

Zoo TV

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In November 1993 the Irish rock band U2, played the SFS in Sydney, Australia, during the Zoomerang leg of the group's critically acclaimed Zoo TV Tour. The concert was a sonic and visual masterpiece, a veritable blizzard, a sensory overload. But at the very core, the marrow, of the show, and the setlist of songs, is a private introspection into the themes of love, betrayal, infidelity, reinvention, metamorphosis, and sexuality. This poem, based on a thematic analysis, determines the theme(s) of each song and reinterprets them based on the very personal experience of the protagonist, as a philosopher, husband, artist, political activist, and father. Thus, the completed work allows the character to understand, describe, and interpret their innermost.

Show Opening

Tens of thousands of iron filings,
Sprinkled, small shavings of ferromagnetic material
On a page.
Lights go down,
Standby for Transmission,
System Test.
A screen flicked on,
The fanfare trumpet, an adhan, a call to prayer,
The effect, akin to a bar magnet placed under the page,
A force exerted on each, and every, particle of magnetite,
One and all induced to align itself,
On the magnetic field,
To turn to the Sacred and Profane.
The pulsating pounding beat of the drum,
The palpable low frequency of each blow,
A tactile sensation,
The chest sensing the vibratory pressure.
You my, HJ¹ recruit,
Beat a mechanised rallying call:
That we do not wish to see classes and castes,
Develop among you,
But see one nation.
How can a drummer boy,
Invoke such hysteria, insanity, elation, euphoria,
A paroxysm of anticipated exultation, glee, and joy,
And yet blindness concurrently?
Screen static gives way,
To random video snippets stitched together,
To tell a narrative of a world in:
Dislocation, perturbation, disruption,
In hurly burly, breakdown and hoo-hah.
A sensory heavy handedness.
The induction of imagery:
That a depiction can stimulate, something it is not,
In actuality and contextuality.

¹ In 1933, Hitler Youth (HJ) took over all youth movements in Germany,

Its power to produce, to seduce, to effuse,
To captivate, interpret and project,
The *Triumph Des Willen*.
The artist² creating,
The most beautiful art possible.
An art of fascist aesthetics,
Of religion, power, and unity,
Orchestrated, choreographed, illuminated on a scale,
That exalts glory to the nation.
A work of technical mastery and innovation,
A celebration at a point in time and furcation,
For the purposes of demarcation,
To halt social degeneration,
To embark on elimination,
A societal schism, rupture, separation,
Pruning, removing the unnecessary:
The Hebrew, the gypsy, and homosexual,
The political dissident, and the insane.

Accompanied by a soundtrack,
That bursts forth,
Out of the sound system,
Out of two curved wings,
Number 9, opus number 125³,
The supreme achievement in the history of music,
Performed in four movements:
Transitions from sonata to scherzo and trio,
To minor sixth to a choral finale,
A declaration of universal brotherhood:
The fervour, the zeal,
Deepening, ascending,
*“Do you bow down before Him, you millions?
Do you sense your Creator, O world?”*⁴
The vehemence, the fervidness,
Nearing the height of arousal,
“Seek Him above the canopy of stars!

² Leni Riefenstahl, a German film director, photographer, and actress, known for her seminal role in producing Nazi propaganda.

³ Symphony No. 9 (Beethoven)

⁴ Friedrich Schiller's *Ode to Joy*

He must dwell beyond the stars.”⁵

The savagery, intensifying ferocity and barbarity,

“*Alle Menschen*”

Oh, the climax,

The pleasurable release of the tension,

The gushing,

The simultaneous ejaculation and contraction,

Oh, this ode to joy!

Enter Beelzebub, the demonic dipteran,

The god of the Philistines,

The Lord of the Flies,

A silhouette, against the screen:

The blue sky of the Western world,

A circle of twelve golden mullets,

A union of a people, of perfection and entirety.

One of the dozen stars,

Fall from the azure,

Triggered by presence of this prince of the demons,

His mobile head, with a pair of large compound eyes,

This master of insects

That feasts on excrement,

Cause of human sickness.

Let his dance commence.

⁵ Ibid

Berlin Zoologischer Garten Railway Station [Zoo Station]

Ashen, slate grey, pallid, *low-anchored cloud*⁶
Draped over a city of prostitution and depression,
Suicide, violence, and addiction.
Under the low, squat, Dunlop Reifen, bridge,
The rabbi, and his Alter⁷ seek shelter.
The scholar delivering a sermon,
Engaged in healing, speaking in parables, gathering disciples,
A crusader for all that's good and righteous.
The other, in dualistic opposition,
Knowing darkness is a virtue,
With leashes in hand, tethering lonza, *leone* and *lupa*⁸,
The beasts having escaped from the zoo.
The Amora struggles to have his homily heard,
His words drowned out.
The gathered citizens, the unrepentant souls,
The dull hearted, allured, yielding to the quadruped menagerie,
Capitulating, succumbing, ceding,
To the chained bestial appetites and violence.
The teacher wonders: how to check, offset, and counter?
How to give decibels to his discourse,
Volume to the tales of his father's charity and compassion,
The perils of violation and transgression?
He departs, to ponder, come up with an answer,
*To dream it all up again.*⁹
He returns combat ready,
Sufficiently equipped, trained, and brained,
To engage the enemy: his dissociative identity.
Clad in skin-tight black vinyl,
For this Comeback special,
Opaque blaxploitation goggles,
For this rebirth,
Sexual deportment, mannerisms, and gyrations,

⁶ *Mist* by Henry David Thoreau

⁷ A person with dissociative identity disorder (DID) has two or more distinct identities. The "core" identity is the person's usual personality. "Alters" are the person's alternate personalities.

⁸ Translates: leopard, lion, and she-wolf. The three beasts, taken from Jeremiah 5:6, are thought to symbolize the three kinds of sin that bring the unrepentant soul into one of the three major divisions of Hell.

⁹ December 30, 1989, Dublin's Point Depot, Bono delivers the "*Dream it all up again*" speech

The austere sincerity has succumbed to a hedonistic spectacle.
The question now is will this elaborately staged oration,
Where flocks are gathered,
*Under the bridge downtown,*¹⁰
Succeed in gathering the masses?
If he walks away, will they follow?
The Beatitudes are sung,
He walks out of the tunnel,
Into the light of the Hardenbergstraße,
The giraffe witnesses the master “*followed by great multitudes*”.

¹⁰ *Under the Bridge*, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Songwriters: Michael Peter Balzary / John Anthony Frusciante / Anthony Kiedis / Chad Gaylord Smith. Under the Bridge lyrics © MoeBeToBlame, Universal Music Publishing Group

An Insect of the Order Diptera [The Fly]

A random sequence of words,
Lacking pattern or predictability,
When stitched together,
The desire to discern an intelligible pattern we call fate, art.
To circumvent randomness,
We conjure up, appeal to, the divine.
Fire up that Random Word Generator:

ARCHITECTURE

PARADOX

ABANDON

DISTRIBUTE

LEMON

WHILE

NUANCE

UNCERTAINTY

GALLERY

MISERY

DENSITY

DISORDER

YOUTH

PURSUIT

WRESTLE

LANDSCAPE

HIDDEN

IS

JOURNEY

URETHRA

DIPLOMACY

BELLY

MISSILE

MORE

TRUSTEE

PASSAGE

SHIFT

EMPIRICAL

CHEW

PROABABLE

FLOURISH

SYLLABLE

DEFAULT

BERRY

HYPOTHESIZE

IN

STILL

EXECUTION

CONCRETE

HOMOSEXUAL

VERTICAL

GENERAL

ABSORPTION

EUROPE

IRONY

VARIABLE

CATEGORY

COMPLETE

ANGER

CULTURE

FINAL

DIET

LIBERAL

DISORDER

INTERFACE

UNION

FOOL

ORBIT

REALISM

IS

BRILLIANCE

REPTILE

INSTRUCTION

MIGRATION

NODE

IMPOSSIBLE¹¹

TACTIC

MONUMENT

DISPLACE

GUTTER

PARTICLE

¹¹ Mathematician Theodore Motzkin stated, “*while disorder is more probable in general, complete disorder is impossible*”.

