

'A SONG OF THE
END OF THE WORLD'
1974

SONGS OF THE END OF THE WORLD

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"A SONG OF THE END
OF THE WORLD"

by
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Maurice Rowdon A SONG OF THE END OF THE WORLD

A portentous poem of 373 lines accompanied by 14 pages of pedantic explicatory notes.

Certainly not.

DJE
19.3.74

rej - ret.

by DJE

21/3/74

Chatto and Winders

Come, a passionate speech

we dare not go out on the stage

we clothe it in past scenes

then masked as the dead
we love to perform

fear being a deep attachment to survival
we aren't afraid

what fear of the end
do we read in each other's faces
now that survival is out of the question

shame would bind us equally

10

but we find neither fearful nor shameful
what has already abandoned us

our hope in this solemn moment
is that we shall all be liberated
from every kind of obligation
that of love
that of fear
that of survival

The Midnight Bell

we work to pass the time

the time that remains

20

or we cease to work
so as not to lose
the time that remains

for only work prevents madness
screams of death

work gives the impression that things are all right
that the world is going along as it always did

work is a lie

get in car start her up
looking forward to the cup

30

pull to right drive her off
see the doctor about that cough

watch lights slow down
what a lovely dressing gown

wait for green switch on lights
wish the tele had more fights

in with gear push her home
mattress silent rubber foam

put out blinker foot on brake
wonder if those seeds will take

40

here's a street another too
remind me take the boys to zoo

here flash lights at tricky bend
sometimes feel this is the end

get antifreeze renew the oil
ask the chemist lance that boil

patter of rain but wipers on
job's all right but magic's gone

keep to left let madman pass
like to kick him in the arse

50

no stopping now for mile and half
wish she'd wear a hat not scarf

lower gear when going downhill
some say celery some say pill

watch at the top for oncoming cars
might be better if I took her to bars

here comes bridge and traffic lights
go to town and see the sights

petrol's low but gauge might be wrong
twice my age and still going strong

60

try the radio switch on heat
must get covers for this seat

that's a nice model does ninety in third
he said the typist called me turd

pull out now the right lane's clear
fifteen years since she called me dear

watch out here for nasty skids
I hate the wife the job the kids

The Death of Incarnation

our tragedy being
that we must always look back

70

history pours down on us

we are the drowning man
seeing his life in a moment

to see the past
is to see the end

when thought disintegrates
money becomes the government

brass wits and golden foolery

80

their skin hung from their fingers like gloves
to the sound of the pipe the tabor and the trembling crowd

for the body insists
on being the finale
of all these destructions

on the understandable ground
that all else having been lost
the body at least remains

we eaters march aghast out of history
gorging on the dead
in the hope of being fed

90

A New Spartakus Manifesto

it would not happen
if we believed it would happen

it was promised
that when the poor became rich
the problem of survival would cease

but we rich have no other problem
than that of survival

(and we could not help but notice
how in that dream of future life
the human being was missing)

100

what misfortune

to fight so long for our rights
against the cruel rich
to inherit this dried leaf of a world
which won't last for many more holidays
many more wage increases

I remember once upon a time
I remember

I remember
because it didn't happen

110

I remember heavens that led to hell

the trams clattered like lighted ships
and carried our nightmares away
in a smell of fish and chips
to the next frightened day

we limped and smiled good night
in the full stare of day

and looked to the end of the street
to beguile the nightmare away

120

what thinkers will help us

the higher the thought
the bigger the detonation

thought and number and time
children of order mothers of crime
when shall we three meet again
in thunder lightning or in rain

down by pleasant tempe's shore
no skins were found to fit any more

the theory decides the observed
the doctrine the law

130

5

Be stone no more

much of our interest in past peoples
was wanting to know how they did it
inhabiting present time
with apparent ease

we have seen so many films in the making
we hardly turn round to look any more

ashamed of recording any more
that which did not happen

the arena hired
the lions amenable

140

now we want the scene to be real

when the time comes
we shall make so much history
we patient ones
there will be no occasion for filming

how bold we shall be
when the time comes for us to be admitted
into present time

but meanwhile we are quite happy
we orphans of tragedy
to call the event real which never happened

150

6

The Mask of Cupid

we have done everything to seem
and not to live

look at all the things that have been done to seem

it isn't enough any more

it's all seeming and no living

look at the wife of him who seems so much
how she trembles

in her right hand a firebrand tossed
fury in rags

160

and he's afraid of giving up work
that is seeming

7

The Host

who is the host
who floods the rooms with light
and in morning ablutions
secures your happiness

who brings news of serpents to unsuspecting husbands
working in the garden
and ordains that at table
among the chink of glass
you shall not grow old

