

## **SEQ CHAPTER Vh Vr 1**

Who, he thought  
to himself, could  
tolerate this realm where,  
as no reasonably observant  
and moderately astute thinker  
could deny,  
evil has becomes resplendent,  
wearing the most highly  
decorated garb  
and attracting immoderate  
and unwarranted praise?  
Warlike men go about,  
abiding their own condition,  
because they live  
without knowledge  
of the justice  
that comes from beyond.

Who, he thought to himself,  
could possibly survive in such  
a realm where folly is taken  
for wisdom, where insipidities  
are the subject of scholarly study,  
where utterly conventional  
artworks  
are believed, by reason of  
the sheer ignorance  
of those who maintain the belief,  
to be original.

Who can forget  
even for a few minutes  
that we end  
as food for worms.  
Thus we wander in the land  
of clouds,  
through valley's dark,  
list'ning Dolours  
and lamentations.  
He pondered these things.

But who is he?  
He is a man  
dressed with a certain negligence,  
that is not entirely insouciance,  
not entirely disrespect,  
not entirely an academic mannerism,

not entirely roguishness,  
and not entirely the product  
of advancing age.  
His face is pale  
and wholly uninteresting;;  
though it reflects  
low-grade suffering  
of an unspecified type,  
it could not be described  
as compelling.

Who, he thought to himself,  
could continue to draw breath  
here, in this polity, where  
the silly, doings of aging brat-boys,  
who have already grown a paunch  
and seen their skin  
grow grey and thick,  
could be mistaken  
for the products  
of genuine, holy imagination,  
and praised  
by the even more paunchy,  
grey-bearded assortment  
of rogues,  
knaves,  
rapscallions  
and vipers  
that fill our universities.

Who could maintain  
the optimism necessary  
to be productive  
when the thoughts  
of morons, passed along  
in classrooms,  
is treated as the gold  
of imagination.  
Why these dopes  
are puffed up by admiration  
of their witless,  
poorly read  
and non-contemplative charges,  
but even without that  
they would have been  
utter dunderheads.  
They are cut from the cloth  
from which fate,  
when the time becomes ripe,

makes idiots,  
cheats,  
cut-purses,  
and pathological liars.  
Why they are all  
cunning,  
mendacious,  
unprincipled  
and without character.  
They all behave as though  
they hailed from New Jersey:  
the proper sort of compost-heap  
for this sort of weed.

For he had been forsaken,  
stranded in the Blue Cellar,  
adjacent to the depressed I.Q. Zone,  
without music,  
without a map.  
He had lost his bearings.  
He could no longer set off  
for his hacienda  
where the vases and tiles  
dream of his childhood,  
where the wine is finished  
with fables from book  
whose pages are torn  
and no longer read.  
That's finished.  
"You'll never see the hacienda again,"  
he said to himself.  
"It no longer exists."  
"You'll no longer read  
from that book.  
It has yet to be written."

So the man thought.  
He contemplated that humans  
are no longer bound  
by ties of sympathy and compassion.  
He realized that loyalty  
no longer holds.  
Friendship lasts as long  
as it remains convenient  
for one of the friends  
to exploit the other.  
This must be the last era  
of this doomed planet's history.  
So the man thought.

Like Montaigne, he knew  
that all public institutions  
as well as all private lives  
are held together  
by a web of vice,  
the most common of which  
is cruelty.  
Oh that bitter-sweet prick  
of malignant sensuality  
one experiences  
at seeing someone suffer --  
children feel it.  
Whoever tries to take that away  
removes one of the conditions  
necessary for human survival.  
Sadism is an existential passion  
before it is sexual thrill,  
he thought to himself.

In tawdry houses, young girls  
are led into sin,  
and something more disgraceful yet  
is tolerated: they are made  
to pay for their keep themselves.  
Truly this must be the last era  
of this doomed planet's history.  
This he concluded.

Pets are abandoned  
to become prowling beasts.  
Houses fall into ruin  
from neglect.  
Covenants are broken.  
The simple-minded clamour endlessly,  
while those who think deeply  
keep silent.  
Husbands and wives are separated.  
Food is depleted of nutrients  
and crops abandoned to the drought.  
Truly this must be the last era  
of this doomed planet's history.  
This he concluded.

Men hurry about,  
seeking vengeance.  
The sky has turned to smoke.  
From beyond the clouds,  
shrieking and uproar descend on us  
in columns of dust.

The world is smoldering in strife.  
Friends part.  
Lovers go their separate ways.  
Associates join rival factions.  
rip each other's flesh  
with bullets.  
"Loyalty" is a word  
no longer understood.  
Truly this must be the last era  
of this doomed planet's history.  
This he concluded.

The holy ones awaken  
in the middle of night  
their bowels spastic with terror.  
The most charitable vessels  
are filled up  
with fear and loathing.  
Priest forget their prayers.  
Poets neglect their prayers.  
Dancers neglect their prayers.  
Musicians neglect their prayers.  
So art is no longer made.  
When none think any longer  
of the requitals  
of the world to come,  
an invisible hand  
smites one and all.  
Truly this must be the last era  
of this doomed planet's history.  
This he concluded.  
Clearly the time when  
the Trumpet of Doom sounds  
is near.  
Clearly this is the last era  
of this doomed planet's history.  
O Lord, when that time comes,  
will we all be thrown to the fires?  
This the man pondered.