A “Double Octave Sweep” on the Guitar Riff [Even Better Than the Real Thing]

Inside a downtown diner¹²,
Phillies 5¢ cigars,
Two women and a bartender,
In the midnight hour,
The fluorescent light leaks out,
Through the glass exterior,
Pours onto the deserted streetscape,
Seeps into a city of lonesomeness and facelessness,
Bleeding into a darkness of angst,
Draining into a meaningless and absurd world,
Where each, and every, citizen,
Can sense trepidation, the disorientation, confusion, and anxiety.

Sitting at the bar,
The daughter of Eros and Psyche¹³,
The personification of immoderation,
Of pleasure, enjoyment, and delight,
She sits there inebriated,
Logic and reason abandoned,
Enslaved to the chains of libido,
Imagining the fusion of two human bodies,
Of the carnality, animality, sensuality,
Of two figures interlocked
Into one bodily mass of harmonious physicality.
Her companion,
Sprung fully formed from the forehead of Zeus,
The embodiment of reason, wisdom, and war¹⁴.
The virgin deity,
With majesty, grace, power, and authority,
She sits there unapproachable,
Love and passion abandoned,
Bound by the laws of logic and virtue,
Imaging the severance of head from the heart,
The obedience to integrity, honesty, morality,

¹² *Nighthawks* by Edward Hopper

¹³ In Greek mythology, Hedone is personified as a goddess of pleasure, enjoyment, and delight.

¹⁴ In Greek mythology, Athena is personified as a goddess of reason, wisdom, and war.

Of the singular rational mind,
Guiding the character in accordance with nature, reason, and veracity.

The two sit there, face-to-face,
Like detective and criminal¹⁵,
In calm confrontation,
In discourse soaked with subtext,
Each line of the dialogue,
Peels away a layer of veneer,
To reveal the very essence, the marrow.
And in doing so,
A slow realisation,
That they are diametrically opposing,
Yet concurrently coupled,
By the knowledge,
That the times we are living in,
Drag us away from a higher state of being,
When people no longer look for the truth,
But instant gratification¹⁶.

¹⁵ *Heat* (1995 film), written and directed by Michael Mann. The American diner scene where Al Pacino's detective Vincent Hanna finally comes face-to-face with Robert De Niro's criminal Neil McCauley

¹⁶ Lead vocalist Bono explained the lyrics to Even Better Than the Real Thing "It was reflective of the times [the band] were living in, when people were no longer looking for the truth, [they] were all looking for instant gratification" in McCormick, Neil (ed), (2006). *U2 by U2*. HarperCollins Publishers.

The Leatherworker [Mysterious Ways]

In the internal courtyard of the bourgeois mansion,
The scent of the hibiscus, bougainvillea, and oleander,
The pomegranate flowers,
The beautiful young jinn¹⁷
Dances around the water fountain,
To seduce, to madden, to kill,
Preying on the guest,
The artist that has arrived,
To find both spiritual and intellectual inspiration.
The opium induced hypnosis,
The analgesic relief, to rid of the melancholia,
The recumbent literati,
Watches, semi-conscious,
The sheen of her tanned skin,
The undulations of her hips,
The percussive modulation of her torso,
The shimmies, shivers, and vibrations,
That fluid, sinuous movement,
Continuous motion,
As if mirroring each stroke,
Of Maghreb script,
Of the pen and brush
In the hands of a Sufi calligrapher.
Curvaceous and voluptuous,
She moves in a consorting rhythm,
Echoing, the flow like curvilinear ink strokes,
Of the writer.
She absorbs in the rhythm and pours out life,
The pen, the brush, tablah, the oud and her are one.
And now the lyricist lays unresponsive,
Oblivious to all around him,
Her mission is completed,
And with that she exits,
Escaping through the canals of the historic city.

¹⁷ Aicha Qandicha, the female mythological figure in northern Moroccan folklore. One of a number of folkloric characters who are similar to jinn, but have distinct personalities, she is typically depicted as a beautiful young woman who has the legs of a hoofed animal such as a goat or camel.

The rhythmic clip-clop,
Sounds the hasty retreat of the licentious dancer,
She runs in joyous abandon,
Elated and giddy, exultantly proud of having killed the writer.
But then has enters the Suuq Dabbaghin¹⁸
She screeches to a halt,
To watch a hullabaloo,
A gathering of multitudes,
Crying out: *hosanna*,
*Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!*¹⁹

Rumours abound, that a mystic poet,
From Benares,
The Bharat city of pilgrimage, death, and mourning,
A guru, who has risen amongst the Sufi saints, sadhus, and ascetics,
Has walked 10,000 kilometres,
For the triumphal entry to Fez,
To liberate untouchables,
To eliminate caste,
To abrogate social discord.
He has arrived, and with the power of divine word,
Will create a *land without sorrow*.
Overlooking the round stone vats,
Each filled to the brim,
With white solution of animal urine, faeces, quicklime, salt, and water,
With poppy, indigo, henna dyes,
The pungent, permeating stench of piss, rotting flesh and stagnant water.
The congregated, clinging from every conceivable vantage point,
Hush has the shoe cobbler saint sits,
Cross legged, on a seat of small branches laid down for him,
Humble attire, beads in hand.
He looks out across the tannery,
Past the madrasa and the river,
Across the medina quarter of the city,
To the horizon and beyond.
A palpable, almost tangible anticipatory silence.

¹⁸ Tanners Quarter

¹⁹ Among the many prophecy-related statements shouted out by the crowds in Jesus's triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

And so, the untouchable, leatherworker saint, who had been exalted and elevated,
Where all castes came and bowed at his feet,
Now extols the Lord,
Sings the kirtan²⁰ of his praises.
The amassed array of the assembled,
At this animal hide workshop,
Listen on *how to escape*,²¹
Of *mountain and peacock; lamp and wick; of I and you*,²²
Witnessing poverty, and how *in all things exists the Lord*.²³
And in that moment of surrender,
Has the scent of sandalwood wafts across the district,
Aicha, the temple harlot, is heard proclaiming: *Jai Gurdev*!²⁴

²⁰ Sanskrit word that means “narrating, reciting, telling, describing” of an idea or story

²¹ *How to Escape*, poem by Ravidas, in Nirmal Dass (Author, Translator, Introduction) (2018). Songs of the Saints from the Adi Granth, State University of New York Press

²² *If You are a Mountain*, poem by Ravidas, in Ibid

²³ *When I existed*, poem by Ravidas, in Ibid

²⁴ Followers of Ravidas, Ravidassia, employ the greeting “*Jai Gurdev*” meaning “*hail the god-like teacher*”

Bison [One]

In the womb,
An estranging cavernous subterranean world²⁵,
A foetus, a record of religious ritual,
Expressed and communicated,
An unborn child, a conduit to connect to the fathomable,
To that which keeps us secured and nourished,
To celebrate the fertility of the land.
Or it may merely be the desire, the human curiosity
To beautify their surroundings.
In this divine cavern,
The pilgrim will find connotation and consistency,
Those who are adrift will be anchored in this world,
Will find meaning and coherence to their lives.
Look up to the ceiling,
And see the seed,
That will in seventeen millennia,
Spawn the foundational work of the High Renaissance,
That is the depiction of Creation, Downfall, and Fate of Humanity,
A separation of light from darkness,
The creation of the Sun, Moon and the Planets,
Separation of Land and Water,
The Creation of Adam and Eve and their Fall and Expulsion
The Sacrifice of Noah, the Great Flood, and his Drunkenness.
Look up to the ceiling in this dark Iberian cave
And view the work of the artist, our ancestor,
The sublime portraits of bison,
Pigments of ochre and charcoal,
These compelling Paleolithic images of bovinæ, even-toed ungulates of Altamira.
These documented images relay,
Perhaps a way,
For the hunter to connect,
With the spirit of their prey,
A summons, a charm, an invocation of magic.

