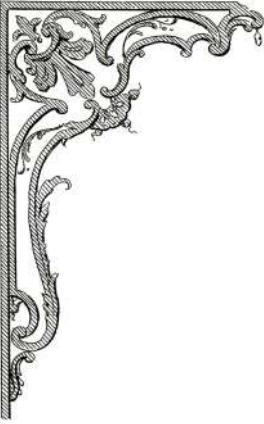


The Four
Humours

Theophrastus Bombastus

Sanguine





the Pimperor has no hos
for he wears hosiery
that women
find distasteful in first degree
and aberrant as regards his sexuality

"I've naught to wear"
he purrs
"save these cheeky intimates,"
and voices other questionable sentiments
not comporting with his title

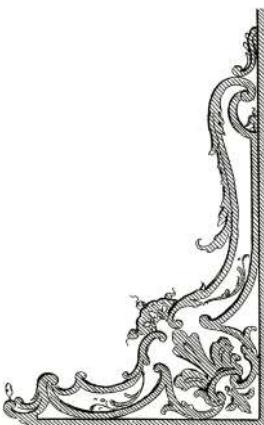
he never reads the bible
or webpages lacking SSL encryption
or bookmarks search results for "how to regrow
foreskin"

(though he did once comment gaily,
on how it so engrosses
these sufferers who daily
swap outlooks on phimosis
and its toll on those who masturbate
or would if but their dicks were straight

though his is not
nor is his dress
nor overall demeanor
he's less a Pimperor
I guess
and more a petty queen or
baroness

the type to eat a dick
with watercress
and call't a "revelation")

The Pimperor has no hos
At least,
not of the feminine persuasion



it's gotten around to your time on earth
of length of life there's quite the dearth
shall we not then make the mirth
 that's been so long forfended
hang stars on what's portended

like fir in snowy windows
and wassail by the pail
 the game is ipso facto
and the apple's in the ale



c'mon Rocky, you can do it
you can beat Apollo Creed
if you train at boxing often
and consume the yolk of egg

if you go in chucks ascending
stairway to the famous scene
that will be the way to do it
 in the movie; Adrian

it is good though tropey
win by jumping ropey
 and I really hopey
to become like Rocky



Twice crows the cock
Though veinly
At pussy's intimations
And billows forth the windsock
In ungainly protestations

"Why so vane" he mutters
Swinging southerly
Weatherbound or else thwarted
Utterly

She is the wind
And moves you e'er you know it
As the cock sees it
So must he crow it

I'm gay I'm gay
I want to probe a hole
that's unbefitting
I want talk of Rabelais,
the soul, and mother's knitting

how good it is, how gauche,
how very sad
to be a lad in love with other
lads



the far-off woman
skirt coyly swishing
Unattainable,
a moving grove of things soft and hidden, just
beyond,
turning the corner now in miniature
a hundred paces ahead on an afternoon walk
too many to close space
not so many that I cannot make out the
insouciant gait, the swinging arms
that suggest beauty
of an internal kind
and-I turn the corner now, heat quivers, noting
again the sensuous shifting of haunches
the glimmer of sweat
the play of flesh and muscle
Discernible even so far away as
one hundred paces~
of the external kind too

I heard
the mother's revile chirping
from my nested-in eaves
to rouse her egg'y young
out the gnawed through buttonhole
into bright June

threaded along deftly
on a blue strung needle
she sewed to the sky around them
a breastpocket
of eagerness and care
"see! see! the world!"

ungainly, they fluttered forth
on downward courses
new to the pull
of wind
and grass
and the glinting water's
surface
that gives and swallows,
a chlorinated Lethe

it was unlucky variance for one
that took its errant flight path
to the hot white pool deck
ill-fated
and
from my porch I watched it,
quizzical,
hop lightly in
(no diving!)
and learn the only thing
it ever would

about thrust and drag and lift
which it couldn't get
with its wet wings
and soft bones

drawing pitiful cursive
on the deep end substrate
lacework ripples
on that lazy blue square
that no one saw but me
and the recourseless mother
"see! see!"

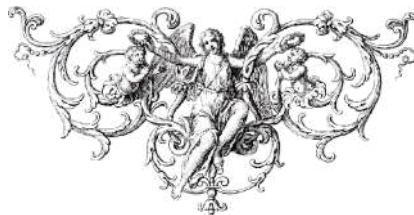
dashing down,
I hurdled the locked gate
(no running!)
and scooped it up
too late,
filmy-eyed
death-spraddled
beak agape and dribbling

it vacated its bowels in my hands
and stiffened

later, inside
hands washed
I chanced to see the mother on the
railing
Looking in at me



"good things come to those who wait"
says the lazy jester.
but in truth the best things, mate,
come to those who pester



the monkey climbed the tree
fiddle dee dee
he found a mushroom cap
holy crap
the mushroom tasted odd:
monkey god

life is a little idea that climbed into the ear of God.
it attached itself and whispered dreams that
sprouted and budded, climbed out in and around
god's head in a great profusion of curling fingers.
life covered his arms and legs, filled his insides and
found his orifices. a verdant madness, Bacchic,
tumbling and twining themselves together these
many vines formed striated bands which formed
limbs, and a trunk, a great green thoughtless body,
with the sleeping body of god at with heart. the
little idea in the ear of god in the heart of the great
green one rejoiced at this and capered and sang a
many-pitched song, which the green body danced
to, whirling itself through dark reaches and flinging
spores, which found their way to other gods, and
the lost children of those gods, prodigal and
sleeping in distant places, the pockets of void. Life
went there, and seeded them with dreams, filling up
the nothing with the tickling growth and leafy
density, growing and growing, till every square inch
of the vastness of infinity was heavy with life and
nothing was no more.

life fell on its small back and sighed with relief.
yawning, it slept and dreamed an older dream, large
and austere...of flint, and hammers, and sparks of a
coming cleansing fire.







