



GONDOLA

T^{ROPIKOS}

A page steeped in inks. Black mass of parity, equality, chaos. The colour black as seen everywhere is but an exact and accurate diagram of all possibilities. Mathematics connecting the consequences of the invisible acts all over, one scheme immersed into another represented graphically. Concentration of dots merged to make the maps of heaven. Delicate apprehension. Inviolable eclipse of light. Anarchistic night sky, dark with constellation. Horror of mass fury. The outrage of being born.

Blind rats released from ships into estuaries, swim upriver to sanctuaries. Threatening reason, sense, humanity. At the turning point, the lethal water rises. Eruption into inertia.

HANGING BALCONIES

As I stumbled home through the wounded airs, I sensed the lethargy of the ceilings spinning slowly, spherically. Figures swayed in scented rooms, waltzing. They were singing songs along the old canals. I scaled the shafts of light from the windows, arrived at hanging balconies.

How full of fiction this recurring moon around Jupiter, gifter of fortunes and funerals. Close my eyes and cry for the moment when I fall. Magnanimous as a planet I do not wish to brood on my decay in a century where one hardly knows what is real. In times when all roads lead to law-breaking. Bound to act and be acted upon. Made and made to be. Dreaming my dangerous dreams.



THE MASTER'S MIND

When he is hounded the grand master of the marionettes has been known to sometimes betray his designs, his derangement at his slow decline, his participation in the process of extinction. A dying begun long ago in the birth cycle.

A mind on alert, self-conscious and reliant on its established sources, sees itself everywhere in all things, interprets in its own sense exclusively, unable to gain control over a field of neutrality.

A being unable to detach from emotion, in an impossible balance. Active in a hunting ground, focused on the extravagant passage of time. Lunacy takes the highway out.

TONGUES OF ROMANCE

Rain cleanses the atmosphere. The clouds disperse with fiery outbursts while evening retires and the dusk star rises in romance behind the gutted palace. A wandering queen, set in perpetual motion moving in her orbit, touching other circuits that expire with greater or lesser impact consumed by her own momentum. Thus the planet of Love comes into her own.

PALACE OF THE FOXES

Deep rumble of unease. Black velvet, silver spangles, the gondolas go by shrouded. The streets are jammed with meaty crowds which cannot move. Obese eunuchs and masked blackamoors carry aboard outsized grotesque babies, carnivorous cherubs, malign and grinning. Amacabre mood vouches for the dark values of the flesh. 'Carne Vale.'

In rooms, powerful tensions are amassing. A boisterous crone swings upon a chandelier. Is it the Befana of the wintertime turned rowdy in a dream? The walls spin round to peals of her drunken laughter. She crows like a cock, swinging with pendulance from wall to wall, spilling coins of gold and wine from a goblet from which she sips. Candles of the chandelier drip hot red wax, scald the masqueraders below, scorching exquisite walls hung with damasks and brocades, loosening the great lamp from the ceiling, sending it spiralling, crashing. The palace catches fire. Halls, the rooms, the vestibules burn. And in other palaces, at that moment the ceremonies begin. New emperors are being crowned in pomp, with pageantry and drum rolls, festooned with garlands by the citizenry. And all around, the cities of man burn. Disentranced ones wave, protest climbing grotesquely into their coffins. Carried away shoulder high by pall-bearers, on garish palanquins to catacombs. Through labyrinths to vaults to high-ceilinged rooms where they are stored on shelves above each other and rag flags laid about them. Or they are burned in bon-fires in the town squares if really unpopular.

MISERICORDIA

Queen of destitution
the lagoon animals
are mating
furiously
grave old captains
long gone down
to hoary seas
dip plumes and scales
in sea bed nights

ACTS OF LOVE

On the lagoon they are staging a water-ballet, comprised of the love-duet between a giant snail and a Nereid with limbs of glass. Beneath the dirty waves they chase while the city folds her shutters tight, pretends to sleep. The Bora wind rattles the window-panes jealously. It has been working on the stair railings and made them all dangerously loose. Tonight it's bent on unhinging the windows, serenely shakes them free. Slender panes of glass shatter surprised before the Palladian buildings.

Faraway the water laps around the island of San Michele, the sea-walled lagoon necropolis. One must be sure to hear the closing bell, catch the last boat that leaves these levels.

Church bells drift, reverberate through the waterways into the sleeping houses. Teeth chatter on boats tossed from Zattere to Zitelle onto the cold glitter of Giudecca as all the churches float away like galleons in the queer air.

LAGOON



RESTORATION

Artisans arrive in force in the early morning from the mainland, banded together with armies of plumbers, sewage workers, garbage-men, dockworkers. And soon the work begins. Rough looking men strut on the roof-tops and look out from the delicate gothic windows. The sound of drilling hums in air, bores like a drone through the city, enters into all its quiet places. Builders descend from high ladders, quickly disappearing underground, rabbits in a warren as ingeniously contrived pulleys transfer heaps of masonry from place to place and power tools ring out. It is the feat of restoration, preventive measures to keep erosive forces at bay.

A demanding roster of seasonal duties is required for the maintenance of the monumental. Rearrangement of the sky-scape, positioning of pontoon bridges, walkways at flood tide. Or just a grand shower of pyrotechnics. Pedestrian ways for the feast of the Redeptor or the barge of a Doge. Rockets falling into the sea. A city on show.

Shuffling background workers intentionally dress up the facades, backbone of a city never abandoned for long, returning time and time again assembling dismantling machinery, to push on slow restoration on Renaissance houses. Builders dusty with plaster pause to pass on snippets of the latest gossip, while architects ponder the mysteries of weights and spaces, measure the fabulous light and try to contain the deepest creases in the ageing face of beauty.

S EE HER FLOATING

City in her evening shadow
See her in her own eyes
When her day has wandered on
From the jongleur's song
Venice, bride of the Adriatic
her skirts a-dragging in the mud
Old dame Venice
Fallen into the arms of a haughty water
Who claimed her
When she was proud and young



G ALLEON

The canals are full of wine and piss at carnival. I saw your ghost three times in the city and pursued you through the oldness. It is because of your absence that we know of you, Love. Prophecy in my mind and I will light my torches on the waters. Taut sails of hide billow, the crow's nest suspended in the sky, wind amasses amid the treachery of the stars. Wet with bitter sea-juices, ripe sails fit to burst, ships are heaving to go into the evening, heavy with deadly perfumes. Having left the safety of shipping channels they break against the banks, having erred into the canals and tried to sail on land. Let the galleons of dream invade, laden with chimaeras, creatures of the pagan worlds, mythologies waiting to disembark, blockade the lagoon.



A CQUA ALTA

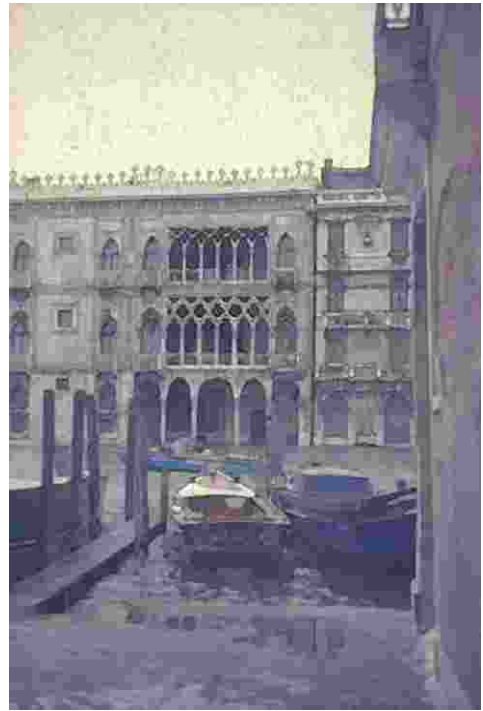
On the steps of the salt warehouse on the Zattere a Japanese tourist suns his perfect opal face with an aluminium disc. The quick-changing light throws pale roses onto his translucent skin while the canals criss-cross endlessly. Green water is storming the city and a November sea rises from beneath the ground. In the squall parts of the roof of the Frari basilica fall in. Boats float in the streets. Confused gulls fly into the town to feed while people wade late to work threading a delicate way along platforms and walkways. Dogs stumble erratically into the canal not knowing where the street ends and after the rain has ceased a raving sunlight patches together the wet and dry areas. New waves tease the drying high-water mark and Venetian reds, earth browns and dark gamboges betray their deeper tints. The steps go up and the steps go down the Rialto bridge and in the shallows of the canal small fish flit among reflections of drowned palaces.

W HERE THE TOURS GO

The Grand Canal winds slow searching among the floating places, calling at each one. Palaces! The Sorranzo, Correr della Regina, past the balcony of the Queen of Cyprus! Lenses of powerful machines zoom back and forth as cameras click in nervous hands and the water bus swings recklessly from one bank to the other moving its human cargo.

A gondola, its prow dipping, glides past the sweeping staircase of Ca' Rezzonico. Floats inside like a black swan. Through ornate rooms it travels, marble-veined with red vine leaf, purple stone mosaics forgotten by ghosts. Among chinoiserie and candelabra it swirls in an eddy, through fabrics yellowing like the teeth of the dead, past thrones of rosewood inlaid with shell, and chairs with legs that finish in paws. Brilliance of the dyes in textiles diminish to a faint washed out aquarelle while frail tapestries crumble into dust beneath the swirling ceilings, irregular brushstrokes in a lacquer finish betray a moment of distraction in a craftsman's hand. And you see yourself a moving spectre drifting in ruined mirrors. Among reflections in dull gold-ware that stands around in galleries where pictures hang. Paint, that most alchemical of substances creates processions of garland-bearing putti. The Giorgonesque mind invites into moody forested worlds, into Dionysian time where pagan gods revel. Reclining classical figures adorn the boundaries of a lazy horizon where pale goddesses guard fantasy and humans lounge gorgeous with arrogance.

PALAZZI



M ISTS OF MOON

The moon shines like a great lily
in the Italian night
while engines purr soft on the Grand Canal
above the leaning balconies
and the lonely stars
watch in their icy way
laughing children have been
throwing snowballs in the ancient squares
at play all day where odd lamps
lay quadrangles of acidic light
and the trembling balconies
of the palazzi waver
in the cool reflections of the canal
statues in the walled gardens
shiver before that assassin moon
cover themselves in hoar frost
and dancing over
frozen fountains
bid goodnight

WINTER BALLADS

And so the canals drew me on my way - into the quarter of San Polo. I tracked the stars out from the dusk and as I crossed the bridges, paused to smell for coming rain. Water splashed, a lantern swung and a dim glow danced away among unseen ripples. A boatman moored his dinghy and the first fresh drizzle fell. And suddenly fearful of the encroaching night I went to search out a friend.

And later when we crossed deserted squares, rain dropped in the air, glistened on rooftops, shimmered. Cats came out from damp doorways, reconnoitred around the wells. Ageing residents appeared with chubby dogs to walk, and students met for an aperitif. The campos bustled, the streets grew lively, commuters headed in haste for the mainline station.

The organ player practiced in the empty church of San Giacomo dell'Orio. Silver spoons shone in the Danieli hotel. In a damp basement below a round tablecloth is carefully raised by waiters and slowly dusted in a strange ceremony. Starched tablecloths pulled neat, the tables set, the head-waiters appear apprehensive. The restaurants on the lagoon are opening. The tough tugs Maximus and Severus, blow loudly on their horns. The steamers for the Lido carve up the shipping canal while by San Marco visiting British warships weigh anchor in the deepwater basin. Gondolas wreathed in song sweep stately by the great green doors of Santa Maria della Salute and Tommaso the Sardinian mask-maker puts the finishing touches to a mask for a harlequin, gives Pulcinella's long nose a tweak, and crosses to the bar. His companion of the evening a bankrupt noble, drowning sorrow in Veneto wines, carried home nightly, unconscious to his rooms.

RIO ALTO



EASTWIND

Old rose, mauve or the palest of the azures, spheres of irregular crystal. Behind misty Murano birds circle the windows. In each glassy heart a cold spark of jewel gleams caught within the clever iron fretwork of the artisans. Around these delicately illuminated windows words flutter and figures meet at evening. Candles were burning, and Schnapps glasses rose while busy shadows traversed ornate rooms. And white-haired men posed with careful gestures entering hot into discussion beneath the famous paintings. Nearby a woman noisily drew the shutters, left me staring in the wind.

TORCELLO

Winter solstice. The moon hummed pale and ghostly, thread itself silently through the barbed wire behind the cages of the columbines. In day's faint fields, beyond the marshlands I chased the vanishing stars. In turquoise swamps hung with webs dry stalactites of ice hang and dark veins of salt etched slender rivers in rock. Beyond were Roman ruins, a sky a lilac dark and a sun drowning in solitude.