Poets neglect the words  
that God revealed to human,  
and professors discredit them  
in their classrooms.  
Forgiveness is no longer practiced.  
Rituals of holy joy  
have been forsaken.  
Those who help the poor  
are treated unjustly.

Those who refuse to greet you  
achieve lofty positions.  
Those who steal property  
with which they are entrusted  
go unprosecuted.  
Those whom you once help  
and now treat you vilely  
are looked up to.  
Those who once depended on you  
and now plot against you  
receive public award,  
while good behavior  
finds no reward.  
One shudders  
at the state of the world.  
Surely the Trumpet of Doom  
is about to sound.  
Surely the Last Hour is nigh.  
Surely we have not long to wait  
before we are hurled  
into the all consuming fire.  
So the man concluded.  
Surely this is the last era  
in the history  
of this doomed planet.  
So the man concluded.

Because no goodness can be found  
in any breathing creature,  
the holy ones are bereft.  
Because no prayers climb to heavens,  
evil spreads over the earth.  
Surely this is the last era  
in the history  
of this doomed planet.  
So the man concluded.

The trumpet will soon sound.  
I shall no more see  
the faces of other men.  
I shall no more play  
and make sport  
with other inhabitants  
of this earth.  
My dwelling will be torn apart.  
Between the coming nightfall  
and the next morning  
we shall all cease to be.

So the man thought.  
How truly the vulgar speak,  
he thought,  
when they say that this world  
is a vale of sorrows,  
that there is so much pain  
in this earthly realm,  
that misfortunes proliferate  
as abundantly as kudzu  
in the American south.  
The sailor tossing out  
at sea sails  
without a captain.  
Perched in his eagle's nest  
he cannot see his maker.  
His defiance is to blame  
for the heavy weather.

Such truth there is  
to these sayings  
that we understand them  
not as divine dispensations,  
but as the factual reports  
of mere mortals,  
accustomed to the afflictions  
that humans visit on humans,  
knowledgeable about the way  
that mortals rain down sorrows  
on other human beings,  
about the delight that people take  
in perpetrating misery and suffering,  
about the cruelty that is  
the conspicuous bent of even  
the highly civilized,  
the highly cultured who,  
as the conduct of critics  
and professors makes evident,  
are no less prone  
to inflicting hurt  
than the more barbaric among us,  
that is those who stand  
on street-corners  
in the poorer districts  
of the city, peddling destruction.

No it is humankind  
that is the cause  
of the all the world's woes.  
Butchering is a human inventions.

"Murder" is a word that humans  
made up to describe their actions.  
The fire that humans kindle  
will destroy a large portion  
of God's creation.  
So the man understood.

The cunning of wantonness  
knows no limits, he realized:  
evil is most sly.  
"Thus Los sings upon his watch,  
walking from furnace to furnace.  
He seizes his hammer every hour;  
flames surround him  
as He beats.  
His sons labour in thunders  
at his furnaces;  
his daughters at their looms  
sing woes."

"What else could you imagine  
the mania for reading biography  
might tell us?" he asked himself.  
Our time craves  
to know the secret lives  
of those who are above us  
exactly because we want to know  
the culpabilities of those to whom  
we look up.  
And this is not for the reason  
that Malraux truly discerned,  
because we hope that  
through learning of their dark side  
we might discover the secrets  
of their genius.  
He inclined to that position  
even though he realized  
that ever since Baudelaire,  
our culture has maintained  
the adolescent conviction that  
there exists an association  
between genius and evil  
-- of course he knew this.  
The man wondered:  
How could I not realize that simple fact  
when the jeune indulgences  
of the pseudo-artistic  
pseudo-avant-garde,  
film



persistently,  
even unremittingly,  
lauded by the pseudo-intelligentsia  
in the universities,  
rub our noses  
daily in that very truth.  
How could I not realize  
that simple truth  
at this time, when even  
the pseudo-artists now attempt  
to assert their credentials as artists  
by revealing the blackness  
of their character,  
as one did recently  
by publishing  
an autobiographical memoir.  
What aside from his baseness  
could such a Bible-thumping,  
perpetually depressed  
and mentally dazed john,  
this imposter who pretends  
to having read widely  
in theology and philosophy,  
and whose main grounds  
for claiming  
to possess special intelligence,  
it turns out  
(as one grasps  
when one has seen through  
all the conceited  
baroque flourishes  
of his overwrought prose)  
is the fact that he is a descendent  
of a lavish, slave-owner family  
and heir to their  
blood-stained wealth.  
Why else would this  
self-pitying dope  
scribble such over-wrought,  
overly ornamented prose,  
but to that end.  
Ornament, after all,  
is the refuge  
of those whose thinking  
lacks structure;  
and they are simply wrong  
who believe  
that chaos on the written page  
is the best emblem of the chaos

to which moderns are fated  
-- and that mistake is  
the characteristic error  
of those who are made insecure  
by their implicit,  
though unarticulated  
knowledge of how disorganized  
their thinking really is.

By exposing his mean,  
arrogant,  
crabbed,  
puffed-up,  
ignorant,  
self-serving,  
self-pitying,  
depressed  
and aggressive  
character,  
this dimwit hopes  
to make himself appear  
as a genius.

He relished the thought  
of how vain these aspirations  
are for a man who went about town  
in make-up and lipstick,  
his head filled with thoughts  
of buying underwear.

