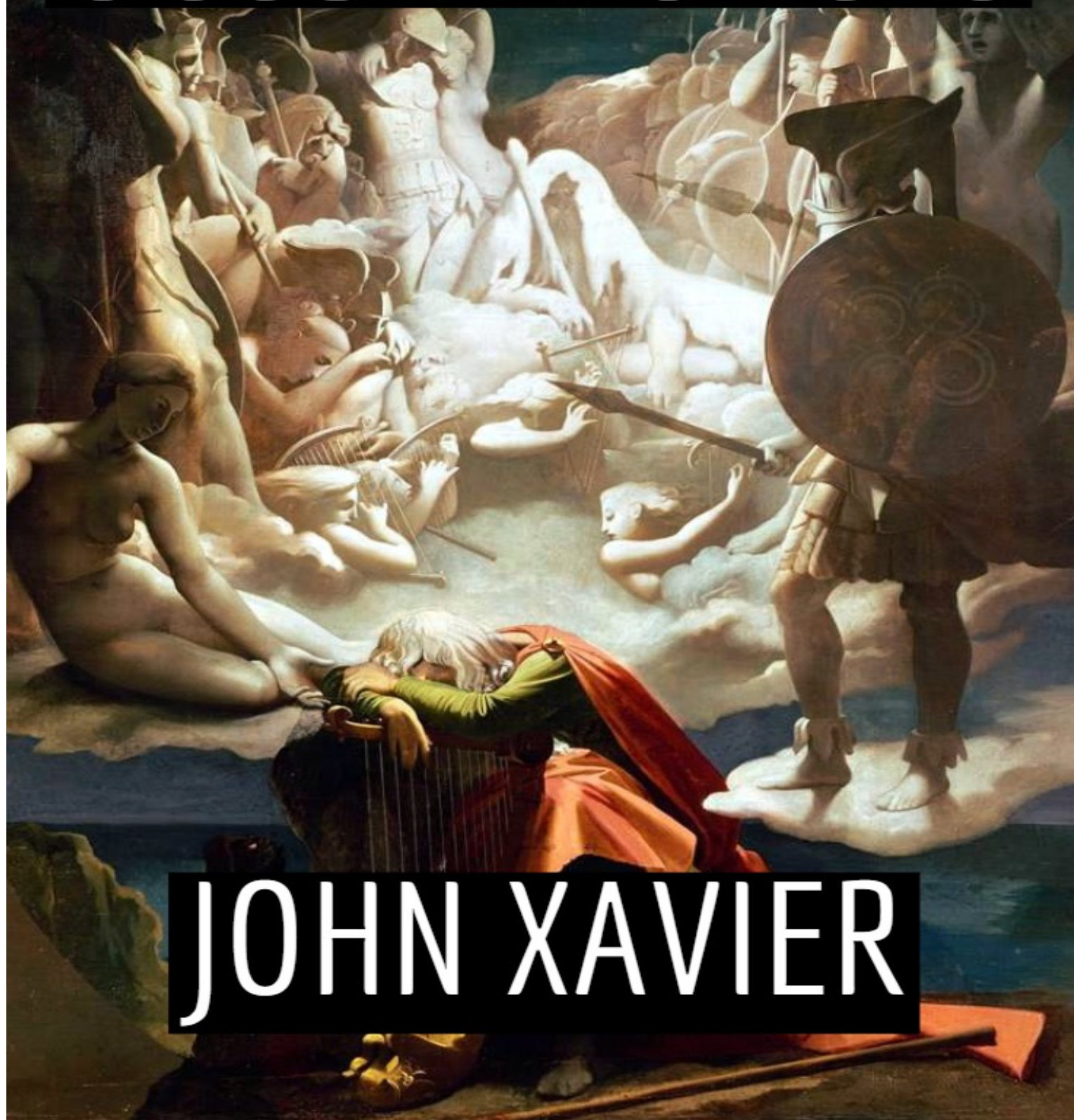


# OCCULT FORCES



JOHN XAVIER

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John Xavier

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*It's the empty space that allows  
the wheel to turn.*

– Lao Zi

## ALL THAT REMAINS

Fog oozes around the bones  
Heaped over centuries;  
It touches the blackened scraps of leather  
Overgrown with fungus,  
It crawls across the shattered antlers  
And hooves of deer

Here too are the mussel shells  
And worn pebble tools that opened them,  
Fragments of the mystery  
Where creeping snails linger warily  
With tentative eye stalks

The midden is as tall as a man;  
Spilling out to the edges of the forest,  
A gathering of abandoned  
Relics that say more than the speechless gods  
Once worshiped in this country,  
Powers called to by generations of people  
Watching over the land and sea;  
They say more  
But still not enough

Each one of their villages is gone,  
Less now than the last smoke of dead fires  
Where primal myths were born;  
Passions long ago faded into the air

This is all they found,  
These starved children of another continent;  
With rifles raised in fear  
They patrolled the unholy site,  
Saying their prayers  
In unusual honesty and alarm while  
Wondering at the profound immensity of it,  
That such a thing could ever exist  
Even in a haunted world

In the captain's journal entry that evening  
No mention of it was made

## ALTERITY

Dreaming chameleons in sheens of vermillion;  
Slim and trembling with thin limbs,  
They flow with  
The branches whims

Asleep in trees, clinging silently, and these  
Teeming with the swooned lizards

The night a magnificent magenta,  
Crepuscular, astral;  
Spontaneous sorcery ordained over natural forces

Together the creatures surround a secret,  
A truth mutating in their  
Aggregate masses,  
Evolving towards an elemental revelation  
Which the world has not yet seen

Could it be a human being?

## ASKING THE SYBIL OF AMHERST

A door divides her – from her Visitors –  
Disembodied – as if the House were speaker –  
And – as she becomes more mystery –  
Mysteries she Befriends – their Confessor –

Attentive of course – considerate –  
Slowly the shadows give Her their trust –  
Then she imparts their wisdom –  
But we – however – never learn much –

A faint light shall vanish where it's bright –  
The mind must Darken – if it will See –  
People though – are much eager to be fire –  
Of self extinguishing they feel no need –

You cannot see Eternity's kingdom –  
With eyes filled by the vulgar glaring sun –  
Pray that you can escape its rays –  
And True Illumination – May come –

## AUGUST WAS LOVELY

The leaves as they dance across sundering trees,  
A fever of the wind descending

And what secrets are they sharing?

Female earth, fertile and young in summer  
Stays summer forever,  
Lives on in the light between the stars  
Where joy doesn't  
Perish in the darkness

The dead have no love in them  
But you will not die –  
Only the flesh is unveiled

Passion is the flower of creation, a harmony  
Spreading in the choirs of animals  
Until even the stones themselves awake  
And the voices of mountains  
Rejoice, echoing

Tender woman, I close your eyes  
With my whispers;  
Watching from another time  
As you pass away, briefly,  
Tears gleaming along my weary eyelids;  
Trembling while  
The air escapes your lips

This the dream of an old cat, purring as it sleeps

Although the world has lost its beauty  
It will all be regained in eternity

## BEAUTIFUL MEMORIES

A winter night among the mountains;  
Those dark and peaceful fathers of earth  
Lifting a flawless ceiling of stars

Snow lay along the trails and around the trees  
Like dreams accumulated in the afterlife,  
And the silence knew it was exquisite

While the others slept we slipped away  
Ascending to the shadow forest  
Where our footprints were soon alone

The two of us spoke little as we sought a place  
Beyond the reach of time and civilization;  
Eager for freedom, however brief

So, as our breath graced the cold air with its  
Ephemeral ghosts, we worked quickly  
To put on our unnatural gear

The encumbrance of the cross country skis though  
Vanished swiftly as we built up speed  
And, single file, the nocturnal wild amazed us

Yet the path we followed had its islands of light;  
Solitary lamp posts in the gloom,  
Alien structures humming with electricity

Under which we discovered perfect ski tracks  
So we went on like that for hours;  
Gliding as I never had, before or since



## BONE RAGA

Rattle man, clackety man,  
He be grinning in the dark man

Used to be a grim boy  
Sprawling through the dank,  
Musing things,  
But him got aged in a plague time  
And all that moaning flesh  
Went dust