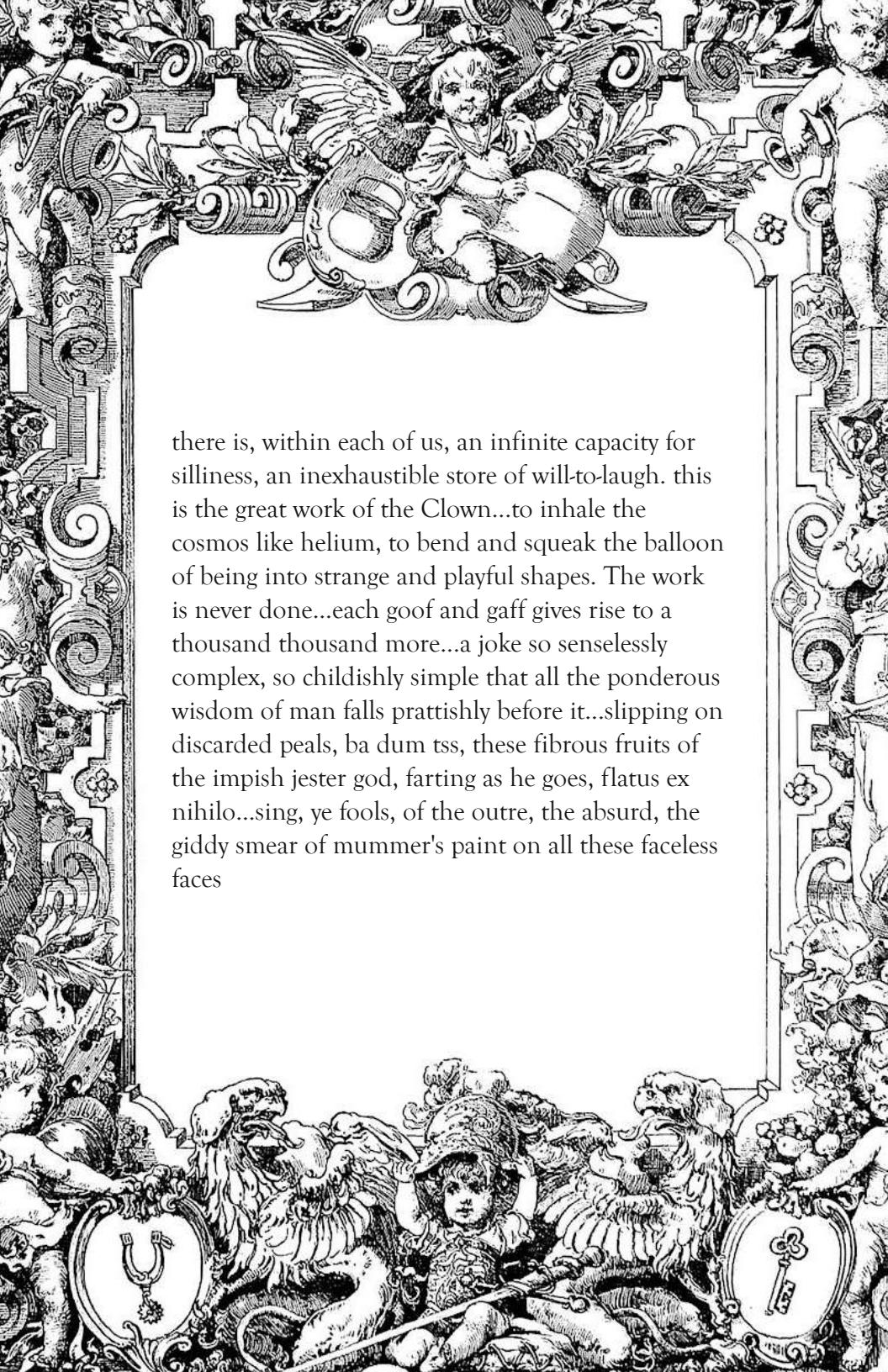
he's hawking his wares
and plying his trade
purveyor of pitchers of cheap
lemonade

a thousand fine cuts from a
thousand white suns
and daughters of brothers will
come to the table
to lend their small fingers to
delicate tasks
like beckoning buyers to try
some if able

it's good and it's fresh
so he told them to say
as cold as the cash in their
wallets
pulp barrel spending in sad
subdivisions
as the lemon man squeeze it he
calls it

munching on a bratwurst
listening to kraftwerk
fahvergnugen gestalt
reichsadler somersault

pleasuring a blonde beneath the
stars
to the far off hum of well
engineered cars



there is, within each of us, an infinite capacity for silliness, an inexhaustible store of will-to-laugh. this is the great work of the Clown...to inhale the cosmos like helium, to bend and squeak the balloon of being into strange and playful shapes. The work is never done...each goof and gaff gives rise to a thousand thousand more...a joke so senselessly complex, so childishly simple that all the ponderous wisdom of man falls prattishly before it...slipping on discarded peals, ba dum tss, these fibrous fruits of the impish jester god, farting as he goes, flatus ex nihilo...sing, ye fools, of the outre, the absurd, the giddy smear of mummer's paint on all these faceless faces