Let him hope what he will,  
he thought to himself,  
those of us  
who know this piece  
of self-glorifying ignorance  
know how futile his artistic hopes  
really are, notwithstanding  
his desperate attempts at making  
the darkness of his soul known about.

For his bitterness and fury  
have created a void inside him  
that precludes the possibility  
of artistic production.

Who does our esteemed neighbour  
think he is, the man asked himself,  
a Montaigne, who could turn  
the blackness of neurasthenia,  
that anguish-inducing disease  
that leads its victims on  
to a debilitating restlessness,  
into the gold of pellucid,  
intelligent,

and dazzlingly original  
writing?

Still, he thought to himself,  
the main reason why the mob  
feels such enthusiasm  
for reading biography is this:  
we long to delude ourselves  
into believing that those who  
in fact who merit admiration  
are no better than the common herd.  
Pushkin got it right when he wrote,  
"The mob reads confessions and  
notes, etc. so avidly because  
in their baseness they rejoice  
at the humiliations of the high  
and the weaknesses of the mighty.  
Upon discovering  
any kind of vileness  
they are delighted.  
He's like us! He's vile, like us!  
You lie scoundrels:  
He is little and vile."  
Montaigne, he said to himself,  
caught the meaning of their hope  
when he wrote,  
"Nous sommes tous de vulgaire."  
Biographers pander  
to the mob's cravings  
by serving up revelations  
of the peccadillos  
of their subjects' private lives,  
upon which, of course,  
they exaggerate  
and embellish.  
The sense of indignation  
that any genuine artist feels  
about the indiscretions  
that this enthusiasm authorizes  
is total and even, on occasion,  
all consuming.

But humans alone  
are not responsible  
for all this suffering,  
he thought to himself.  
He asked himself:  
"Is not the sailor,  
vulnerable to nature's fickleness,

on a more intimate acquaintance  
with a more copious  
portion of suffering  
than other people?"  
"And are gales  
not sent from heaven?"  
"Is it not heaven that causes  
waves to swell and storms to break,  
sails to rip  
and vessels to founder?"  
"Is it not the Divine that unleashes  
the watery furies?  
The chasm that rolls  
beneath their matchstick vessels  
teaches them that greater troubles  
befall humans than ever they make."  
He knew, too, that, underneath  
all its accounts  
of trial by ordeal,  
ritual contamination  
by corpses and menstruants,  
hovering miasmas of impurity,  
the Tanakh is really the history  
of the world  
in which one person slays  
another who was  
suckled at the same breast,  
the story of the world  
of the Enemy Brothers,  
the story of twins struggling  
against one another  
in the same womb.  
The Tanakh's divine inspiration,  
he understood,  
ensures that this  
is God's message to his children.  
But he knew too  
that ever since Byron's  
restitution of Cain  
in his eponymous play,  
the unregenerate and envious  
brother had become  
the hero of modern literature,  
since Cain conformed his actions  
to his inner drives  
rather than an outward law,  
and even manage to survive  
the rupture in consciousness  
that that division

between inner and outer induced.

Harsh though He may be,  
the man knew that needed  
to know God.  
He knew he needed God,  
because he needed a Father  
and a Mother.  
He knew he needed an older,  
wiser being  
to talk to, and to cry to.  
But when he went to talk to God,  
he found that the sky empty.  
That made him feel like someone  
who has been raised  
from a death through suicide.  
He felt like one who had  
climbed out of the grave,  
bloodied and scarred  
by his own actions.  
He asked himself:  
"Am I imagining it,  
or is this welt on my cheek  
growing ever more prominent,  
as a perverse  
parody of a birth mark  
-- call it a death mark."  
He called out,  
hoping that someone  
might hear him,  
but the only response  
he heard was the sad,  
terrifying roar  
of an empty room.

The emptiness condemned him,  
and not just him,  
but also all of his kind,  
that is to say, everybody.  
Out of the emptiness,  
misery rained down on people  
and affliction spread everywhere.  
All succumbed to sickness.  
The first of the disease's  
many syndromes was madness.  
"Why, look what has appeared  
on the roof adjacent?" he noticed."  
Is that not a woman, as naked  
as the day she came into the world?

People in their right minds  
do not take to performing  
their morning cleansing  
out on the roof,  
for all the world to see!  
My God, look how the rain,  
that rain which will not stop,  
trickles down  
between her breasts,  
forming rivulets  
over her stomach  
until it disappears  
into her pubis,  
only to emerge  
at the inside of the tops  
of her thighs,  
forming a curving course  
as it continues to trickle down,  
flowing down  
the front of the thighs,  
until it reaches her knees,  
where it splits,  
flows down the sides  
of her calves,  
over the ankles  
and onto the ground.  
How could she expose  
herself to the world  
so shamelessly?"  
He thought for a moment  
that this disease  
might not really be such  
a grievous affliction after all,  
but a great moment  
in the history  
of the city, a time  
of revelation.  
Might not the sight  
of this cleansed,  
purified, naked lady  
be a blessing,  
he thought. Then he knew  
that he too  
was going mad.  
Nonetheless, he imagined  
a blanket of flowers covering  
the rooftop, and knew  
that he too was going mad.  
He imagined himself falling,

purified and naked at her feet,  
rolling through the petals  
that impressed his flesh  
with exotic and delightful aromas,  
and he knew  
that he too was going mad.  
If only this moment  
could be prolonged interminably,  
he thought,  
for then  
I might be  
completely cleansed,  
completely purified,  
completely naked,  
and utterly redeemed.