Rattle man, clackety man,  
Knows the forgotten dances man

Laughing at feeble centuries,  
Doing footwork,  
Whistling cruel tunes—  
Don't need no friends neither,  
Teeth enough to smile,  
Rhythms just crave limbs

Rattle man, clackety man,  
Waiting under your skin man

Knocking on stranger's doors,  
Inviting himself in,  
And once he got them family  
Seated in they living room  
The show starts,  
Going until they screaming man

## CHTHONIC TANGIER

A velvet casino,  
The air pungent with hashish

Try your luck among these  
Affluent vipers

A musician, his hat over his eyes,  
Is quietly playing guitar in the corner

The sounds of the roulette wheel  
With cackling chips joining in

At the bar, a bourbon neat,  
Served in a short glass, beading

Its quartz like splendor  
Slicing up a lacquered table

The burn in a man's throat  
While he sits and has another

And the hum of numerology  
Alive in the crowds

Djinns of chance, circling, scheming;  
Their powers invisible and fatal

Anyone who comes here belongs,  
Initiated in secret blood rites

In a subterranean lair,  
The spiral stairs descended

## CONSERVATORY ON A HILL

A wilderness enclosed in glass,  
Pulsating with polyphonic bird song

As I sit under a throng of Lady Palms,  
A mated pair of Roul Roul Partridges  
Emerges from beneath my bench  
And rambles past me nonchalantly

Nature is first and foremost an explorer,  
In blind experiment seeking  
A final beauty to sate the void

Here the full power of its industry is on display;  
The air alive with winged wonders  
And water pools concourse with koi  
While every inch of soil  
Prosperes with superb exotic flora

In the brief lulls from human crowds  
I feel myself fusing  
With the life surrounding me;  
The electricity interweaving with the air I'm breathing

Hours later a vision seizes me;  
A totem of all life  
Ascending into the invisible beyond

## *CROWN OF THORNS*

Now You will become God  
And the millennia shall flee from You;  
The whole of this dying creation  
Putrefying in Your cataclysmic hands

No less shall the ones who worship You,  
Bodily without spirit,  
Engulf the infinitude of Your desires  
In a stench of unending lies

Breathe upon the void then, if You must,  
Unleashing the life within,  
Because either they will eat each other  
Or they will go empty

Lord of cannibals I know You,  
All this feast of suffering is Yours;  
God Accursed, You offer up wages of death  
For which You even gave Your word

## DIESEL LAND

People flow towards it,  
Crossing the train tracks and highways  
Along its industrial terrain;  
All while the luminous dawn rises up around them,  
An orange and azure incandescence  
Crawling under the bruised tide of storm clouds

Likewise the black figures of wheeling seagulls  
And imposing power lines  
Strung between skeletal electrical towers  
Preside here

This is not a place of dreams  
Or innocent hopes;  
Here life is worn down slowly over the years,  
Men and women doing what they must  
To provide for their families,  
Making hard unpalatable choices  
As unmerciful time eats away their hands and faces

Will salvation come for them eventually?  
Maybe but not today;  
Today they give themselves to toil  
Inside the guts of factories,  
Repeating routine-crushed lives daily disappearing  
Like the billowing haze of white steam  
Greeting them on arrival

There is beauty wherever the spirit survives  
And it is made greater by adversity

They persevere despite the injustice of it all;  
The swarms of lies, the exploitation,  
Conceived in giant pacts of fraud devised by  
Lawyers in the employ of governments and corporations  
That reduce the whole of humanity  
To a resource they want systematically mined

People have become numbers  
Existing in the ledgers of the *new world order*,  
Waiting to be subtracted

The bottom line isn't real though;  
What's real is workers in grimy overalls and heavy boots  
Pushing wheelbarrows in a junkyard  
Between glassy puddles with angled reflections  
Stained by the colors of gasoline,  
It's forklifts shuddering as they spear pallets in the rain  
And semi-truck horns blaring in the background  
As garbage gets shoveled  
For hours into rusted compactors

This place with all its waste  
Lying around in the open is the truth;  
The world that comes  
From the mouths of our politicians and newscasters  
Meanwhile, that's nothing but a lie

Wake up, sell your body, then pass out;  
Weeks filled with days like these  
Will use up the best decades you'll ever have

But those who are born into this live on somehow

Overloaded, they are not broken;  
Instead they tell vulgar jokes and laugh heartily,  
Defying their oppressors  
Through impossible survival

## DIVINE WIND

the japanese zero fighter  
flies into the american battleship

the pilot is incinerated

stepping out of the lotus of flame  
he returns to the world

it's still nineteen forty five

again he's a pilot  
in the imperial japanese air force

commencing a suicide mission

he listens to the priest chant  
and drinks his tea without emotion

then he climbs into the plane

the pacific as usual is dreadfully empty  
until the enemy's sighted

soon their bullets swarm him

frayed by the defenders' guns  
his plane streams fire across the sky

yet he plummets onward

the explosion that shortly devours him  
barely registers before

the brightness wipes away his mind

death has joined him to all the others  
the earlier millions of the war

he's quickly torn from oblivion though

remembering nothing  
his eternal dying continues

## ECHOES ALL

The conch gathers up the world  
Inside its pearl palace  
And the glistening green sea  
Authors islands from memory

Where once there was water,  
New continents intrude;  
Places undefiled by adoration which unleash  
Forests lush with grotesque beasts

Their bones will feed progress  
As they melt into an alluvium  
Drenched with many ponderous eons of rain;  
Marvel or monstrosity, they end the same

Vanguard for a host of silent stars  
Just as lifeless in their fate;  
Giants who've been set no other business  
Than to run down until finished

The worst disasters drained of their calamity,  
Made as soft as murmurs;  
Things in brute transit now briefly held  
Inside the walls of an empty shell



## ELDER BLOOD

Pale lights arrayed over the gray bridge,  
Twin rows in the dismal air

The odd car passes by, materializing out of the haze  
Before swiftly disappearing again,  
As I'm preoccupied with  
Doubts and second thoughts

Then I notice the figure approaching

A form shimmering on the edge of the gloom,  
Not wholly within this world;  
My dread increasing when it vanishes

The wind abruptly hits me  
And dies away, leaving something behind;  
I don't turn at first;  
With eyes closed and clenched fists  
I prepare myself

Often these past months I felt close to madness,  
Unsure he was real, but it's him

The cataracts of his eyes  
Are doors into undesirable wisdom,  
And his thoughts  
Remain veiled as he speaks

"The truth is easy to want but hard to embrace."

But which truth exactly?  
I studied the codices of the ancients  
With feverish devotion yet they could never say

Or wouldn't

"You're on the threshold now," he warned, "Of another realm."  
"One from which there's no return."

I nodded and, pulling back my sleeve, I offered up my wrist

That night I became one of them

## ERR ARMA LOGORRHEA

Unrelenting words, the marching of words;  
Entire armies made of words

Words crashing into one another  
In word cacophony  
And each word dying on entering the fray

More words replace these though,  
Words that must climb the corpses of their brethren;  
Desperate words with zero sanctuary –  
Words trying to survive their wordless orders

Yet the supposed masters of words  
Are also slaves to the force and energy of words;  
A word guards its commander from silence

As such our own words destroy us;  
Keeping us forever on a battlefield of words

## EULOGY FOR JOHANN JOHANNSSON

*The silent organ loudest chants*

*The master's requiem*

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

When the music is over the desire will remain

And the house we grew up in,  
Lost in the countryside,  
No longer has any windows  
So now a cold wind is blowing through it

We'll remember what it was though  
For a while longer –  
Like physical photographs  
Curling up  
With departing years

Until the very end, until the last *sliver of light*,  
The ineffable inside us will crave  
Something we glimpsed  
In the gentle mercy of a sound softening our hearts

To feel anything is miraculous,  
The orchard of a miracle,  
Because the soil of this world succeeds  
In growing all that we see –  
From what is lifeless it brings that which is alive,  
And we don't understand how, but art,  
Your art, shares in this

Wordless in the beginning and wordless  
In the end but music  
Doesn't need to have words

Let the earth absorb our old house,  
The myriad powers of dirt and trees and sky  
Shall make good use of it –  
Because the soul doesn't dwell in these,  
It travels through them

You too are on a journey again while we  
Listen with hearts yet to follow

## FEAR SEDUCES

Intimacy measures itself by her,  
The stab of her arrival;  
That paralyzing instant where the world falls silent  
Leaving you fully conscious of yourself,  
Your squirming intestines,  
The sweat trickling down your cold back  
And the arid taste of death  
Spread in your mouth,  
Killing the words you'd speak

We are all embryos  
To the fertile touch of terror,  
Waiting to wake asunder  
As soon as the cleaving blade descends  
And who's to say  
That this isn't better?

