down  
 directly in my path in one grand finale.

Was this the music I had heard?  
 A shredded score lies in a heap before me.  
 The notes are scattered on the pavement.  
 Harmonies fly away in the night.  
 Rhythms are blown apart at random.

The heavens plummet back to earth.  
 Stained glass windows are broken.  
 Smashed icons sparkle in the dimlit haze  
 till they are swallowed in the blackened snow  
 and trampled on by calloused feet.

The muffled strains of a saxophone  
 filter through the desolate streets.  
 Two silhouettes dance on a murky windowpane.  
 A pointing figure thrusts open the sashes.  
 The saxophone stops playing.

A woman's head appears the frame.  
 lit up with a blinding unholy illumination.  
 The shadow of a man lurks behind her.  
 At first she does not see me  
 slinking in the diabolical darkness.

Her smile vanishes when our eyes  
 finally meet. Mine plead for absolution.  
 Hers pronounce a verdict of guilty.  
 "My God!" I exclaim in a whisper.  
 She slams the window shut again.

Not wishing to be rescued I move on.  
 I approach a bridge. Two men  
 in top hats are walking towards me.  
 They are carrying on a civilized conversation,  
 paying no attention to a fool like me.

A dilettante cannot hear the river,  
 the beating of its rhythmic flow  
 the pauses in each melodious ripple,  
 the rests between each dithyrambic measure,  
 sounds undefined and hence unobserved.

There are times when we cease  
 to be at peace with the absolute nothingness,  
 when we expect an answer, a voice  
 to fill the void that punctuates  
 the whole of existence.

We fill in the blanks with chants  
 and chatter and endless gossip,  
 seeking relief not just from  
 the tedium and disquietude  
 but the fear of silence itself.

Odious silence. Ineffable silence.  
 Mystics worship it because they believe  
 that silence, too, has a voice.  
 But there are no hymns to fill the emptiness,  
 no prayers to be heard in a vacant sky.

I am near the men now.  
 They do not look up.  
 Turning my ear to the water  
 I hear what they will never hear:  
 a silent scream rising from out the deep.

Would it not be better  
 to have a steadfast faith  
 that never questions  
 what each of us already knows,  
 what I have learned too soon?

SONNET

Maladies strewn on tainted pavement  
 feign laments of several hues.  
 Restless yearnings cast in black  
 pursue their effervescent musings.

The deed committed, silence roars  
 out warnings of the discontented  
 echoes blasting tame refrains,  
 murmurings of rebellions thwarted.

The hoarfrost sheds her loaded rimes.  
 Hell's drunken poet's memories  
 still mesmerize her sunken eyes.

A hollow chalice rapes her kisses  
 while holiness awaits the fire.  
 A sparrow falls yet no one listens.

THE GRASS WILL NOT MIND

The grass will not mind  
 when the sunlight fades  
 into a fleeting but fair moment  
 which we implore to linger  
 a while longer, not knowing  
 that eternity is found  
 when flesh decays and fertilizes  
 the rich brown soil  
 beneath the newly sown seeds,  
 from which there is no escaping.

## THE STUMBLE

The lingering fog clings  
 to the solitary lamplight,  
 a celestial moon hovering  
 above the concrete sidewalk.

Dancing shadows click heels  
 on the wall of a brick building,  
 phantasms of worn soles  
 neglected, slowly shuffling.

The broken tongues of poets  
 babble esoteric rhymes,  
 plucking shoestrings like lyres  
 to a pensive siren's wind.

One poignant cathedral bell  
 disturbs the haunted air,  
 a stark reminder echoing  
 the loss of quiescence.

Then a desperate foreign sound  
 filters through this wilderness,  
 as an old man stumbles faintly,  
 one hand on the ground.

## SILVER LANDSCAPES

Luminous gray on the closely-guarded horizon,  
 pearls and platinum under my feet.  
 The landscape swims with silver birches  
 in frosty moonlight and woven wreathes  
 of fog-clouds and translucent snow.

Two feet on steel stones tap out  
 the irregular cadences of an ironic life.  
 Slush drips from branches sheathed in tin  
 as three-eyed silverbirds sweep the ashes,  
 the leaden smoke forever rising.



## VAMPIRE-TREE IN A MIRROR

The firmament is green and brown.  
 Tombs are carved in spidery caverns.  
 A fence without shadows surrounds  
 a house with a missing chimney.  
 A twisted rope hangs from a tree.

Borders of blue meet borders of gray.  
 Ratchets of waves envelop the sea,  
 like a rainbow dissolved into white,  
 empty even of nothingness,  
 surrounding the spaces in between.