²⁵ Cave of Altamira

Let us now travel in time,
Back ten centuries,
To the broad expanses of flatland,
The prairie, steppe, and grassland,
The land of coyote and the cougar,
The pronghorn, elk, and mustang horse.
Above them all the endless Uranian blue skyway,
Domain of the ferruginous hawk and quail,
Meadowlark and golden eagle.
In the thick, tall needlegrass,
Crouching Plains Indian,
Bison hide on his back,
Bellows a distress call,
An imitation of a calf in trouble,
A faux imploration, an ersatz petition for help,
A fabricated sense of danger,
He begins to run.
In the thick tall needlegrass,
Crouching Plains Indians,
Robed as wolves,
Spring to their feet,
Behind the herd,
And give chase to these noble creatures,
These creatures endowed with power,
These bison, that roam, in harmony with the *Great Mother*.
Crouching Plains Indian runs
Towards the escarpment,
Towards to the edge of the precipice,
Crouching Plains Indians drive,
They marshal, shepherd the headlong rush,
The thunderous hooved flight, frenzied charge,
Towards the vertical rock wall,
The awaiting fall.
The buffalo jump,
Tumbling, plummeting over the cliff,
Into the abyss, the hollowness,
The brutality of communal hunting.
And in the carnage of the kill site,

In the bloodbath of cadavers,
Midst of the massacre, amongst the multitude of carcasses,
The corpse of a White Buffalo,²⁶
A death that will haunt this generation.

²⁶ The Sioux consider the birth of a white buffalo to be the return of *White Buffalo Calf Woman*, their primary cultural prophet, and the bringer of their “Seven Sacred Rites”.

Unchained Melody

*“Woah, my love, my darling
I’ve hungered for your touch
A long, lonely time
And time goes by so slowly
And time can do so much
Are you still mine?
I need your love
I need your love
God speed your love to me.”*²⁷

²⁷ *Unchained Melody*, Songwriters: Alex North / Hyman Zaret, © Unchained Melody Pub LLC.

The Garden of the Saint-Paul Hospital [Until the End of the World]

The *fou roux*²⁸ artist,
Experiencing hallucinations,
An assault of voices in his head,
Misinterpreted by him as mystical revelations,
And after an earlier altercation,
A squabble, a spat, clash with fellow painter,
With straight razor in hand,
Slices off left ear,
Presents amputated lug to harlot,
As a keepsake, a memento for her to remember him by,
And the following day is hospitalized²⁹.

The doomed artist genius,
Disposition drowned in dissolution,
Isolation, abandonment,
His body having relinquished physical freedom,
Imprisoned by despair, interned by a sense of failure,
Battles his personal demons.
Yet to retain his sanity,
He looks out onto the asylum grounds,
Bound within the walls,
A no-mans-land, between the cell and the wide world.
And in transient lucid moments,
His mind takes flight,
His mind, like a lark ascending,
Like a butterfly fluttering in the air,
Seeking out beautiful subjects,
To render in paint on canvas,
Using a language of strokes and swirls.
But what he sees is not born out of his imagination,
What he sees is not an account of any dream,
Or the manifestation induced by medication,
It is actual, concrete, and real.
The artist, his palette blazed with colour,

²⁸ The redheaded madman.

²⁹ On 8 May 1889, Van Gogh reports for treatment at the asylum Saint-Paul-de-Mausole in Saint-Rémy

Sees overgrown garden,
Shards of light shining through the shaded cedar,
Pink and purple pine trunks,
Other ivy-covered trees,
Exuberantly flowering violet irises and lilac,
Burst out of a blood orange earth,
Dancing in an ectoplasm zephyr.
Poppies and Butterflies,
Dandelions and beetles in bouquets of roses.
The force that drives the nature framed in his eyes,
Drives through him and in doing so,
Will nourish, and at the same time, destroy him.

The artist one evening,
Beholds under a tree,
Sat in solitude on stone bench,
A fellow patient “*overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death*”³⁰
A rabbi muttering,
Slouched, facedown,
Beseeching with his father,
Pleading that a cup of suffering be taken from him,
“*Yet not as I will, but as you will*”.³¹
The artist watches transfixed.
The rabbi clearly agitated,
In agony, springs to feet,
Throws up his hands,
Shouting that the time had come,
That he, as *Son of Man*, must be delivered to the sinners.
The artist steps forward,
Breaking the rabbi’s concentration,
Who makes a supplication:
“*Do what you came for, friend*”.³²
The artist steps forward and takes the rabbi by the hand,
And they both take a seat,
And in utter silence,
Both men sit and understand,

³⁰ Matthew 26: 38, New International Version

³¹ Ibid

³² Matthew 26: 50, New International Version

That kismet to give, or to withhold, is in neither's command.
The artist prompts the rabbi to look up and see,
The wonderous, the celestial,
The Indian yellow aeolipile constellations,
Those Catherine wheels,
As they spin, and eddy, about their axis,
In the divine and infinite ultramarine, nocturnal sky.
The rabbi spellbound by the timeless and universal beauty,
This vision beyond his comprehension.
His thought, perception, reason, and emotion,
Capitulates to the ethereal and dreamlike,
And in that moment of surrender,
The Rabbi sighs, "*Thank you, Artist!*" and kisses him.

There's Power in a Union [New Year's Day]

Feeding the greed of the behemoth,
Is attained through the famine of the laborer,
Is got through pitting workers against each other,
Is realised through chaining each sister,
Striking down every brother.
Yet cohesion, the glue that binds us together,
That empowers us to cut the tether,
To collectively endeavor,
The revolutionary measure,
To cut down the capitalist colossus,
Is in the power of a union.
Singing power to the worker
Power to the worker
Power to the worker
Power to the worker, right on.

And this is the Proletariat
2, 3, 4
Workers, secessio plebis,
Workers, coniungere,
Workers, workers,
Oh “*Workers of the world, unite!*”³³

³³ “One of the rallying cries from The Communist Manifesto (1848)

The rolling footpath,
 Scoring the valleys, moors and hills,
 Etching this ethereal landscape,
 An origin and evolution of a topography,
 Moulded ten millennia ago,
 By glaciation, a geomorphic process,
 Of erosion, deposition,
 An abrasive physical, chemical and biological narrative,
 Leaving behind stretch marks on the terrain,
 The scars of birth.

Above,
 The fiery disk veiled by a diaphanous vapour,
 Converts this physical panorama,
 Into to the intangible, an energy,
 A material world metamorphosed into mirage,
 Corporal details of upland hill farms,
 Hay meadows and wild moorlands,
 Vanish into a ghostly translucent membrane,
 Dissolving the concrete into a wraithlike realm,
 The cosmic order delineated, demarcated,
 Into the material and the moral,
 Mechanistic and the mystical,
 A universal, natural law unveiled.

As the sun warms, the mist lifts,
 And the instilled serenity and beauty evanesces.
 For in this natural amphitheatre,
 Nature's performance,
 As water, bound by the laws of gravity,
 Drawn vertically,
 With the rush of the plummeting river,
 The swelling, upsurge of sound,
 Loudening in force, volume, intensity,
 As it reaches a climax, crescendo, apogee,
 Nature's Scream,³⁴

³⁴*The Scream*, Edvard Munch

An expression for human fear.
It amplifies an overwhelming sense,
Of anguish and melancholy, an uncertainty,
Liquidating the tranquillity, the equanimity.