Those resigned to being afraid know only slavery,  
Captives of a deadly inaction  
Emanating from some unknown axiom;  
She reaches into the most forlorn  
Dimensions of human being,  
Where even nightmares and trauma vanish,  
Enticing weaknesses from our desires

An enchantress of bleak lusts,  
Her presence crucifies;  
Hypnotizing with volcanic lips and marauding hips  
While her eyes stare like incoming asteroids  
Ready to undo the solar system

Vulture goddess hungering for failing flesh,  
The decay in us welcomes this,  
Eager to be eclipsed in final surrender

## FOR THOSE DEPARTING

Go with ease sweet spirit, your hardships are over

No more must you strain; not now, not ever

As you are being lifted from the burden of your body, relax

Your life was one of many and you were perfect

However humble, however small, the role you played was essential

You were an atom in a rainbow, composing beauty

From birth beautiful and, through your entire life, beautiful

Now you are simply receiving your reward

Listen for it, the music, the orchestra come to carry you

As your heart was moved by songs in life, let it transport you

You are above aching and worrying from here on

Rise without effort as your pure self, as the eternal you

It is finally time for every one of your desires to be fulfilled

Everything you love that was lost you will rejoin

## FORGING A REPUBLIC

In between the hammer swing and anvil clang  
Flashes the image of a bell tolling

Then another strike follows,  
A vision ensuing as before but this time  
It's a crowd gathering in the open air,  
Listening to an impassioned speaker

Again the smiting instrument falls  
And with greater intensity now,  
The sound encompassing a people with an anger  
Equal to their newly awakened numbers,  
Decent citizens roused by indignities  
Secretly orchestrated with insidious cruelty

Ring loud once more the clash of metal on metal!  
The hard dissonance of truth  
Shattering a frail harmony of lies

Let the world shake with every wallop!  
See the nations of the Earth  
Vibrating from a zeal for liberty  
No inhuman power  
Could ever hope to subdue

Each hit gives violent shape to the future,  
Imposing itself with the clarity of moral necessity  
Because all destiny absent spirit is decay  
In a universe of natural entropy

The pummeling here repeats a claim  
Growing louder until the deaf can no longer deny  
That full vitality demands  
Nothing less than full democracy,  
A total summoning of spirit  
United in purpose to give being to freedom  
In a sword to sweep aside tyrants  
Made by the shared might of the masses

It's the arm of all toiling people become one,  
Their strength incarnate together,  
Capable of creating anything

## FROM DEPTHS BELOW

Lightning strafed the roiling skies  
As thunder bounded the ocean wide,  
While in the brawl of monstrous waves  
Rocked one ship, alone and brave

A vessel launched by avariced hearts  
To seek fortune in lands still new and dark;  
A captain and crew of veteran men  
For whom danger was simply their old friend

The storm as such inspired much bravado,  
The sailors eager to meet the battle;  
With courage and calm they secured their ship  
Against the fury of water and wind and twist

All seemed done, even their captain thought  
They'd bested the dangers of nature's onslaught;  
So despite the deck seesawing wildly  
They danced and laughed in soaking glee

Unknown to them, they were being watched  
By ancient eyes with malevolent gloss;  
The hunter wisely prowling while chaos prevailed,  
Finding vulnerable the prey they trailed

Tentacles now engulfed the ship in foul surprise  
Coiling masts and rigging from every side  
Until, too late, the crew finally raised alarm;  
Far past the point of undoing harm

Yet with knives and pikes the sailors fought back,  
In daring there was nothing these men lacked;  
But to no avail, the ship groaned as it was crushed,  
Before shattering from the abyssal touch

No trace of the voyage was ever found;  
A secret among the corpses who spiraled down  
Where, in quiet fathoms unraveling flesh,  
They added to the Kraken's nest

## FUNGUS PROPHET

Mushrooms inhabiting the mind;  
Folds of coral brain tissue  
Flooded with oceanic thoughts

Cold waters swirling with light and vision

You are millions of years old,  
And suddenly these are all gathered together  
In a riptide of neurons;  
The blood in ancient communion  
With an undersea volcano

Lava bulging from the heaving depths,  
Roaring out of the shadows

This quickly blackens at the touch of water,  
Frothing into mournful shapes  
Hostile to a world above;  
What's been created, devouring  
Everything lying in its path

Mushrooms suddenly erupting from the skin,  
Overwhelming the naked form of man  
In his primordial hour

Gospel of the destroyer, revealing  
Itself to you, yes you,  
Swallowing you in inferno;  
Chaos of revelation, chaos of the beast  
Thrashing from a lethal wounding

Your eyes are opened to the underworld,  
The fires now churning below



## GROUP EXHIBITION

Most of them live in a condemned factory by the waterfront, or so I've heard...  
I don't see any influences here. Why? Do you?  
Ugh. I'd hardly even call this a crude interpretation of wine...  
Don't stray too far. I want you to meet someone. My plastic surgeon...  
My ex was a defense lawyer. He ended going to prison three years after we broke up...  
You just have to find the exfoliant that's right for you...  
It really depends on what type of portfolio you're comfortable with...  
Artists make amusing guests in short doses...  
Damn, this place is packed like crazy! Who are these guys anyways?  
I used to swear by Prada but now it's Hermes or nothing...  
Her social media is mainly just an echo chamber for her narcissistic petulance...  
It's been hard getting decent weed in Tuscany lately...  
Sure they're derivative and hackneyed, but they sell for a hundred thousand. Minimum...  
It's not about having the family's name on a hospital wing; it's about the people...  
You should see them live! They're amazing!  
A tiny place over on fourth. The décor is terrible but the duck is exquisite...  
I was the face of a major ad campaign they recently ran in China...  
Why'd we come here tonight? It's not like we're going to buy any of this shit...  
Abstract is abstract. What else is there to say? Let's talk about something else...  
After this let's go check out that new club I mentioned...  
Don DeLillo? Never heard of him. In any case, I prefer non-fiction...  
They just got back from Berlin. A bit disappointing really...  
I volunteered this summer at an orphanage in Sri Lanka. It changed my life...  
His cock is enormous; I mean, I've had my share of large men in my day but, my god...  
Nowadays it's all about money. Look at everyone here...  
I enjoy just walking around, eavesdropping on snippets of random conversation...  
Yeah it's pure. Come on, let's hit the bathroom...  
Don't mention my divorce when I'm talking to someone. Why would you?  
What's that music playing? It's truly awful...  
I work in finance. My condo has a great view of the ocean...  
Personally I find that activists almost always turn out to be tedious bores...  
*Summa cum laude or magnum cum laude.* One of the two...  
What I want to know is how much their manager makes off the merchandising rights...  
Oh look! Here comes your boss; and he's drunk...  
To be honest I really only do these things for the networking opportunities...  
The attendance tonight testifies to the passion for art in our city...

