

## Astronomer

He knows mathematics, never sleeps, and sips  
his silty Turkish dregs accordingly.  
Outside is winter, sepulchral in sleep-  
a meditative wife, aloof as is his,  
busy in meditation. Snow, like her,  
is foreign. Antikythera to  
a different set of stars.

Kepler, he thinks, would also be unmoved  
on seeing snow, or left contemplative-  
that favored ether of astronomy.

Aborted quietude. The cat slinks by,  
its breath impressing on the afternoon  
a cigar's shadow, all the ash of day  
gathered to rest. But ever-restless he  
returns to work. Though stillness suits him best  
to reason is to be at one with God.  
To prove divine. But gravity is known.  
9.8 meters every second squared  
to keep him from the stars. So what remains?  
What bend in space or motion undefined  
could turn his distance to geometry?

Had Fibonacci such a string of days –  
Long, loveless things – he too may have grown sad.  
The cat drops from the fence. His pencil sinks.  
The universe expands and he is gone.

He leaves behind the storm. Barometry  
like melancholy is for better men,  
for meaning-makers, artists, brothers whose  
applause is more than stilted noise. Who feel  
no struggle towards compassion. Who embrace  
the swell of cold, whose calculations are  
for better things than physics, or the stars.  
Who know more than mathematics, and whose days  
are made of nobler things than neon gas  
and bounded infinities circling,  
towards the endings of their number sets.

## Scorpio

The scorpion is a clock with many hands,  
a blister swollen smooth,  
astronomy's Delilah,  
naked and cutting in October's bed.

Ptolemy lay beneath her sixty years  
worshipping the ride of her geocentric hips  
across the arched back of the atmosphere.  
Galileo had her in his cell,  
hands on her breasts.  
Einstein she made love to in the achy cupboard  
of a university office.  
He called her queen of relativity,  
her sloping waist the plain,  
the cleft between her thighs a black hole's well-  
infinitely small and deep.

The scorpion is Persephone in Hell.  
Dante's heroine and Pluto's wife.

The ruler of the ninth house from the sun,  
the underworld,  
the lecher's orbit, cheating gravity,  
a flay of dog-like moons.

The scorpion is a fixed and Martian eye,  
a sweating sting of venomous intent,  
a carapace opened on Andromeda's knee.  
Named in parts like pagan Hecate.

Lesath, the sting, the red, subgiant man  
that left Orion oozing at the ankle,  
weak in axioms and knees.

Shaula, triple stars, make up her tail,  
a courtesan embrace in Herod's hall.  
Three silken women,  
lips on jasmine lips.

The scattered feet are Shinto butterflies,  
geishas swaying home through Kyoto streets  
like nebulous light traverses time,  
at the speed of time.

War and peace entwine to make her brain.  
The sixth sense and the first –  
The insect, guilty Himmler,  
jousting bloody Kennedy, the eagle on the moon.

The scorpion is sex and death,  
Ramses' chariot and Wagner's bones.  
The moon blew out the windows of her house  
and made her woman.  
Tarot is her many-colored dream coat,  
fate her smelling salts,  
her corset negative polarity.

In September you can smell her on the wind  
when snakes are sunning.  
She stings autumn and settles into place,  
the scales upended at her side  
and Samhain's ghost a shell around her throat.

## Chaos Theory

No rest for you, sweet baby.  
You are mustard gas. The pressure of an upturned séance  
or barbarous mythology.  
A gin-soaked god commanding decadence.

All butterflies metamorphose into you  
and pinwheels churn Persepolis to dust.  
Alexandria burns and cyclones echo paper fans.

You, unenvied idol, stack the deck  
with poachers' saws and plagues.  
You sway through shadows, graceful on bound feet  
and at the front door of my umber home  
you bid me "cut. Yourself or otherwise.  
It's Time outside,  
and he's a gambling man."

## **Tartarus**

I.

Tartarus is calling from the east. The mystic  
work of sunrise cracks the earth and cloistered  
night shrugs off the will to be. Day schooners  
forth, its mainsail bellied with idioms.  
Tartarus is calling.

In the age of listening all this goes unheard:

II.

An open-ended question.  
Tartarus splits around the withered, mystic  
fingers of the day. Will-to-be is calling  
from an hour of prayer in unborn cloisters.  
The bay fills up with schooners bringing  
cargo from the east. Idioms and sunrise.

III.

The work of unborn schooners never ends.  
Not while the cracks of the earth go unheard.  
Tartarus stupors, drunk, shouting idioms  
to faceless passers-by. Day fancies itself a mystic  
with all the power of an empty-bellied age.  
To be cloistered ages listening to an art.  
The cracks of earth are calling.

IV.

Calling all  
schooners.  
Cloistered women,  
unheard by  
mystic Tartarus.  
The earth - a ravaged idiom.

V.

Day peels back the skin of idioms to find Tartarus beneath.  
The empty unborn are calling,  
drunken on the open-ended stupor of the will to be mystic.  
Tartarus goes belly-up, parting for the slaving of schooners

caught at hour's rest. The wine of unheard  
prayer ages in their hulls, where the cracks of earth are cloistered.

VI.

Tartarus fills an open-ended grave.  
Nearby the cloister bells churn up old idioms:  
"The cavalry at hour's rest stampedes unheard."  
"If the unborn are in your ears no day will stop them calling."  
"It is a foolish drunk who empties wind from schooners."  
The earth cracks open. The hour of burial is mystic.

VII.

An unborn Friar marvels at the funeral.  
"Today," he says, "no prayer or idiom is calling."  
And still the churchyard fills – unheard – with schooners.

In this way death is mystic.

## **Hadron**

No particles have meaning.  
Not protons in the dusk  
or the roundabout pattern of carousel electrons.

Self collides with self.  
In the wake something like living occurs –  
a supplanted summer, maybe,  
blind inertia.  
Nervures grown stale and still.

I have elsewhere felt this way.  
Outside time no one is listening, no  
water wheel of days pursues existence.

This second-hand otherness once seemed our paradise.  
But it is only static.

A cloth over a birdcage.

## **Prosthesis.**

Splintered photons maraud on your skin,  
trapped in the shallow isthmus of folded knuckle  
and reflected on the salt flat of a fingernail.  
You lie on your stomach, head propped on your hands,  
your palm erect as a frightened soldier  
and your spine a ladder sunken in the glacial clay of your back.

The moon splays over you,  
a lover pale and trembling in undress,  
shedding light like a second skin.

I am silver in her estimation.  
Chrysanthemum among the dull enclave that traps her eye.  
In yours I am offence tessellated with loneliness.

If you were God would you be rid of me?  
Steel and flesh were never meant for tandem flight  
but where could we divide in the past-tense of this empty room?

There is no space between us, no conjunction.  
We are paired particles in a vacuum where all directions are down.  
Ours is a union that murders sleep and erases the memory of touch.

We would eat each other if we could.  
But we are one man, star and stagnant thing.  
Estranged, but rendered in this night  
as similarly white as two burned windows in a photograph.