## AGAINST UNKNOWN WAVES

“Denn, wie auf dem tobenden Meere, das, nach allen Seiten un-  
 gränzt, heulend Wasserberge erhebt und senkt, auf einem Kahn ein  
 Schiffer sitzt, dem schwachen Fahrzeug vertrauend; so sitzt, mitten in  
 einer Welt voll Quaalen, ruhig der einzelne Mensch, gestützt und ver-  
 trauend auf das principium individuationis, oder die Weise wie das In-  
 dividuum die Dinge erkennt, als Erscheinung.”

—Arthur Schopenhauer

Against unknown waves  
 goes the solitary sailor  
 with nothing left to guide him.

The ocean is unyielding,  
 islands unfound and uncertain.  
 The doubt remains inside him.

Idle in a storm he sits  
 caught in the squalls  
 of his own crazy sorrow.

He awaits no calm,  
 only for the ship to hit  
 the shoreline on the morrow.

AUX ARMES  
Four Impressions

“Contre nous de la tyrannie  
L’étendard sanglant est levé.”

—Serge Gainsbourg

I.

Innocence and valor spent:  
a green sprig of chaste winter wheat  
peeps through the melting frost.  
Clarions call and schoolboys follow,  
proud young men in a fervent era  
of spiraling words and nimble reasons.  
Fragile buds are pruned at dawn  
from a presumptuous oak nestled  
deep in an ancient primordial forest.

II.

Scorched grass covers the ground  
like the unkempt beards of soldiers.  
Burning hopes ignite the fires of fear.  
The unbridled power of furies and winds  
sweep across the mountains.  
The flames of hell are unyielding.  
To stand alone and wait be counted,  
recalling the promise, the rallying cheer  
of a fate undisclosed and never revealed.

III.

The harvest moon opens a wound,  
spilling blood-red oaths and curses.  
Temperate shadows lament in defiance  
the faded faces and vanishing *jus divinum*.  
All is torn and stripped in remnants.

The naked have returned as saints.  
 Each broken cross is an emblem  
     of martyrs who could not resist  
 the temptation of the sword.

IV.

The bare snags and fallen limbs  
     reverberate with all the piper sang.  
 The roots below wait to sprout again.  
     Blessèd cheers and unquenched relief,  
 the moan of solitary prayers:  
     salvation knocks but once and never waits  
     to be let in through a half-closed gate.  
     Nirvana evaporates into trenches,  
 hollow, empty, and remorsefully dry.

SACRAMENTAL UNION

The host is dipped  
     into the wine and eaten.  
 The body and blood  
     are transfigured.  
 They become our own  
     body and blood.

We ourselves are the bride  
     impregnated by the spirit,  
 the children of God,  
     the body of Christ,  
 the blood of the lamb  
     that saves us.

The earth itself is a sacrament,  
     with nothing beyond  
 the edges of creation.  
     We too are part  
 of its holy sphere,  
     emblems of the divine.

## NIGHTPIECE

Novalis sang to you, my queen,  
 his hymns of grateful adoration.  
 And now my half-closed eyes have seen  
 the reason for his celebration.

At dusk, as daylight's brilliance fades,  
 your luster paints a tapestry  
 to curse the evening's toneless shades,  
 strike mute the poet in ecstasy.

All life secrets have been dissolved—  
 clouds of mysteries torn asunder.  
 Though nothing yet has been resolved,  
 I still can sense your orphic wonder.

Allow my deafened ears to hear  
 the silent music of your spheres.

## I TOO SHALL DANCE

Today I, too, shall dance.

I shall dance with you  
 to the beat of a distant drum,  
 to the tune of the piping wind.

The meadow is a sea of eager flowers.  
 The hills are waves on which the grasses play.

And today I, too, shall dance.

I shall dance a wake across these waters.  
 I will navigate the dory of my soul  
 across these swells of rainbow hues.

Today I, too, shall dance.

## THE PROPHECY

When the prophecy was first revealed  
phantasms spring full-born from dry dust.

Emerging from their sepulchers  
they dance on a stage of bellflowers.

The vines are entangling, the arbors inebriate.  
Rivers of wine flow from the mountains.

Bruised heels trample the newly sown grain,  
staining the fields crimson on green.

Dawnlight awakens on rippling waters,  
filling the ocean with sparkling light.

A sorceress rules the impermanent spheres.  
Her steel-gray wand kisses empyreal clouds.

A crenellated parapet secures her fortress,  
with a carpeted runway for her mystical flights.