And a lying voice implored:  
"There is no God  
nor Son of God.  
It is all  
human imagination.  
O divine body,  
though are all  
a delusion."  
Another chimes in  
"The vision of Christ  
that though dost see  
Is my visions  
greatest enemy."  
Yet another beseeches him:  
"Thou art a man.  
God is no more.  
Thy own humanity  
learn to adore.  
For that is my spirit of life.  
Awake! Arise to spiritual strife,  
And thy revenge abroad display  
In terrors  
at the Last Judgement Day."  
And he was plagued  
by doubt.  
"What is this vision  
that you have?"  
he was asked, and  
"Who is this Christ  
of whom you speak?"  
And all that he could say  
was "Mine speaks  
in parables

to the blind."  
And in his confused distress  
he heard someone say:  
"Doubt, doubt, and don't believe  
without experiment."

Children were born  
lacking all colour.  
A man appeared  
in the middle of the square,  
carrying a banner emblazoned  
with the image  
of the Virgin of Guadalupe.  
Soon the flag-carrier  
was encircled  
by a throng on crutches,  
hobbling toward their only hope  
for remission of the  
rapidly spreading plague.  
They longed to fly to the image,  
but their feeble  
limbs allowed them  
to touch it, if at all,  
only slightly.  
A few of the fortunate,  
still capable of locomotion,  
marched bravely  
in front of the image,  
while some  
who still had good eyes,  
but very lame feet,  
fell to the pavement  
in front of the banner,  
and cried out  
in despair;  
but what by then had become  
a procession  
simply stepped over them,  
paying them no heed whatsoever.  
This lack of compassion  
pushed them  
nearer to death.

"And one daughter of Los sat  
at the fiery reel,  
and another  
Sat at the shining loom



with her sisters attending round;  
Terrible their distress,  
and their sorrow cannot be uttered.  
And another daughter of Los  
sat at the spinning wheel.  
Endless their labour, with bitter food, void of sleep;  
Though hungry they labour.  
The rouse themselves  
anxious,  
Hour after hour  
labouring at the whirling  
wheel, Many wheels --  
and as many lovely daughters  
sit weeping."

Monstrous ugliness became  
the common condition  
of all the city's citizens;  
a foul stench spread  
throughout the whole city.  
People went about everywhere  
with posies  
tucked in the sleeves of their jackets,  
and availed themselves  
of their fragrance  
so frequently  
that the commingled odors  
became downright abominable.  
Next, the disease  
brought on delirium.  
In one old man,  
an Southern Italian  
of Moorish coloration,  
the madness  
resembled senility,  
but what distinguished  
it from that affliction was  
the specific character  
of its desperation.  
There was a raw force  
to his madness,  
a greatness,  
a barbaric dignity,  
the trampled, downcast  
but yet paradoxically undaunted  
dignity  
of beasts  
trapped in their cages,  
the dignity that allows Caliban,

in spite of everything,  
to tug at our heartstrings,  
and makes most people  
much prefer him  
over Ariel.  
In another, younger man,  
it induced  
exactly the opposite effect.  
He went about stooped,  
and once every minute  
pulled his face into  
a hideous contortion of shame.  
On rare occasion, he cried  
to the heavens  
for forgiveness,  
for he believed  
that the contagion  
to which all were succumbing  
was the direct product  
of his personal guilt.  
Behind this, though,  
was malignant fastidiousness:  
he was utterly revolted  
by bad breath,  
spittle,  
stains, clashing colours  
and bad manners --  
clearly, his inner being  
was sharply at odds  
with his external situation.  
This conflict  
between self and world  
had given him ulcers,  
which he self-medicated ridiculously,  
by consuming large amounts  
of vanilla soda.  
Needless to say, the gasses  
in the soda  
resulted in extreme flatulence,  
which his fastidious constitution  
experienced as a further insult.  
So he spent his days,  
for the most part,  
hobbling along  
on a stick, his eyes  
cast to the ground,  
steering himself clear  
of other people,  
and cowered

whenever anyone came near.  
Another, a medical doctor,  
developed a morbid  
fascination with decomposition,  
excrement and sewers.  
He produced an amazing number  
of sketches of implements,  
which he never got about  
to actually creating,  
for preventing  
those who worked  
in morgues,  
slaughter-houses  
and that urban monument  
that commanded his most intense  
affection, the sewer system,  
from being overcome  
by the stench;  
he also devoted his time  
to scribbling pseudo-scientific  
treatises on  
the disposal of faeces,  
the recycling of horse-meat  
and the regulating of prostitution --  
treatises which, beyond question,  
were the equal of any postmodern  
academics' conference paper.

He cried out  
to the Holy Word,  
asking Him  
to control the starry pole  
and to renew  
the fallen light.  
"Oh, the Night is Worn.  
Oh, turn away no more;  
Why wilt Thou turn away?"  
Thought's liquid coarsed by,  
too slowly.  
This retarded movement  
possessed no calming powers;  
rather, it induced disquietude.  
Everything moved slowly,  
but nevertheless,  
as Galileo might have remarked,  
it moved.  
Everything shifts;  
nothing settles,  
because it concerns a mind

which cannot rest,  
which cannot even imagine rest,  
so impatient with itself  
the soul is.  
And he realized that  
all was dream, for dream  
is only the slow analysis sensation.  
Memories drift, as on water.