The mind shuts the eyes,
Dials the volume down,
The consciousness transcending the experience of the here and now,
The emergence of a vivid visuospatial imagery:
In the rolling landscape of South Yorkshire,
The hills, escarpments,
Broad valleys and moors,
Pockmarked with evidence of mans' industrial endeavour,
In farmed open country,
A sheepdog trial on the 15th of April 1989³⁵.
Border Collie and handler,
*Come-Bye, Come-Bye*³⁶,
*Away/Away to Me*³⁷,
As the dog circles the sheep, herding them to his symbiotic partner.
The associate barks the command:
*In here, In here*³⁸,
A demand that the canine
Shed, separate the flock, into two.
Orders for corralling are bellowed, the sheep to be driven into pens.
But it is at this point, this juncture, this fatal moment in time,
Where the speaker communicates a flawed instruction,
The hearer heeding to this error ridden direction,
Manoeuvres the second herd,
Into the already filled cage holding the first.
The assembled crowd look on at the impending, unfolding tragedy,
The shepherd, his body in freeze response,
A disconnection from what's happening,
The grief-stricken baaing of distress,
Maaing of pain, agony and angst.
And when all has fallen silent,

³⁵ The date of the Hillsborough disaster, a fatal human crush during a football match at Hillsborough Stadium in Sheffield, South Yorkshire, England

³⁶ Circle the sheep in a clockwise direction

³⁷ Circle the sheep in an anti-clockwise direction

³⁸ Used during shedding to separate the sheep

In the carnage under the skies of God's Own Country,
Ninety-four lambs lay slaughtered.
Deaths that will haunt this generation.

The mind opens the eyes,
Dials the volume up,
The thunderous blast of the waterfall,
Is now added to by the bleating of ninety-seven lambs,
A sensory overload³⁹, an overstimulation,
Stop pressurin' me, just stop pressurin' me,
*Stop pressurin' me, make me wanna scream*⁴⁰
The body distorts, reflexively reacting to the inner and outer *screams*,
Eyes widen, nostrils flare, elliptic mouth,
Hands clasped over ears,
*Stop pressurin' me, make me wanna scream*⁴¹
*A blood and tongues of fire*⁴² sky above.
The blue-black river adding to the din,
Beseeching, commanding:
*Take time*⁴³,
*That'll do*⁴⁴.
And by falling, tumbling, plunging in,
Upon entry, in that instance of unison,
Where the body and nature become one,
The river continues its course,
Purifying, cleansing the land,
Carrying away all impurity.

³⁹ The musical composition and lyrical concept for the track *Numb*, on U2's 1993 *Zooropa* album, were inspired by the theme of sensory overload.

⁴⁰ *Scream* lyrics Songwriters: Terry Lewis / James Harris III / Michael Joe Jackson / Janet Jackson © Mijac Music, Kmr Music Royalties LLC

⁴¹ Ibid

⁴² *The Scream* is based on an experience Munch had when he was walking with two friends in Ekebergåsen on the outskirts of Christiania. He described his experience in several texts: "... *I paused, feeling exhausted, and leaned on the fence - there was blood and tongues of fire above the blue-black fjord and the city.*..."

⁴³ Slow down

⁴⁴ Stop and return to the shepherd

Marion [Angel. Of Harlem]

The *Lady in Satin*, having been fleeced of all worldly possessions,
Devoid of all human relations,
Her mortal body bruised and blemished by sin,
Is on her final journey of pilgrimage,
Through the crossroads of America.
And on this road to redemption,
She is accompanied by her faithful Mister,
Her heart full of compassion for him,
His one of devotion for her.
Eleanora and her boxer,
A faithful and requited kinship,
A bond of unconditional and untragic love.
Even though she walks through the valley of the shadow of death,
She fears no evil,
For he is with her,
Her companion comforts her.

As Lady Day and Mister stroll,
An angel of the Lord appears to her in a blazing fire,
Out of a Sugar Maple tree⁴⁵,
All aflame, yet not consumed.
She hypnotised, mesmerised, at the marvellous sight,
Turns aside,
When Indra calls out to her from the blazing tree,
*“Come to me because you are weary and burdened,
And I will give you rest,
But there is no place in Heaven for persons with dogs,
So, abandon this hound, for there is no cruelty in this act,
No unkindness in severing this pact,
Forsake this animal and you will not perish,
I will grant you an eternal life you will cherish.”*
But Eleanora refuses to perpetrate this unholy deed,
She rebuffs this promise of salvation,
Rejects to be saved from this damnation,
To cast off, to forsake, the one that is devoted to her.

⁴⁵ Some Rastafari believe that the burning bush was cannabis.

On bended knees,
Hands clasped in pray,
Dog in lap,
A sorrowful Ms Fagan cries,
Like a sobbing, weeping Madonna,
Vowing never to surrender such a one,
Till her own life is at an end.
And a single teardrop of blood,
Rolls from her cheeks,
Falls, to anoint the head of the devoted boxer.
Indra watching and listening to the lamentation,
Moved by the anguish of the scene,
In an instant, transforms the dog, into Billie's father⁴⁶.

As Lady Day and Clarence⁴⁷ stroll,
Onwards on this pilgrim's passage,
He sniffs danger in the air,
A sense that parent and child need to get off the trail,
Into the river,
To evade the slavecatchers' dogs.
He turns to daughter and sings:
"Wade in the water
Wade in the water, children
Wade in the water
*God's gonna trouble the water"*⁴⁸,
An explicit instruction,
That they, as negroes, need to avoid capture,
If they are to continue their final path, their way to freedom.
In the moonlit night,
Hiding on the banks of the tributary,
As the black bobbing shallow water passes by,
The pa and progeny,
Peer through the lined sycamore and cottonwood trees,
Gazing at an assembled mob,

⁴⁶ In the epic Mahabharata, the Pandavas, having given up all their belongings and ties, made their final journey of pilgrimage to the Himalayas accompanied by a dog. Yudhishtira was the only one to reach the mountain peak in his mortal body, because he was unblemished by sin or untruth. On reaching the top, Indra asked him to abandon the dog before entering the Heaven. But Yudhishtira refused to do so, citing the dog's unflinching loyalty as a reason. It turned out that the dog was his godfather, Dharma. The story symbolized that dharma follows you until the end.

⁴⁷ Clarence Halliday, the father of the singer Billie Holiday.

⁴⁸ The lyrics were first published in 1901 in New Jubilee Songs as sung by the Fisk Jubilee Singers.

A spectacle lynching that will have the propensity,
To burn into their memories for the rest of their lives.
The two, in silence, watch the trauma,
The brains lagging what the eyes were seeing,
Shipp and Smith⁴⁹, suspended lifeless from the boughs,
Hanging taut, in the trees of the courthouse yard,
The pendulous bodies strung up over the feverish, frenzied crowd,
A horde of white men, women, and children,
Hour upon hour, multiplying by the thousands,
Driven by a neurotic, ravenous appetite,
Hollering and howling,
Bellowing and bawling,
Gawking at human suffering.
An outburst of mayhem,
As Cameron⁵⁰ takes to the stage,
Beaten and dragged,
Readied to be hung,
The baying for blood,
The yammering and yattering,
Blabbing and the burbling,
Confirming the teenage nigger,
As the third rapist and the shooter.
As preparations are underway,
For the third hanging on Calvary of the night,
The Innocent cries out:
*“Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?”*⁵¹
Hushed prattle and chatter,
Twaddle and natter,
Rumours that the negro is summoning Elijah,
The miracle performer, resurrector,
The bringer of fire down from the sky.

Down at the riverbank,
Sycamore trees,
Unfix their earth-bound roots,

⁴⁹ J. Thomas Shipp and Abraham S. Smith were young African American men who were murdered in a spectacle lynching by a mob of thousands on August 7, 1930, in Marion, Indiana.

⁵⁰ A third African American suspect, 16-year-old James Cameron, had also been arrested and narrowly escaped being killed by the mob; an unknown woman and a local sports hero intervened, and he was returned to jail.

⁵¹ “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

Slide apart to reveal,
The Angel of Harlem,
This celestial intermediary,
This servant of God.
The assembled turn and fall silent,
Each star in the Indiana night sky is switched off,
One by one, the light dims,
The Anemoi sit at her feet,
All movement having ceased,
A shard of moonlight illuminating her face,
She begins to sing:
*“Southern trees bear a strange fruit,
Blood on the leaves and blood at the root,
Black body swinging in the Southern breeze,
Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees.”⁵²*
On her final note,
All lights go out,
Darkness blinding the eyes of the throng,
And when the lights return,
Holiday has gone,
The crowd subdued,
The Guiltless is rescued,
Escorted to a jail out of town.