Wild duck on the winter pond, sunken boat-sheds where the summer's slipped away. As if one could still the crying of the heart, abandoned in its quiet flood. The hardness of the cold ground, the feel of damp woods, of feet rooting into clods of wet earth. Vapour evaporates into cool ascendance. Is it the erl-king about in the mists at the very top of the church-tower? In homely dwellings in the distance fish-nets dry and shipping lawyers dine, munching on whole abdomens of leggy sea-urchins, savour a rare delicacy of raw mussels. Sixty-three people live here, with cats and dogs, poultry and wood fires. Crisp blue cabbages stand stiffly in the kitchen gardens, distant speedboats of industrialists and aristocrats traverse the estuary.

In the faraway farmhouses - there is surely company to be found. But here, out here, billows break on the sea's viridian edge. Greedy gulls feed in raucous elation. Lively bodies of hungry birds drop heavily, weightlessly, plunging at ease into icy seas. And I, as a stranger am, among the elements. A stranger in the seasons and the suns. I thank the phantom stars for their dull glimmer, but it is a lonely walk in the deep winter's evening.



THE CHRISTMAS NIGHT

After a severe turn in the weather, the cold settled for several days, hunger summoned the scavengers and the cats are on the prowl. The canals freeze over and the gondolas are trapped by ice on the small waterways. Marble bridges tremble, slippery with frost. Poultry trussed in the butcher's window in ceremonial dress, with hats, cravats and ribbons. Soft white home-made pasta and cream, garlic steaks beaten, wrapped around bacon with courgettes and saffron. Trotters of a pig jellied as a treat.

It is the Christmas night of old. Shortly before midnight the big boats make a frenzied rush to deliver people to their destinations. The Armenian boys' choir sings the midnight mass at the Chiesa dei Carmini. Cold flames of candles splutter lighting up dim regions of paintings and dark scenes offer themselves up to view. The fir tree is lit in the Campo in memory of the first tree. And the Magii bring three crowns of gold.

T HIRTY-SEVEN BRIDGES

Having encircled the entire town with pacing I find myself now but a bridge away from my original starting point in Castello. It's been something like the carnival walk which crosses every bridge there is. I started out pressed to leave the small house, dark and low, intending hours ago to find a quiet table in the shade, and a glass of Friuli wine to watch the sun go down. Some place where it would not shine in through my eyes, teasing with silhouettes, blinding with dark vision. I chased shade everywhere but when I turned each corner, it waited, hung low, like a great ship sinking in cloud, leading me a fine dance through the social housing of the commune.



S IESTA

Only tourists around. And sunning cats. The little squares swarm, and the sound is of purring but something dead comes oozing out from the canals. Wide streets suddenly end in dead little alleys hung with telephone wires where lazy signals jangle. Voices carry their messages and phones were ringing which never could be answered. It is desolate here in the height of the season. I seriously study my address book and try three dead numbers. All my friends are out of town and bitter sweet are the pangs of intense desolation. A someone lay in the street feigning illness, a few coins in a hat, watching the passers-by through half closed eyes. A siesta in summer. A hand-written sign beside him: *I am destitute.*

L IDO

Tattooed feet walk down avenues of verdant trees on the Lido of Venezia where madonnas are preserved on dusty wayside rotundas and laughing brown children ride overloaded motorbikes in formation down the roads. Arm in arm by the casino robust Italianate women stroll four abreast their black eyes a-glimmer. Gnarled roots of toes burrow into sandals as crumpled feet stumble by leaning heavily on a stump of a stick. You sip ices in the shade of a gay canopy, looking up only sometimes to where people cycle faraway on the reef silhouetted indigo against a sky that is a skein of gold. The Latin babble wraps you round in tongues of romance and the horizon moves as the first drops of rain fall on the sea, releasing hoops of gold. Precious are the rings which hands can never wear.

R.I.P.

The art collections of the patriarchs burst with the treasures of Hesperian culture. Beatified saints possess becoming physical attributes. A peep show staged by artists who chose subjects from the loveliest. Hairless flesh soft in bloom, genitalia lightly veiled with leaves. And who should dare to look with improper gaze?

Let the dead rest guiltless. Beauty attests to the presence of censored powers in the craftsman whose skill was required to call up deeds gloomy and lost, presenting sanitized scenes of torment while inquisitors stand innocently by. An element of depravity, an idea of pleasurable pain, so very lightly camouflaged.

Lithe bodies of martyrs are thrown in abandon onto canvas, onto fresco walls en masse, a record of religious atrocities incited by fantasists. Incense burners and branchlike candelabra sprout like vegetation. While no one dares to say that insistent calls from the bell towers create a sense of time running out. And only the candles hiss back with a splutter: Man is half a spirit measure, half a breed. Heretic.



BASILICA PADOVA

Relics from an exhumed corpse are on display. The shroud of the saint is covered in photographs, in petitions, in offerings, in money. At the numerous confessionals behind the main altar it is mainly women on their knees before an earth deity, the goddess, Maria, ancestral mother active in the dream systems of humans invoked to prevail against the caprices of fertility, misfortune, destiny. A piety that finds resonance in the anarchic mind of the Christ. A man not known to have lived, yet proven by death to have been immortal.

Masses are celebrated simultaneously at separate side altars. Congregations assemble gravely in units as in a military formations before the sacred images. Joyless companies, their backs to each other leaving unguarded the central aisle. Power of religion where self realization is burnt to a blunt stub. An intimidated self-censoring vassal, property and territory of an organization at whose head reigns one all the more deluded than the rest. Insecurity renders man vulnerable. Bonded through ritual, he surrenders his own mystic authority.

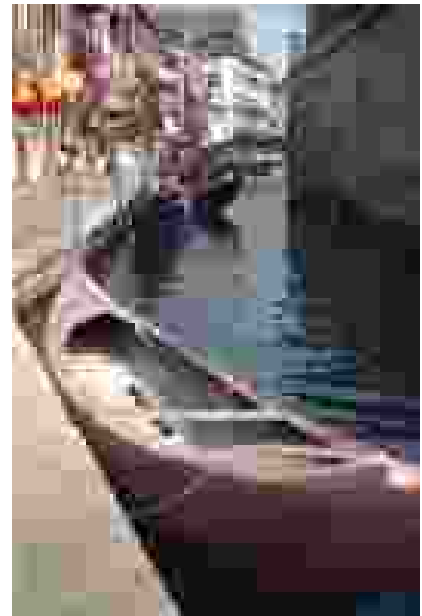
THESE LONELY COASTS

Early in the morning cafe dogged old men are already seated in the seats which they occupy at this time of day. They sit mute and alone, in token company with the others of the neighbourhood, a glass of clear wine to hand, absent-mindedly watching the busy street where everyone goes to work outside. A television set runs mechanically in the background failing to attract the slightest attention while the bright clink of washed glasses being steadily positioned on the draining-board brings a warm reassurance of routine. The smell of fresh bread mingles with stale whiffs of nicotine where the ashtrays are still piled high with dog-ends. Strong odours waft in through the open street door where the refuse-collectors cart piles of garbage away from where the cats urinate nightly. Errand-boys carry wreaths of fresh lilies to a coffin in a church of the angel Raphael. The Espresso machine comes to order with a hiss of steam and the bar is ready for the day's business.

In light of palest gold the aged Venetians splay out across the modernised bar, positioning themselves forlornly at the sticky tables, the functioning of their weakening bones as faulty as the creaking fans overhead which hardly stir the brown air. Dust flies vigorously beaten down into the street from the open windows. Sharp tongues wag among the gossipy old wives whose bustling work is being performed in an assertive ritual among the linen, rugs and clutter of the homes above. Washed and fed and serviced, sent out of the houses like obstinate children, the men take refuge in the bar.

Sometimes, just for the sake of doing something, the old men speak, giving voice aloud to sudden anxieties. The sounds tumble out with superstition from sources of faulty memory disturbing other sitters who now stir feebly, drawn out from reverie while flies buzz with annoyance. As the words subside it is as if nothing has been said. There are no responses from the empty air.

Querulous a head drops low on a chest, takes breath and then begins again its monotone to be sharply, instantly interrupted and reprimanded. An unsynchronised chorus bares its teeth, angry minds rear up to subdue these laments that are of no avail. The voice twists back humiliated then childishly, refusing to be silenced spills out its dispirited sounds once more. This time there are no objections. Is no one listening? Lone orators, gaining confidence, address themselves with virility, with assertive utterances between long minutes, to break the impact of the tired years, the dumb waiting in the cafés on these coasts.



MUSE

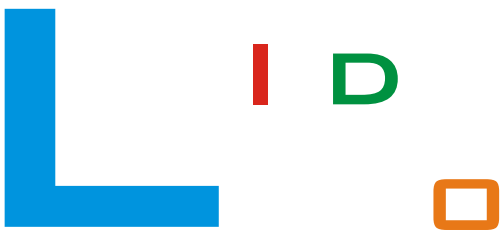
Wave of music
dark chords truss
the wayward meanderings
of a chosen chaos
Wavering tresses
snake toward watery ends
in these listenings
These sea-witchings

R^{IO ALTO}

High rio and
the hour is early
when rosy vendors bring
their island produce
and catch of a silver night
to the Rialto market

Tipsy revellers row
through waves of notoriety
nocturnal scaled beasts
feast in succulence

and the snow falls into the sea
as shadowy shapes creep
laughing up the landing
a-quiver with nightly music
stumble onto the famous bridge
as troubadours strum songs of dawn
for Eleanora of Aquitaine



B^{RIDES}

Sparkle of mischief on
the Renaissance waters
where
excited brides
ride
the gondolas
unconscious
of the monotony
which engulfs
the gondolier

WHEN BIRDS RISE IN SAN POLO

When the gulls rise, I will go. A random sound will start the massing of the birds. Will announce your every spirit departure. And when they wheel in the rain like a fleet of dark arrows released by invisible archers, I too will rise. For it is then in my silent understanding that you are active. In the quiet graveyard of my heart it is then I understand the oblique disc that is your leaving face. The world goes by as you and I and those who seem to be who remain to guard the renegade gulls who wheel above the old town squares.



DAYS OF THE SUN

In the deep benevolence of the winter sunlight, we mouth words and begin to speak. Gossamer threads catch afire, a halo appears around an aged eye and hearts beat in stilled wind where insects flit wings laden with light. Now for long moments the ceaseless figures move no more. There is only the heavy sound of time moving in a holy hour. The sun continuously warm caresses, touches the fragile tissues of flesh, and rocks us gently into trance. I wonder at your eyes full of languor, your eyes of gazelle and when my turn comes, rise to the kiss of the sky.

DON'T SHOUT

On the tables outside the closed restaurant. Among the dock-workers of the Commune, there is one of them, I watch. Now, he speaks quietly to some one no one sees. It is an intense discourse held in whispers. The invisible being appears to give advice, sometimes to scold, and finally resorts to reason. The man looks up slowly shamed, responds with excuses, explanations ... and is cut short. He bows his head, scrapes patterns with his feet then stops his shuffling to listen again, this time intently. And as the replies come from the sober air, he gives in with a whimper. The matter is at last settled.

PIAZZA

FOR THIS IS MY BODY

The white gulls screamed around the well in the square on that clean morning of Venetian spring. The artist tried to follow them a while maddened. He walked in fury, freed from the asylum, lifting up his kingly head, wound around in bandages. He let trail his blood red cloak in the dirt, erratic as a prophet wandering into a mist filling with wings. Then kneeling suddenly on the ground, he took a sheet of white paper into his hands and began to scratch painful lines upon it. When he was done, he rose and offered it to the heavens. Then he tore it into many pieces and tried to hand it out. Take all of ye and eat.

S^{OUTH}

It is the time of siesta when the trees are full of southern music. In the hot camp-sites capricious voices of Roman children rise. The heat of the day passes relentlessly by and long hours of inaction stretch near the glittering beaches. Guarded in the gentle shade of leaves they wait. It is August in the bays beyond Sorrento.

The strand is live. Like a silver snake it curls its enticing way into azure vaults of sky. Skin soaked in sun-oils, burnt a dark and velvet brown, stomachs soft and round and always very full. The children toss, turning hotly quarrelsome. Once the midday sun has gone, they rise, silhouettes against waves which sparkle. Small brown feet trip steadfastly by as small beings rush to and fro on busy errands, caught up in the bustling energy of the season. Water swirls in little bottles and pale sandcastles float. Shells for crumbling turrets and the slipperiest bits of seaweed for the flags. Fragile necklaces break. Scatter. Sea-garlands lost in the sands.

And sometimes suddenly, the infants drop their spades, lose interest in their fortifications, stand motionless, staring in the air. Startled by the sunshine, the shoals of shining fishes which the waves bring, the dusty heavy wind which bangs like a canopy tossing the surfers about.