170

who is the host that tunes the voice
to sweetly differentiate in evening dialogue
the male and the female

who shakes the earth like a head of hair

who wanders with the bear

who signals at night to the lost
and comes to the window
uninvited like the sound of leaves

180

who lies down by lovers
and rises with the dead

who rouses old men with a morning cup of tea
engaging them with whispers
full of a wit that we would think black

who drives at speed in strange vehicles
and is seen for a moment
and then denied

and dances sometimes under trees
without apparent awareness of audience

190

who hugs an old friend
and later reveals that they have not met

who is my lover

who is my father

who dances for me

who recognises me

who floods the house with light
and will if he is lost return

whose touch is so much
I complain of its not
being there on the sheet
turned back at night

200

and whose touch is such
that those who have no eyes
who do not recognise
live in the brightest trust
knowing the rooms will be set
so perfectly with light
that no host will be sought

Whence is that knocking?

it's true we've been liberated

210

the shadow of obligation
has ceased to fall on us

delicious lack of seriousness

it has been too much for us
the civilisation that never came

the more we made it
the more it fell to pieces

it was too much for us
those armies churches chambers of commerce

now all that can go to the devil
or rather back to him

220

gone the obligation of those lovely summers
and those intimate winters

deliciously useless making projects
because the expected is always missing

make me a raw red steak
and then I can feel my roots
stretch downwards through the brutes
into the raw red earth
where I had my birth

230

as long as someone willing
does the necessary killing
and I do not hear the screams
or see the blood in streams
or suffer the frightened eyes
that make me recognise
the murders for my sake

the sound is tuned to the ear
like hope or sin or fear

each to his frequency

240

the summoning of his bell
each to his degree

the sound is tuned to the ear
the wound to the fear

some find it made
others weave it everywhere

for heaven and hell
are here and now

Unruly Night

in a certain sense
the philistines have been beaten

250

for certainty cannot now be of a worldly kind

the roses are already dead
or mad
and don't watch us any more

the grape smiles
because a little drunk

hope makes all things grow

this hope
lies in wanting that which is not

the jasmine is smiling in the hope at last
of not being

260

the grape is drunk on its future

and now I can see that the willow

is weeping with laughter

and with how sad steps the moon is climbing

I shall not intimidate softly or otherwise
your certain knot of peace
nor cause my desolation
to become how ever so softly your distress

nor shall I make my bargains drive
how ever so lightly
on your head

270

nor strike my hours
of how ever so deep a darkness
on your light

and I shall not uncover in all my paths
how ever so thick
one thorn for you
and shall not halt how ever so soft
your silver tread

280

10

Song of the Mediterranean

troy is now no more a city

seat of civilisation
still lovely to see

still crowned
if madly

lovely civilisation
that never existed

and crime the government

troy is now a tribal chamber
roof of gold
floor of amber

290

11

Eastward in Eden

mary came to my door

I love you she said
looking at my side

are you my mother I asked her

no she replied
I am the one who died

but surely I said
it was not you who died
but the one with thorns round his head

300

I am the one who mothered him
and also the one who fled
I am the one who gave him that kiss
and took him down from the bitter cross

and you my son were the one who bled she said

once I was a ghost
it happened long ago
on a hilltop it came about
in a universe of snow
someone saw me lying dead
in a fairhaired heap on the ground

310

and then I came round the corner
large as ever in all my parts
and they took me for a ghost
for indeed I had died
crumpled on the path
consanguineous at last
with the gleaming earth
in the first of my deaths

12

This filthy Witness

christmas is over
the geese are dead
presents have been given
and uncles fed

320

carols still lovely
are no longer heard
and death was done
to many a bird

chickens were throttled
turkeys were split
geese knocked out
and wild ducks hit

330

christmas is over
we had a fine time
our fingers are twitching
from a future crime

we live like lords
we give the best
but more than a bird
has died in its nest

crackers were pulled
the port was passed
suddenly a voice
said it couldn't last

340

the birds all lay
sizzling in fat
while crop and beak
were kept for the cat

tea and sandwiches
at half past ten
we'll have to make life
all over again

350

take wing like the birds
build us a nest
be alive again
to unearthly request

we can't accept
these meals from the past
but change the scenery
alter the cast

13

Now the hungry lion roars

but what shall we do
we bodies
if undoing everything
there remains nothing for ourselves

360

feeling our selves to be bodies
in remembrance of a shroud
we required the support of number
and the presence of a crowd

but what shall we do
if nothing but one remains

thought and number and time
children of order mothers of crime
when shall we three meet again
in thunder lightning or in rain

370

NOTES ON THE SONG OF THE END OF THE WORLD

The title: 'On August 24, an hour before dawn, a whirlwind made up of dense black vapour, spreading in all directions for about two miles on either side, emerged from the upper sea near Ancona, and began crossing Italy as far as the lower sea near Pisa. This vapour, driven by irresistible forces, whether natural or supernatural I do not know, and torn and galvanised by struggles within itself, split up into clouds, some of which rose further into the sky and some of which descended to the earth, crashing against one another or whirling round with incredible speed, sweeping before them a wind of staggering violence, while their struggles resulted in frequent lightning and blinding flames. From these clouds, thus broken up and embroiled with each other, from this furious wind, and the stuttering sheets of flame, came a sound louder than the roar of thunder or earthquake, and so terrible that whosoever heard it thought that the end of the world had come.' (Leonardo da Vinci, 1516).