He floated in delirium.  
He felt his mind to be  
a restless pool  
that in its lifetime  
reflects many images,  
and draws down many clouds,  
to mingle them with the earth.  
He recognized  
his mind's chameleon  
nature, and understood fully  
how changeable mind is.  
But like water,  
mind can become  
a flood, overwhelming  
all that it touches,  
and causing appalling pollution.  
He recognized that his memory  
is a great kaleidoscope,  
harbouring incessantly  
mutating forms.

He wanted nothing more from life  
than to feel it ebb away.  
The sounds of children playing  
carried with them  
an unfathomable melancholy.  
High branches mark  
where the sky begins.  
"Is it possible,"  
he asked himself,  
"that we have tried  
too hard  
to teach the heart  
to think,  
or taught it to think  
too brutally?"  
"Is it possible  
that we have deprived the heart  
of its ability

to take a break from thought?"

An unfathomable dispensation  
was granted to one special group,  
the police.

Perhaps it was their big, beefy bodies,  
perhaps it was  
because of their isolation  
from ordinary folk (contact with whom  
police everywhere  
and at all times  
avoid like the proverbial plague),  
or perhaps it was because  
they were privy  
to information hidden  
from the general public;  
but whatever the reason,  
the cops were a privileged  
occupational group, little affected  
by the calamity to which  
so many around them succumbed.

The ordinary citizens passed  
numerous hours speculating  
about the reason for this blatant  
injustice. Some proposed that  
this special treatment proved this  
habitually brutal, coarse, ignorant,  
thugs were really the elect,  
chosen by God; but even the  
fervour of madness could not  
convince the majority that God  
could select such brutal, murderous,  
self-serving, corrupt thugs  
for salvation.

But whatever the reason the police  
were favored by fate,  
they hastily took advantage  
of their special position.

It wasn't just  
that they surrendered  
to the characteristic cop instinct  
to humiliate,  
though of course they did,  
by harassing those who were  
too weak or dispirited  
to stand up to them.

No, in addition to that,  
they became even more corrupt  
than is the cops' usual lot.

One police constable,  
Andre the Giant K.,  
began peddling  
used syringes  
on the job,  
with the predictable consequences  
to those desperate enough  
to purchase them.  
Another went in  
with his girl-friend  
to open a convenience store  
that prospered  
by selling crackheads  
their baking soda and Chore Boy  
scouring pads; the main reasons  
for the store's  
astonishing success  
were the high demand for drugs  
that the calamity created,  
and the fact that dope addicts  
could avoid charges  
by purchasing their supplies  
at the police officer's store.  
Andre the Giant's partner, Thumper,  
operated a business  
on the side, too,  
as a scrap dealer  
trading primarily  
in copper piping and stripped  
telephone wires that druggies  
would trade in when they needed  
a fix and had no money.

The worst of that band of rogues  
was a cop named Leader,  
an ex-mercenary who  
from a young age  
had delighted in  
civil war,  
bloodshed,  
robbery,  
and political strife,  
to which delights he  
his career as a soldier of fortune  
had been dedicated.  
Amid the corruption  
of the pestilent city  
Leader could easily  
surround himself with

a gang of bodyguards, comprising  
profligates,  
criminals,  
debauchees,  
adulterers,  
gamblers who had squandered  
their children's inheritance  
in gaming dens, pot-houses  
and brothels of the vulgar sort,  
people who had bankrupted themselves  
to purchase impunity  
from criminal prosecution,  
men convicted of murder,  
men prone to sacrilege,  
men unable to stop themselves  
from abusing children,  
men unable to keep themselves away  
from Alfred Hitchcock movies,  
teenage boys unable to keep  
themselves from listening  
to Hip-Hop music,  
people living in fear  
of being apprehended by Leader's  
colleagues, the police,  
cut-throats,  
perjurers,  
people who had stolen  
from alms-boxes,  
people who teach pop culture,  
psychologists who made a trade  
of offering false opinions  
for sale,  
in short, people who live  
disgracefully,  
people living with a burden of guilt,  
people willing to shed the blood  
of their fellow citizens.  
They were Leader's intimate associates.  
If an innocent happened  
to become friendly with Leader  
the temptations to which  
that intercourse exposed him daily  
soon made as much a ruffian  
as all this rest.  
(This is a social dynamic  
which professors know about  
by first hand acquaintance.)

The spreading contagion

resulted in the closing  
of all the maisons de tolerance  
and maisons de debauché.  
What a pity  
such grand theatre was sacrificed  
to people's fear  
that physical intimacy  
might lead  
to contracting the plague.  
What daring vanished thereby!  
These establishments had begun  
to offer such fine spectacles  
They had put such  
imagination-stimulating displays  
of erotic refinements  
and perversions on offer.  
Upon entering one of these houses,  
one could feast one's eyes  
on tableaux vivants  
of nuns being raped,  
and lesbian scenes staged  
with the finest straps  
of Spanish leather  
and dildos  
of the best English make!  
Grandly decorated parlours  
were available for hire,  
for orgies and lavish parties..  
The best of these houses  
also provided,  
for the delectation  
of sadomasochists,  
machines for administering  
intensely localized  
electric shocks;  
and, for those  
inclined towards bestiality,  
finely bred Great Danes  
and Newfoundlands.  
As extreme as their daring was,  
these houses  
were characterized too  
by the most touching chastity:  
many of the women  
were well practiced  
in several tongues,  
and spoke our own  
very elegantly,  
though with a certain