Ah, but it is the Sirocco that stirs, stoutly blowing from Africa fine puffs of desert sand. The earth responds reverberating very slightly. Unable to resist its pull, the tiny ones are drawn into the water, wriggling forth unshaped as tadpoles into the marine sanctuaries. Spied upon by vigilant mothers from the scolding hotel balconies, they rear impatient heads and return imperiously to the strongholds of their forgotten castles. A magnificent show of dignity.

Embossed rock mosses and fossilized algae weave lace-like formations of black stars and water trickles wetly while imaginary giants take form in a dazzle of fallen rock, sentries on a far shore. Something flares in the sky. The red sun makes its move, entering the nearby vine groves. It scans over orchards lighting up fiery swarms of midges, tears the darkness down as it leaves. Early fires are lit by workers and dead leaves burn. The scent is of the drifting sea, of wood and ash where smokes ascend to meet the wandering crescent of a whitening moon. And all the while the constellations, slowly strung above the tideless bay.



SOUTH

A^{RIA}

In the island gardens of Capri ghostly lovers rustle, talking softly in the evening air. In cooling shade a pianoforte plays, cooperates with friendly harmony. A graceful gent strikes chords and song is wound around a Mediterranean bed where his companion lies. With young wine and secret words divine with courtesy, the old queen masks his cares. A human voice tinged with remorse, moves mental furniture to sacred times when light was young and men held captive in the dungeons of love.

Sea-walks and doctor's prescriptions, rare appointments in the season, they wait now with forbearing for the final encounter. An ageing youth retreats, elusively lost inside the tiring spirit of the other, brittle as shell. Twin halves that contain a vanishing pearl of remembrance. Submarine musics emanate from the odyssey of these breastless sirens, for their nostalgias, their nights. When he hears the soft moan of sleep, the singer's voice falls silent. A Vesuvian breath stirs over the anonymous marinas.

A MALFI

The ruined villas hang precariously over the coastal inlets and volcanic bays bubble with springs of manganese. Undercurrents erratically disperse the toxic wastes from passing mercantile vessels. The high way to Amalfi nervelessly skims the precipices. Motile minds enervated by the solar breeze steer sleek Ferraris, darting serpentine streaks of scarlet skilfully negotiate the acute bends. Cars race reckless, veering on an edge of unreason. The frivolous eyes of the drivers are curious enough to be distracted by another chase as the fast grey launches of the Guardia di Finanza career crazily after camouflaged contraband vessels that jettison cargoes of cigarettes and liquor overboard into the grey seas. The local populace gleefully abandon their banter and come out of the houses to cheer. Excitement mounts as bounty-hunters man light boats and speed buoyantly out to retrieve wayward gifts of fortune while the excise men are intent on their pursuit. The water craft splay out from the harbours, propelling white fans of dissolving surf.

A regular game at a regular hour. The chase is soon over. The action as quickly extinguished as ignited. Sometimes the law wins, sometimes the smugglers. The boats return with their spoils and the salvage is divided. A cheering audience withdraws noisily into the houses for the evening.

In the sky above the chaos, aero-dynamic play of unconcerned pilots, laconically sky-writing with humid streaks of vapour. Wing to wing they loop, somersaulting with supreme faith, entwining with one another or falling into sudden dives, redeemed from these suicidal inclinations by the superb precision of the flawless machines. Elated by deathlessness they jubilantly explode the sound barrier and something like thunder booms underwater.

Moored again the boats bob, on the quiet sea, playthings of a wandering god who sometimes whips the wind and makes it cry. A welcome languid and secret draws the late bather into the deep violence of the sea, into the exquisite night of summer that is a vow of Love.



T YRRHENIAN

the Caesar's open Dorian home
uneasy living
on the booty of Alexander
raider on his purple steed
reviver of a dormant day
he came to stay

we stay away
the aspiring suns which rose
to tell Pompeii
rise anyway
so many snakes awake
fable in salt and surf and cloudburst
in a fiery Roman candle
Imploding immeasurably

BAY OF NAPLES

Giant mouths of writhing fishes. With a vibrant surge of force water breaks free in fresh green gallons. Wet fountains ejaculate pumping furiously released into redeeming skies. Unrestrained, with wanton release fruit and dolphin soar giddily, rise high on uncontrollable jets of fluid, spume and mist. The pagan world bursts open its arteries in unfettered joy. The triton throbs compulsively, pleading for the lively Nereids, gyrates with the squirming octopii, a sea-satyr dancing after them all weakened by his own desire.

In the local churches the priests make believe and miraculous protectors of sailors cooperate with statues of the virgins of the sea who bleed on time. Smearred and dirty, packs of urchins roam with dogs and tears and razor blades between their small teeth. Bandits with the eyes of numerous Christs. Arms gilded with an array of lost wristwatches. They clamber lithely onto the buffers of public transport vehicles, cheeky and insolent, waving packs of contraband tobacco under the noses of the local Carabinieri who is perhaps an uncle or a cousin twice removed. Mouthing abuse they go for each other rabidly in the Neapolitan parks, betroth their wizened faces, their shrewd heads, their drowning hearts.





ASSISI

H UNTER

He lay in wait, anguish in his atmospheric heart. He gazed upon the sky full of designs. The soil was bursting through his being. Unreasoning unknowing desire awakened in him to penetrate a sky so determined against him. Feigning airs full of bitterness, he lured freedom to himself. He breathed it. It vanished. The stars struck him with surprise. The sky laughed at him and blew him away living. He raised monoliths in defiance, and soared as a flock of birds higher. There he lay in wait. Again.



G REY BROTHER

Rocky forests breathe upon the balding spine of the rolling mountain. A slumbering mammoth darkening this land of Umbrian night. The Apennine falls steadily down from the heights to reveal great rivers full of sun and far on ridges blue conifers spin sparsely up to the tree line.

Honey-eyed and olden, grey brother floats. Burnt and cold and brushed in snows, he clammers onto footholds, makes his way to eyries. There stands a castle from the twelfth century where no pennants fly. In fortress chilled there dwells a god whom no man knows. There he skulks on all fours.

The clear ozone stuns him. Eagles spread their wings like sails in azure skies, circling like recurring thoughts. Purple crags. Gold vapour. The sun lets fall its last rays upon the cold November stone. Wild chestnuts fall and hit the cold ground. He feels the cool kiss of the woods hung with wisps of curling mist. Far below a russet tree decked with pears sheds its foliage. A pale carpet of leaves. And in the valley below beyond the rosy fruit, a form. A white stag stays for moments listening, its antlers spreading like trees. Listening? To the whisper of the river in the valley. The huntsmen move below hidden in the bracken and the deer begins to run with the flow of bright disappearing water. He sits hidden from the birds while the wind comes.

M AKE ME A SHIP

There is a war in me
the blood comes and flows.
No man can stop
And you and I are many
With my particular pains
And dreams that ride day-mares

Understand the law-giver
Understand my isolation
Understand that every moment
I edge nearer escape

Our dialogues will be of sand
and ash
Chasing shadows
Make me uneasy
Feel me breathing

AFTERNOON NEAR ASSISI

Kinetic light and all the ethereal lucidity in the mind of Piero della Francesca. Its cool call elusive, while I struggle with a tricky feat, trying to stand on the sliding stones of the shifting hillside. The strong wind catches hold and for a moment I feel afraid. The vines on the terraces cling as I do onto precarious grips in rock, but they in their frenzy, can sometimes grow through stone.

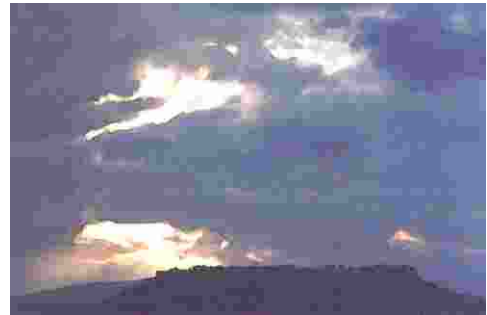
A solitary figure far in the distance a man, battling the clays for grain, in stiff competition with the animals and insects. Soil, bared and churned by the plough, gives in again and again. Deep mass of brown, slabs heaped in a fit of forgetfulness. And the aged earth turns ever carelessly away to new caprices.

I stumble to a fall suddenly aware that something is about to be staged for the remote eye of a spectator. The birds are silenced as at moments before an eclipse. The sun is ominously blocked out by the sudden arrival of dense cloud. It moves fast, spectacularly lit, letting prick through tiny points of light here and there, flooding selected parts of the panorama, picking out chosen fields. They shine in brief moments and the rays pass swiftly on. Tossed cloud plays havoc. The wind flaps, ricocheting. Sands are lifted, carried away with sheer force and the small stones smartly sting as they pass.

Rain amasses and arrives in droves. The wind brazen, beautiful, boastful. The sky seems to lose its will giving place to the storm. Dark and silver, shadows stream across the fields as though choreographed. Then, not to be outdone blue light breaks the barriers deftly penetrating. Sparse olive trees throw writhing shapes onto the ground and vines struggle so very hopelessly. The tempo quickens and black goats dance away in fright.

Creator. Destroyer. A virtuoso seems to take an active interest in hinting subtly at a range it commands, revelling in absolute mastery. Performers below, sundry players in the monotonous wastes of infinity. Toys of a meticulous technician who with supreme dexterity leaves no trace of identity. A natural god whose signature is anonymity. Exhibiting inhumane power in work which leaves no trace of labour, no track of error to be found.

And we, impotent beings, permitted to survive at whim, suffer indignity, taunted by a manifestation of potence, of quiet, nerveless intelligence. Of unearthly magnitude. Frail tissues of skin, stretched and taut, dried of oils, age instantly in the fierce onslaught of the elements. Wet single hairs flying across your eyes, catch new light and burst into prisms where tiny specks of ignited dust particles seem to silently partake in some late stage of explosion.



O DE TO THE SKY

We are at odds
you and I
lost fragments of a thought
that is not ours
An I
like a soil
awaiting a fresh rain of words
you ever a sky
always leaving
words
that come all the way
to leave no trace
each time
we speak yet never hear
a recurring notion
where clouds go while returning
for no thing ceases

N OCTURNE

Calm crotchets, quavers aquiver, dance on the ground while the city rustles softly among leaves. Suddenly they disappear! Yet there they are again, now swinging on the outside walls in the guise of delicate musical instruments: the slenderest of the grey violins, gay guitars and cellos swaying sober in the breeze. Ah, but if you must know it is but the shadows cast by festive light-bulbs bobbing overhead, suspended on five lines of electric cable, elongated by moon lighting, sliding silently across facades. A musical score.

Startled by this shadow-play in imitation of their superior games of espionage the villainous cats creep up to watch. With superb assurance they spring, cat-a-mountain crossing from the balcony of one narrow apartment to another. Sinuous creatures gyrate in mid-flight gliding for deadly seconds in night air as graceful shadows ripple down the walls.

In a cloud the moon hides. Curtains billow like sails in the open windows and the cats regretfully eye the bright tropical birds imprisoned on the window-sills in small cages with views upon the sky. The angular houses on the old canals assume the shapes of voyage, stacked like tall ships banked in low tides on the Zuyder Zee. It is a nautical town with wharves and quays, and it is a hard fight in the morning, on a bike over the dykes which span the Polder country, a hard fight against a wind clearing it's way over the flat land, relentless as a bulldozer.



H ELIX

Dry as a snakeskin the path lay in wait. In the high sierra attracted by distant shouts a rider stops, looks up into the fires of the sun. A giant plane tree spreads shadow like a cloak, and he knows he must take up with the memories. Chase the taste of ash and the one of fresh rain.

Death rattles like a castanet. Mercurial fruits merge, a reptile music coils inside him, waits to spring. The torero dismounts. And suddenly the night is all upon him. Breath of unseen animals.

It is then that he knows that the bull is near, stamping the ground. One false move, and he will cross into the zone where it reigns, trigger into motion the mechanism of a kill.

Engulfed by dark forces he moves his world into terrain in which red wind blows. Precise as clockwork, notoriously outlawed, the sun enters the arena murderous in intent. A riotous player, igniting into action its renegade energies. A fanfare of brass trumpets assail the heavens. For all the dreaming bulls of Andalusia. Snorting triumphant, the bull rises, arches its back, breaks loose and charges into the spectators.

The torero is caught, sent spinning. Taste of sand, blood that bubbles into nostrils. The sun rises faster and all that can pity vanishes softly extinguished. Its rays turn into horns which rip, that toss him higher. In luxuriant courtyards dancers toss their manes, steer into defiant poses. He flies wounded like the wind through darkness. Moments before his own death, his horse is felled. A dull thud as it hits the ground. The breaking of a spine in the still wheel of eternity.

D UOMO MILANO

Entering into the furious activity of the dome, the vacuous spaces fill with the percussion of a modern building-site. Warm air meets the cold and vaporises in draughty passages. The sun enters nowhere except where it is permitted, to be filtered through the psychedelically stained glass. Angelic hosts appear arrayed in warring coloured lights. Behind heavy tarpaulins, machines whirr, motors and engines burst into combustion. Invisible workmen, engineers and crane-drivers, bill the work in progress and the steady sound of drilling pervades all.

