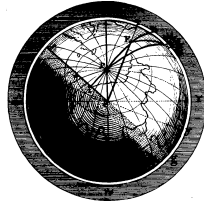


FEARFUL SPHERES



MMXVIII

*... a sphere, whose centre is everywhere
and whose circumference is nowhere.*
— PASCAL

Stale Year

no fire

no revelation

no gnostic star to burn your lips with angelspeech

or send haunted, cavernous, synaesthetic dreams

glass spheres of coloured space

nesting inwardly

to some luminous convergence . . .

no.

just sick winds full of rubbish and

the slow drip of years.

The Warmies

out at the Warmies
a tidal wrack of
 cockleshells,
 seapolished pumice,
 sleech and litter
limned the spit,
leeward of the giddy,
slimeblown crescent
 curving into Hobson's Bay;
a poem of mud, water and time.
we watched fall the
 gloaming air,
and drank beer
until the stars came out.

Zodiac

numberless like spiders' eggs,
each starhouse built
beyond night's edge,
the empty amphitheatre

with the fish's head.
past the orbs which rise and arc,
and quicken round the western air.
they swell night's descant, then depart . . .

we throw away our horoscopes.
but life still mirrors
the order in the sky: like weeds
growing in summer rain.

Two Masks

the empty hallway
 like a stone
 in the heart the desert.
the shadow in the pierglass
 yours without knowing.
the mutter of leaves
 your breath.
the ancient town
with its gray labyrinth of streets
 endlessly, fruitlessly yours.

Funhouse

rain clouds at street level.
we took refuge in the Nicholas
where I curled up and slept
on zigzag tiles
in the hungover stairwell
 where Monday never comes.
we woke to voices from
the floor below,
guttering and lurching
and holding forth
 like a sick candle . . .

nothing made sense.
corridors ran in trapped and
 self-reflecting loops,
as if seen through a mirror, at night,
by the heir of Asterion.

North Shore

cruising nameless backstreets of
 dead ends, junkyards, burnt out
 trailer parks in tumbledown lots
 of weeds concrete
and radios

we crest the hill
and space, it seems, dilates.
 huge and broken volumes
 sculpt out night:
cylinders, spheres, cones
Cézanne in metal and smoke
 and piles of mercury

the cenotaph of a
 dead alien god
 keening with
the voice of space

Trials of St Anthony

dark of mutants, cactus
and millennial sands.
the drunkard priest, soured by years,
pours out his jeremiad
cut with bourbon

and now
no one attends his sermons—
the town dead or moved on—
so the padre sleeps in his vestments
out in the cold of the ruined chapel
and speaks to the empty pews
wind humming over the plains

the power station —blind oracular—
and every TV singing the same song

Holographic Twin

near the forest on the state line
past the plant's threnodic hum
 miles of farmland
 the guttered, junk-dredged river . . .
all apses of civilised orbit

you hear legends of void string and ghost
mythic local kids
 who did too much math and drugs
 and went deep into the woods
never to be seen again

we're not sure they exist
 or if they remember us

but years
 there'll be brown envelopes
 filled with numbers
on our doorsteps

Street of Crocodiles

the city holds its breath
clocks stopped.
a cat slinks discreetly
 a murmur of black behind a red curtain
 in a forgotten arcade

and passersby project huge shadows
in the cool cool
 mercury-vapour blue.

the wunderkammer is closed.
a moth flutters
 in the casement
and headlights flicker across walls of
 beetles waxwork furculae
 the glass eyes and specimen jars
 of sinister midnight green ...

a ghost house of *prima materia*
 waiting to become something
 new

Rua dos Douradores

when the moon transfixed you
and the stars guttered like candles
 waking from sleep
 in the upper air
you spoke the charmed words
and night blossomed,
 a secret flower
 with its flumes and gullies.

without moving, you could glide
 down
 to the street
where an old Portuguese couple
 argued by lamplight

bursting with sublime
and interminable life.



Apocalypsis

Smug, neuralgic Leverkühn pauses over his scores.
In the hovering gloom, sees the Black Spot
Grow like fungus across the bureau,
Floral wallpaper, up his pant leg.

A gong ringing in space. Waves of sickness.
Language, he thinks, *is a hole burned in the void.*
Words are holes in things.
The Spot wavers, recedes. A pure tone.

Outside, the bright cadenzas of spring.
Leverkühn returns to his scrawls,
A wrack strung like telegraph wire
In the Chinese room.

Nostalgia

The spring brings grass, damp wind,
And rhizome; growth without centre.
A gale keens over the hedgerows,
Rattling the casements, promising change . . .

Or rather, repetition: seasons,
The same blank circle of forms,
Time dancing in cartwheels
Like a shy, mad stamping horse.

In the sunroom, Mrs. Reed collects herself.
But the wind blows through her dreams,
The garden crowding the house,
Plants pressed against the window,
 and now a knock at the door.

The Monad

We saw the cabin,
A delphic, ruinous presence,
Through the bright rime
Of the morning trees.

Wild herb in hectic bloom.
Sagging cardboard boxes
Sloughed across the porch,
On woodrot and unread mail.

Heimlich. A sense of
Life beyond life,
Mute, self-enclosed and
Lurking out of frame.

So say four warmblooded creatures
Who do not speak the dead
language of *res*.



Slow Winter

School report: the day a rotten egg,
Winter light like sour milk,
A haunted katabatic scours the plains.

Mr. Zug, the caretaker with a head
Knuckled like celeriac, curses
The weather, the students, his crooked broom.

Over that whistling plain, we rarely spoke.
Like an *idée fixe*, on the other side of the earth,
The blue light of an unknown star.

Jumble Sale

We move south, Sebaldian vagabonds
Mumbling obiter, shaking terribly.
A train. Endless papers and transfers.

Passengers glow in the dark;
Late, breathless, elsewhere,
In wrong and numberless rooms.

Arrival. Or possibly breakdown.
A hamlet, laughing with strange light.
We are somehow at the main square

In time for the jumble sale:
Thorazine, wax cylinders, hair.
And fires reaching like thin teeth towards the sky.

The Shrinking Captain

The final, improbable mystery of the lamppost.
The frozen clocks.
Corpse-candles in the tree.
Splendid evenings in Weimar!

At dawn, the guards came to take the captain.
He was already too small for his overcoat
 and getting steadily smaller.
They carried away a bundle of cloth.