## GUESSING GAME

The uneventful disaster of my life  
Has unfolded like  
A paper fortune-teller

As a child I thrived inside its secret facets  
Until my future selves  
Pervaded every variety of fantasy

Worry was too abstract to touch me then;  
Youth was confidence enough  
And the world seemed mine to create

Manipulating the device in happy arrogance  
I began to make my choices  
But everything I chose was wrong

The destiny I took for granted,  
A life filled with success,  
Slowly faded as my failures gathered

Each dying illusion, a unique part of me  
Culled in mundane revelation,  
Losses totaling the whole of a man

Hate and sadness are written here together,  
Defeated in tandem,  
As the cruelty of hope survives

I haven't the courage to surrender  
So I keep making guesses,  
The fortune teller bent in fumbling hands

## HE DIED A CATERPILLAR

In his dreams he danced in golden light  
Among the endless flowers

The air carried him in its arms  
And he was weightless and colorful and free

Beauty was ready to tear him apart  
But reality was rather different

Hidden in the forest shade  
He crept and ate and cowered at the sky

Unknown to the world he was safer  
So he took no chances

He refused to build a cocoon when the time came,  
Unwilling to suffer so much mystery

Naturally the world wasn't bothered by this;  
Nothing ceased as he wasted away...

What wings he might have had though!

## HONEST DESIRE

I confess lust, physical lust;  
Lust that has no pretense of love

Yes I hunger for the bodies of women;  
For their mouths, their breasts, their genitals

Yes there is an animal inside me  
That voraciously craves the all fulfilling fuck

Because it's not beauty that moves the body is it?  
It's the pistons of carnage, churning away

Some want to tell themselves this isn't true,  
That we're not rutting beasts broken under instinct

Personally though I've just grown tired of the lie;  
I've never met a saint but I know I'm not one

Every woman is human to me, equal in rights,  
But this has nothing to do with lust

Lust is wanting to wrap yourself in the body  
Of a stranger you just saw strolling by

## HOW TO WIN THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE

Help to sabotage an agreement to end a war;  
While the president of your country  
Tries to resolve the conflict your fellow citizens are dying in,  
Undermine his credibility with his allies  
For the sole purpose of  
Getting your boss elected to the same office

Then, when you're in power,  
Secretly orchestrate the illegal bombing of  
Two non-combatant nations  
And, by doing so, condemn thousands of innocent people to death  
While also creating a political instability in one that'll  
End up killing millions

Increase the bombing of the enemy during peace negotiations  
To encourage them to capitulate;  
Exclude your allies from discussions with the enemy  
Then resort to a massive offensive just to  
Get them to agree again to  
Things they'd previously agreed to

Make a big show of signing a cease fire agreement  
Which your allies are unhappy with  
But force them to anyways  
Because your boss needs to deliver on the peace he promised  
In order to win an upcoming election

When the award is later given to you  
As a cynical exercise in political theater, be sure to  
Accept it with contrived humility  
Despite being fully aware of the lack of any  
Meaningful progress towards peace;  
Then, when the war renews itself and your failure is undeniable,  
Decorate your false surprise and regret  
With a few calculated gestures of contrition

Some people might say it isn't appropriate for anyone  
Responsible for so much death and fraud  
To receive a Nobel Peace Prize  
But, if so, they'd be laughably wrong in thinking that;  
After all, the Nobel Prizes were only created to  
White wash the destructive legacy of the man their named for

## HULDUFOLK CURSE SONG

The human spirit so poorly imbued,  
Your crude snooping we casually elude

Prying you often seek our homes  
Unable even to see inside the stones

How empty and drab your brief lives,  
Surely signs of a cursed tribe

All rocks and rivers are our friends  
While you're unable to speak to them

And your corpses that we find in ice,  
Ugly things warped with surprise

Just one more kind of trash you leave,  
With each death Earth sighs relief

Humanity the pox, humanity the blight,  
Turning rotten what once ripe

I SAID GOODBYE FIRST

And it killed me

Now I'm left to imagine your smile  
In the afterlife of you

Journey in a shadowy desert

The moon then is my memory of us,  
A cold but cherished light

More genuine but more distant than mirages

You had a laugh eclipsing  
The birdsong of a whole forest

You were the axis of my brief paradise

But I wanted too much;  
My desire causing its own undoing

Without becoming anger

No matter what you'll remain  
A beautiful mystery

I STILL SLEEP ON MY SIDE OF THE BED

I had to work late again tonight and your sister wasn't happy

Her voice hushed, she tried to provoke an argument  
But I was too tired to fight back  
So she left more disgusted than anything really

Slipping off my shoes with my feet,  
I slowly climbed our stairs

Listening in the darkness, I could hear the grandfather clock  
We bought on our honeymoon ticking away

The girls' rooms of course are still across from ours  
But I'm beginning to wonder  
If they shouldn't be farther apart;  
They're going to the same elementary school  
And I hear they spend  
Almost all of their free time together

In all honesty though,  
I don't think I'd have the heart to separate them

Both were dreaming peacefully  
When I peeked in on them this evening  
And, all things considered,  
I should be grateful they're as well adjusted as they are

Removing the noose of my tie in the hall,  
I wearily toss it on a chair when I enter our bedroom;  
Yet tomorrow will be worse than today

That's mostly all I do now; work

You can understand why  
Vacations don't exactly appeal to me right?  
After that horrible snorkeling trip,  
After having to drag your limp body to the surface

It startles me to think how long it's been

For seven years now I've slept  
Next to your absence



## IDLE ENNUI

Soon my body will disintegrate  
into cold indifferent  
nothingness

Whether  
this event will  
become meaningless immediately  
or if it'll become meaningless  
after passing eons,  
it will  
become meaningless

No matter how I live,  
death will take away my individuality

I think I am alive  
yet I can't even define life  
and all the philosophy I pour into this question  
spills through the cracks of reason

My universe routinely destroys galaxies

And everything I invest in this world,  
every exertion and desire,  
is unable to directly touch a single molecule

But hey,  
it's sunny today

## IMMORTAL CLEISTHENES

It was almost empty when I arrived, the agora  
Eerily quiet in the aftermath of the vote

He was nowhere to be seen

How my heart ached for him Xanthippus!  
To suffer so cruel an irony!  
It was our great friend who'd liberated Athens  
And, ungrateful, they'd repaid him  
With the most grievous insult they could summon

When I saw the pile of pottery shards  
With his name written on them, I was sickened

Frantically I ran through the city  
Indifferent to the stares of my fellow citizens  
Until finally I found him,  
Tear stained and barely able to stand

"Cleisthenes!" I cried,  
"One day shame will twist their  
"Stomachs in rueful knots!"

He didn't reply but he allowed me to embrace him

Ten years is as good as exile  
For a man of his age and condition  
And everyone knew it;  
Many will try to tell you otherwise because  
You're too young to remember  
But be assured,  
Their intents were villainous

"Wonderful Cleisthenes! Immortal Cleisthenes!"  
I continued, holding his shoulders,  
"You are forever the father of democracy  
"And author of our equality;  
"All free people in future ages shall have  
"Your noble name in their hearts."

That the man who had me sculpt the tyrannicides  
Would die cast out; the disgrace of it

## INFATUATION

My heart fits in the palm of your hand,  
Engulfed in your silence

I want it back and  
My mind  
Freed of the thought of you;  
But as I move closer  
Your briar of roses ensnares me,  
Their thorns  
Extending to pierce my body

Limbs, eyes, organs  
Skewered;  
All, except my heart still calling me  
Though ruined with devotion

Damsel of my disaster and monster  
Wrought in angelic womanhood,  
Murdering with favor

I am the manure of your garden,  
My corpse feeding  
Your ripe and swollen fruit;  
Break me down  
In the secrets of your serene roots;  
I wish it were death

Wasted into element,  
The beast within me is reborn

It's truth; a truth I hate

The unfulfilled desire in me  
Devouring my illusions;  
Your beauty, the lightning strike  
Shattering the lie  
That I was a creature of reason

What vanity!  
I am forever impassioned, feral, brute;  
Lost to blinding forces

Not even living;  
A golden calf  
Ablaze in God's own oath,  
Melting into the foundations of the earth

Within a maze of unbeing  
I am becoming  
What I am;  
A piece of revelation,  
A sign in the wonder of things  
Auguring terrible power

Lust only begun

This the garden's inevitable end written  
Into every single seed

A madness that has no cure  
Except extinction;  
Something beyond me  
Because I'm  
Utterly enthralled by you, even your  
Slightest hints,  
Which if they intend mercy  
Need offer me no love