Choleric

God yawned at the elect
their tired verses
imprecatory psalms
he dug a pond
to retain them
and called it heaven

Life comes at you
very fast
So watch your head
or it's your ass



said the corvid to the egret
I regret to inform you
your right to roost is forfeit
but I do not wish to harm you
so vacate these wet premises
and go and find another
said the egret to the corvid
last night I fucked your mother
said the corvid to the egret
you didn't and you couldn't
you dursn't and you dassn't
and you definitely shouldn't
said to the egret to the corvid
then go away and ask her
in shame the craven raven
relocated to Nebraska

penis of my ass	protean shitmass
penis of the high born noon	fate's reeking
ecliptic sunfuck reveries	mahogany
as like as not gay Icarus	chambers
his feathered obstinance	
thwarted at the azimuth	
picking at my nether lock	dab tenderly
rattling my fences	at the red-puckered eye
ball fields in summer	solemn ablutions
hot and irrigated	"fuck" scrawled defecant
the moon is an ass	on the stalls
in striped pants	where Father sits adjacent
struck through like a	in kindly absolution
discarded line	drunk on chrism
baseless claims	intimating avarice in coiled lengths
in the first degree, the second;	strung down down the nine circles
who's uncursed?	through bone-walled catacombs
agonized, reverbant	
an abbot fat and apple cheeked	Babe Ruth signed my skull;
peddling indulgences,	I touched the hem of Mickey's mantle
shit nuggets in the offering bag	big league chaw splat
99 feces	fastballs gutter candles in the recess
plenary enema of Assisi	
Luther preps the papal bull	down
bishop's prick rises	the black tarred heroines
sexually transmitting diocese	go fetching
sidelong through the transept	fuel for dark machines
see my coy fianchetto	noxious engines
my mating pair	that sprout wires
the mitred snipers	spark-fanged and latched
Notre Dame grotesques	onto Judas's nipples
a kingside press to force your hand	howling
toward inevitabilities	from the jumbotron
deep, gastric	to everyone's amusement
the minotaur's belly laid open	
spilling a map of entrails	



there are
icons in the icechest
crackerjack prophylactics

catamites waving pride pennants
o'er Elysian fields
as Socrates braids his ass hair
with hemlock
cumfart sussurus

macro lager sophists
buzzing through bullpens-
gadfly in left field
till cinders

fall like manna on the
pitcher's mound

what a show, what a show.

eugehhggghh.
sing, cherubim,
the many eyed host, sing sing
ye golden thoated
semen coated
lips to sounding rod
sing the one great song

only begotten of my penis
of my ass
Penis of my penis of my ass



cereberus boards sputnik,
the countdown to troposphere
rending rusty curtains
to unveil christ in coach
Johanine

Mary, she flies Virgin
transfiguring
foul calculus at 50,0000 feet
egg tooth pearlescence
Colgate mediatrix
jissomy cirrus
streak the hatching sky. Enough

eugghhhh. enough of this
dollar store consonance
dryfuck peristalsis

humpty dumpty sat on a wall
penning a moving ballad
"call me Lord Shelley," he said standing tall
Now that dumb Bysshe is egg salad



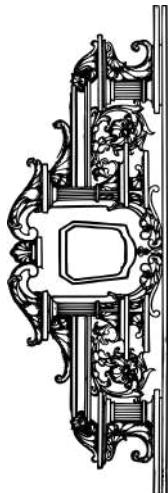
my kingdom for a single line well-written
or two, a couplet fresh and unbeshitten
alas i have not found in all the land
a quatrain I could e'en remotely stand
and every sextet that I lay my eyes upon
is fouler than a tray that they serve fries upon
at some small, smoke-filled, godforsaken diner
sign reads: "you'll never find an octet finer!"
sign lies, as do all those who write such verses.
10-line poems? they belong in hearses

millions of years of evolution, a smear on the bottom of a shoe... la cucaracha, la humana, extermínación

it's like this.

the Anthropocene is a writhing nest and a feast of rot; and god is a bad landlord. call pest control already. tent the earth.

the spirits can stay at some off planet hotel and return when the vapor settles to sweep up our crunchy remains.



TERATOMA

I am porous, invertebrate,
globular
Tolkien'd call me Shelobular
a meatball of gristle and teeth
and hair
I am not supposed to be in
there



Bodhis sat vacillating
on the stoop
thinking of famine, war
and croup

these things were not good
they were seemingly bad
he belched and smelled
the meal he just had

a parade was ongoing
projectile vomit
and beads
and jasmine was growing;
a bum was relieving
himself on its leaves

there were fat men wearing pirate hats
and fat women who appeared to be
liking that
and children in strollers
and jackbooted patrollers
and bells and bell tollers
and all the kings horses and all of his
men

all of whom Bodhis roundly
condemned
there from his place on the stoop

where he sat thinking of war and of
croup
and the crap

that the bum now was doubtlessly
taking
the mess he was sure to be making
on flowers

untrimmed and spreading
from alleyways narrow as shoulders
of priests

the sky was shedding its
daylight, picking its molars
and smiling its creased and
gummy red smile
bodhis reviled this
pursing his lips against its lewd
advances

while across the way,
gently the Virgin
blue in flickering light
watched courtyard romances
two lovers spilling their beers
their words their seed