periphrastic charm.  
Moreover, their bedrooms  
they kept  
in an impressively tidy condition,  
and on their beds  
not a wrinkle of salacious  
wallowing was to be found.  
The effect of this  
unexpected cleanliness  
was to put a charmingly  
civil face  
on these very carnal engagements.  
What was most impressive, however,  
was how bold the actors  
in the sexual theatre dared to be:  
one evening a grande horizontale  
of special renown absented herself  
from the opulent  
dinner party she was hosting,  
adjourned to her bedroom,  
then reappeared  
in the drawing room,  
completely naked,  
carried by four valets  
upon a silver serving platter  
garnished  
by a bed of violets  
and rose petals.  
What great images such scenes  
could conjure up in one's mind!  
How wonderfully such goings-on  
stimulated the imagination!  
And now, because of the plague,  
these houses had been abandoned.

Because the maisons de tolerance  
were closed,  
couples clasped together  
more tightly  
and with greater frequency;  
on occasion they  
intertwined so tightly  
that their mouths were bruised  
and their souls bitten.  
They locked themselves up  
in a prison of dark love,  
and the secret voice of love  
could speak  
only about melancholy.

Those who succumbed  
to the disease's delirium  
entered the twilight zone,  
between waking and sleeping,  
and became uncertain whether  
they were awake or asleep.  
The world itself became  
the stuff of dreams.  
And a voice spoke  
out of the terror:  
"Let the priests  
of the raven of dawn  
no longer,  
in deadly black,  
with hoarse note curse  
the sons of joy.  
Nor his accepted brethren  
whom, tyrant,  
he call free  
lay the bound  
or build the roof.  
Nor pale religious lechery  
call that virginity  
that wishes  
but act not."

His soul was desolate,  
because he felt abandoned  
from above.  
His enemies reviled him,  
tormenting him with jeers.  
"Where is your God Almighty?"  
they scoffed.  
He asked God to champion his cause  
against the impious.  
But the impious thrived,  
while he lost everything.  
He prayed to God to send light,  
but the contagion  
continued to spread.  
He said to himself,  
"Do they not know  
that it was foretold  
that when the time is ripe  
for the Messiah to come,  
impudence will increase,  
prices will soar,  
and, though the vine

yields copious fruit,  
wine will become costly.  
The nation will fall into heresy.  
The scholars' meeting-place,  
will be given over to harlotry?"  
"A brief look at the universities  
will show that that prophesy  
has already become true,"  
he thought.  
When the impious jeered  
and cursed him, he thought,  
"Wasn't it foretold that  
when the time is ripe  
for the Messiah to come,  
that Golan will be made desolate,  
that those who live  
on the frontier  
will roam from town to town,  
and none will take pity on them.  
The wisdom of the scribes  
will decay.  
Sin-fearing men  
will be despised.  
Truth will be gone.  
The youth will shame their elders.  
Sons will malign their fathers.  
Daughters will rebel  
against their mothers.  
The face of the young  
generation in that time  
will be like a dog's face.  
Sons will feel no shame  
before their fathers."  
"All that we are now experience  
has been foretold,"  
he told himself.  
"Be resolute.  
Do not flinch from abuse.  
Do not doubt,  
for all this are signs  
that the advent of the Messiah.  
They abuse you now,  
but soon they know  
the nature of wrath."

The next syndrome  
was a greater trauma,  
for the afflicted became blind.  
He was among the first

to give over to it.  
He could not see his sons  
but groped about  
with feeble hands  
longing to touch  
their famished carcasses.  
Medical science could not identify  
any pathological process that first  
induced madness,  
and then led to blindness.  
Doctors vexed themselves  
over the problem.  
Finally, it was decided,  
that when objects  
dematerialized, the eyes,  
without an object to contemplate,  
rolled inward,  
and became blind.  
Most proclaimed that this  
was caused by the whip of God,  
chastising them for vileness;  
so many fell to their knees,  
confessing their sins  
and repenting their ways.  
But it was to no avail.  
Boils broke out  
even on the bodies  
of those who were most ardent  
in their prayers.  
Even those whose confessions  
were most honest and complete  
turned sallow  
or ashen of complexion,  
and boils developed  
on their private parts.  
Jaundice struck more than a few  
of people at the very time  
they were at prayer.  
Even those who spoke  
with the most humble  
and respectful tongues  
witnessed their feet  
being twisted  
or turned into a club shapes  
in a matter of no more  
than a few hours.

Prisoners, unquieted by dreams

secreted by their overlaboured brains,  
experienced the strongest vision.  
Many dreamt the same dream,  
of a wolf, with four whelps,  
pursued by dogs  
over a ridge of mountains;  
and as soon as they seized the prey  
tore at her bowels.

The afternoons fell away slowly,  
as gently as a shawl draped  
from a shoulder.  
In the stillness,  
weeping could be heard.  
Out beyond the grey limestone walls,  
weeping could be heard.  
Out over the waters,  
weeping could be heard.  
From above the clouds,  
weeping could be heard.  
The angels fell silent  
in the stillness.  
The violist in the square  
fell silent.  
The wind was muzzled  
by the fetid atmosphere.  
Leaves were silenced by the weight  
of this atmosphere of contagion.  
The miners and road workers  
no longer sang at work.