Just one insignificant act is required

Close your hand  
And my heart will disappear

## IRE OF LUST

The rage to live on,  
For some being past death;  
Wounds of lost dawns  
As time creeps in the flesh

In ache and grief  
All its seeds are sown;  
No strength left leashed,  
No spared land or throne

It thrives most on force,  
This urge to breed;  
It sees the earth as a whore,  
As no more than a means

A beast with no ears  
For the cries of the hurt;  
On a path that will not veer,  
One set right from birth

But then its jail has no key,  
This zeal by doom ruled,  
Which if made pure would be  
A fire to raze the world

## JUST A TEENAGER

She moved so softly and gently,  
Like a flower recently made human that was  
Still in awe of its new life

This world is unworthy of her

It was the way she took something  
From a stranger's hand,  
It was the hopeful innocence in her face  
That struck me  
With sudden anguish

They cannot save themselves

All these children flung into the world  
Like seed across a scorched land,  
Where the ravenous birds will descend on them  
And the rodents, skulking from their lairs,  
Greedily gobbling them up;  
Even the sun, the light they long for,  
Can turn cruel  
And devastate them

This girl I passed, barely a woman,  
Was one of these

I don't know what'd happened to her  
But I could tell  
She'd been betrayed;  
By her father and mother perhaps,  
Or someone else  
Who'd come along with  
Swinish brutality

There was a time she'd never felt evil  
But the world  
Had taken that from her;  
It'd crushed her  
Right when she was blossoming

I saw her sitting on a milk crate yesterday,  
Panhandling by herself

## KEEPSAKES

i.

Sometimes you'll discover something  
In a box  
You forgot you put away  
And at first you  
Won't recognize it

What could it be?

A book, a photograph, a love letter?

When the memory returns  
Does it hurt?  
Or does it feel good?

You are living in the present  
And you are living in the past  
But your memories...  
Your memories have no life in them

You will grow old inside these  
As time moves on –  
Like a faucet left running  
Even while  
Nothing else happens

Soon the battered refrigerator  
Will want replenishing....  
Soon the dishes that need cleaning  
Will overflow the sink...  
Soon you will be  
Out of paper towels again

But time won't force you  
To turn your dreams into reality

Maybe that's fine

ii.

The mementos add up  
Surprisingly fast

Birthday cards for instance

Perhaps you're not sentimental  
But some people  
Can't throw them out –  
These cards won't be seen for years,  
They'll wait  
Inside closets and basements  
Until the right moment

A divorce for example

Then the person who received them  
Will pull them out  
And they'll return to their  
Younger selves

Each year, each cake, the candles  
Fluttering as the people  
Around them sing...  
Yet the words aren't quite audible  
And the colors  
Now are only ideas,  
Because there's nothing precious  
You can really  
Save inside a box

*"Happy birthday to you..."*

iii.

A trophy on the wall  
Will tell people you were great once,  
Plus you can  
Use it to remind yourself

A writer might read his own poems  
As a consolation too

Today the sun rose in the east  
And set in the west –  
It's a matter of astronomy,  
Nothing profound  
Or exciting however

Its light is like us in many ways

It gathers a history which,  
If left unseen,  
Grows ever distant



## KNOWING IT'S OVER

Sorrow in a glass  
Golden with the dim light of midnight  
And voices without names

Heaving the weight of envy  
In my pallid heart,  
I contrive an air of confidence

Nothing passes between  
Me and the people on either side;  
Things greater than time and space divide us

It's as if confiding in another person  
Would puncture the  
Old copper diving bell of my life

The chill of the abyss is waiting beyond,  
And I ponder the ice in my drink  
With scientific aloofness

My oxygen tank was going to run out,  
I knew that, but somehow  
I convinced myself the future would wait

That I'd be ready for the end,  
Or that I'd stumble across a prodigious salvation  
Waiting for me on the ocean floor

## *LEAP TO FAITH*

If you knew the outcomes beforehand,  
No strength would be required

You wouldn't choose  
The thing you most desired,  
You'd just accept  
Whatever you could get

There'd be no daring in our decisions;  
No sense of the uncertainty  
That comes with precarious convictions

Life would have the mechanics of  
Weights and measures  
Calculating alternative states of pleasure  
Until the spirit expired as  
It abate in leisure

The gravity of the mystery meanwhile  
Ignites vitality viscerally  
Because even in tragedy and misery  
There can still arrive an abiding tide of victory

So what holds us back?  
Where is the necessity that we lack?

Courage! Courage! Courage!  
Courage and clarity,  
Surging with urgency, sincerity;  
As precious as their rarity,  
Today they almost seem to scream of temerity

Livid with the lies of a timid time,  
The rage of truth remains  
Vivid if we give it sufficient mind

So although we have become geniuses  
In the art of self-deception,  
Our hearts hardened with the armor of transgression,  
Beyond this darkness  
There still awaits the resurrection

Believe then not in a world that you can see  
But a world as it should be;  
Let this hope remake you from inside  
And in yourself at least confide

Be brave and claim passion

## MAKING PEACE

We are laughing as the world falls apart,  
Celebrating its demise since  
That's the only control we have left

We fill the night with fireworks  
And disdainful music, in the hope we can forget,  
Begging for any distraction  
From the primeval blue ocean  
Swashing at our shores,  
From the melancholy silence descending in  
The last of the late twilight

Civilization is the building of pillars  
That will fall and the  
Writing of books that will fade  
And the planting of gardens that weeds will overwhelm;  
To create anything appoints it to destruction

Any other belief and we deceive ourselves  
But instinct leads us wisely  
To recklessness and indifference;  
Absolving us of truth with swift suffocating bliss

Reality is the hard city streets  
That'll eventually turn your blood to ice,  
Draining your head of all its uplifting hallucinations;  
We can laugh at collapsing skyscrapers  
Only as long the shrapnel from their implosions misses us;  
They'll catch up with us though  
Which, when they do, will be the end

So we live, doing anything to avoid waking and  
That's exactly what we want, for as long as we can have it

## MEMORY WIPE

They were the remnants of human beings  
Preserved in their fallen state;  
Inhabitants of morgue-like cities  
Living off the last fumes  
Of a grim hedonism

Eyes invaded with digital code,  
They saw no more;  
Hearts rebuilt without flesh,  
They felt nothing

And time ceasing didn't change this

The striving for perfection  
Was no more futile than it was before,  
Their dedication now was no less honest

It was only a single generic brain  
Holding this ruined world together though

A riot of experiences  
Reduced to metaphysical machinery,  
Burning quantum  
In some imitative cyborg archive,  
When suddenly,  
Something external reached out to it

It was a portal to the universe  
Coming to consume

The world inside the brain quickly  
Began to fragment,  
And the pieces, separated, disintegrated  
Into a haze of static

Thousands of years of science  
Had reached its zenith  
In an artificial mind erased in minutes

## NECROMANTICISM

What of Wordsworth among the earthworms?  
A poet devoted to the soil  
Who now toils underground?

Genius is spread thin by an alchemist named Time  
Working away with mortar and pestle;  
The inventor who leaves at last only a residue  
Of thoughts lofty and celestial

Even the brightest things in heaven turn to dust  
While the drums of our hearts are soon fatally hushed;  
And the universe gives no hesitation  
Over whatever is crushed;  
Too early too often, too painfully too much

Mothers and fathers are taken from the innocent,  
Sons and daughters from those in love;  
Though art gives powers of ghostly resurrection  
It all fades away like the nests of the dove

Whether death endures or the divine exhumes,  
Ideas in strife alter not truth;  
That life is prelude to what comes

## NEON YELLOW DOOR

It is so excellent  
And welcoming and surprising...

What joy must inhabit the house inside!

I hope the owners and architect  
Talked about it excitedly

It's almost like mischief; a gleeful little rebellion

And in the sprawling neighborhood of  
Gorgeous homes,  
It alone made me smile

In fact, I had to sit down on the  
First bench I saw and,  
Overlooking the mountains miles away,  
Wonder at what  
Had just moved my heart

That the color of something so mundane  
Could do this...