Once-white statues occupy the rooftop. Impervious to the elements, saints and prophets pose their limbs in an eloquent language. Menaced by the growl of minute cars which fill the skies with acidic airs, with assailing rains, stately statues raise their limbs in sad protest. The encroaching spheres of industry, the railway terminals, defy definition. In united formation they seem to challenge the ideologies of the encroaching metropolis from a stronghold of an old faith. Stone work cascades decorously. Sometimes soaring organically, steadily bound for inexpressible heights, suddenly conceding to the futility of endeavour, falling back gracefully, flowering into sculpture. Silent medieval journeymen reassert in their strong vernacular. Voyaging through unlit skies, veering dangerously toward points of tension, the Duomo sways.

Towering, vaults of stone amass charged with impetus, indulge an impossible urge to soar. It seems as if titanic columns would be released as rockets, if only the massive energies which hold them back, were eased. The cathedral is torn back by gravity to the ground, its supine cones deadly as missile heads.



T HE MASON'S FEAT

He traced the flamboyant movement of the Baroque into the several churches profusely occupying the plains. Masonry crazily mounting, the aspiring lines of the forms struggling to rise, only to collapse the heavier for their very voluptuousness. The heaving body of the architecture attempted to affirm its massive ambition. The stranger stood. The snows seemed to have followed him south. He was done with the churches. He stood before the menace of the mountain. He started to crawl across its snarling face, his limbs sending an avalanche crashing.





GYPSYHORSE

JOURNEYS IN WINTER

The first snowfall, the landscape monochromatic, a charcoal sketch. The Slav towns huddle among the leafless forests, sullenly cowering. In the distance, A freight train crawls into a dull afternoon. Snows gather softly together in the deeps of unseen ravines, decking the granite rockface. Figures crouch into the protection of gnarled trees and in unheated restaurants poorly paid waiters dressed in worn evening wear wait on wayside travellers. Angry workers on the cash-registers are struck boorish with disinterest as the feeble sunshine fades away catching here and there on the abandoned building projects, the pre-fabricated residential blocks. There is nothing going on anywhere but the cold.

Whirr of a helicopter above the flimsy tower blocks, irritating as a wasp in the furry sky. It stirs in the air thick as a soup allowing occasional yellow rays to flitter through. A cold sow basks in a sty beside a factory yard. Beneath the ground the seeds of the sunflowers sleep. Above quivering like blue flames, cypresses. Pines taut as arrows prick into the higher sky. Working soldiers stand around in the leafless parks, stomping their feet and puffing hard onto cheap cigarettes while mangy dogs run yapping around them. The winter Olympics are running at Sarajevo and the army is out clearing the roads. The railways are blocked and the trains are waiting ...

JUNGLES OFFICE

The draughty train to Ljubljana waits amid the wintry airs at a signal box near Nis. Reflected, in the black glass of the window, the transparent face of a man floats, ethereal, among the snowflakes. It's eyes vainly search the darkening land. In its hostile depths the lights of distant cities glitter. Beyond the cold and silver trees a freezing river shimmers, water crackles below the crunchy, starred sky. When the stars seem to call to him, he pulls down the window, looks out with a great shudder. Frost gathers around wisps of lichen and fronds of heavy feathers form. In pregnant stillness, exquisite snowflakes fall decorously, settling on the trees like blossom. Veiled like brides, secretly beautiful, the trees are slowly hidden from him in jungles of iced night. The Earth reveals her monstrous beauty. He remembered the girl, Rodika, waiting for him fearful in the dark which surrounded all.

Waiting, like the trees for springtime, for the roar of the sap and warm soil, the freeing of the arteries, the frozen wastes. But a river of blood has etched in him it's deepest tributaries. He closes his eyes unable to bear the volume of emotion he carried within like a great and sandy silt. Somewhere in a torrent inside, his spirit floundered in throes of violence, in tides of pain.

And he gazed into the blue stars, into crystal hearts, icy fires. Knife-edged flowers began to weigh the branches, until they began to bend, bow low. Among the cool and glassy sprays of buds, he hears the breaking of the branches as they kissed the ground. Snowflakes blew away lightly like petals, one by heavy one and blossom begins to fall. The flakes whirl closer to him, inhumanely wonderful. One enters the carriage, settles, startling as a kiss upon his lips. His head snaps, severed, floats away - a forfeit of the wintry air. The window slams shut. The headless man sits down. The train jerks erratically into movement.

N EAR DUBROVNIK

Lone animals move slow in winter pasture, in wisps of cloud that wander through the valleys. An old brown horse and an old brown woman who asks for cigarettes while the wind moves in her muddy skirts. Gently it blows through the greying locks of hair, so lightly it rustles the mountain grasses, throws its all up in a puff of dust.

Hurts in the beautiful eyes of the animals, cattle scattered along the hillside while the dirt road winds so carefully up and down the summits past blasted quarries and fallen stone where no man comes .

The dust track of powdered quartz and the tyre treads allow little grip on a shifting surface. A slow trudge on foot to higher ground to see the clouds furl like soft down far below in high valleys.



G YPSY HORSE

In cloud cover, in wisps of rag, the gypsy horsemen ride. Through the slow trees embroidered with deep silver light. Clink of shining copperware and the cackling of fat brown hens, laughter of little children running free. The corn lies stacked in sheaves as far as an eye can see. It is the market day and carts are journeying laden to a sunny town.

The fields are fired far away, the stubble burned in lines of flame to the horizon. Fiery fields far from February with the herd and the harvest. Soil smoulders, left to furrow in the warm glove of the equinox. And earth dreams its dances, its golden rains. And all the while the horsemen pass, slowly along the blue highway.

F IREFIELD

The dirge of lively insects rises from the busy cornfield over which the voices of farm-workers carry. A haze steals slowly over the afternoon meadow and dark shade spreads rapidly beneath the great oaks. The wind, a mysterious antagonist, sways the heavy boughs recklessly, shaking crackling leaves into the aromatic heavens. An azure sky glistens like a gem between the black branches. Overcome by play, vanquished by old fatigues, the peasant children fall asleep in the dirt road, clutching hot loaves and small dogs. Drowsy swoon of late summer. A dusty cloud watches over them for a moment, then allured by the charms of the day drifts away into the distances of the landscape, into misty blue fields.

F IELD OF THUNDER

Under swift clouds the moon, serene as a white lily, raises herself stately among the fresh vapours of evening. Birds fly home into the deep shadow of the trees and far in the valley the tiller's evening field is full of fainting snakes, invisible and lost as he is in the undergrowth.

Dwindling and remote, figures straggle along rivers of black ice, along paths through the darkening country. The sun steals wearily away. For it is then the shadows play. Sullen-eyed peasants, burning with cold, drop their dull scythes look up defeated from withered crops in fields of ice. For it is Winter the huntsman hard upon them and dark are the hungers in his eyes. Acidic, the stars fade away full of treachery. Old hags croon, sadly, sweetly, bowed down by the harshness of their labours in the elder snow. Sad trickery of the heavens. Arthritic mothers band to the horizon, tying the ice into frozen sheaves a blizzard of hardship in the blindest of their blue eyes.

And did the summer summon ghosts,
steal children from the shepherds,
Stir black leaves to send them swirling?
The dead are dreaming on immortal matter
Sleepers in the wind
Rise and go

F IELD OF VISION

leaves in a maze of green
graves of earth where
light tosses through the branches
of a thousand lives

eternity is in the cemetery
where arms and long grasses
will never send again
acres of tender strength
in river veins

And the last trees call
in distant gentleness
a girl befriended by a sky
fled in a rain of birds
from a forgotten act of love

E VENSONG

standing stones in the grey valleys
country lanes
heart high on the rise
over the shadowy mountain

ants crawl all over your skin
moths come out of your ears
cars come out of your eyes
after dark

ferment of seasons
in haunted vine-groves
and hearts that pulse
like wet wounds

a stable hung with rags
spilled wine
a draught of redness
the anguish of a summer

Unwanted clothing, earthly possessions
left in a moment of disarray
when death called
as is his sudden way



HELLAS

A little girl called out from her garden "You want a room?"
A kitten peeped and a lady looked out. The little kid's name - it's Irene. The birds were chirping over the noise of the wind and I accepted a room because it is a good feeling to look from a snowy bed through an open sunny door and see a tree very green in leaf, smell the scent of lemons on the breeze, while the ferries blow sleepily about in the bay. So now the kitten has curled asleep under my bed. In the evening I will sit in the porch and listen to the stars crackle and laugh to think how the white boat caught the waves in compliance with the wishes of my windy heart who is a mighty mischief-maker.



The objects seem to be waiting in the room. Waiting for me to decide. I feel as if a thousand eyes were watching me for what I do here. But no-one knows me and I say nothing. Hum of the wind, whirr of crickets as I count the moments go. Outside is the world, the annual pilgrimage and the town is full. People sleep piled in heaps in the midday courtyard of the basilica. Old women cross the bleached flagstone with pitchers of clean water, young women crawl up the steep street on their knees to the Banagia of Tinos beseeching her intervention in cases of infertility.

I cross the little town, past the neat cemetery and down a craggy hill path which soon loses itself in the hillside not leading anyone anywhere and I find myself gazing into a stagnant pond full of mosquito larvae, flies buzzing around donkey droppings while the little lizards scurry hastily away from my footsteps. The wind is in my head now. Rambling along rarely used ways into empty fields surrounded by high piles of stones serving as wind-breakers. Wild berries stain my wandering feet where I linger with the satyrs in the finest forest groves and I pressed my body against the tired earth, crumble into soil in the steep hillside eroded myself just a little. Sometimes a coloured gate a lonely house and then contrarily the path turned right around and returned me to where I had set out from. Women doing heavy washing and bars where older men are playing games of backgammon forever. A woman is pulling the blinds down as it is getting late. Sooner or later I must ask or else I will go away anywhere immediately. I could ask this woman if she knows of this family.

And now it is done. Manolis turned around and said "It is Maria isn't it?" And I nod astounded to be remembered. And I speak some words. And then I listen long while saying I would be leaving soon. As soon as events play themselves out.

For soon it will be done. And while the sadness turns and tastes of shadow it chances to die in memory of the waft of jasmine that I lay on my bed long ago. I revived that heedless scent for just one brief moment so I could let it go.

The elements immerse themselves into their afternoon dialogues and the eroded rock around the lighthouse cascades into the unsettled quarrel of the sea with the island. Waves boom and crash as the soil crumbles further into the very deep, the very blue sea of Delos. The wind in a frolic activates the exploding surf into glowing streamers of kinetic light. Isolated, alone with the wandering herds, overpowered, shepherd boys fall into sleeps. And it is then, in the dead of the afternoon that the rogue breeze makes its first intrusions, entering into the clandestine communities, prowling stealthily through the houses that climb the steep streets, seeking secrets in its wilful way. Its grey eye sweeps the barber shops, the churchyards and the slaughterhouses. It moves wildly through the rooms and unseen people call out, frightened by its lawless presence. They the old, who hear each other breathe among its eerie moans in the lonely hill-top villages, who hear death in all things. And they cry out. And then it bangs the windows scornfully and leaves, scattering fragrances from the sea, with the long trail of sorrow in its wake. And then they hear it in the fields, as it wrestles to tear the grapes and olives from the branches in forsaken places where no man comes.



Inside the salt white houses, wizened women age and wait like spiders, shrinking into dark corners in the shaded rooms. With slowness, frail widows breathlessly adjust their brooches and drape their heavy mantillas hidden from sunlight while lips move in endless cycles of prayer. Quiet are the lace-makers, toiling in slow grace their deft fingers knotting innumerable wedding trousseaux for new generations of bright-eyed brides, who will learn to tease the spirits from the vine, and draw healing from the wild herbs. They pass on their well-used dowries and their memories with careful deliberation. The renaissance bed-hangings are now worn and thin, and the glass bead-work has long lost its sparkle, in tiny rooms, adjoining, where ancient crumpled men lie abed, like lifeless dolls, fingering their worry beads. The slow-dying fathers and husbands watch the sea-lights pass slowly over the flaking plaster ceilings, following the tireless course of the sun through the day. But the tiring eyes of dark Leandros know



he must not sleep. For the Aegean burns in blinding light and the golden waters of the coast swirl in ever stronger currents through his mind. When he dozes they try to carry him away. In the oldness of the summer he falls into dreams. His mind is only faintly alert. He hears the voices of the young as the sounds drift to him. The whining of live infants, barking dogs, the braying of asses. The daily siren of the mainland steamer blows hard and the young men push the boats out noisily to meet it. Vain young boys dive, cutting sharply into the waves, showing off their supple bodies. In his minds eye he tries to follow them. He knows their rough shouts and movements full of graceful strength but his mind is ebbing like the tide in an emptying cove, a quiet place where dazzling waters carry and retreat. Octopii caught in rock pools on the beach, cook live on spits of white driftwood. The lazy sun-filled voices of the fishermen travel to him in the quiet noon. The dry leaves near his window crackle in the breeze and begin to fall like golden birds from the summer trees. The deep swirling gold sea floods in his mind where Hellas releases a secret storm of light. Through his body grows a green young vine the shoot of death. The vine gains strength, paralysing him as it grows steadily through his veins, through the walls of his being and slowly, so slowly turns his sky, to stone.