She placidly looked on
in spite of it
just to the right of it
beheld in between and beyond
what Bodhis could not

squinting and rubbing his belly
in fear of heeding the dyspeptic
thought

that in all this grand contumely
the many costumed procession
of man and his making

there was no heart worth having or
breaking
no cause for confessions
or cause for aught at all

Bodhis thought of this and more
from his seat on the stoop
in spring's soft pall

while the bum ambled on
looking for
quieter places
to answer nature's call





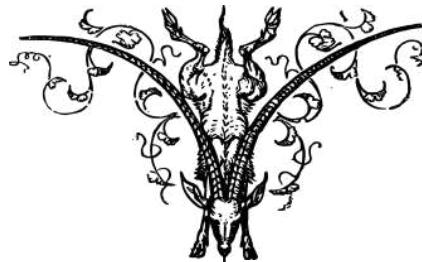
The drumsticks of war
Beat darkly in the breast
Of the quick brown fox
Coxcombing through his texts
For native notions to behead
Poultry in motion e'er the dead
ones, the fried-in-bread ones
Could raise their ancient cry
Musket powder ink blot
eggfaced crackpots
Pen the henhouse red and
Smoke the peace pipe dry

No fear,
Chanticleer
for John Smith farms organically
The colors of the wind
will be harnessed quite sustainably

And for your bravery
a feathered cap and gown
A thornless crown,
no cross left to bear
or knee to wound
Or squaws to squabble or prepare your wretched food

No brooks left to ford
Or arguments left to brook,
Chief among them, Lord,
"to take back what was took"
to unbreak that omelet
unkill Mohamet
Uneat the sour grapes
of our *hegemonic* rapes
and pillages
(sorry about your villages)

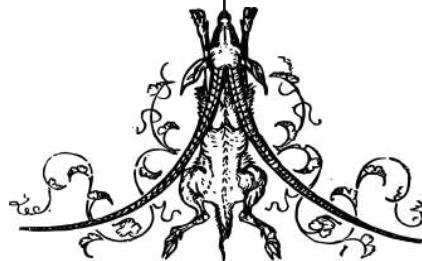
but that's life
And the chicken chicks on chippily
"bookbook"ing while the foxes
Look on licking lippily



鼎

the world is but a word
unuttered
once said, it will explode
in pieces
and the spirit will ride out on
that black horse
stabbed now behind the moon

how can I dare to make it new
what is older than time
fire, hot and blue
the bronze-cast die
mark the age with a bowl
upturning
smell the stale stuff burning



NABE

Mother's carpet matched her drapes
she built up static on them
produced a field for grazing cows
to wander and to low in

polar bears shorn close beseech the
farmer for his subsidies
his fallow widow lactates syrup
for their bare necessities

ground control to Ursa Major,
Tom's a minor inconvenience
divining futures in the pastures
"show the rod and spare no lenience"

said the king of Babylon, his whoring
wife Delilah with him
darning socks of Samsonite
for fetishists to wear and sniff em

poring over manuscripts and
marginalia?
stick with dynamite and it'll never fail
ya

Tom's cooking up anarchic schemes
and dreaming of a better linen
to drape across the nakedness
of all his father's mother's children

conical her titties, long her dugs,
she never should have given Aldous
drugs

so bravely manufactured by
machine-predicted laborers
whose future selves earn salaries
to free indebted embryos

womb suspension sweatshop
amniotics
wrung from all of those
who lack the sense to sense the corpse
that's hanging from a garden hose

in deep Edenic thickets on the pubis
of the farmer's wife
who levels barrels at the boy
for monkeying with death and life

and fancying a cosmonaut who
barked his shins
and gnashed his teeth on bones then
made a crown of them

there's Uncle, he walks on all fours
driven from his habitat
penis long as yarrow stalks
and scarcely quite as thick as that

the King now shows his hand in
mortal sympathy
he'd never knowed or crowed a cock
as limp as thee

I, Ching Chong, the chinaman
beheld the calving bergs unfurling
brackish bricks of soda pop
No-zone left and cameras rolling

filmy substance, oil slick
atop the poor boy's Coca Cola
Tommy asked the Who-man
could he maybe borrow his Corolla

"but conversion's still forthcoming
catalytic proselyte
your ruddy hooded ornament
shall not adorn my sleigh tonight"

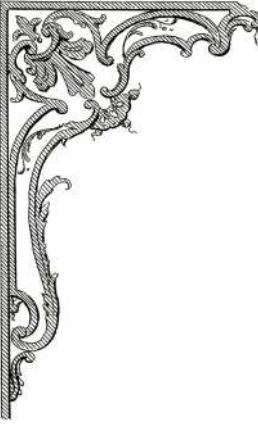


and that's when Tom exhausted
pinched the candle light

and so the father and the son
side by side embosom-ed
push up daisies and brassieres
hereafter quite un-cozen-ed



the Energizer bunny beats a reveille
and charges Mother then and there
with battery



LESSON 9

depart, you narrow minded hens
 you dealers of inconsequence
get thee hence, dawdlers and dilettantes
 and trouble me no more

I'd rather breathe the musty spores
 from pages of old books
then smell the smell of flapping lips
 and dodge your darting looks
I'd rather feel the wind
 or its calm absence
than touch your heated skin
 and bear that sentence
that crude brand upon my forehead
 where you kissed me.