⁵² Songwriters: Lewis Allan, Strange Fruit lyrics © Wb Music Corp., Music Sales Corporation, Edward B Marks Music Company, Marks Edward B. Music Corp., Edward B. Marks Music Co., Dwayne Wiggins Pub Designee.

Black Sisters [Stay (Faraway, So Close)]

The darkness displaced
By a coruscation of light,
Revealing in that immediate instant,
A lush botanical bounty,
A lush jungle of vegetation,
Strained by the tempest,
Sloping in hues of yellow, orange, green, brown and red,
A raging gale,
Slanting, silver streaks of lashing rain⁵³.

And in a flash,
Her world is once again plunged into blackness,
A sudden darkness of death,
Trapped within the confines of the two-dimensional canvas,
Her framed domestic world.
She, the prey, can sense the presence,
An impending danger,
On autonomic alert, her pupils dilate,
Pounding heart,
Tightness in the chest, accelerated breathing,
Her senses a heightened surveillance system.

And in a second fork of electrostatic discharge,
That brilliant bolt of visible light,
That illuminates, irradiates,
The amorphous world given form,
She looks for the predator,
Amongst the mother-in-law's tongue, rubber plants.
Is it veiled in the verdant blades of grasses,
Prowling, preparing to pounce,
To engage in killing her?
And in a flash,
Her world is once again plunged into blackness,
A sudden darkness of death.

⁵³ *Tiger in the Storm* by Henri Rousseau

In room forty-three,
Bibaa and Nicole⁵⁴,
Praying hands clasped together,
Kneeling in front and peering up at the canvas,
The hanging which is harbouring a night.
Greta Moll,
A mother and child,
Gwen Jones,
Emile Bernard,
And the peasant woman,
Join the two black sisters.
They plead and intreat,
Entreat and implore,
A sincerity from the depth of their hearts,
A petition, invocation, benediction,
For her, the quarry,
To step out of the canvas,
To take refuge,
From a foreboding fear,
Escape an ominous terror.

And in a third instantaneous stroke of plasma,
In a penetrating blaze of white light,
The wiry whiskered hunter is illuminated,
He enters right stage,
Into his, and her, conjugal world.
Dense and heavy,
Orange and brown pelage,
Almost imperceptible,
In the long grass,
In the vertical patterns of light and shade,
Feline camouflaged by foliage
Wide eyed and perched,
That sense of immediacy and movement,
Amongst the myriad green shades of flora.
How to survive this threatening situation?

⁵⁴ Bibaa Henry (aged 46) and Nicole Smallman (aged 27) were two black sisters who were murdered in Kingsbury, north-west London, England, on 7 June 2020.

Her increased heart rate and respiration,
Should she freeze, flight, fight,
Fright, flag or faint?
And in a heartbeat,
The connubial canvas,
Once again pitched into a world without light.

Room forty-three falls silent,
Bibaa and Nicole embrace,
A lamentation, a harrowing grief.
Knowing hers was a life suffering from astraphobia,
Dreading the lightening,
Just as much as she feared the tiger.
But why did she never leave?
Why did she never step out from the canvas?
Step into the safe space of the gallery room?
Was it danger and fear,
A shame, embarrassment or denial,
A trauma and low confidence,
Did she simply not know how to ask for help?
Whispers, rumours that murmur,
Undertones in the air,
That she had said when he hit her, she didn't mind
Because when he hurt her, she felt alive
Is that what it was?

And then in a fourth, and final, bolt from the heavens,
That instant release of a gigajoule of energy,
Branched channels of lightning,
Fiat lux,
Illume the exotic rainforest that has now been cleared,
Flattened, trampled, levelled.
And in the centre of the painting,
Larger than life,
Devi, the Mother, the Divine Feminine,
The Eternal Truth,

The creator, preserver, and destroyer of the universe⁵⁵,
Riding a tiger,
Riding the apex predator,
That senseless creature of anger.
Her eyes fixed on the viewer,
Readied to unleash her divine wrath,
Against the wicked,
For the liberation of the oppressed,
She will bring forth destruction to empower creation.

⁵⁵ Durga, in Hinduism, a principal form of the Goddess, also known as Devi and Shakti, associated with protection, strength, motherhood, destruction and wars.

Satellite of Love

“Satellite's gone up to the skies

Things like that drive me out of my mind

I watched it for a little while

I like to watch things on Zoo TV

Satellite of love

Satellite of love

Satellite of love

*Satellite of*⁵⁶

⁵⁶ *Satellite Of Love*, lyrics by Lou Reed © Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC

Father and Son [Dirty Day]

Through the entrance courtyards on the rue Bonaparte,
The then chapel,
And once monastery cloister,
Now residence to the learned society,
We find walking side by side,
The appointed professor⁵⁷ of academicism,
And the radical from Le Havre⁵⁸.
The classic realist and the impressionist,
Contest and deliberate,
Mediate and contemplate,
The schism, the division.

The champion of the Classical,
The Pompeian, the Orientalist,
Merciless in judgment,
Critical of *inaneities*, the *junk*,
Censorious of those violating canvases,
That fail to adhere to the rules of tradition.
He proclaims that there are values that need defending,
Principles of endurance and altruism,
A calling, of patriotism,
Solemnness, deed and reason.
He names the preeminent painter⁵⁹,
That devotee of the Revolution, friend of Maximilien,
Cites his oeuvres of classical austerity and severity,
Heightened sensitivity,
In moral harmony with the dying days of the Ancien Regime.
The conservative critic turns to the activist from Giverny,
And recalls the masterpiece,
That portrays the pledge to fight the Curiatii,
Where the Eternal City battle the metropolis nestled in the Alban Hills,
A combat to be fought by a set of triplets from each side,
He will, with his two brothers⁶⁰, take the pledge⁶¹ of allegiance to Rome,

⁵⁷ Jean-Léon Gérôme

⁵⁸ Claude Monet

⁵⁹ Jacques-Louis David

⁶⁰ Jean-Léon Gérôme was appointed as one of the three professors at the École des Beaux-Arts.

⁶¹ The Roman legend, *Oath of the Horatii*

Obey a father's call,
A patriotic duty,
An oath made with an intensity and clarity of purpose,
Deaf to the lamentations of heartbroken women.
And in the battle, he will lose both his siblings,
Return to slay his sister who dare,
Besmirch the name of the City of Seven Hills,
Because fidelity to civic duty outvies all familial bonds.
This is neoclassic!
Devoid of all frivolity,
And decadence, of self-indulgence.
The disciple of academic painting takes a vow,
An undertaking of nihilism.
"I base my conduct on what I find useful,
And in these days the most useful thing I can do is repudiate,
And so, I repudiate,
Everything,
Everything that is not in concord,
In unity and harmony with classical antiquity."
And with indescribable composure he repeats:
*"Everything!"*⁶²

The irreverent, impertinent, atheist artist,
The man *who owed everything to* Boudin,
Whose imaginative output,
Is viewed by the Salon
Of having no edification value,
Prepares himself to retort,
A response, rejoinder, a riposte.
Human perception and experience,
Immediacy and movement,
Optics and light,
Laid down in each, and every, dab of paint.
Those momentary and transient effects of sunlight
Rendering on canvas that fleeting quality of luminosity.
Liberated from content and style,
Free and unfettered from monumental tableaux,

⁶² *Fathers and Sons*, Ivan Turgenev

Of mythology and religion,
 Of the art of Greece and Rome,
 Unfastened from anatomy and geometry,
 Untied from the lives and heroics,
 Of emperors and kings,
 Of legendary deities, heroes, and creatures.
 Released from the eternal fables and sagas,
 Those narratives of *old wives' chatter*.⁶³
 Let us now turn and gaze towards the ordinary and modern,
 Let us find there a morality, a virtue, an aesthetic,
 In the lives of the care-free bourgeois, proletarian, and the peasantry,
 And even amongst the completely desolate and objectively poor,
 Let us record the value and worth,
 For each, and every, narrative should be visible and have voice,
 Let us see a shower of comets when a beggar dies,
 Just as in the past "*the heavens themselves blaze forth the death of princes*."⁶⁴
 And let us take off these golden tinted glasses
 That restrained, and muted colour,
 And now see this exuberant freely brushed paint vibrate,
 An intensity that zings, blings and sings on the canvas.