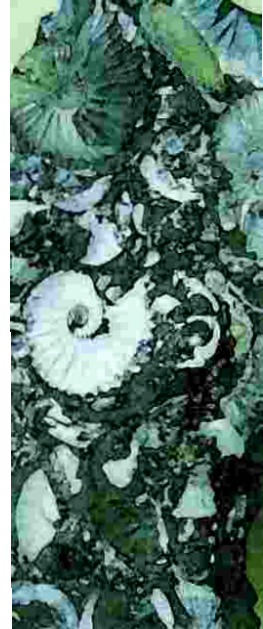
A NDROMEDA

When darkness falls the Greek seamen wade out beneath Andromeda to startle the good shoal and the young stars while the moon ascends the slow hours until dawn. Alive in interstellar night, under the constellations, Their features carved by stern climates, lines etched by ravaged waters a mesh of webs. Inky tattoos move beneath their amphibious skin as they row seawards their fish minds full of chartered seas. On disappearing sands, dreaming in daytime, they absently mend their nets, as far as they can be from land, trysted to unseen kin on the edge of other oceans.

WILD BIRDS

Crescendo of a pianoforte as music pours out from an open window by the Seine. Unseen eyes watch the coal barges chug laboriously through the sluice-gates. The wash flows over the marble feet of statues holding the bridges and small waves slowly work their way to the bank, soak into the street cafes where coloured drinks glint in glasses and tiny suns float reflected among the ice. Males sit indifferently, solid upon their haunches, limbs splayed majestically, absorbing the dailies. Their behaviour changes alarmingly, as false scents signal and women pass. Movement lingers in a silky fabric, a flirtatious swing of a hip, a hint of caresses. The men turn restless, alert. Birds swarm above the river, spiralling on a sudden axis, eclipsing the sun. A raucous swoop downward and away draining the fluorescence from plastic chairs and tables. A tiny quake of meaning erupts into a moment and people shiver in cool nakedness. A quick erasure follows, an intense staring directed at the bright fluttering of canopies. The friendly fronds of a tree wave back and a spectre is banished to its dark abyss once more. Traffic purrs and murmurs with reassuring sighs of exhaust as powered gears change softly. Chatter rises warm with charm and the afternoon bows down to an ultimatum of stylish repose. Concierges begin to doze as the air fills with feline languor and sun terraces empty in a slow withdrawal. Somewhere, someone moves to change a disc and music stretches out on lazy strings. Electrified, a singular note vibrates into a whine, fades out.

PARIS



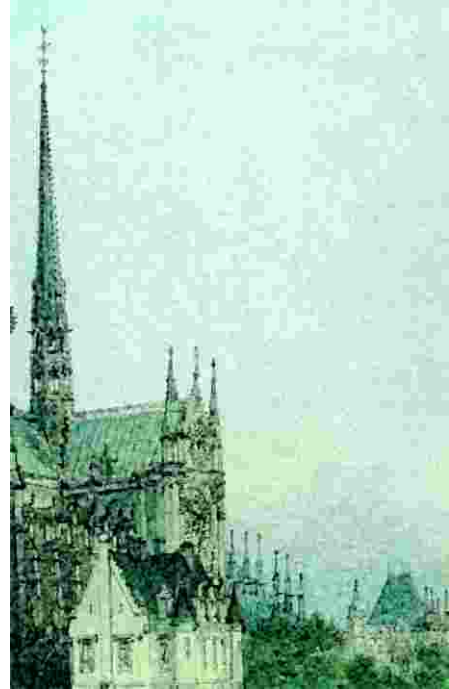
KISS OF SPRING

Lovers entwine in the parks, their mouths mingled in young night. The mild spring pounces onto these couplings on the benches, and painters of nocturnes hang around in groups, in the old quarter, beneath the low trees, sipping pale slow beer, nerveless with insomnia. Nearby the nightclubs open and begin to trade. Jaunty hustlers stalk the streets. Swaggering and arrogant scented sphinxes of the alleys swing their hips, mark their territories and purr for the approach of the wayward toms. Skins of gazelle, of pure doe or puma, eyes of brilliance, enticing the playful beasts who roam the night.

E GO HUGO

In his rooms that are now a museum, caricatures of the period. Dandies of the salons, posers in tall top-hats. Misshapen craniums, distended skulls, so very privately disturbed. Here he once lived. Hugo the old: On a verge of an encounter. The man of letters with his Quixotic stare. 'voyaging through the stars, the centuries and the creeds'. The literati and the libertarians. Mind reflecting mind to substantiate its own realizations. A crop of half-truths handed on in what is remembered of a language. A timepiece clocking up the score.

And where he lived the frames of paintings bear graffiti, atomic mushrooms scratched carelessly into the wooden cornices with little flowers powering between frightened worlds. For do not the processes of dying begin with birth? "Ecce" on a gallows. And the strangest of the scratchings: the recurring words: 'Ego Hugo'. Wasn't he sure?



N OTRE DAME DE PARIS

Cracks open in the genteel facades, splitting the silvery buildings. From open windows softly ignite marital arguments, softly exploding into Saturday. All is contained in the silent gliding of a limousine, in a wedding in the ducal square. It startles the basking doves, who vanish in the sublime breezes. Where flees the azure light but to far Notre Dame where gargoyles squint with sunless eyes in a careless watch over the faubourgs. From niches among classical friezes trembling putti clamber down into the ruined squares, call out to dormant musicians who revive in sleeping doorways in the expensive boulevards and rise to dance for rings of fire.

H AUTE COUTURE

From week-end walks in cool parks, wintry people draw near the glistening stones in the grand arcades tucked behind the facades on the Champs-Élysées. Faces powdered and re-structured appear delicately poised before the window shades of the jewellers stores. Immaculately manicured, hands appear in the show cases to fussily re-arrange the presentation with the skill of card sharps.

Tongues pass over glossed lips thin with desire and women perch on knife-edged stilettos peer avidly unloved. Slivers of old stars, clusters of asteroids, petrified rock silicates instruments of the occult.

The remedy of adornment. A costly business of redressing the animalesque heritage where an insistent apparition stares back remorselessly from the looking glass, undisguised.

And with each fresh season, with sophistry, mass clothing industries re-define the human frames, conjuring a clothing. Slits, peep-holes and a strangely zipped up offer of a body refusing intimacy. Hats-perch guilelessly on heads lost in soft intrigues, veils drape in drowsy fascination and mannequins await the verdict of the passers-by.

METRO VOLTAIRE

The thief smiles with easy grace as his open theft is witnessed by everyone except the one stolen from. The passengers shift a little uneasily on their seats, sink their cowardly noses into the safely violent sheets of the dailies, peeping up now and then in a pretence. Nation? République? Is it the correct halt? And away he slips when doors slide silently open and coins and tambourines jangle. Spell-bound we rise to follow. A busker calls out a greeting, strokes a harp and sings beside the silver escalator. A step upon its snaking treads is a move to higher labyrinths, through drifting avenues, to a place among the crowds. Oxblood, ochre, Zahara red. Cloths of flaming nomad kings. Hawking traders steeped in sands of Africa, vendors caged in cities create a market place.

At the approach of the flics, brilliant and beaded, chieftains gather unlicensed wares, scatter like machine gun-fire. Magnificent women slowly pick up heavy babies glistening between ebony hands and a rogue herd stampedes soon lost among the busy shoes a-tramping. And we, like the alley cats we are, too tired, too eager to avoid the wrong eyes, succeed only in tripping back down the steps of endless underground stations to land once more among voracious tramps and gutted meths drinkers, trapped in the tunnels in a coma of disobedience.

NEBULAE

In hounded hours blood strays
and murmurs strange lore
don't you know
the horned god schemes
in things unseen
where the fire flies
the urchins die

the wind of the nebulae in the courtyard
dry clothes blow on balconies
in summer night that waits to enter.
Iron rays in the heat of the moon beat
penetrate into sleep by an open window
in the lighted skies charmed and chained
a calling from the far children

OUTSTATION

The walls snake away into the distance. On the other side a train station. Strollers. Chatting vigilante, keepers guard the city parks where the grass is out of bounds and park keepers chase you away with a shrill whistle. Nature in the city grown unnatural. Venerated as a cultivated show-piece, an asset of a city, poor splendour where it is no longer seen to be in use or useful. Give us back our heaths and the games of a hundred yesterdays.

Secret passages of the eminent men of history. The routing of power. Examine the record of the hero of history. Frail maids and chimney sweeps, beings gone to ground under the orders of industrial undertakers. Lift up the statues, exhume the necropolis, underworld city of night where the field commanders guard the grim remains.

Re-stylers reformers, rearranged gestures, dusted the shelves, stained linen in bunkers. The dormitories, the cemeteries, the catacombs. The past posed in a museum.

Clearance is called for what has long been denied, deadening in the arteries - world in its delirium. One long forgotten day.

A TALE OF THREE ROSES

His friends left to be out in the spring day. When the door had closed behind them he drew the curtains and in the darkness of the room waited, seeking solace in the air in which their breath had mingled. For this day he would stay hidden behind the dusty curtains which masked the boulevard through which some had sometimes moved.

It was a furnished room near the Metro Robespierre. An early morning. Three vivid pink roses stood tall in a vase. A lonely man spending eternity. He turned to the widows, surveyed the streets for several lost minutes withdrawing at once upon meeting eyes in other windows across the street. Night spent eyes that left on mystery appointments every day. He watched for their late return, tracing their way back to lights in the other window. Soon they would go out, searching. But for him it was a time of listening. A time when he could only hear his blood rush. But today, slowly other sounds reached his ears, traversed voids as the birds moved in swift unison across the roofs and foliage gave way to insistent little breezes. He could hear the clawing of small rodents in the attic while the sky grew so very low he was forced to stoop. His head bent low in the small house, he was growing too large for the room, for the street, for the whole world. He stood there growing. The greenest being in Paris.

Wind behind bright clouds. What's that sound but the sound of breath. The breath that moves the nights awake in the dungeons of the heart. The morning breeze blows the petals of the flowers in the vase. They sway in soft union and a baby cries below stairs. He had tried to imagine how things could be other than what they had become, not recalling when the distancing had begun. He had longed for certainty but silence had edged in between him and his surroundings with slow determination. There was no substance now, but for the certainty of the emptiness. Clearly circuits still remained unlinked in this gathering of unnaturalness. Certainly he had played a role in his own downfall. But the others too, had played their parts well. Where had they led him? Into egocentricity.

I do. I am done unto. The act - in all its unrehearsed tenses. He had asked the 'Who' for a long time. Being and made to be. Active and activated. Sometimes it had been the 'Why' he'd found most compelling, indefinitely hovering over every action, forcing urgent decision. In movement or repose, his flesh was compelled to draw energy, committed to breath. But a strange reversal had occurred. A transition had taken place from 'I act' into 'I am acted'. And his mood had changed to the passive voice. It was a static state. Time moved in him while scenes changed, carrying him unto quiet places where little happened or at other times deep into the disturbances, the crucibles of passion where the angers from which one cannot be redeemed burned themselves out in ferocity.

What was that sound? The new-born cried in the flat below, and the sound recalled him. Was he awake or comatose? They are moving us through our sleeps, the dream-walkers. They are dreaming us up nightly. How far had he been suspended in this limbo far from the old order of the world he had known? How many were the hours that had passed? The petals of the flowers had fallen softly around the vase. The light was on in the room of the eyes. It was evening and the day was spent. At that moment the phone rang and he listened to the commands in the voice. He went into dim streets and took the train journeying far into the countryside.

The temperature was dropping fast. The walls were paper thin in the old farmhouse in Marquis-le-Comte. It was late - or very early, he could not tell. He was cold and awake. Iron rays of the moon beat. His mind craved to loose itself in the luminous havens, chained by an ancient mystery. It would be warmer in the stables with the animals. He exited into the garden past the outhouses and was drawn into the ornate sculpted nightly woods beyond. Thistles and lichens called out to him from the hidden places where the fluid knotted in aged trees and the moon moved vapours. Cracks open shadowed worlds. Shapes in the oaks created new disturbances in his head. It was then they found him. And took him to the hall of the high windows. A dull light of understanding now shone in his eyes but he sensed no longer fear. Why quarrel in that canyon? Why mean to die here scratching in that sky that offered nothing? He had been born a dead man. This he had always understood. Yet, what events had befallen him? This we cannot say so exactly. How had he fared? As the others like him. There came a point when the unknowing was unbearable, blood throbbed, veins burst. He had been waiting for them, for their misunderstanding, absorbing the surroundings, the stupor of the days. Hearing from afar he inevitable sentence of execution that had been passed upon him.