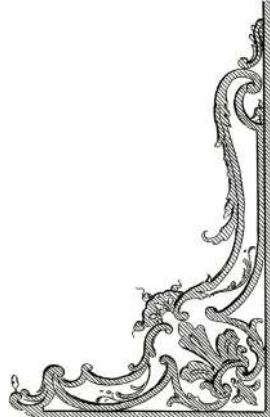
"did you miss me?"

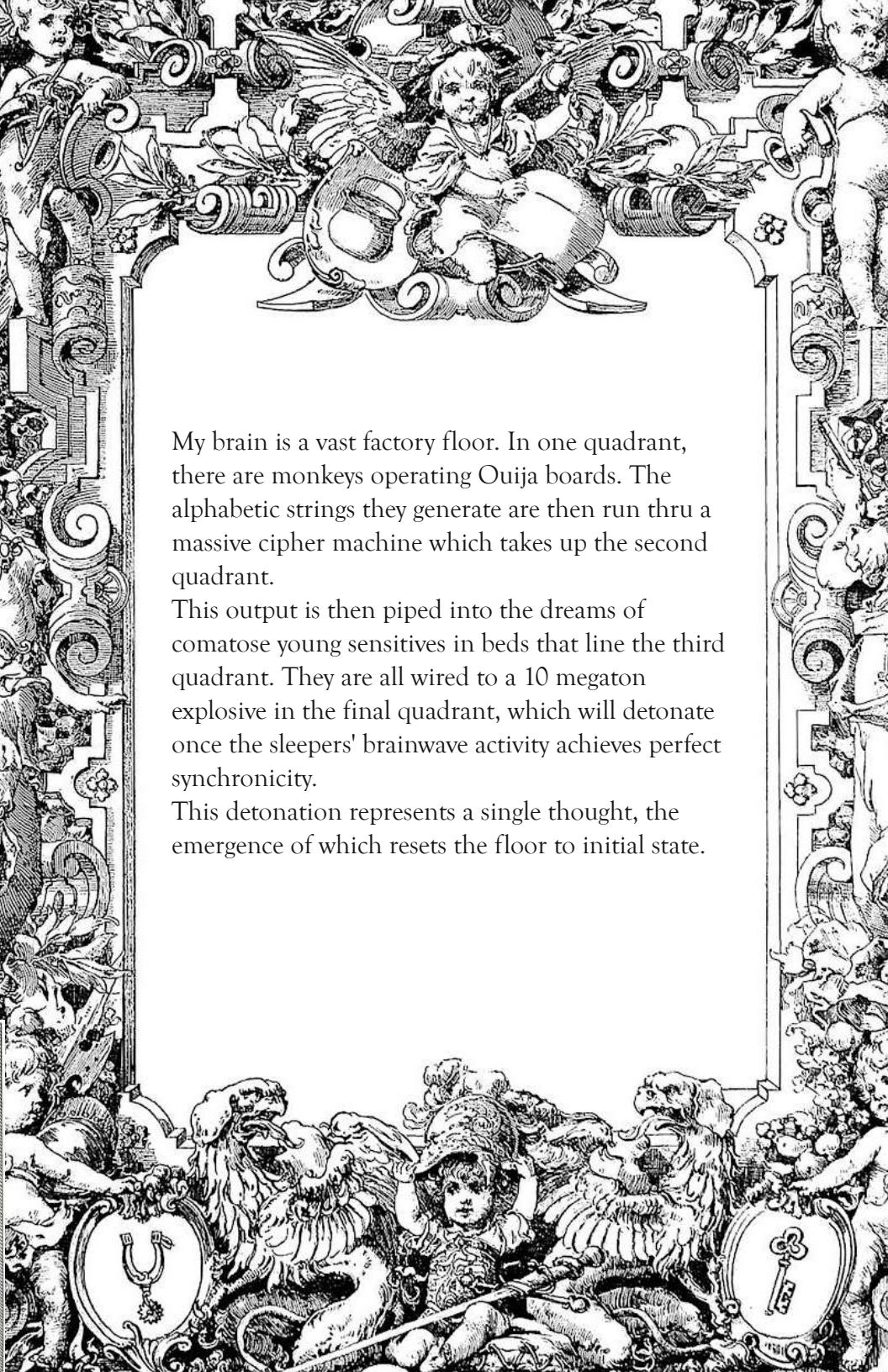
miss? I'd rather die
then miss or be missed by you
 I've seen your wares
 your wheatless tares
and have no wish to try you

depart! begone!
and leave me to my leavings
 infant-like
you gnaw to soothe your carnal teethings
 diapered, powdered
 toddling yon and thither
or else, cold-eyed and serpentine
 you slither

depart
depart, I'd rather die
than listen to your prattling
 one moment more;
than be the man stood hat in hand
 at your hell-darkened door.
 (all the sweaty nothings
traded so cheaply in that place -
chimeric, emetic, disgrace upon disgrace)

I'd rather die, yes, die,
than be the man who felt you
 and was felt.
 I'd rather die
than be the man who smelt you
 and was smelt.





My brain is a vast factory floor. In one quadrant, there are monkeys operating Ouija boards. The alphabetic strings they generate are then run thru a massive cipher machine which takes up the second quadrant.