The two protagonists,
 Have walked, and talked, side by side,
 To the Jardin du Luxembourg,
 And along the treelined promenade,
 The Les Pompier, now tiring,
 Fatigued by the physical and philosophical exertion,
 Looks and see the *effets de soir*,
 That play of sunset light in the dusk,
 Twilight grated through tree branches,
 The rippling shadowy effects,
 A world thrown into hues of purples, blues, blacks, and greys,
 Yet a harmony and balance,
 And a sudden sense of insight through the divine,
 The classic realist realises and addresses the impressionist:
 "*Sometimes the children of the house show the right path to the elders of the house*"⁶⁵

⁶³ Plato's criticism of the Homeric mythological tradition

⁶⁴ Calpurnia, in Julius Caesar, Shakespeare (1599)

⁶⁵ Dialogue from the *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham*, 2001 film written and directed by Karan Johar

Nicaragua Jaguar [Bullet the Blue Sky]

A world of dense tangled vegetation,
A closed continuous tree canopy,
An environ that evolved and adapted over millennia,
To camouflage the carnivorous felid with spotted rosette coat.

This revered Mesoamerican god,
It's transient ability of moving between earth and the spirit realm,
Rapacious, either in the trees or water,
Prowling in both the diurnal and the nocturnal.

It silently stalks through its sovereign Fascist state,
Solitary and territorial in that impenetrable jungle,
A dark, still and humid world,
A dominion designed for its advantage, a palatinate at its mercy.

But what we have learnt from the Homeric poems,
Is that the Gods are not immortal nor forever young,
They are impermanent, they are subject to suffering like you and I,
They may ultimately be subject to death.

And so, *he who kills with one leap*⁶⁶,
*This mighty hunter before the Lord*⁶⁷,
Who kills where it pleases because it is all his,
Will find that Creation won't always bend to his will.

And so, over and across on another continent,
On a Milanese runway, she swaggers and struts, that graceful stature and gait,
Poise of a cat, dressed in haute couture,
Draped, and adorned, with the pelt of a Nicaragua jaguar.

⁶⁶ The term Jaguar, or Yaguar in the native tongue, literally means, "*he that kills with one leap*"

⁶⁷ Nimrod, the son of Cush, a great-grandson of Noah, described as a king in the land of Shinar (Mesopotamia).

Spanish Steps [Running to Stand Still]

Atop the *Scalinata di Trinità dei Monti*,
The Trinity of the Mounts,
This late Renaissance titular church,
This Roman minster of Bourbon Kings,
Its two balanced bell towers,
And the hieroglyphic graffitied *Obelisco Sallustiano*,
Set against azure of the ether above the eternal city,
From which the French Cardinal,
Looks down the stairway,
Looks down to see slumped at the base of the stone step staircase,
Unbeknownst to him the atheist Romantic.

The self-exiled lyricist,
His breathing having slowed, tiny pupils,
Near to losing consciousness,
Looks up the slope to see the sublime,
An initial mystical and joyous embrace between the body and the soul,
Akin to the union between nature and man,
He yields to the oscillations between the earthly and ethereal,
Eventually capitulating, as the sweet corrosives stream,
A sinuous, elegant, graceful flow,
Through each, and every, vein,
Carrying a wistfulness and loss,
A romantic, wallowing and lyrical quality,
A slow but sure realisation that this actuality,
The here and now, is a mere hypothesis,
Stands in need of proof,
The *onus probandi* resting on the rational mind.
A gradual acceptance that his name scribed in the sand,
Will be washed away by the next incoming wave,
Pacifies his inner spiritual turmoil.

The self-exiled lyricist,
His breathing even slower and shallower,
Looks down and across to the *Fontana della Barcaccia*,
Bernini's Baroque-style fountain,

The half sunken boat carried and deposited here
By the flood waters of the Tiber.
The poet drifts into a numinous realm,
A world of hypnagogic visions,
And in his laudanum induced dream,
The travertine⁶⁸ boat now makes voyage for Lerici,
And sailing through a tempest,
Toiling and tossed in heavy seas,
The high winds drag *Don Juan*,
With fully rigged top masts and sails,
Under the waves,
The devoured vessel descends into the depths of Neptune's domain,
Taking him, and his two companions,
Down, fathom after fathom, deep into a dominion,
Where he would be everlastingly freed from haunting dreams.

The Cardinal runs down the staircase,
Finds, washed onto the bottom step,
A badly decomposed body,
And in the jacket pocket a copy of *Lamia*⁶⁹.
His Eminence recognises and comprehends,
That in this frightful instance
There is to be no prayers, no absolution of the dead,
For he was the *infidel*⁷⁰ poet, the political radical,
The materialist,
Drowned for his ignorance of the godly,
Drowned for his atheism.

⁶⁸ The *Fontana della Barcaccia* is sculpted from Travertine, a type of limestone.

⁶⁹ John Keats' narrative poem, which first appeared in the volume *Lamia, Isabella, the Eve of St Agnes and Other Poems*

⁷⁰ The day after the news of his death reached England, the Tory London newspaper *The Courier* printed: "*Shelley, the writer of some infidel poetry, has been drowned; now he knows whether there is God or no.*"

Sahel [Where the Streets Have No Name]

In the drawing room,
The warmth radiated from the marble period fireplace,
An inner warmth circulated with every sip of whiskey,
Saul⁷¹ sagged in his Eames lounge chair,
Feet resting on the ottoman,
Looks out of the bay window,
Across the starry night,
Over to the lights of Dalkey Island and Dublin Bay.
He has returned home,
After completing his missionary world tour,
Spreading the teachings of the radical from Nazareth.
With heavy-lidded eyes, he drifts into quiet wakefulness,
By degrees disengaging from the external world,
Brain waves slow down,
Until all alpha activity ceases,
At which point his soul leaves the body,

The spirit peeling away from the slumbering, snoozing physique,
To stand and be guided across the room to switch on the TV,
To receive a revelation from the father of the Jewish messiah.

The nine o'clock news⁷²,
Sommerville⁷³ pronounces that 7 million Ethiopians are threatened by starvation,
Thousand having died,
A dot on a map pinpoints the town of Korem,
Where the refugees have converged.
All rather abstract.
She introduces Michael,
Studio cut to recorded broadcast:

At dawn, the daughter of Eris⁷⁴,
The sorrowful goddess of starvation, hunger and famine,
Lifts the veil to uncover, to unsheathe,

⁷¹ Paul, born Saul of Tarsus, commonly known as Paul the Apostle

⁷² The BBC 9 o'clock News, broadcast 23rd October 1984, reporter Michael Buerk

⁷³ Julia Somerville, was the English television news reader on the BBC 9 o'clock News, broadcast 23rd October 1984

⁷⁴ *Limos* the goddess of starvation, hunger, and famine in ancient Greek religion.

A biblical famine.

She has taken residence, made home,
In these wastelands where the soil is barren,
And nothing can grow out of the earth,
She has filled this land with the substance of death,
Turned this terrain into a phantom realm.
This is Humanity's punishment,
For they scythed down Demeter's sacred grove,
And in a retribution, retaliation, a reprisal,
She embraces Humanity in her arms,
And kisses it on the mouth,
Entering it, and filling herself its *mouth and throat and lungs*,
The contagion, that *craving emptiness*,
Streams through every venous blood vessel.
And now, subsequently, Humanity is filled with an *unquenchable hunger*,
Driven to devour, compelled to consume,
Eat, eat, eat,
Gulp, gorge, gobble.
But the craving won't subside,
Hunger won't abate,
Eat, eat, eat,
Cram, wolf, bolt.
And having run out of provisions,
Humanity is ultimately driven to eat itself.