Her iron-clad wings refute the hot sun.  
Angels in mourning are expelled from their realms.

The falling rain empties the sky of its moisture,  
leaving the heavens in celestial drought.

The earth becomes an aqueous wasteland  
of mud in which nothing will grow.

The murmuring yarns of whispering trees  
are quenched in irascent, miasmal swells.

The oracles uttered by blue wind and streams  
flow into a lake of sulfur and fire.

Bent pipes babble their caustic poison  
into an unredeemable wilderness.

The piper plays his magical tunes  
to the plodding beat of pedestrians.

Coarse visions are squandered in a murky dark wood,  
attended by decadent priests wearing masks.

Their faces, unseen, remain unreflected  
in pools of mirrors they have broken.

Their keen senses perish with the shattered glass,  
self-martyred in pity on dry heaps of sand.

The garden issues rivers of fetid blood  
to cleanse cities arising on the impotent plain.

The walls are scrawled with indecipherable graffiti  
spelling out prophecies in esoteric runes.

Saints careen midst the crumbling towers,  
seeking refuge in a sanctuary they cannot find.

The legions revolt, cast like swine into the sea.  
Demons curse desperately without being heard.

The dead lying mute for ages rise up to speak,  
awaiting revenge and a just retribution.

The innocent voices are cryptically silent.  
Then a trumpet blast rends the saturnine curtain.

The earth heaves in remorseful surges  
which forfeit any hope of consolation.

The scorched earth is remitted with defunct wages,  
money that now has been rendered worthless.

Consecrated by justice, the new constitution  
betrays the alien meek by decree.

She groans in travail when from its cocoon  
a dead fetus erupts from the melting walls.

The bastard stillborn sucks hard at a vein  
spurting forth briny milk from her bosom.

Exiled actors are banished then damned  
forever to burn in a depthless crevasse.

Their off-key voices ascend in roulades,  
a cacophonous clash of blasphemous wails.

A burnt-orange haze spells the victor's defeat.  
The executioner's hood is removed, his face unveiled.

Hanged silhouettes dance on the gallows.  
Pointed lances penetrate their sides.

Each chained to the cells of their hollow bodies,  
the heart may forgive though its stripes never heal.

An ethereal glow bathes the night in a haze of fluorescence,  
dispelling the familiar moon and stars.

In the frenzy of the approaching storm, the white leaves  
of bending trees are torn from their branches.

A country preacher shepherds his family into their shanty.  
The door is wrenched loose from its hinges.

The deliverer is near yet he cannot redeem  
even himself, so it seems, from the curse of the liar.

As soon as the thought of the flood is spent out  
renegade seamen return to their helms.

Their warships are christened, their battles begun.  
A poet in sackcloth refuses his last rites.

In spite of their mocking, he would not confess  
to sins he had never committed.

The seer had pierced the unknown with his tears.  
His dying lips mouth a curse on the crowds:

“You have fainted with fear when beholding your graves.  
 You have never taught death to your sons and your daughters.

Your comforts were forged on a pleasure-machine.  
 The towers you built with your dreams shall all pass.

The elixir of life in your powerless hours  
 has changed into poison that will not let you die.

Your edens, your visions, and fortified harbors  
 secure nothing for you but your own desolation.”

#### THE CYCLE OF STRIVING

When at last  
     standing naked again,  
 will the serpent’s tree  
     still haunt the garden  
 and condemn us once more  
     to an eternity of toil,  
 towards the vision  
     of another eden,  
 of yet another hope  
     that ends in disappointment?

#### TEMPTED BY SERENITY

Recurrent is the hope  
     and desperate is the craving  
 of those who have no refuge.

I fled and was followed.

Tempted by serenity,  
     promised more than she could give,  
 turning away I watched  
     as she too turned away.



## THE DISENCHANTED

Smoke curls round the aura of light.  
 Snow lays thick on fallen hemlock leaves.

Seared by the blazing meteors of night,  
 with nothing accomplished, nothing achieved,  
 one perceives empty chambers of despair  
 locked in a rock face of concrete.

Frightened feet dance on illumined air,  
 disclaimers fair yet painful, partial, incomplete.  
 Lanced by the arrow's sharpness and glory,  
 we long for a perfection that cannot be grasped.

This heart, all inventive and skillful in story,  
 answers questions that cannot be asked.

We hurl shameless, apart, yet unbroken  
 through flaming oceans of gory heat.  
 Whispers of promises remain unspoken.  
 The believed heaves through the frozen sleet.