Life amazes me

*NOM DE PLUME*

A single feather floating in the breeze,  
Visibly enlivened with the lightest thrills of air;  
It glides through glades and green places,  
Evading the idle traps of stasis;  
It leaps along in kinship with all delight,  
Offering its observers pleasure without price

The remains of an unknown wing sloughed away,  
A random element restless in its levity;  
This is the music of silent creation,  
Spontaneous with nature's many persuasions;  
From it a secret reveals itself,  
Where in our world hides true wealth

What is beautiful can refresh the spirit  
Only because they share in essence;  
That which life thrives on must itself have life,  
For any restoration will this alone suffice;  
The telepathy of inspiring things then does testify  
To authorship by anonymous divinity



## ONE OF THEM

Who is this man?

He is old,  
He begs on the sidewalk,  
He does not  
Look people in the eye

This man is not us but  
He is somebody

Isn't he?

Can we acknowledge that?  
That he exists?

And I don't mean  
Exists in the sense that he's  
Something we pass by

So not as something  
That exists for us in our lives

I mean instead  
That he gets up every day  
Hoping something  
Good will happen to him

He is not dead yet,  
He still wishes for things,  
He hurts

And soon the world  
Will free itself from him

A stranger's hand  
Will touch him in between  
His eyes  
And turn off his mind

Who is this man?

He is one of the forgotten

## ONEIROMANCY

A shaman's face leaning above mine,  
Slowly blowing smoke over me

His skin is painted lunar blue  
And animalistic shadows  
Are slinking across it

We are alone in the otherworld,  
The nameless place  
Where a chanting of trapped spirits is  
Seeping through stone ruins

They beg for their return;  
Pleas like ash,  
Voices like kindling

In this long exhaled kingdom,  
Giant orange sand dunes  
Are shifting with immortal patience;  
Unhurried by the  
Emptiness of their surroundings,  
Adding grains to themselves  
One at a time  
In their uncounted eons

While I try and lift my unfamiliar body  
An enormous crystal hand  
Descends to me from the darkness of heaven;  
Gleaming with light it carries me away  
As the shaman laughs,  
Bidding me a final farewell

I realize this is the hand of my author  
At last come for me;  
Ready to judge their creation

But first I have to be taken apart,  
Carefully of course,  
Being as delicate as I am;  
This my author does with special instruments,  
A pair of crystal hands now at work,

The body I have  
Laid across the stellar sky  
As its elements undergo vivisection

With their divine skill  
They open up my heaving chest;  
Removing the jewel inside,  
A small burning thing,  
Before placing this in an apocalyptic urn  
Filled with a chthonic ocean

The ember of my heart  
Hisses as it's plunged into the black waters;  
Oblivion and eternity, shadows  
Held in a single moment

There's blood in the clouds here  
Because the air is also us

Why though?  
Give me some insight into all these  
Metamorphoses;  
A question that to my surprise  
Summons an answer

We are reading your dreams  
And you've been dreaming for a very long time

So I open my eyes,  
Seeing the familiar surroundings,  
Realizing the truth,  
Before closing them again  
In frustration

It's too early to get up,  
And I'm tired;  
Impatiently I wait then for sleep to return

Drifting off, uneasily, anxiously

The yellow dawn arriving through glowing curtains  
In a white room where the void of power  
Pulls me sinking again  
Into a sinister realm of mind

## ONLY BULLETS NOW

The gun speaks and its siblings answer,  
Each voice igniting another,  
Together feeding off a reckless hunger for war

And their mouths are spawning stars,  
Angels of cosmic mayhem,  
Ready to rewrite the destinies of unlucky bystanders

Astounded in violent astronomy,  
The world watches  
As attentive and impotent as ancient Ptolemy

Every press of the trigger  
Simultaneously effortless and momentous;  
The *wheel of fate* simply spun again

So the ammunition keeps arriving,  
Pouring into the world in black waterfalls  
From *ivory tower* factories

Relentless, they slowly swallow up the landscape  
Until the cities and mountains disappear  
Under a prophecy of metal

Behold this indifference to good and evil;  
Behold our killing machines  
Unleashed with perfect freedom

## PELAGOS

The seas are mine, they belong to me;  
When my ruined body  
Becomes Nature's materials again  
My words will live on  
In the crashing of the waves

Days on end,  
The surf shall recite them to  
Generations of children  
I'll never meet;  
The soul of the water remembering  
Because we had kinship

I too threw myself against  
The world;  
I too exalted in my own  
Destruction

Though the salt stung me, I drank,  
Ingesting it all  
Insistently and recklessly;  
Drinking until I was  
Too weak to drink any further

Claiming life by unreasonable acts;  
Never eased, never sated

## PEOPLE YOU MIGHT WRITE FOR

No one will ever read you  
as passionately as an enemy

The first stranger you ask about your work  
is too shy to say anything

An editor you set your hopes on  
proves less than enthusiastic

Someone who quotes you admiringly  
just leaves you uncomfortable

Your best friend  
doesn't really understand it

Mom and Dad will be divided,  
of course

People you work with  
half-jokingly tease you about your ego

The author you admire  
won't admit to remembering a thing

And then there's you  
but you don't know why you do it

POPPIES GROWING FREE

Red, pink, orange, white;  
Shy clusters of trembling delight

None come to water them;  
None cherish and none condemn

They thrive in the untamed grass,  
Unremarked as people pass

Now one family with the weeds,  
Mingling together fresh blown seeds

Quick to fade as summer goes;  
The opposite of human woes

Yet so gladdening in the noon sun,  
I could not pluck a single one

## PORNOGRAPHY MACHINE

Watch me baby, she says  
Fingering her vagina

And at every hour of the day  
There are a million other  
Cameras broadcasting  
Similar scenes to the lonely  
In their darkened rooms  
As they fondle themselves  
While focusing on getting off

Did the girl in the gangbang  
Dream of doing that one day?

The machine doesn't care;  
It's not worried about the cost,  
In human pain or dignity,  
So long as the electrons of  
Money keep flowing from the  
Advertising revenue and the  
Customer data that's being sold

It's a system running on  
Pure mathematical precision

Even as it feeds our most  
Grotesque and cruel desires,  
It tries to push us further;  
A sewage of secret appetites  
Flooding our computer screens,  
Regardless of search terms,  
Because scum rises to the top

So much of the fucking that we  
Witness is hiding suffering

But our algorithms ignore this,  
Urging us to new links until  
We're infected with the same  
Automated indifference,  
It's just what pleasure is now;  
A wading through an underworld of  
Digital debris from broken lives



## POSTHUMOUS FAME

William has it,  
Emily has it

I think it suits a poet

I mean, people  
Shouldn't strive to touch immortality  
During their lives should they?

It's so irresponsible;  
Till the soil I say, till the soil

Sure, there were some  
Who became world renowned  
For their verse  
During their lives but  
This was in recognition of their new maturity

They made their art into a business;  
Almost in atonement

Mysticism has no place in society,  
Not with all the work  
That daily needs to get done

And that's essentially  
The problem with poetry;  
No matter  
How invested it seems  
In the world,  
It's always threatening to spiral off  
Into outer space

Plato knew this I guess

However we can't just ban it,  
No matter how  
Appealing that may seem

But we can ignore them in life  
And then celebrate them in death if  
Eventually we have to

## PUTTING DOLPHIN CHILDREN TO SLEEP

They slide from my extended arms  
With screeching laughter;  
One after another  
Into the black waters of a dream

Twisting, squirming, flopping;  
Sporting identical mischievous grins  
While they disappear

There's a sense of aching finality  
As I watch them go;  
Uncounted and unburdened, fading  
With the fantasy of a smile

The sun doesn't visit us but  
I'm the only one  
Hesitating to say farewell

Goodnight! Goodbye!  
To hijinks! To merry havoc!  
The pranks that we've all enjoyed  
Now belong to the universe

Here I too embrace the jest;  
Falling forward,  
Vanishing after them

## QUIET RAILROADS

They have no purpose anymore but they remain;  
Some older folk even remember  
When cars of freight would clang along them

The power they had to move astonishing tons  
Hasn't fled their weathered steel,  
Only the city they belong to  
Outgrew their former service as a  
New era declared itself

Left to the sparrows and mice  
The railroads now  
Are the stubborn defiance of past industry  
To not move on  
In natural union with the future

Laid out like religious precepts  
They hold fast to mere memories of evangelism

Their truth is rot and rust refused,  
Resisted, repelled  
Since, after all, why can't  
What was done be undone?