In this barren landscape,
Plagued people and panorama,
Fused to become features of a place without places,
Of a face without faces.
The dying and the grieving,
Death swathed in bundles,
There is no temple to turn towards for mercy,
No bread to eat of, thus live forever.
The images are a visual voice to the abandoned,
The soul of the son of Tarsus watches the emaciated,
The scale and the horror,
"I feel it in my fingers, I feel it in my toes
Well, death is all around me

And so, the feeling grows⁷⁵

It sees the imagery, pictures that testify,
To a deep-seated dignity of all humanity,
And yet in parallel protesting its violation by this wrong.
The television screen bear witness to the illogicality,
The paradox, the contradiction,
That in the refugee there is a fragility, yet also strength,
A transience and a permanence too,
An immanence alongside a transcendence.

The recorded broadcast cuts back to studio,
The soul of the Apostle stands,
Chaotic and capricious eddies of despair,
Swilling in the pit of its stomach,
*“Who's gonna tell you when
It's too late?*

*Who's gonna tell you things
Aren't so great?⁷⁶*

It's guided back across the room,
The spirit pours back into the bottle,
To coalesce, conjoin, to cleave,
With the drowsing, dozing physique.

An ascending arousal activating the cerebral cortex,
Fuelled nerve cells,
Readied for the analysis of incoming sensory information,
By even extents engaging with the external world,
Opened eyes, spring into alertness.
Paul has recharged his humanity, reaffirmed his moral compass,
A realisation that *they* need not live in agony,
And misery of heart until the end of the world.

⁷⁵ Songwriter: Reg Presley, *Love Is All Around* lyrics © Dick James Music Ltd.

⁷⁶ Songwriter: Ric Ocasek, *Drive* is The Cars' third single from the band's *Heartbeat City* album released in March 1984.

The Supper at the Blue Gate [Pride (In the Name of Love)]

Malik el-Shabazz is in town,
On a visit to investigate racism,
Wanting to help block planning permissions,
For the erection of gas ovens.
He is to walk down Marshall Street,
The road where non-white people are barred,
From purchasing or renting property,
The avenue where citizens don't want niggers for neighbours.

The ex-militant Muslim minister walks down the street,
Strides in cleft stick,
Pondering over the ballot or the bullet.
He knows that it is the factories, foundries and forges,
Of this city, that built an empire that help rape foreign lands,
That has ultimately yielded the predicament of the here and now,
The emigres' blighted existence in this town,
This quandary, this Catch-22,
Freeze, flight, fight.

He quietly treads down terraced street,
Heckled by white residents,
Told that he, like darkies, ate dog food,
Told that he, like darkies, be riddled with disease.
But X is unresponsive.
His wild, eccentric, brilliant, volatile mind,
In turmoil.
Choice between integration, segregation, separatism?
Was violence to be met by violence,
On the streets of Birmingham, England?
He stands and closes his eyes,
Turns to prayer,
Pleading for meaning, a solution, and destiny.

X and IWA⁷⁷ enter the Blue Gate,
Barmaid refuses service in the smoke room,

⁷⁷ The Indian Worker's Association (IWA), the socialist organisation which invited Malcolm X

Directs them to the public bar room.
Avtar⁷⁸ cases joint, sits at table,
With *the unexpected and largely unwelcome guest*,
And raises a pint,
To thank him for showing solidarity with their struggle.

Enter the frame, a stranger.
A powerful drama to be played out.
The two men invite the outsider to join them for supper⁷⁹.
He accepts, he pulls up chair.
The guest introduces himself,
As a Baptist minister, an activist from Atlanta, Georgia.
He recounts experience of campaigns for justice in Birmingham, Alabama,
Solutions of non-violent, confrontational tactics,
Occupying public spaces with marches and sit-ins,
To create "*a situation so crisis-packed that it will inevitably open the door to negotiation*",
No time for cunctation,
But time to take an abjuration oath renouncing brutality and bloodshed,
The solution was pacific agitation.
The president of the SCLC proclaims that this time for talk is over,
It is now time for food.
At the table with them, he takes bread, gives thanks,
Breaks it and begins to give it to them.
And in that immediate instance the dark brown atmosphere is transformed,
A stark light emanates,
The room now is one of light and shadow,
In this room of chiaroscuro,
Mr Singh leaps out of his chair,
Mr Little throws out his arms in a gesture of disbelief,
For their eyes are opened and they recognise him,
And in instantaneous transverberation,
Both souls consumed by their love of God,
Lost in ecstasy and euphoria,
A mere second in this state of spiritual splendour,
He *has vanished out of their sight*.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Avtar Singh Jouhl, then secretary of the IWA

⁷⁹ *The Supper at Emmaus*, Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (1571–1610)

⁸⁰ Luke 24: 30–31: "... took bread, and blessed it, and brake and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight"

And both sit in acknowledgement,
Conscious that the sublime had interrupted the daily here and now,
And both sit and listen,
For outside the public house,
Outside on the streets of the Black Country town,
The singing *in words of the old Negro spiritual*:
Free at last. Free at last. Thank God almighty, we are free at last.

Interlude

When commanded to do so,
He⁸¹ refused to prostrate before the first prophet of Islam⁸²,
Claiming to be superior,
For he was created from fire and not clay⁸³.
Expelled from paradise,
He is now sat here backstage,
With whiteface and rouge lipstick,
Waiting to come on stage,
To offer temptation,
To expose what is hidden in our nakedness.
He is now sat here, outfitted in glittering boots,
Sporting a gold lame suit.
But an issue with this metallic fibre,
Is that it is subject to seam slippage,
The tendency for a seam to open due to the application of a force perpendicular to the seam direction.
Another issue with this metallic fibre,
Is that it is subject to yarn slippage,
An actual shifting or slipping of the yarns,
Unable to withstand the normal stress and strain of wear,
Leading to a short life expectancy of the garment.

Just dance, spin that record, babe, da da doo-doo-mmm

*Just, j-j-just dance*⁸⁴

Spin that record, that vinyl of Lenin's Favourite Songs,
Play for me *The Cliff on the Volga River*,
A cliff that has stood there for centuries,
A cliff and a river that remembers,
The name of Stepan⁸⁵.
Let the instrumental intro be the stimuli,
To put on the horns and enter the stage.

⁸¹ Iblis

⁸² Adam

⁸³ Quran 7:12

⁸⁴ Just Dance, Song by Lady Gaga, Songwriters: Aliaune Thiam / Nadir Khayat / Stefani Germanotta, lyrics © Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC

⁸⁵ Stepan Timofeyevich Razin a Cossack leader who led a major uprising against the nobility and tsarist bureaucracy in southern Russia in 1670–1671.

Seduction [Daddy's Gonna Pay for Your Crashed Car]

Succubus comes to seduce.
The supernatural seductress, enchantress,
The first wife of Adam⁸⁶,
Appears in each, and every, vision and dream,
Induced by laudanum.
Each, and every, measure of tincture of opium taken,
Slowly sinks the deteriorating spirit down to death,
Descending to a realm,
Where you cannot return and “*find again the paths of life*”.⁸⁷

Oh, I'm singin' in the rain
Just singin' in the rain
What a glorious feeling
I'm happy again.
I'm laughing at the money.
Showers down from *above*,
Greed is *in my heart*
*And I'm ready for love*⁸⁸.

⁸⁶ Succubus is descended from the ancient figure of Lilith, who was the first wife of Adam

⁸⁷ Proverbs 2:18–19

⁸⁸ *I'm Singing in the Rain*, Song by Gene Kelly, Songwriters: Freed Arthur / Brown Nacio Herb

Hanging on the Telephone

Do you know that the custody sergeant has authorised my detention?
Indicted of impiety, charged of corrupting the young.
My valuables emptied into a plastic bag,
Shoelaces and belt removed.
I'm entitled to free legal advice,
I won't answer any questions, but I have given my name,
It was noted on the charge sheet, scribed in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek.
I have one phone call to inform someone of my arrest.