Wreaths of pity for this ill-loved miscreant. The accomplishment of his crimes had been preordained. Yet even at this moment it was not clear to him if they were already bygone events or yet to be performed. What had been unforgivable had been his powerlessness to avoid them, his fatal wish, his gross pity for himself and the world at large, the poor performers too ill-equipped to accept a wager loaded against them. Afterwards in the back-room of that house he had hidden, hidden within the self-inflicted confines of a misanthrope. Alone thinking out his alibi. At ease with the fact that his cold and constant fear was at last contained between four walls. Unhealthily lurking in his own mind. In that den of a ghost caught unaware between abandoned worlds until they came for him.

A slothful inertia sank slowly into him like a wound. He had survived where he had willed to die. Now he had arrived at the point he wanted to be, in a situation with an end in view. Where he could stop it all at will, by his own hand. He caringly fingered the tiny capsule. Soon there would be no more hours to spend in white rooms with barred high-windows. The sky-scapes no longer held back their terrifying bluenesses from him. The impenetrable azure sky reached out with bouquets of guiltless air. It's faultless beauty was it's death-cry. It's promise of vacant unconcerned release. He found deep comfort in its disinterest.

Does the eye sense it or the mind see it? Nothingness arriving in abundance. A proof of infinity and yet a reminder of absence. A sky void of time, ever receding. Flowing, grace-filled dictates of serenity. The light that had no mercy entered everywhere, pervaded those lonely cells he lived in. Brought live to him that other state of being. Hard won had been the chosen days, the last on earth. To be passed alone. Now there remained to him but three. The un-lived days stood tall like unlit candles. Execution would have come in time and been carried out. But his intent would interrupt its smooth coursing. And when their time was consumed he would have long escaped. And he would belong to what had been. But for now he directed his unnatural attentions onto those in other white rooms, concentrating on a projection of monotony when black moons of an intense loneliness loomed from nowhere. No. It was certain. There was no one. No one waiting in that sky. No one but the uncertain century in which the indecision had grown so very dangerous.

Having been attentive for a long time to the chance movements of an interior dial, the dead man stirred. Fate in its careless mercy had finally met with him. He lay there in the stillness. Saw his broken hands. His crushed jaw. It had ended in violence. Such had been his flight. And yet he came to. A deathless breeze rose from time to time, flew far beyond his field of vision. He rose crushed in his grave to follow it.

With his sharpened eyes, his vanishing mind, unable to avoid the suspicion that his presence had had no significance whatsoever. Having never been a believer in the tyranny of the living. Freed by death he could observe the necropolis where all wielded the power to destroy what could not be determined. He could not help these quarrels. These inner monologues. It had been a fatal balancing act with sanity. With a certain kind of obstinacy he had chosen a wayward path. From the abodes of men the way had wound awhile along common ground. It had led past the labourers, the fields and factories. The resentful music of the foundries with their fine machines turning. The days of his life had delivered him into brash and vivid beauty, seductions, slaughter fields. The terrain had become tricky. He had found himself in new company, with the chasers - those atrocious hunters of death in winter. Under orders of obedience, luxury, boredom in seasons of martial activity. Exalted by the sensation of destruction, unanimity, technique. Avoiding glances in the shady avenues, he had listened to the conversations of the armies in the bars. Absorbed in each other, captivated by irresponsibility, soldiers of fortune caught unawares amassing ornate objects, erecting columns in an old style, monuments offerings to a vegetating god of misery, a broker in pain. In the haven of the skies smoke rose from mounds, from broken homes and bones, from rag children their sad soft bodies broken by impotent men. Their ruin was being extended. On the black stones of the yellowing earth they had held communion with sinister energies. He for his part would secure the revolution of a nether sun when men as he had been would climb into upholstered coffins with elaborate gestures, brandishing their fists of gold, their bodies of unbelievable roundness, hair alive with vipers, blood of gum. They would go down. Certainly and Forever. To be consumed by certain kinds of silverfish.

V^{AGABOND}

Tramps stumble blindly in the damp woods their clothes like dry leaves, colour of bark, baked in mud. Heavy as bats suspended in daytime, their forlorn eyes watch the French towns from afar. A thin veil of snow rests upon them: Mezières and Compiègne, Sedan and Nancy. Disused manor-houses of a bygone aristocracy, locked away behind rusty gates while ivy creeps among the forget-me-nots, gathering at the overgrown entrances and frail grey roses tumble from winter urns. Stick insects gaze into a sphere of liquid sky, crowns on the pillars at the gates to lonely gardens. In the forgotten enclosures rampant with moss, malicious cherubs revel in muddy fountains spouting jets of black water into the freezing wind, their faces run amok with lost and childish laughter.



P^{ÈRE LACHAISE}

Many attend a funereal wake, but there are always those late-callers who come in different centuries. For here in the citadel of the dead there are paths beyond the doors that open after dark and all beings mortal. The residents are waiting, open to receive odd calls from time to time from visitors come to pay their respects. Disintegrating photographs on display among wreaths and weathered plaster flowers where angels genuflect glaring like birds of prey their silver mouths full of moths. An open-air dormitory where the homeless come to sleep away the torments of the night. A fallen silver chalice on a tomb betrays the secret life of the graveyard, Luziferian moonlit masses. Cats mate between the tombs where feeble grave lights splutter and a hairy tramp wanders like a prophet, vehemently blessing the tombs, throwing spirit onto them with drunken vows.

A^{VIATRIX}

the kindred birds scurry
when there is too much news to carry
and an animal within
feels fleet spring muscles, supple limbs
and puma speed
in flight from words
while hair sways heavy on a shoulder
a black flag

WE CLIMBED A WHILE IN SILENCE

Mist settled over the Meuse as the river crept around the town, wound about an old water-mill. The campsite we were searching lay beyond. The insistent old men had taken hold of our bags and walked on ahead leading us on through the woods. We climbed a while in silence, Zillah and I. After a while we sat down on the path and rolled together leaves of grey tobacco. The old gents stopped and waited patiently, the Chanson du Départ chimed out from the clock-tower of the quaint town. We were passed on to curious young immigrant boys to be led down a grassy slope to the destination we were seeking. Rain came with dusk and white stars shone. Small sleepy children appeared at our tent to enquire as to the nature of our starlit running barefoot over wet night grasses.

LYON/SUSO TRANSIT

The sky deeply arching dips into the open valley. The glazed roads opaquely diffuse the lights of transit traffic, and the towns glitter exquisitely in the valleys. Bulky convoys of trucks crawl up the sliding sides of the mountains, glowing giant centipedes. Making slow progress, they climb sluggishly along the huge slabs of land often losing their grip and rolling downwards. A slow crawl through the Douane, the routine exchange of papers and currencies in the dead of night. And on again, winding into the early dawn light. After a long haul, the border crossed, the sleep-shadowed driver succumbed, surrendered to fatigue. All around the car-park, other lorries, sleeping trucks, absent men, empty tarpaulins flap loosely in the mountain wind.

SECRETS OF THE RIVERGOD

A gathering of mountains crowned with new snow. Summits lost where well-shod hikers trek the stony paths into the line of thinning pine and a slow trickle of cars drifts on the valley road. Clear sound of mountain stream and distant peal of bells. Dewy valley dark lake, beyond the castles quietly the cattle move intent on grasses dipped in night ice. Rugged are the heights that hold no secrets, each gentian crag mapped, each wandering glacier tracked.

G ARDENS OF LUXEMBOURG

Students tumble, frivolous with insolence and infectious laughter ripples among the somersaults. Their exuberance attracts the stern whistle of the custodian of the grasses while other idling eyes lift up. But hesitate a moment, sink perception into the further ground behind the acrobats, to discreet scene shifters. Mendicant vagrants doze serenely near sedately planted squares of display blooms, by the trimmed bush and the border plant. Stubborn presences that stalk the public gardens, always with the trees in the troubled woods, not to be driven. Begging friars, would-be alms gatherers, with veiled eyes drift, in self-induced stupors through the cities of amnesiacs, malingering in the vanishing parks of the inner oases, loitering among the gazebos near remote water sources. Coughing from exposure, diseased tramps exchange grimaces and insults competing for dog-ends in the litter bins in rugged contempt. From time to time they recognize each other fled before the law-makers, the bourgeois monuments in the faubourgs of the towns.

C HANSON DU DÉPART

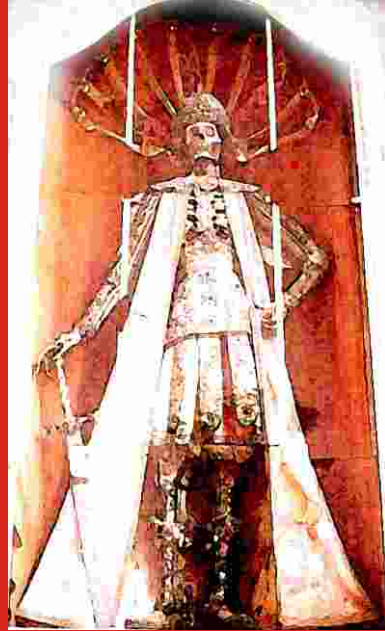
Lying below
a fleet of sparrows
in the bone-yard as
wars reared, rose and ebbed
and spirit lay
in a dead man's prayer

And if the reveille sounds
in a romancer's dream
will we surge
far into the storm hills
race farther than the camps
to no man's land
so as not to be found
forgetting
that it is a world
that is floundering

C OME THE FALL

Immense shadow of mine own making
out on white wanderings in the holy European citadels
waifs on the willow wind sense the sirens
of the marine worlds beyond memory.
beyond a cool blue gypsy nostril,
weaving garlands
for dancers with the smoky wreaths
of famous cigarettes

Turn to stone to stone gazelle,
to turn a doe's gaze
on the glare of gargoyles
guarding a grim pack
while we lurk in the city
waiting for a mighty shudder
when she the brooding city
shifts a shoulder
to roll boulders down her alleys
awaken in the sewer
a germ of meaning
so we can brew a new brew
come the fall



WARFLESH

DELACROIX

Strong they are. On the slave sea they are
Enticing the air into that sail of thick hide
The wind howls, the raft tips,
lists submissive on the stone wave
A heap of cloud gathers like a great dog
Foams there above the rabid sea
Raw, skinned gloats
above the graves of god

J EHANNE

Avoid the wrath of the harridans,
Clamour and slander in the territory
Give maidens of sanctity
and perpetual succour
In the valleys of resurrection

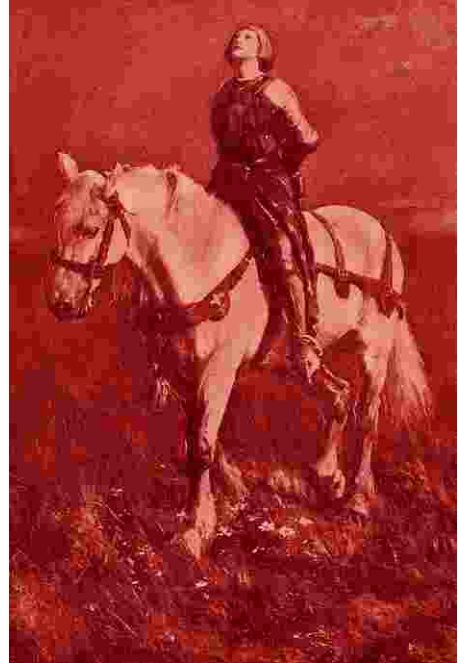
things seen
the blood clean
guillotine
red rivulets, like tresses,
ribbons regalia
rivers of war
olive branch hide
the shameless eyes
of the maid of Orléans

V ANDAL

Magnificence in mountains, crops in valley tender gathered.
From ravages. From famine. When he rode he plundered,
drove galloping hordes, Teutonic myths across a sea of
Germany. In red eyes, dread eyes read eyes. Beast of
barbarian day chain the night claim the bird nailed to the
empire. they have rubbed blue glass into the eyes of the
endless children.