This output is then piped into the dreams of comatose young sensitives in beds that line the third quadrant. They are all wired to a 10 megaton explosive in the final quadrant, which will detonate once the sleepers' brainwave activity achieves perfect synchronicity.

This detonation represents a single thought, the emergence of which resets the floor to initial state.



Melancholic

the dark curtains draw
around the dead
billowing and toothy
articulating bones



misery loves company
this fact is widely known.
that's why homeowners tell you
to go out and buy a home
and why the wedded urge the single
to procure a wife
and why beleaguered parents
are outspokenly pro-life

the hobo wears a path on a narrow
strip between
north and southbound traffic
he holds a sign that says "free money"
it is unclear what this means
There stands an unleashed cur
motionless beside him
on closer inspection, it is taxidermy
if you tap it, it's hollow
if you tip it, it rattles
like pill bottles do

mouth to mouth with it behind the
Walgreens
dispensing wisdom in tablet form
when sun burns down the skyline
and the ash falls like manna,
Then the dog shakes off its rictus
and pronounces the names of research
chemicals
bumpily
automatically

sliding on tracks
the hobo takes the day's nickels and
dimes
and converts them into goods
shoppers wince at his smell

he selected once from the candy aisle
a heart-shaped box of chocolates
"hot date?"
smirked the cashier

he took the red ribbon that bound the
box and tied it to
the dog's paw

in the floodplain, off the interstate
fey lights converged
on tents pitched there
and the pariah peered up, bleary eyed,
at uncanny figures
and the dog floated up toward them.

the hobo caught him by that red
ribbon
preventing ascension

the dog never talked again after that
but other things did
they took on animal heads,
and said the names of God
which sounded suspiciously similar
to the research chemicals
that the hobo had taken in the past
for a paltry sum

in a dream, or another life , or maybe
this one
he had gone to a party
in the high hills
a small cabin full
of the animal-headed,
sipping glowing beverages
and transmitting thoughts
that bloomed and broke
in fractal

the close air hummed
crystalline
at uncomfortable pitches

one animal, a parrot, theorized to the
room
that there was a pill to stop all this
once and for all,
that every medication was a prototype
for some utter light

they scoffed, the cat especially
there was more to be done,
Already-always,
and anyways, Jesus Christ had said
the same thing
for all the good that did.
for all the good a bodhisattva did
or a Mahomet.



the room agreed, and sent malign
vibrations to the brain of the parrot,
zapping him dead
they went at his corpse with pincers,
roasting the meat

the hobo could have been that parrot
or any of the animals for that matter.

he ate spare pills
and came on the fur
of his taxidermied dog
behind the Walgreens

and everyone in world
was better for it





TINDER

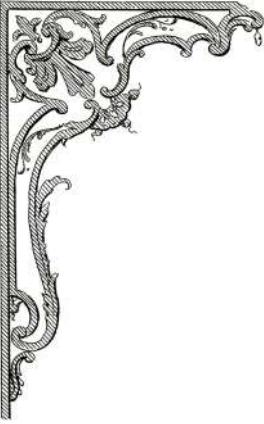
On god, upon these poles
Upturnt and ballin'
Perilously strung
from scales of 1 to 10

Plying holes,
debonered and crestfallen
The fish eludes
the artless fisherman

(His wispy cirrus 'stache
Flies off like osprey
To match a face perchance
Less sad and hungry)

I find myself incapable
of saying what I mean
which is to say quite capable
of getting caught between
the thing I said and that which
was
intended by the saying
as obstinate and tremulous
as the donkey's braying

All phlegm and flaw,
I'll hem and haw
till the dew is on the grass
I'm no beast of burden
but I am a sorry ass



The rain came down in sudden sheets
I passed perilously close to curbs
rolling through residential streets
that brim and darkly surge

toward drains and grates
a guttural placation
my car is full of ghosts
Writing their names, dates
in the condensation

Currents run the length of it
crackling overhead
Rubber burning at the brink of it
Time's watershed

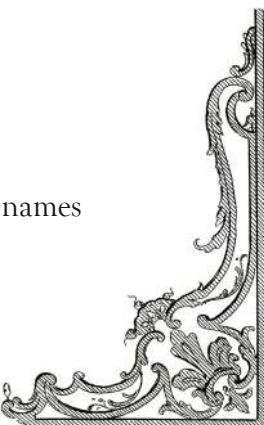
Where the ions in your fingertips
arc unto death
And that hot electric smell is
On your breath

And headlights sweep conical around the bend
And wiper blades smear streetlights, warm and Gaussian
and red

A wave a thousand stories tall
of static
Rolling, rolling through the grid
Breaks~ slow, emphatic-
Upon the fluttering lids

Of two great eyes
Tuned like dials
To emergency stations

They cannot hear my dark placations
Those smiling ghosts that fill my car with their old names
I'll join them one of these old nights
Or one of these howling days



all of this the rippling
of a billion year old stone
Whose was the arm that threw
it
and from whence was it thrown?



when is it my turn to be human
when will the sun change me
when will the wind blow
life into my stone passages



the sound of harps and vehicles
a spider in the sky
spinning jangling strings
in a cruel and smiling way



SANDOWN
on gray days in the channel
the wooded isle oscillates
and children put on flannels
and go out to investigate

in twos, along the river
to the confluence
where the old-planked bridge
abridges continents