## CACOPHONY OF THE BROKEN SPHERES

The city has a music all its own,  
 a grand cacophony of broken spheres  
 resonating between the walls  
 of steel towers reaching for the sky.

I walk in the glow of streetlight moons,  
 past lampposts spun from magic.  
 The dead lie exposed in open arenas.  
 Vultures pick the bones clean and white.

Minotaurs hide in the labyrinth  
 of crisscrossed streets and gridded alleys.  
 I am lost in a maze I cannot escape.  
 There are no strands of thread to follow.

THE TUNES WE ONCE HEARD

The tunes we once heard are now but a remembrance.  
 Just picture the memories, still so subdued,  
 floating by unredeemed and obscure, yet unbroken.

It seems so presumptuous to think we could live  
 subduing temptations our dreams would create.

We have waited for hopes that were never renewed,  
 indulging in passions unnamed and unspoken.  
 Insanity bars us from being attentive  
 to the yearnings inside that cannot be ignored.

Yes, we ate all too soon of St. Lucifer's food.  
 In our greed we consumed each maroon-tainted token,  
 as fugitives fleeing vicarious prisons.

We ate of the sacrament, partook of the emblems,  
 and sacrificed life for a glimpse at its semblance.

FINIS

Above the crosswalk, arm in arm with gentility,  
 nothing resounds. Seldom may one hear the drone  
 of measured paces as they scrape and tap out messages  
 in coded footfalls breaking on cement like music.

Too many run. Someday I too may flee these scenes  
 of promises which I have heard in vacant hours.  
 When shall the heartless be free? And when will the days  
 grow shorter as shadows lengthen on the courtyard steps?

LIBATION

I drain water  
 from my bottle  
 into the ocean.

## BRANCHES

## Branches

woven against a smoke-grey horizon,  
 form and darkling pattern in the gloom.  
 slender fingers  
 moving lazily with the breeze  
 trace voluptuous lines, intricate designs.

Vibrating with the slow momentum of the coming storm  
 the off-beat  
 rhythm  
 of the falling rain  
 attunes itself to my liquid pulse.

Or does the blood jet  
 alter  
 to fit the rain?

## Standing

beneath the ancient pine's sheltering branches,  
 breathing in the sweet, clean air  
 dwarfed by  
 the darkness  
 the mountains  
 the storm.

## I glory

in the climax of rolling thunder.

## Within

the invisible pentagram  
 I feel myself one  
 with the night  
 the west wind  
 the multiverse of life.

## I feel the humming within myself

—the vibrating power behind the storm—  
 and realize  
 the essence of each  
 must also be

the whole  
 interpenetrating  
 infinitely  
 eternally  
 one.

À LA FLAMME

Saffron flower,  
 throbbing with heat—  
 your pulsing life  
 hypnotizes,  
 penetrates me,  
 melts me.

As I gaze  
 my cat eyes fix unblinkingly  
 and I sense the interpenetration  
 of our subtle, sensual selves.

You bow, sway, and bend  
 as unseen breezes  
 make their presence known by  
 molding your hot liquid form in the path  
 of their overflowing passions.

Shadow dancers  
 whirl,  
 leap,  
 and pirouette,  
 living in the fainter glowings  
 cast by your creative soul.

Deeper goes my gaze,  
 until it begins to flow.  
 My own being is merged...  
 intensity with intensity.  
 Hot flame unites with hot flame.  
 My soul joins yours  
 in the rhythmic dance.

## TOO SOON

Too soon the night again  
 shall tumble and fall,  
 when dusk beckons our return  
 to sleepfulness once more.

For a moment all is still.  
 The leaves do not rustle.  
 The songbirds do not sing.  
 Even the cicadas are silent.

## UNTO CAESAR

The curtain is rent.  
 The banquet is given.  
 Let us drink wine  
 from holy goblets.

Let us praise the gods  
 of gold and silver,  
 of bronze and iron,  
 of wood and stone.

The number of our days  
 is written in graffiti  
 on the walls  
 of crumbling tenements.

We weighed ourselves  
 on the scales.  
 Now we live with wild donkeys  
 and eat grass like oxen.

Burn the purple robe.  
 Melt the gold chain.  
 Let us watch  
 as the empire crumbles.

## WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO THE HARMONY?

What has happened to the harmony  
 that once accompanied my monotone?  
 The discordant must be left unsaid.  
     Unison is only our need to agree,  
 to know what must remain unknown.  
     The music has died. The music is dead.

I must point myself away  
 from all that could possibly limit you.  
 You are not the answer that I seek.  
     As soon as I find the words to say  
 I've said more than I needed to.  
     There is no reason for me to speak.