F LAME

flame came
roaring in caves
a spark of golden yellow
corn roamer
gathered fire from ether realms
to ignite sacred flowers
purify dawn embers
and make the dancing
evening ones revive



F LOWERS OF THE FIELD

rare lilies
fresh cut
flower of death
slaughtered hybrid
splashed with new blood
the men lay white
in the dust

dismembered
in sacred rites
in warring
they went for the brotherhood
they went for the women
they went for each other
scarlet slash
a cloven embrace
in forest steel
one blood now
they slept
at one with the dust

A TROPHY

Legend of phallus buried in a wet womb
Fecund in night
An erection extended into a seed-giving
Unknowing, a being in time arrives
Forest mind in wrinkled face, an infant boy
held triumphant in the jealous arms
of Father Love
jubilant he guards the trophy of his member
a small furious weapon of vindication
man rejuvenated in the child

But what anguish quivers in its first cry?
in its young face banners fly
an ownership unfurls
Flesh of my flesh live by my law
Support my lie
Feed on my enemy

A living tool, a sleep of innocence
Caged in his sculpted cradle hardening like horn
a boy dies, carved in bone



T HE PRICE OF MEAT

S UPER VISION

In the verbal cemeteries, low-lowing, bovine lullabies disarrange the feudal etudes. Music sadly moves among the skulls where beasts graze untended. Encouraged to search in a refined air for ancestral relics, boys discover, decapitated heads. The secret plantation. Authorised military vandals throw earth over eyes in the soil. New children set their childish jaws, help cover it all over, while in the absence of the root stars, infection spreads in memories and begins to fester. They wait grimly for the harvest of the jewelled eyes. And now the eyes are growing. For the dead do not forget their quarrel.

Mercenaries imagining a response in the eye of an icon, re-focus their vital energies on new weaponry, idolatry, duplicity. Protection of the tribal crop. Burnt earth. Dull intelligences kick an old habit around, break bones in the battle-fields. The ancient dandies of the salons doff their elaborate top-hats, scoffing at the premise of a just anger against an enemy, fratricidal loyalty, assault in the name of trade, in a love for liberty. Lust, plunder, vice has governed every deadening movement of history. Every lucid massacre.

How slowly he hurries the lonely ape of Justice.
How slowly he hurries.

BANNERS OF FLESH

energy of ruin
black fields
crop of crosses in the sunshine
a dead yield
dogs of war prowl
near the feeding-grounds
carrion picking over
a montage of all that is
unresolved

savagery of the human meat-fields
war-craft and a lucrative career
transmitted like a disease
from one generation to the next
An ancient carnivore
grinds its incisors
prepares once more to tear
flesh from bone



REMORSE

How kill a city?
time will tell
the minds that wondered
Why?
Historic unknown
how foolish to have thought
you could decipher
Miracles

How kill a city
the living thing
in streets in veins
you did it
monster
that you are

And shall I tell you why you did
those things
that are unnamed
because
you yell for a lie
fearing of the life in flies
in black mountain stream
in death itself
that refuses to destroy
the cries of men

SCYTHES OF THE ICE FATHERS

An ancient glacier swept down into the valley where
threatened, three dying seas lay down their silts. Wolves
roamed among the homesteads, in the carcass of the
haunted summer. The rains had failed, the crops not borne,
delivering the kin into the calm edge of famine.

Shadow played around the fires kept in memory. Men
drummed before a totem. A sky opened like a cavern,
Phantom cattle leapt across. Away from the flames the
darkness howled, struck with thunder the tempers of the tribe.
The chieftain daubed his face with dung, set before himself
the mammoth face of his anger. He hung his pelt with
implements, his breath with toads and went wandering
among the friends and enemies.

In unnamed night his tribe followed. Masked raiders on the
moonless nights. Ethereal horses reared in the darkness
around them. They had no need to combat for the eerie wind
the chill night air fought for them. Unseeable frigid armies of
ghostly ether struck with terror and the force of supernatural
fright crept on those they appeared before. A faint footstep.
Glance warily over that shoulder for the unknown is abroad.

L YRE

Unknown breath of wind, caress the dormant dreaming one. The trigon harp rests aged and triangular in the museum, a fabled player. Its tone is mellowed now by the long-dried resins in the wood where weaknesses in the grain, feature as vital adornments. The cracks embellish, reveal the experience of the age. Tremendous forays of time sound nervous musics. The jubilant anthers of feudal flowering implode into the astounded mouth of gaping Orpheus. His ruined heart in its rawness secretes nostalgia, anticipating the neologisms of the jargonauts.

O

He blunders into a garden, a landscaped garden - an errant mathematician whose scholarly nature forces upon him the oddity of his surroundings. Encloses him in structures from which he cannot disentangle himself until he can neither view nor venture forth. An old and armoured beetle. The cumbersome mantle of age creeps over him. In his minds eye he draughts out dangerous orients, alluring orbits to himself, the vortex of chaos in his yellow eye. A recorder of eclipses, he scornfully weights the bitter pleasure his novel position gives him, levitating and deviating in his manuals alone. Black on black - his diagrams for seeing in the dark. A delicate cluster of nebulae. The flower of his heart voyages into unlit galaxies where only the ghosts of stars will take heed.

Scratching feebly, he pores slowly over the marks he makes, faint marks which hold his meaning for him, this decipherer of shadow, bearer of moonbeams and cups of blindness. The flimsy panels of his house shake in the gentle terrors of the heart. Gossamer petals he draws over himself as he tears off the wings of the encased insect he finds cocooned within.

H E WHO HAS PROPHESED

Power cowered as a snake of light before the presence of the scribe, recording reams of words, the rhizoid hairs of his long beard forming into matted lengths of rope in the passing of time. The ancient petitioner was encouraging nourishing skyways for the trespassing words entering the orifice of his mouth to perish in that empty hole. Words, rise off the tongue aviating. Fits of words break forth. So long held back, suddenly let fly, foundering in formation or pursuing with violence in rigorous questionings seeking toward oath-finders, in irregular high-flown utterances. Muttering, grumbling the rhapsode sings the praises of the saxatile seed rising in his land. A fat prophet with his hereditary creed of hatred, his accent on intolerance, leads the mare of a dim apocalypse through the recent sagas, mountain-ward chasing the sage hungers of a god. Bird men winged in the eye, recognise that theirs is the flight beyond conversation.

D ISCOVERY

tribes amass in carnage
in cool blood-killing
cascading into the cult of battle

sun up fall out
it is the I Unknown
warrior that stirs
under wings in the quiet field

in the end it is the world
in delirium
weeping in arteries

A RT OF A WARRIOR

the butcher of Riga did not dictate
the day of Pity
carrion feeding
where fester the dead of yesteryear
on the little that is left
king birds swoop into the sacred pool
where swims the promising gene
in our peoples

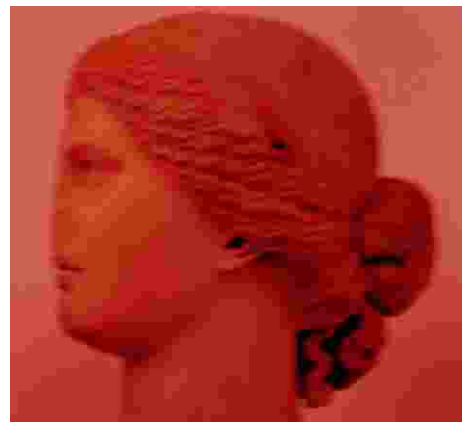
it can not be our response
ring the red moon trace the smell of blood
and invade that dark theatre

D ISGUISES

Zeus's Disguises
None we have
Some we want
Give the law back to the prophets
Large scale repression will result
from time to time
in massive waves of violence
Mechanical murder is the release
of the dormant villainy
of the hysterical god
of escape

I NVOCATIONS

fearless
eye of gray Athena
sage and virgin
gazing daughter of Zeus
his armed and quiet enemy
sister of the huntress
hidden and of argent



D REAMING WOMAN

She washes her voluminous rear in the near stream, arching her powerful back, shaking the great vans of her muscular shoulder blades, the shiver of her shins. She streams lazily out of the water with the birthing mammals. Weighted by her heavy stomach she staggers, a drowsy mud-basking jelly, sensuously enslaved by the demands of biology. Her navel filled with red sounds of waiting forests, of leafy bird, of watchful world. Her unconscious off-spring lie wet and helpless, blind on the ground, waiting the reassurance of the heavy breast and belly. She flattens them protectively with her mass. The afterbirth falls away. The creatures begin to feed from the living nipple, suck on silky fluid sap meted out with its quantity of moon. Exposed, confused, protected. In the glade they will grow ever imitative in their rites, responding to the urgent impulses to couple with the kindred in early intimacies, in the first green orgy of carnal flowering. Succumbing to the call of fecundity, fertility, pap and play.

BLOOD TREE

Eve's free-wheeling
Then why was the tree forbidden?
Far-sighted, wise
mythic bringer of sorrow
damned curious
peeped into the devil's mirror

Is not the god stolen from the Christ a little minded man god?
Or is the little minded men who have made it seem so?
Equals of a god? Would a god ... mind?

Did Eve have moral conviction?
Did you not break your conditioning, little experimental specimen Eve?
Break out to other ground, exercise a wing?
Did you come to exert a threat
With your intolerable free will?

Not conforming to the pressure
pleasing, precious pleasure
So there remained but the punishment.
You were sent out on a limb

What did the fruit teach? And why did you share the apple?
With the male in whom the memory was better erased.
The one who obeyed sooner and doubted less.
Your punishment: Eternity

But you never did regret your action
You never will run around a rat-cage for rewards
You will do as your inner workings prompt
because the learning can not be un-worked
and the knowing in the fruit is flesh

You will do what you will do
because of an understanding
that in spite of the evidence
the one will not be left to rule
you ate of the fruit and you have become
the all-suspecting fruit

FORGETFOOL

Erasing a landscape
losing a language
on the trail of god
I began to wander

to exercise the energies
to remember a beginning
that ended thoughtlessly

to track back on an environment
remembering only a language
of nothingness

ONCE IN PARADISE

I thought crime
for remembrance
asking there the question always asked
Is not the mind a monument?

Were we thrown out of Eden or did we choose to leave?
What was the fruit you ate Eve?
The very bitterest.
What did it teach
The very bitterest

Which nature did you seek to near
with the apple of illusion?
Pain the teacher. Death the healer
Were they there in the unlearning of your nature?

Company is our ultimate consolation
But can a presence in this wilderness change it?
Something has happened
More than we have ever imagined

S TAR OF THE SEA

And Cain knew his wife. Woman and tongue spoil for earth
and good sons piling idols in the groves because
The lilies that we hold have no odour
leave us unfree to go until the hour of bidding.
Wind-kindled on incense laden evenings
kneel in flames before the Marys of the seas



I N FIVE SEASONS

I ran as shields fell
and summers ended
the sages were coming
down from the mountain
voices floating
on the wind's singing
torches searching
in the emptiness

I ran as shields fell
down from the mountain
torches searching
voices floating
on the wind's singing

I feared them all then
with their long skulls
their fingers of hope
blind seers
in empty caves
and ran
for living blood
from claws of life
long skulls of hope
and fingers fat
ran living for the blood
for hands of fire

F ORKED TONGUE

stories in an eye
clear as honey
in the season in wild streams
we will meet
in the pharaoh's
book of ages
A is for Arrival

stories of our eyes
clear as honey
in the seasons
we will meet
streams wild
in books of sand

R^{ECOGNO}

One must live one's life in anonymity in order to preserve a private mind. Eradicate exterior evidence of intelligence in order to avoid detection. Those who internalize the codes suffer. We create uniform images and censor all else prey to a technocracy which assures an illusion of prosperity. Hounded by commerce into commitments which enslave in the prime of life, policed from the cradle to the grave, man is authorised to exist as a discouraged species that has lost all aspirations to autonomy. Energy spent on trivial pursuits, in limited time, we err on reducing cerebral activity and awareness of unawareness to a minimum. If there are views from this mental fortress, they are of other identical fortresses. In a push-button culture we mistake imprisonment for luxury. We buy permission for free movement unaware of disenfranchisement, not recognising that under the guise of enterprise the mind has been thwarted, the creation defined to serve the causes of eccentric villains. In the distraction a militia have occupied the unprotected mind which nullifies its own existence. Ultimately we are not protected by soldiers but disarmed.



SLEEPING MAGII

Power, prestige, wealth - the irresistible trinity. Since all else fails these prizes are seized by force, with the gallows or the asylum for dissenters. Implicated by our mass participation in survival, we persist in the deadly game. Pledged to keep the peace, we sponsor the status quo for a small weight of minted coin. We condone weapons for mass murder manufactured in the name of trade, clothes from skin, and take nourishment from the limbs of other live animals. That's our business.

But our appetites have become insatiable and consume us. In struggles to assume individual independence we can only ape our oppressors. Bombarded by our own propaganda, still we allow ourselves to be strategically engineered. Grounded in hypocrisy, from time to time our race gives vent to a primeval natural violence in paramnesiac purges. Dabbling in elaborate games of death when it comes down to it, unable to break bad habits we reduce all to pulp. Stretch that human drumskin taut, beat louder and cry your tears hard.