When everyone was blind,  
they hung bells or gongs everywhere,  
of different pitches,  
to guide people  
in their way about the country,  
for each direction had  
its own peculiar note.  
To serve this purpose,  
they had to peel incessantly.  
The music they made  
was glorious indeed:  
wherever you placed yourself,  
however you turned your head,  
however much you  
leaned forward or back,  
whether you put your weight  
on your right leg or your left  
you would hear the different

mix of tones.  
Soon people discovered  
that they could compose  
their own internal symphonies  
by dancing.  
In short order,  
more and more people engaged  
in choreographic practice,  
to the end of filling their heads  
with this celestial music of chimes.  
The effort became a mass obsession,  
isolating each  
in an individual sonic cosmology.  
Because a different order  
than visual appearance determined  
their movements, they took on  
the look of a chorybantic cult.

Even the blindness became blessing.  
Once all had succumbed to it,  
a man announced that only God  
could see us now.  
So many people,  
male and female alike,  
disrobed before continuing  
their dance,  
thinking that that way  
they are more free  
to move.  
They proclaimed that they engaged  
in their nude dance,  
which was for God's eyes only,  
for the sole purpose  
of delighting God,  
even though the all understood  
that the intracranial  
symphony of chimes  
that they created thereby  
had the power of transport.  
All sought to be involved.  
This is what blindness taught them.

In midst of soft warm rain,  
someone pointed out that the heavens  
were covered by clouds,  
so even God could not see them.  
Not even the most imaginative  
and most thoughtful among them  
could conceive the possibility

that God too had become blind.  
God would not succumb to disease,  
they averred. But they feared  
they were unseen from above.

Among the blind,  
only those whose voices  
were not melodious  
were deemed ugly.  
What happiness  
for the skinny girl,  
so skinny she seems sickly,  
to not be deemed ugly any longer!  
You cannot be dirty and unappealing,  
her friends told her,  
for you speak  
with the tongue of angels,  
of and among mortals.  
How would know,  
she responded,  
for you cannot see me.  
Yes, but the soft silkiness  
of your voice  
makes us dream you,  
they retorted.  
Yes truly, blindness is  
such good fortune for the ugly.  
It was a blessing for me.  
When I had eyes to see,  
I lived "in umbra viventis luminis.."  
Now I know the "vera lumina"  
for my soul dwells  
in "in vera lux."  
This blindness is no affliction,  
but a sweet dispensation.  
Appearances no longer matter.  
Blindness has made my understanding  
contemporaneous with hearing.  
Blindness enables me to see  
the living light that is clothed  
by the shadow of light  
that sense of sight apprehends.  
Before I was blind,  
I had glimpsed the living light  
briefly on two occasions.  
But now that I am blind,  
I dwell continually  
within the living light.  
The living light lifts me out

of any pain and suffering;  
it forbids suffering.  
I am made a boy once again.

This is the Great Day  
of the Great Feast of Life,  
when the eye turns inward  
to discover the unity of things.  
This is what the blind learned.

How remarkable that we  
who are so base  
can receive such blessings from above.  
"Thou seeest me,  
the meanest thing,  
and so I am indeed;  
My bosom of itself  
is cold,  
and of itself  
is dark.  
But he that loves the lowly  
pours his oil  
on my head,  
And kisses me,  
and binds his nuptial bands  
around me breast."

This is the Great Day  
of the Great Feast of Life,  
when the eye turns inward  
to discover that every natural fact  
is the symbol of some spiritual fact  
and every natural appearance  
corresponds to some state of mind.  
This is what the blind learned.

From afar he heard a voice:  
"Ah the sun does arise  
And make happy the skies  
The merry bells ring  
To welcome the spring."

I am transported to a place  
of cheerful pleasantness,  
a place of flowers  
of untellable beauty.  
This is what he experienced,  
through the charity of blindness.



This is the Great Day  
of the Great Feast of Life.  
The Holy Word that once  
walked among the trees  
renews our faith  
in things to come.  
"Love seeketh not itself to please,  
Nor for itself hath any care.  
But for another gives its ease,  
and builds a Heaven  
in Hell's Despair."

This is the Great Day  
of the Great Feast of Life.  
Piper, sit down and write  
"In a book  
that all may read."

Eyes that turned inside could know  
the living light that saw them,  
the living light that poured out  
of the crystalline heavens,  
like pure waters that flow from God  
and spread pure green everywhere.

The landscape filled  
with rosy light,  
trapped hazy wisps, and high above  
towering precipices of clouds.  
Thunder reverberated.  
Flood-waters hurled themselves  
over embankments.  
The air vibrated  
with the sounds of santurs,  
tonbeks,  
duffs,  
and reks.  
The heavy rain roared  
like a falling meteorite.  
The pond filled to the brim  
and overflowed.  
Thickets rustled  
in the gentle wind.

Piper, "pluck a hollow reed"  
and pipe "a song about a lamb."