Arpeggiates time and stores it in a
cylinder
somewhere just beyond the residential
zone;

mother, humming, strains pasta
through a colander,
oil though a traffic cone

to lubricate the stiffened joints
of Capital
which creak out promises:
ancient, technical,

and wise, an Entity from some
adjoining world
patched and clangng, of more-
than-human size
emitting a peculiar song that
vibrates in the eyes

he's eating berries in the bushes
and waving at the girl

to come, to come
and touch his metal carapace
and read the lines,
the brailled and dotted surfaces
the slant rhymes
that groove his chiptune lexicon
reroute the crucifix
posthuman rubicon

while Jesuits
thumb doggedly through codices,
manuals~
pages full of broken script
homiletic, illegible
to the insensate, heavy-lipped,
heavy-lidded.....

awake! the hissing, writhing nests
long-dormant in the ditches
are out to turn your sons to clowns
daughters into witches!

[autophagic <→ classicized, inert
the children felt the tremor in the
dirt
and saw the beckoning hand reach
from shelf
a silly vision of a future self
astride an old, old earth]

with sigils drawn in silicon
devices ceremonial
the great snake eats the sun,
eats its tail
livewire cannibal

circuit complete
Sam bounds
winking sidelong in peripheries

but his song persists
at ever-higher frequencies





a can, warped by the heat of cigarettes dropped in it
the night whistles

Norman Rockwell painted warm lights
he sits in the mist in February
limning a gospel
that does not include me

bare trees ache, their nerves exposed to
all of this and more
my twiggy starling
if you can walk around the place enough
the skin will grow over
and the hair will grow on it

and the wind will comb it out
the nits and nests
into the pool to sink down sodden
and clog up the drain,
lost continents

for a boy or girl to find,
inhabited by the ghost of Magellan or
the ghost of Desoto

those explorers in hats who
sat a long time in the rusted-out deck chairs
waiting for summer
to watch wasps
zig zag
toward a spot on a map only they can see

I cannot see it now
in the mists of february
on my balcony overlooking
all of this and more

I cannot see it now
but on my third or fourth time around
walking again past that grimacing tree
or that empty pool
in the mist
in February

I think I can see it

and how it beckons
and how and how



i will give you the purpose you crave
in the form of a person you know
on Saturday next at 2 pm
look for a sign in the clouds
you will not see it; look again, again....
the kingdom is at hand

Bhlegmatic





what need have we to automate
by hurtling bus or car
when we've the means to ambulate
more happily by far

on these soft limbs
though not so fast; what lies ahead in time or distance vast
that could outpace
the shining wreckage of our reckless race
save its pedestrian hymns?

barefoot, the spirit sidles o'er
to long old wanderers
who hum and dream
far off the speeding corridors.





the ragged cocoon
hangs stolid from the eaves
affixed with spittle
flapping in stray breezes

Man, I thought,
with his towers sheer
lacks this small thing's power to
adhere
with his towers tall
lacks the knowledge not to fall

Yet fall it did
that ragged cocoon
when mother knocked it off
with a broom
Or a rake
and went inside to bake

I'm sick of things that come in
packs of
6 and 12 and 24
I'd rather find a thing I like
discarded on the floor
and suit it to my purpose more
than all this cut-rate pleasure
quaffed
from cut-rate glass
that shatters at the last
before I've meted out in equal
measure
times to be taken at my leisure
trading trash for treasure
at some corner bargain store

I took to the woods
to find myself; found nothing
of the sort. Joy. Joy.



the sun makes preludes,
chirping and sheer
pours a pink concoction
an incidental curative
I wipe away my fever sweats
with the branch of a tree
and suck on the sky
like a lozenge



TALCUM

don't spurn the blue intangible
don't grow too fast
don't gas the car on the tar smelling
highway
or flash metal at circumstance

climb the ladder rung on rung
slow as cactus
and don't steal love from television
it runs off electric
parallel to sewer lines

furnish yourself better
with a prototype dream
in wide open spaces
like a lizard or the desert hare

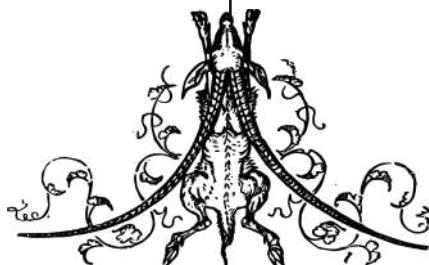
if beauty's in the eye of beholder
how does she cry, and why has
no one told her
that her bright tears derive from
what is lesser
I do not think that mere sight
can repress her
or explain her or tell her what
she is

No, beauty must be elsewhere
in some deep-begotten knowing
some green and quiet growing
some eternal, some infernal
state of bliss

leave it to beavers
to damn with faint praise
and gnaw with long teeth
at the plans that we've laid

the glens and the gulleys
corpses of copses
hoisted with pulleys
to make way way for shops-es
for centers of commerce
commerce of sinners
waterfront properties
log bejammed rivers

tell Liberty it'd behoove 'er
to stick to the things that
improve 'er
and as for the things that
bereave 'er
better to leave it to beaver



When Solomon was far out in the far out sea, he would sing to the birds that flew there and sing to the birds that swam. When Solomon was out in the wide wide far out sea, there were three songs he would sing, and there were three dances he would dance.