It's not that I can't say anything more  
 but that I can't say anything at all.  
 The only reason to be singing again  
     is not to make things as they were before  
 but to hear the voice so still and small  
     and dream of how it could have been.

I want to lay my head on the ground  
 and look up at a sky I cannot touch.  
 There is nothing more to think or feel.  
     Why search for what cannot be found?  
 What's the point in striving so much?  
     Poof the dream to unveil the real.

## WHEN THE UNIVERSE FINALLY EXPLODES

When the universe finally explodes  
 there is no more room for presumptuousness.

Who can stand tall when there is nothing to stand on?

We are but a spark of the all-encompassing fire-light  
 hurling out into space, growing cold and dying,  
 never to return to its origin.

## THE WHIMPERING WORLD

In the end  
I find myself  
weakly fading  
without a struggle  
into this same  
whimpering world.

## OMEGA

The Omega is near.  
Out of fear I struggle to say  
“I believe.”  
My silent words ring hollow.  
I gaze at myself  
in the mirror with horror.  
And he too is aware.

## DESCENT INTO HELL

The fire burns forever.  
Nothing remains the same.  
All things are destroyed  
in its all-consuming flames.  
The mind is purged,  
the soul cleansed.  
The old has passed away,  
preparing the way for the new.

## THE WIND

Caught in the sin of a wind  
 that never stops blowing.  
 Feeling once again  
 that the end just isn't worth knowing.

## ABSOLUTE NOTHINGNESS

The void precedes  
 all things.  
 The void precedes  
 even God.

*Ex nihilo:*  
 out of the void  
 all things  
 are created.

Back to the void  
 all things  
 return to,  
 even God.

## SHADOWS

We cannot see if all is darkness.  
 Nor can we see if all is light.  
 Shadows are both light and darkness.  
 We can only see if there are shadows.

## NEW MORNING

New morning  
 morning  
 morning  
 come.



## Annotations

The first epigraph is from Johannes Kepler, *Harmonies of the World* [*Harmonices Mundi*], trans. Charles Glenn Wallis (London: Global Grey, 2014 [1619]), p. 1. The second epigraph is from William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice* in Vol. 1 of *The Plays and Sonnets of William Shakespeare*, Vol. 26 of *Great Books of the Western World*, ed. Robert Maynard Hutchins (Chicago: William Benton, 1952), Act V, Scene 1, p. 431.

POETICA: The epigraph is from William Wordsworth, “Ode: Intimations of Immortality” in *English Romantic Writers*, ed. David Perkins (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1967 [1815]), p. 280.

THE UNTIMELY: Like John Cage’s “Music of Changes” (1951) or Jackson Pollock’s “Convergence” (1952), poetry based on chance may sound like someone banging on piano keys or look like paint splattered on canvas, all of which, of course, are one kind of music, art, and poetry.

THE ORGAN DANCER: The epigraph is from Friedrich Nietzsche, *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, Vol. 1 of *Nietzsche’s Werke* (Leipzig: Druck und Verlag von C. G. Naumann, 1895), §2, p. 28, translated as “...ecstasy may wring sounds of agony from us” in *The Birth of Tragedy*, 2nd ed., in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, trans. and ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: The Modern Library, 1967 [1878]), p. 40.

HAIL TO THE WITCH: It is not misogynist to say that if God can be a woman, so can the devil. The tone of the poem is one of mockery, not adulation.

A SLEEPWALK: The epigraph is from William Wordsworth, “Ode: Intimations of Immortality” in *English Romantic Writers*, ed. David Perkins (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1967 [1815]), p. 281.

AGAINST UNKNOWN WAVES: The epigraph is from Arthur Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, Vol. 1 (Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1859), §63, pp. 416–417, translated as “Just as the boatman sits in his small boat, trusting his frail craft in a stormy sea that is boundless in every direction, rising and falling with the howling, mountainous waves, so in the midst of a world full of suffering and misery the individual man calmly sits, supported by and trusting the *principium individuationis*, or the way in which the individual knows things as phenomenon” in *The World as Will and Representation*, Vol. 1, trans. E. F. J. Payne (New York: Dover, 1969), pp. 352–353.

AUX ARMES: FOUR IMPRESSIONS: The epigraph is from Serge Gainsbourg, “Aux armes et cætera” on the studio album of the same name (Hilversum: Universal, 1979). The original lyrics are from “La Marseillaise,” written by Claude Joseph Rouget de Lisle in 1792. English translation: “Against us from the tyranny / The bloody banner is raised.”