Out on the lake, waves dotted

the almost calm waters  
like flocks spread out  
on the hillside.  
Though it was dark,  
the sun, now gigantic  
could still be seen  
half submerged in the lake,  
appearing like a beautiful  
black woman clothed  
in golden embroidery.  
The stars have gone astray  
in the heart of the waters.  
From the heart of the waters  
they beam light  
out of the likenesses they are.  
The sky was wine-dark  
and the water the colour  
of the sky --  
the two bound together  
as one.  
A ball of fire immersed itself  
in the wine-dark waters  
then the sea and sky  
together became ornaments  
on night's robes.  
My heart rose with both,  
surging to praise  
the One Above.

Piper, pipe a song  
"of peasant glee."

The blind could hear  
the fiery spirit  
that abides in timpani,  
harpes and luz,  
from which human minds take fire.  
Understanding calls out  
from the fire  
with the sweetest sound.  
The fire was a living fountain  
of the brightest light,  
that only the inward eye could see,  
a fountain emitting  
plumes of salvation.  
The fire consumes all evil.  
The fire repulsed  
all boldness of heart.  
Its smoke became

a column of praise  
to the Almighty.  
It was a supreme and fiery force,  
that kindled sparks of life,  
and none of death.  
It was the fiery life  
of the divine substance,  
that blazed  
in the effulgent beauty  
of the fields,  
that shined in the waters,  
that burned  
in the sun and the moon  
and the stars.  
It was the Logos  
that shines forth  
from every word  
and discloses all secrets.  
This fire returned to the heavens  
the light that Lucifer  
had drawn down  
into the abyss,  
though much remained  
mingled with mud  
so as to redeem even the mud  
from its vileness.  
The light was decorated  
by the dawn  
and the heat of the sun,  
and it never darkened.  
Because of the fire,  
all human flesh became  
even more resplendent  
than when it was created  
in the heavens  
(and so, he realized, it is  
good to go about without clothes).  
All humanity was elevated  
by the light  
-- elevated, yes,  
even above the heavens.

"Pipe a song about a lamb"  
"The sun glowed fiery red!  
The furious terrors flew around!  
The golden chariots raging,  
with red wheels  
dropping with blood.  
The lions lash

their wrathful tails;  
The tigers couch upon the prey  
and suck the ruddy tife'  
And Enitharmon groans and cries  
in anguish and dismay.  
The Los arose;  
his head he reared  
in snaky thunders clad,  
and with a cry  
That shook all Nature  
to the utmost pole  
Called all his sons  
to the strife  
of blood."

The light of the fire  
became trapped  
in the windows of the soul,  
and turned  
the colour of topaz  
and sapphire.  
It is crowned with roses,  
lily, and purple.  
This sweet fire laid waste  
to will and desire.  
Its charity razes the buildings  
that vile reason erects.  
O ignee spiritus, laus tibi sit!  
The fire was as a precious ointment  
for their stinking wounds.  
Its spirit ignited dance.  
Inflamed by its heart,  
hands took up pens and wrote,  
even though the writers  
could not see  
what they wrote.  
The fire's touch  
left no stain.

Piper, "sing thy songs  
of happy cheer."  
Fire flows from heart  
and a river from my eyes.  
My tears are as red blood.  
My heartsickness has set  
my bones on fires  
and mixed my tears  
with my heart's bood.

So sweet was this fire  
that it cooled  
the scorching stones underfoot.  
Its light caused  
walls to flash,  
but was as gentle  
as the smoke of incense.  
From this fire issued  
a river of sanctity,  
in whose strength no spot  
of foulness could be found.  
This fire was ablaze  
with a kindly  
gentleness which kindled  
potent virtues.  
This fire put  
all darkness to flight.  
This is what the blind learned.

Piper, "write thy happy songs  
that every child  
may joy to hear."  
Creatures of flame and spark  
became the colour  
of mother-of-pearl and turquoise.  
They raised their voices  
to do the bidding of the Lord.

This fire devoured fire.  
It burned in all things,  
dry and moist alike.  
It glowed within crystal.  
It glowed within coloured glass.  
It glinted from snow and ice.  
He thought,  
"This fire will never expire,  
for it has too many forms.  
The sparks of this fire  
are flashes of lightning.  
This fire burns in pure air,  
without fuel."

Piper, "Pipe a song  
about a lamb."

Prayers formed in him,  
like shoots of grape-vines,  
pushing their way  
through stony ground.

Prayers formed in him,  
quiet and still,  
amongst the noisy calamities  
brought on by all those who clamour  
for profit, advancement,  
recognition of their identity,  
and reputation.  
Prayers formed in him,  
as fires that raze  
a tangled undergrowth,  
so that a new garden can take root,  
of faith and hope  
which are as innocent as flowers.  
Prayers formed in him,  
to induce obliviousness  
to the afflictions that still  
besieged him from every quarter.  
Prayers formed in him,  
against all reason,  
to wash away  
the stain of resentment.  
Prayers formed in him,  
to still the sufferings of those  
who followed  
the way of the cross.  
Prayers formed in him,  
to enlighten him  
about the glory  
of all that seems  
insignificant.  
Prayers formed in him,  
to neutralize the corrosive  
acid of anger.  
Prayers formed in him,  
to demolish  
the error of certainties.  
Prayers formed in him,  
to turn the eye inward.  
Prayers formed in him,  
to quiet the restless heart.  
Prayers arose in him,  
as thanksgiving for being spared  
from the pit of destruction.  
Prayers arose in him  
to keep him as lowly  
as all the dust.  
Prayers arose in him  
to restrain his tongue from anger.

These were the lessons  
vouchsafed to the blind  
through the charity  
of their afflictions.