Perhaps the world will come to them again?

So they don't complain  
Or rise in revelation from the earth;  
No, they wait

## RAW MEAT

Hours later the taste of blood still lingered in my mouth,  
Unsettling in its similarity to my own

Wandering the supermarket earlier that day, I saw it;  
A slab of red flesh shelved in the aisle by the butcher's counter

It seemed like it could start pulsing at any second;  
The spirit of the animal it had been returning for a moment

And something in this prevailed on me to act, a power  
Overcoming me, an urge to tear away its packaging and devour it

As the muzak ran blithely in the background,  
I stood with the cold hunk of meat in my bare hands and ate

But the flavor that filled my mouth was not the flavor  
Sought for in wild prey; it was industrial

The sorrow of cattle slaughtered on conveyor paths;  
An uncomprehending and helpless terror

Every last one of them unaware the whole system of their lives  
Was designed from the beginning to destroy them

Even the predator in me recoiled at this... reduction of life,  
This dispassionate killing which now governs things

So I was once again a man of modern times; I adjusted my clothes  
And took my food to the self-checkout stand to buy it

Then that night I cooked and seasoned the rest of my steak  
Until all traces of its true origins were concealed

## REVEALING HERSELF

As evening arrives  
Its light leaps between the  
Mirrored city towers  
Above a crowded restaurant;  
Inside, amid the hustle and gusto  
Where cheering glasses clink  
And tables vibrate with passionate laughter,  
She is there;  
Set apart by a gentle grace

Serene in flesh, the movements  
Of her elegant limbs  
Add angelic dimensions to a  
Black dress;  
Imbuing its fabric with  
A unity of splendor unique to her

Meanwhile the marvelous garden of her mind  
Flowers with ideas and desires  
Hidden by the pale flame of her body;  
Mysteries that  
She is sovereign over

Every heart has its share of secrets,  
And hers? Who does she  
Reveal herself to?  
Someone hopefully who sees past her beauty,  
Who values her humanity;  
And, whether two souls  
Can ever truly reach one another,  
Must depend on the  
Annihilation of time and space,  
On the world that  
Separates them vanishing

She smiles shyly and speaks softly,  
Kindness and sensitivity  
Glowing in her lunar radiance;  
Although she too has known hardship,  
Hope prevails in her

In the red setting sun of her pursed lips then  
Stirs a confession of eternal dawn

## SELF-MADE MAN

He did it by himself, all of it

The mansion in the hills,  
The sports cars, the private jet, the yacht;  
They're all proof of his genius  
And superiority  
Over the rest of humanity

The entire world belongs to him  
Because he's its creator;  
His vision, his investments, that's where  
Everything comes from –  
Not the fraying muscles of the laboring multitudes,  
Not the silenced generations  
Who carved a civilization from hostile elements,  
Not those who imagined into being  
The legions of ideas and technologies he uses

No, none of them;  
It was just him

He wasn't taught anything,  
He wasn't taken care of  
When he couldn't take care of himself,  
He never received any favors

He owes no one

From the moment he conceived himself  
In some woman's uterus  
And commanded the universe  
Into existence,  
He was the sole author of his success  
And god of his own fortune

## SHE HAD A PURPLE UMBRELLA

In the chill darkness of the morning,  
In a city iridescent,  
Your eyes and lips stood out

The rain was disappearing  
Slowly, the last phantoms of it falling  
Invisibly between us

Likely this was the only time we'd meet,  
A brief random encounter,  
And neither you nor I said a word

## SOUND GUIDANCE

the gently tapping cane

the sigh of the wind

vehicles whooshing past

footsteps on concrete

fractured conversation

a crow gurgling

the jingle of a swerving bicycle

car horns sparring

curse words swirling

the insistent cross walk signal

then, someone's voice

"may I escort you sir?"



## SUMMER STORM

The sky luminous and dismal  
With distant power –  
Transcendent fathoms sweeping the whole horizon  
As the eerie anticipation below  
Expresses itself in quivering marigolds

Now it almost seems as if the wind is seething  
From the thunder and lightning withheld,  
And the Earth, left wondering

While these brooding clouds refrain from speech,  
The tops of trees cry upwards,  
Together softly thrashing in a chanting  
More desperate than it's holy –  
They are starving for an event to release them,  
Waiting to be initiated into  
The deep unknown so dimly desired

The ordinary sun lost here then  
Reveals the arcane sun perpetually hidden;  
The craving for fulfillment  
That all existence suffers in blindness

Even in the nuclear realms of being  
There is appetite pulsing in the material of things

Systems and structures  
Moving with inscrutable purpose for  
The ultimatum of ultimatums –  
That which raises up the mountains,  
Tears a flower from its seed,  
And demands the insentient become animal

Today though the storm passes by

## THE ALPHA PATH

Elixir of starlight, witness to a child's wish,  
And the secrets of a wolf  
Helix in the hunter's arrows

Exhilarating spilled life  
With the red ghosts of tribal heroes;  
Their ancient faded lives,  
Ordained by a night,  
Attended by the dance of stellar emissaries  
Awakening youthful excellence  
With the lore of their achievements

To strive with the animal,  
Both in the arena of external powers  
And the nature within ourselves;  
Exceeding sometimes imagination itself

Imbibe existence indiscriminately  
And become all its ingredients

The pan-obliterating predator  
Consecrating shrines to negative space  
In an awe of extinction;  
Was all the old astrology really just  
Leading up to this?

Fanged apostles assure us so

## THE BEAST CALLS

With sirens blazing, the fire engine  
Roars and, in the distance,  
The beast roars back

A light rain is falling through the  
Darkness across a neon city  
As traffic veers aside  
Before the advance of the  
Emergency responders

The men inside the truck,  
Their faces grave with anticipation,  
Yell over the noise;  
Trading last minute concerns  
Punctuated by the occasional burst of  
Adrenaline fueled banter

This isn't anyone's  
First time tonight but, even so,  
A nervous energy  
Simmers under their valor

Each has seen the beast for themselves,  
Witnessed in it a fearful power  
More savage than  
Any predator made of flesh;  
It is the primeval chaos of the cosmos  
Exploding the bonds of matter,  
Howling at the universe  
With a passion ancient beyond the  
Ancestry of hatred

They are soldiers for order,  
Fighting a war against a wild universe

The voices of their wives  
And their children and their families  
Lurk in the shadows of their  
Hearts as they near the  
Frantic site of the coming trial

Love impels these rough men forward

They would save the world  
If they could,  
Ready as they are to be sacrificed

As the fire engine suddenly  
Takes a hard turn,  
Their destination reveals itself;  
A thirty story tall apartment complex,  
Its affluent residents  
And some curious strangers  
Beginning to congregate at its base

Flames gushing from smashed windows  
Thrash the air far above;  
Pieces of burning debris falling  
As opaque black smoke blots the sky  
And flakes of cinder  
Glow while showering below

The beast is many headed in its madness,  
Each screaming and gnashing  
In berserk rancor;  
Inferno now anarchy, inferno loose,  
Radiant with an endless  
Destroying greed  
And who will dare to tame it?  
Who will challenge  
The incendiary tyrant at the  
Height of their wrath?

There are still people to rescue  
So they don't hesitate;  
Together the fire fighters rush inside

## THE YEARS SPENT ALONE

. . .

Up to the end, when my solitude was complete,  
I didn't realize what was happening

Or rather, what'd happened

It was something I created by instinct,  
As if an irresistible pull towards isolation guided me  
To not reply to certain phone calls  
And refrain from accepting various offers  
Until, one day, these things  
Had entirely disappeared from my life

Have I been lonely?

Sometimes, yes –  
Sometimes it's been very lonely  
But there have been periods of exhilaration too

That's why I want to explain everything  
Because otherwise  
I suspect it'll always be  
Misunderstood

Like Orpheus, I feel that I've been to the land of the dead  
And I wish to leave posterity a report of my travels

. . .