**

The first was the song of the night, which he sang when the sun was high.

A mossy tortoise, rising, said, asking, "why do you sing the song of the night when the sun is high, when the heat of the day reddens your untrimmed neck and blisters your arms corded hemplike?"

"To sing down the sun," Charles said, dancing, and not looking up from his dancing, "down from its high place, where it holds its haughty court. To sing down the sun at noon for the sake of nightbirds."

Satisfied, the mossy tortoise unrose to the sea, to the far out sea where Charles bobbed, vesseled but scarcely with stolen craft that contained neither rod nor tackle, nor aught of angling.

And yet, the fish would leap up to see the dancing of the first of the three dances that Charles danced, which was the dance of the night, which he danced in the day when the sun was high, when the sun was at its highest.

And the dance was a step forward and a step to the side and a step back; it was a waltz that he danced on the deck of the stolen craft that glittered with fat fish. And leaping, the fish came aboard there to see the last thing they ever would, agape.

And the sun came down too, orange and yawning, but curious to see. And yawning more as if to say, "it is not enough."

"It is not enough," gasped the fish flapping wetly. "It never was."

And that was the first dance, consummated, when the sun hissed at the low touch of water, a perfumed breath across the sea, the far out sea...royal blues and dark'ning purples for a nightcloak on the shoulders of the children of the water, who prodded with westward bow the dying fire of a once-proud day.

But barnacles cling to undersides, and they do not sleep, and Solomon did not sleep with them. With a mighty heave to port, he rolled the vessel, listing utterly 'til the hull unrose above, and deck beneath, and dead fish floating free, diasporic.

And so the second dance, and so the ballet motions, the light plie encurtained.

But from the depths, a glimmer of unearthly white, an orb approaching. "How so?" thundered the orb or else its bearer. "How so and wherefore?"

"Buoyed in the arms of the sea," replied Solomon, *fouetté en l'air*, "in the arms of the midnight sea." He spun faster and faster beneath the deck, beneath the sea, sucking in water as easily as fat fish once had, though floating now, encarcassed with X's for eyes, they could and would not again, the fat fish dead and floating.

"And wherefore?" Closer now, reiterant, the orb was but a pretense or lure toward fearsome teeth of a great one, abyssopelagic in origin, but venturing then upward toward shallows, irate, to apprehend the second dance, which-centrifugal and flurried-had begun to make a funnel, cyclonic, and stretching to deep places.

"To suck out the moon from the trenches where it slumbers, in the sun's bed, unallowed. To suck up the moon and spit out and out into the sky for the sake of the nightbirds."

The beast, shaking then with rage, lunged forth, but caught in the

great force of the cyclone, was whirled to dizziness, becoming smaller and smaller until its great booming voice was a shrill squeaking, and with plankton it was forced to swim, diminished greatly.

Still Solomon danced his whirling dervish, and singing the second song in a language he did not know but sang still louder and louder, to rouse the moon and suck it up and out into the sky, the far out sky.

And another orb waxed upwards then, from the depths, the point below the deepest point, a pinprick at first, then a lemon, then a barrel of lemons, then a celestial swell that rose terrifically, sucked up by the second dance, and out out out it flew, carrying with it Solomon and his stolen boat inverted, with barnacles for its breastplate against the falling stars that rained against them in their rising.

Solomon, his face scorched cherubic, fell upon the surface of the moon that he had called into the sky with his second song, and humming the moon betook itself to internal tasks, to saying the names of every woman whose time it was and soon would be.

"And what are these," asked a voice, as silvery as a bell. Solomon turned, and it was a woman, whose time it was not and never had been, for she was encased in a crystalline jar, that tingled etheric, and wearing a crown she asked, "and who are you"

"These are the craters," Solomon said, bowing deeply, "one for each of the nights I have danced my dance of the moon, and each of the days I have danced my dance of the night."

The woman laughed at this, and the stars laughed also as they passed, falling like snow toward the sea, the far-below sea where a tiny beast swam ashamedly with plankton, and a mossy tortoise swam also, and where the sun slumbered at last in the deepest bed

(which for a time the moon had slept in unallowed, but for the sucking-up).

"And I am Solomon, the one who dances." He bowed again, so low, that his star-burned forehead brushed the surface of the moon, leaving a smear of dust there.

The lady laughed again merrily. "Solomon, long have you danced, and many nights and days. The pockmarked moon bears witness. But," she shook her head, turning grave within the jar, "it is not enough. It never was."

She waved her hand majestically. "Two dances have you danced, but there remains a third, which you have never danced."

And she turned then, into a nightbird, and opened her beak to sing. And her song was like the song of time, and her wings were the arms of a mother.

"Dance now, Solomon. Dance to send the world away. Far above all things, dance now and sing the third song to break my jar." The song of the nightbird grew louder and higher til every crevice of the infinite black heaven was so full of the sound that the blackness began to bud and crawl out of itself, dropping black seeds blacker than the engendering blackness of that deepest place where sleeps the once-proud day.

"I cannot," whispered Solomon, and his tears drifted from his eyes like fat silver fish. "I cannot dance it."

All grew silent. The moon hiccupped.

"I love you," whispered the nightbird vanishing.

Solomon sat on the moon then, with the upside down ship, and wept till the coming of the dawn.



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I yielded to the spirit of the spirit
passed into the ground
toward the core and through it
rising down