Let me phone my father,
Let him know of my agony.
My sweat, great drops of blood falling upon the station floor,
Dry throat.
The call rings, but ultimately goes to voicemail.
Must leave a message:
Listen father, I implore, intreat, beg and beseech,
It coming to the 9th hour of the day here in my cell,
Sharing with two former convicted thieves,
But not to worry pater,
I thirsted, and was given vinegar by an officer,
My body is weak, but the spirit is still willing.
I know *it's so funny how we don't talk anymore*",
*It's so funny, why we don't talk anymore?*⁸⁹
I know there have been times when I have cried out loud,
Hollered out to you, my Abba, why hast Thou forsaken me.
So, do not despise or abhor my affliction,
Do not hide your face from mine,
But hear when I cry to you:
"It's you when I look in the mirror
And it's you that makes it hard to let go
Sometimes you can't make it on your own
*Sometimes you can't make it"*⁹⁰

⁸⁹ *It's so funny how we don't talk anymore*, Songwriter: Tarney Alan

⁹⁰ U2, *Sometimes You Can't Make It on Your Own* lyrics © Polygram Int. Music Publishing B.v.

Super 8 Footage [Lemon]

Someone had pulled the shooting trigger,
The ticking sound of the film gate,
Eighteen frames per second,
Had captured a visual image to be viewed,
A pictorial realm to be transiently, concurrently occupied
By the essences of both a dead mother and a still grieving son.

This plastic light-proof cartridge,
Take-up spools loaded with 50 feet of film,
Restore a mother to life years after her death.
The 3,600 frames being played,
Have the power to vanquish, for two and a half minutes,
Man's overpowering enemy: death.
For a fleeting moment, our friend who was asleep, is to be awoken,
The stone rolling away from her tomb,
And she that was dead come forth.
And there she is as a maid of honour,
In this grainy old home movie,
At a wedding in the Palestinian town of the Four Days Dead.⁹¹
And there she is, Terpsichore, delights in dancing,
The Muse, the goddess lays down her lyre,
To join in with the celebration, in joyful choreography, with Martha and Mary,
Adorning silver anklets and *flowers in her hair*⁹²,
Dancing barefoot, an Iris pinned to her lemon-coloured dress⁹³.

⁹¹ The raising of Lazarus at Bethany, today the Palestinian town of Al-Eizariya, which translates to “*the place of Lazarus*”.

⁹² Bob Dylan, *Shelter from the Storm* lyrics © Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC

⁹³ Lead vocalist Bono recalled receiving, in the post, from a very distant relative, early Super 8 footages of his mother. Among the footage was Bono's mother at a wedding as the maid of honour, wearing a lemon-coloured dress. The film footage inspired Bono to write lyrics for *Lemon* about using film to recreate and preserve memory.

The pretty and sweet memories of her dancing force
Those waters from the bereft, lamenting son,
Which he endeavours to stop,
But in this moment of surrender,
The man in him has gone and with his mother having come into his eyes
It gives him up to tears.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ “The pretty and sweet manner of it forced
Those waters from me which I would have stopped,
But I had not so much of man in me,
And all my mother came into mine eyes
And gave me up to tears” - Act 4, Scene 6, Henry V, William Shakespeare

Sehnsucht [With or Without You]

That love you had cupped in your hands,
Slips through the fingers,
Drips down, seeps into the sand,
To hide amongst infinite grains, innumerable worlds,
Lost forever, unrequited.

Dyads played in her presence:
Hope and despair,
Fondness and bitterness,
Corporeal cravings and spiritual aches,
These melodic and harmonic intervals,
Melancholic chords deepening and amplifying,
The sense of sorrow and lament.

That deep desire for the unattainable,
That struggle, that suffering to cope with the knowledge,
That for this certain wish, this specific search in life,
The unrealisable cannot be realised,
The undoable cannot be done,
The unreachable cannot be reached
The unachievable cannot be achieved.

Is this torment a divinely, and justly, administered test?
Is this human anguish, celestially initiated?
Is this pain to be endured with patience and gratitude,
A price to pay for entry to a world without death or suffering?
Does God bequeath life and mortality, just as he gives light and darkness?

A Terrible Beauty [Love is Blindness]

We hold and caress it in our hands,
Confidently consider us to be its masters,
To have the ability to shape, style, sculpt it,
To mould, manipulate, modify it.
But it is, ultimately, an intense, violent, ecstatic, brutal, wild power
That cannot be checked by any conventional common code,
An explosive force and energy,
Concurrently destructive as well as creative.

In moments of transcendence,
When undefiled, in its purest form
It reveals its inner secret light.
And it this light that beams out of a swing arm desk lamp,
Irradiating the sketch pad,
Illuminating an endeavour,
Bathing a schematic design,
A sketch, pencil on paper, of five components:
A switch, a fuse, container, charge and a battery.
The diagram annotated with notes of the fragmentation-generating objects to be used,
Listed examples of shot, fragments, debris to be packed into the device,
The delivery and trigger mechanisms to be employed.

This ray of light tying his deep personal desire to larger grandiose themes of history.
This visible spectrum pouring out of the Anglepoise cast his face in chiaroscuro,
This beam of photons responsible for each small, seemingly insignificant event
That has shaped his behaviour and his life up to this moment.
How did this radiance make a stone of his heart?
This luminosity, bewilder his mind?
Let it be written in verse,
That *Love* is the nativity,
To this *terrible beauty*.

Mephistopheles is Looking for Redemption [Can't Help Falling in Love]

The blotted whiteface,
That theatrical makeup streaked by sweat,
The rouge lipstick smudged,
The Devil's agent,
Calculates that he would have to travel at the speed of light,
In order that time slows to a stop.
But he acknowledges this impossibility,
He recognises that
As an infant he had crawled on all fours,
As an adult he had walked on two legs,
That now he must depart this stage using his walking stick,
*"This is the end
Beautiful friend
This is the end
My only friend, the end"*⁹⁵

The agent of the *Enemy*⁹⁶ of Humanity,
Concedes and is resigned to his tragedy and his demise that is to unfold.
With waning hubris, he sings in desperation, despair and despondency:
*"Wise men say
Only fools rush in
But I can't help falling in love with you
Shall I stay?
Would it be a sin
If I can't help falling in love with you...."*

Mephistopheles is looking for redemption, a rescue, a release,
His damned soul desiring deliverance.
Exhausted and dehydrated,
Trapped in his own hell,
Having been denied from quenching his thirst,
Asks for God's intercession.
*.... Like a river flows
Surely to the sea*

⁹⁵ Songwriters: Jim Morrison / John Paul Densmore / Raymond D Manzarek / Robert A Krieger

⁹⁶ 35.6 Quran

Darling, so it goes
Some things are meant to be
Take my hand
Take my whole life too
*For I can't help falling in love with you”*⁹⁷

And God knows forgiveness is a virtue greater than vengeance.
And so, as the lights go down,
A single ray of illumination guides the once corrupter of men.
The beam of luminosity,
That speaks to him: Whoever thirsts, let him come to me and drink.
He kicks off his sparkling platform shoes,
As he walks on all three,
His gold lame suit begins to disintegrate,
Fall apart at the seams,
The life expectancy of the garment having been reached,
The uniform unable to withstand the stress and strain of wear from the night's work.
He prays even harder; a miracle being sought:
For I can't help falling in love with you
For I can't help falling in love with you”
He throws away the cane,
Fragments of the suit fall away from the frame,
Pieces, one by one,
To finally reveal Mephisto in his nakedness,
With a pair of wings.
Metamorphosed as a divine servant,
He unfurls his feathers,
The magnificence of the span of the plumage,
He takes flight into the Sydney night,
Soaring above,
Freed from gravity that had tethered him to the terra firma beneath.

⁹⁷ Songwriters: George Weiss / Hugo Peretti / Luigi Creatore