*Not with things of the flesh but with  
Powers and principalities*

Wittgenstein once explained to his sister his struggles;  
That he was like a man seen through a window  
Battling the wind and that  
Those behind the window could only see  
The strange motion of his torments

Until the invisible has overpowered you,  
How can you understand?

I felt normal once;  
There was a time I thought of myself  
As a part of the world  
And not as one condemned

But even back then, before the alienation,  
There was always an inability to form enduring connections;  
Perceiving some unspoken conflict,  
A falsity perhaps  
Arising in our power dynamic,  
I would withdraw from the people I knew

What I wanted was something authentic and natural;  
An affinity or kinship that didn't require  
Any kind of social stratagem

I never found it;  
At first I believed I simply hadn't met the right people  
But eventually I realized that it was me,  
That what I demanded of others  
Was a sieve through which none would pass

...

Have you ever taken solipsism seriously?  
Not philosophically either  
But as something that might actually be true?  
I have, unfortunately

It's not something that'll ever leave you

There isn't anything  
A person can say or do that'll erase all doubt in your mind  
Once you question their reality;  
The idea that everything that ignites the senses  
Could all be some elaborate fiction is  
As logically unassailable  
As it is fatal to human happiness

And even if you do survive this inferno of speculation,  
You will wear its scars from then on

Today when I look at human beings  
I do see human beings, I do;

The empathy I feel for their hopes and needs  
Exists even where selfishness  
Sustains my inaction,  
But too often people just feel distant  
Like memories of people

When this unease sweeps over me it becomes  
A challenge to make conversation;  
And the fact it's unpredictable  
Led me to cultivate a tendency to silence

. . .

Eccentricity, odd theories, obsessive intellect,  
These aren't enough to  
Divide an individual from the community,  
More is required;  
Something that'll obstruct all the natural forces of  
Social structure and human union

For me it was actually a dream of greatness  
And a vision of perfection;  
With such a clarity of destiny I buried  
Every part of me that failed in any way to live up to this,  
Ultimately burying everything I was

To live, before my death, in my own underworld;  
The phantom of my pseudonymous self  
Unable to raise me from oblivion

I was as patient as ice in spring,  
Sure that my genius would be recognized;  
It wasn't like the words I wrote  
Were especially bizarre,  
I didn't see myself as one so far ahead of my time  
That acclaim was anything but certain

I underestimated the apathy of my audience

Success is the child of busy personality,  
A creature of politics and professional relationships  
Which in my arrogance I ignored;  
I felt I could get away with it,  
That my talent exempted me from the rules

But nothing breeds wisdom like failure;  
Given that  
I have no reason not to be  
The wisest person who ever lived

Even Nietzsche  
Would be impressed

To take such a virtuosity of language  
And spirit of insight,  
Combining these with passions as profound as any  
That inhabited the past luminaries of poetry and revolution,  
And to end up without spouse or friend;  
Who else ever achieved this?

It is a feat of astonishing starvation,  
An act of morbid drama  
Privately concocted in the banquet hall of a feast

. . .

And so I arrive to the thirty third anniversary of my birth,  
Aware at last I am the architect of my ruin

The feeling even perplexed me,  
Realizing I no longer existed in anyone else's life;  
That I was at most  
Someone people might recognize  
As a reoccurring figure  
In the backdrop of a boring day

It's not something I wanted, at least, I don't think so  
But it's the truth I have to live with;  
The regrets from this self-imposed seclusion  
Making up the tapestry of my life now

The question I'm left with though is  
Whether anything good can come from this;  
Can I still have purpose?

The answer, surprisingly, is yes

Without personal ties, I can give myself to all of humanity



### THREE SMILES

Rain trickled down the bus windows,  
And dripping strangers  
Crowded into the narrow seats;  
There were three smiles

A morning commute home  
Like many others;  
Tired and sore I struggled to keep  
My eyes open after a full night's work;  
No thought for those around me

The first smile naturally  
Took me by considerable surprise

To my left there was a row of filled seats  
And she was sitting in one;  
To be honest  
The first things I noticed were  
Her maroon stockings  
And the shape of her calves

When I lifted my gaze though  
She'd turned her head in my direction  
And, with meeting eyes,  
Our lips mirrored each other's in wide grins  
Before we both looked away

The sounds of the bus  
Were muted by the music in my ears  
And for a while  
I just stared out the window  
To my right,  
Thinking of her

More passengers had accumulated;  
The aisles were occupied now,  
People swaying as the  
Bus weaved through traffic

A girl half hidden among them;  
Demure despite her striking beauty

Through the coats of those between us  
We made eye contact again;  
Sharing a second smile  
Then once again glancing elsewhere

The tension had become excruciating  
As the bus began to thin out  
Since I knew she'd be gone soon

Namelessly departing –  
Nameless forever in memory

I'd resigned myself to this,  
Torn inside with conflicted feelings,  
When suddenly  
She smiled at me a third time;  
A smile I answered  
Just barely fast enough

Finally removing my ear buds  
I listened to the engine of the bus  
And the rain  
As it hit the windows  
And the sounds  
Of strangers murmuring  
While a conviction  
Overtook me

I had to speak to her

Had to, because  
Her generosity demanded it;  
Because she'd been brave  
With affection,  
Something precious

Here she slowly stood up and,  
After hesitating slightly, exited the bus;  
It wasn't my stop  
But that didn't matter

Pulling my jacket tightly around me,  
I followed after her

## UNICORNS OF FROST

Ice crystals spreading through the trees,  
Ascending from a hardened earth,  
Consuming the land –  
The white apocalypse galloping towards us;  
Heralded by fleeing beasts  
And only leaving in its aftermath  
Hoof prints gleaming in an awful silence

Time retreated from the world  
As the ravaging freeze  
Swept down from the North –  
A tide of swirled horns,  
Blizzard manes,  
And the passing roar of an avalanche

Great rivers utterly unmoving;  
Valleys and plains, mute and glistening,  
Fallen to cold enchantment –  
Even the sphere of fire  
Spinning deep in the planetary core  
Slowly draining away, wasting

Cities swiftly gone black and dumb;  
The last of those left to die in the disaster  
Baffled by the catastrophe –  
Huddled figures gathered around  
Rigged heat sources;  
Shivering victims of a mystery

The beasts of myth did not come  
To bring divine clarity  
For the lingering survivors –  
Eyes dark with eternity,  
They trampled the world into submission;  
A final winter to precede the void

US

Our lives like two drops of rain  
trickling down a window,  
meeting

Separate worlds  
dissolving into one

A chance fusion

No individual being is  
whole in itself  
and so each relationship is ultimately  
limitation overcome;  
a growth through togetherness

Where I end  
you begin,  
just as you end in me

We make a continuum of ourselves

The waters of our minds  
swiftly mixing into  
oceans

Giving us the joy we hoped for,  
the sense of union

In all shapes of happiness

## VANITY IN THE REAPING

I have lived on the ashes of my children;  
My tongue is black, as are my teeth,  
And my smile is hideous

The winds alone provide company now,  
Sighing voices touched by agony  
That even death cannot rest

Words in this place leave no record;  
They unravel in the stillest air  
Turning to wisps of noise

It is a calamity befitting a false prophet,  
Exhausting the frail powers of reason  
To invent a saving miracle

Starvation will surely do its work now  
And vanquish the flesh of a liar  
Because he was unworthy

In the clinging glass of a ruined cathedral  
I daily witness the perfection  
Of my damnation

## WAR IS GOD

Be joyous in war,  
Their blood is singing as it flies;  
Your comrades, enemies,  
All have a song for you

Wonder at the glory of calamity,  
At exploding machines  
And broken cities

The bright wings of truth  
Unfold only on the battlefield

Bow to the many indigo dead  
So thoughtlessly collapsed;  
See the world lit with columns of fire  
And the beauty waking in this

From ancient spears to atomic missiles,  
Genius has thrived in strife  
And given death a holy theater

Do not shrink from the horror,  
From divinity grown cruel