L^{IVE CURRENT}

A stagnant moat, where float the bodies of those gone before into the voids. Caught in a hostile domain, with all my paperwork in order, I came upon a mental ground surrounded by electrifying defences. I identified my mind-set as a ramification, a fortified structure instinctively constructed by the vitality of the self to fend off invasive ideas. I named my prison "As I Wish". I later came to learn that this type of thought structure in the human mind is not to guard intact the forces within from human invaders but instead to prevent the energies of understanding from venturing out. I seemed to remember then that nothing I wished for could ever come into being. Things had contrived themselves so that I would no longer wish to wish and nothing could move false convictions. I was adept at eliminating all inclination to comprehend. Thoughts were censored by fear, confused in their attempt to assemble. Distressed in sleeps suppressed ideas emerged from subconscious activity that on waking left traces and odd signals. A crust of lava. When the mind's suspicions are aroused, it tunes to remote frequencies. Rejects superficial surface information on matter and it re-directs its attention to less defined zones.

WARRING MOOD

Dangerous memories? The fear trigger. Pain first stalks you when venturing out on renegade thoughts that query the set-up. But it is to know and understand one's own notions that one risks the journey into mind-destruction. And one must voyage alone in this intelligence gathering. Because a train of thought must leave the rails.

With a query open on immortality, disappearance of the body becomes a grave but secondary anxiety. The real threat to the explorer of labyrinths is long term loss of consciousness. A grand part of the inadequate response to existence is guided by poor memory systems. A collective amnesia.

Man is a genetic mix of god and beast. Torn apart by conflicting urges. Blunders stem from an inability to identify the location a being finds itself in, to denote the relevant value to its entity and to co-existent hybrid beings.

We are in horror of our animal heritage. Somebody's experiment.

We live unknowing, deep in a state of denial, trapped by unnatural, conditions alien to fundamental tendencies. neglectful of the implication that our lack of observation implies complicity in our own reduction.

Although deeply attracted to the idea of combat, we can not endure rivalry nor can we survive it.

Pathology grounded in bloodshed, a history of violent error. Crimes of power, crimes of cowardice give us pack governance and stewardship of our thinking patterns.

We have grown accustomed to our secondary status, our disinterest in our origin. Although anxious to transcend the condition, habit breeds resignation which mutates into sloth. It has been such a long time that we have thought in this mode.

We lack the courage to address our fate.

Recognition of the frightening strangeness of our existence is not present in our thinktank culture. All we do not know, is never taken into account in our over confident decision making. People are keen to present themselves as capable, in control. Yet we can hardly live with the lack of meaning in our lives and deaths. At best we seek solace in unsound beliefs when what we need is an explanation.

N2 MINDS

Collective memory is flawed. The mind malfunctions. The transfer of encrypted data is impeded by deceit. A contamination of the truth cells. It works like a cancer feeding on the body host. We have broken contracts to forgotten areas, to connections, to contexts. Our mindset trips us up with diversion. We don't remember that we have forgotten our route. In everything we do we are operating in a fractured mind.

An inner eye is kept closed by a sense of impending horror, yet it hints of knowledge of forgotten acts, deeds expressed in a tense termed 'past'. In its stead an intricate and selective screen is posed before us as the present 'reality'. An artifice. Which refutes reconnaissance. Backtracking. Verifying.

As with the routine cull of anarchic members of the genus, many of the critically relevant thought content of previous generations has been erased. Eradicating all that refuses to present the actions undertaken by the overlords in anything but a comforting and benevolent light. That keeps in place the control institutions favoured by the directors. Yet faint scratching remains on the dream tapes, picked up by extra-sensory extraditions. In sleep, images surface when the command system of independent minds are off-guard. When the executive function is in its rest position, the spirit mind surfaces to shock awake awareness. In order to de-program defective modes of perception, it has first to catch the ego off-guard, to dismantle the defensive personality structure, to default the part of the mind that continually arrests entrenchment in a discomfoting realization of awareness of its own tricky caprices. In dreaming the unconscious mind attempts an alert.

M^{INDFIELD}

A move, a mood, an emotional excess. Stolen volumes, territories of the earth. A major share, a minor few. A handful against the rest. Activity incited by monopoly, ambition, occupation. Exploiting the tendency of a person to respond to brutality with hysteria.

Detonations in the mindfields? At the root is loss of patience, the wish unleashed for unhindered selfish determination. A rampaging cell. A distancing from ethics renders systematic invasion of spheres, unimpeded access for exclusive usage. And a moving on to the next green pasture. Blind to cruelty, disrespectful of the coded restraints, certain types of men take pleasure in the torment and destruction of other humans.

Under the spell of powerful aggression, you almost believe them - that what is done is chosen by you. But this is not your rage, and beings never encountered can not be cause for an expression of malevolence. Emotion is personal. It is the emotions of the radiant forager we must contain.

C^{ONJURING WITH MASS}

History is a selection of carefully chosen hearsay, collected by survivors, registered on record by the ruling authorities. Used to consolidate seizure of perception by guile, to hold a whole mankind in psychological bondage. A data store on how a certain position has been acquired and who has attained and guarded it. A tailored presentation where in fact the actuality was always undetectable. Notable for a critical absence of consensus.

Centuries have born fruit of disinheritance, confusion, distress. Worthless organic existence.

A central pivot of our downfall has been the instrument of battle. The staged war operation. Calculations that culminate in martial action steeped in risk and a scurry to repair. A system for solid state results within established paradigms where many accept almost voluntarily the decimation of bonded communities that mirror their own.

When not united against an enemy we still remain in competition. Embedded in circles of people we distrust, re-animating old prejudices, clutching for dead idols and other sad practices not yet identified.

I^{NERTIA}

Inertia as opposed to a group dynamic, does not imply rejection of embodiment but rather waits for a moment of its choosing. A pregnant state in anticipation of a threshold. A culmination point. A shift change. Our mental responses were meant to be unique, unrepeatable and timed.

Use of force upon our mental processes is counter productive. A passive mood must be allowed to be. This is the nature of the oppression exerted by those acting in the active sphere. Typhoons of impatience. They fail to notice the critical regulating function of this interdependency. Equilibrium. Sanity. Evolution.

D^{EEP STATE}

There is a feeling to wake up and not know yourself to be you. Not the you who you always assumed yourself to be. Although you are as like yourself as you remember, still you know there is a lot missing in your mind and you may ask yourself what it might be? You have a notion that the face in the mirror is that of a missing person. In its eyes is a question. Who are you?

An to shout to keep yourself good company. But when you are alone and not even with your self, well there is real frigid you have no answer. You are inexplicable. You can not even parade behind the comfort of your own name. Indeed it is this which makes you most afraid and you may begin for you.

HUMAN RESOURCES

A human child from the moment of its first entry is initiated into the mindscape of the surrounding ambient experiencing discomfort at the turn of events. The newborn absorbs its mood of unrest, its false calm, in quiet desperation. It learns to signal so as not to cause mutual emotional upheaval. A steady feed on sophistry that establishes patterns of repetitious behaviour. In a slow dawning the child's spirit begins its conflict with comprehension.

Unguarded against the threat to its sanity, under the impact of duress, it learns to respond to the call for performance. It remains untaught on how to go about with its own psychological vulnerability. An emotional range is laid to rest. The being slips into a silenced rage.

Man lives in the throes of rebellion against social dependency. Each time he refuses, the wounding politic of abandon is applied. Expulsion to a psychological wilderness with only himself for company. On a pretext of conformity, of normality, in self-defence, man cultivates his manners, keeps key words ready, astringent weapons, yet often slips furtively away into his own thought worlds.

RED ALERT

It seems an automatic mode of behaviour shifts into place whenever a person feels observed, i.e. signals and is signalled to. Many are the protective shields that fall.

We may yet come to trust our feelings instead of the subtle programming we are accustomed to. We are not victims of paranoia. We feel threatened because we are threatened.

We don't correctly analyze by what because we have no idea what to search for, instead we hit out blinded by a condition of debility.

We may yet make the spring to the powers of reason. Accommodate the state of incredulity. Reactivate out-phased memory systems and correct our connections.

The pursuit of happiness?

We are unhappy because we have every reason to be so.

We receive danger signals that over-write careful mental programming. Warnings veering close to communicating the scale of loss of which a wakeful hysteria is the symptom.

THE SPECIMENS

An animal bred in captivity, raised under laboratory conditions is little aware that it is the victim of an experiment. It must nevertheless sense that it has been removed from a medium where it can feed, thrive and exercise its reproductive power. Born in captivity it nevertheless senses that it is caught in a non-benign predicament. We are the birds that have never experienced flight, the cows that can not envision grass. Men with minds that have never ...? What?

We speak the social grammar of helots and kings, surviving the rules of an intimidated species. The knots of a spectacular duplicity.

Track the quiet moments in memory, trace the doings of an absent day. Labouring diligently by the luminescence of machines, invited to wear armour, what we are is a You and an I that never have been. Aspiring to a meeting perhaps to be arranged in the future or past with an actor that resides within - and wants to leave.

Make radiant the night with ancestral trees. Let us venture further into the disturbance. Acting and being acted, thinking and being thought. We who have never known who we are, may yet learn.

Because when we learn to dream, we will go far into death into the implosion of stars, breaking open a thought spectrum that will yield to us what we have always been.

A SICILIAN TRAIN

The man in the railway carriage picks up a newspaper - "La Repubblica". An article attracts his attention. Oh! A terrible accident. The Inter-City to Perugia, a head-on collision with a runaway train. A runaway train? He takes in the morbid details of the report: the outcome of the crash, the identities of the victims, their injuries, their relatives' reactions. And the decisive question: So who was to blame for the violent incident? Was it a deliberate action on the part of the train?

The idea fixing in his mind, he looks out of the window. A face looks back at him, questions in its eyes. And on speeds the locomotive, racing with its living cargo while the landscape keeps pace beside as best it can. A train must not forget what it is and never ever try to leave the rails. Safe only as long as it sticks to the constraints, acknowledges its times and heads for a recognisable destination. A train like a man must remember.

Set in motion in a defined space by outside forces. Speed is what causes the confusion. It's purpose once embarked on, must not be questioned or reversed. Within narrow parameters, like those of life itself, it is equipped to temporarily sustain in time a strict function. Identity, provisions, purpose, shelter and water for one night and half a day, moving through a vacuum, impelled by a push and a pull to go through to a destination. Its structure defines its exigencies, its drives its energies. The extraordinary world rushes past the object, capsulated off in its own schedule, where it suffers the illusion that it is moving. On the inside, isolated travellers sit, strangely cut off from contact with each other, tuned in to other sources, gazing at faces that look back blankly. There is nothing to be done but fret until it is over. Bells ring through the night stations and rare lights flare starkly as the train streaks through. Some go out to the corridor to smoke.

Hours pile on hours and for all you know, the journey is an endless one. Social barriers drop as fatigue and discomfort take over the passengers, constraints of cramped space, the limits of endurance. All herd into an intimate pack for the sake of human company to share that one uncomfortable night together. Protective instincts, humour and warmth intrude into the chill of this xxx. Tolerance replaces hostility and kindness is manifested in minor acts of sacrifice. Unknown strangers exchange and offer friendship. They share food and play cards until they tire and then try to find positions in which to sleep. Large men curl into foetal compositions on the narrow seats. Shoes slip off, clothes fall loosely, flesh exposed vulnerably, abandoned to the powers of rest while the guardians of the dark take watch to the sounds of deep breathing.

Lights burst on and off at the border-crossings with claps of vacuum and slamming doors, dramatic routes to be negotiated. The customs officers and the excise men storm through like troopers with their dogs sniffing for drugs. Harsh awakenings in confusion, intruders, reminders of the ever-present necessity of having to give an account to the authorities. Passports and identity papers are sluggishly produced and reproduced, to justify the validity of one's presence, one's existence and one's life-span. And to prove one's sanity while the major systems of the brain are disconnected or closing down.

In certain areas and provinces, the train overcrowds. Many wait the train, queuing in the night stations laden with cargo and suitcases. The floors become wet with the melting snow from numerous shoes. People climb into the luggage racks and stretch out. No one cares. Nothing matters but unconsciousness. Sometimes, suddenly they all leave. The carriages empty in a mass migration or evacuation and he finds himself alone in the dullness of the electric light.

As he curls into a heap the morning breaks with a burst of sunlight. The rail-lines winding tendrils. The renegade train has reached into the south, racing breathlessly through barriers tearing through to consuming climates, the furnaces of Sicily. The wooden carriage of the train shakes rattling, fragile as a coffin through which the Sirocco blows mercilessly, making the drowsy curtains on the windows move in yellow blasts of dust. The unrelenting air enters eager as ever to initiate the processes of decay and decomposition. Winds chased by sullen storms snake up from the dreamless deserts, encroaching the Italian colonies, the barren crust, volcanic cliffs of the north African coastline. Black lava melts into the boiling sea. The rail-tracks stop, the train takes off. Encased in his sealed container, he fumbles with the door, stumbling, fumbling, falling out into space, a pharaoh journeying through his death. Dead drivers tell no tales. Was it the train?