1. Come, a Passionate Speech

'Come, give us a taste of your quality,' says Hamlet to the players, 'come, a passionate speech.'

Line 1. The players are ourselves. We are absorbed in history --- in studying it rather than making it. It is not easy to identify us socially: our classes are mixed, our roles are confused one with the other. History, to be made, requires shared objectives, and recognisable social distinctions. Lacking these, we are reluctant to perform contemporary roles, especially as we are not sure of the existence of the future.

Line 3: But what we can do is dream ourselves into the past. Nearly all public activity is reduced to this by the collapse of the future which is nothing but the collapse of history.

Lines 5-10: Fear and shame are here connected. They are the two sides of a triangle of which the third side is pride. With the collapse of the conviction of survival this binding triangular force ceases to operate. Only the certainty of survival provokes a sharp sense of terror at the thought of not surviving. As the historians say, despair never caused a revolution: only hope can do that.

Lines 13-18: The only hope open to those who feel robbed of survival is the hope of liberation, even from the obligation of survival.

2. The Midnight Bell

It is Lady Macbeth's bell that calls Macbeth to murder. It is in fact after midnight. Here the midnight bell is a warning of 'strange screams of death':

Line 25: 'Our chimneys were blown down; and, as they say,
Lamentings heard i' the air; strange screams of death,
And prophesying with accents terrible.'

(Macbeth, 11, 3)

Lines 26-28: Work, with its suggestion of order (and therefore a discernible future), is an effective veil over the 'madness'. It helps us to forget the terrible bell.

3. The Death of Incarnation

The title refers to the state of the world when Krishna has at last lost his patience with its follies. There are no classes any more, one person cannot be distinguished from another, there is jealousy and resentment between people, and the holy men are bogus. Krishna then destroys the world. This is at the end of Kaliyuga, the era of destruction, which lasts three or four hundred thousand years. The Vishnu Paràna says, When society reaches a stage where

property confers rank, wealth becomes the only source of virtue, passion the sole bond of union between husband and wife, falsehood the source of success in life, sex the only means of enjoyment, and when outer trappings are confused with inner religion, then we are in the Kaliyuga. (Trans. by H. H. Wilson, London, 1840 - see Heinrich Zimmer's Myths and Symbols of Indian Art, Bollingen, Princeton Univ. Press. 1946). The current Kaliyuga, in which we are said to be living, began three thousand years before Christ. The end-of-the-world conviction which has well-nigh obsessed Christian thinking until today, is simply awareness of our living, a grand 'rehearsal' for the end that is coming all the time. The 'death of incarnation' here refers to the lack of men incarnating God, during the climax of the Kaliyuga. 'In the Kaliyuga one does not hear the voice of God, it is said, except through the mouth of a child or a madman or some such person' (Sri Ramakrishna, died August 1886).

Lines 70-80: With the dethronement of thought, pure power (money) is exercised as an end in itself. In history, power was always towards a visionary end of some kind. The collapse of visionary ends meant the collapse of history.

Line 80: From men's brass wits and golden foolery
Weep, weep your souls, into felicity.

(Chapman, 'The Shadow of Nights')

This refers to the 'expense of spirit in a waste of shame' that Shakespeare talked about in Sonnet CXXIX, and which the pursuit of power as an end in itself implies, money being its perfectly depersonalised medium. This modern role of money began explicitly in the sixteenth century, in the form of 'bullionism'. The bullionist obsession has never left the Christian world since that time. It was in the sixteenth century that the Church began to

collapse under the new mathematical rationalism, and began --- itself turned rationalist --- to argue and fight over definitions. Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor, was horrified at the Diet of Worms over the days spent quarrelling about the word 'transubstantiation', between the protestants and the catholics. He had an essentially mediaeval mind, namely pre-rationalist. Apropos of this theme, in parts of Tibet the robber chasing a victim stopped in his tracks if his victim fell, and resumed the chase when his victim got up. Above the power-consideration there was the life-consideration. This is what collapsed in the era of Charles V and his son Philip 11 of Spain. It spelled the end of the attempt to make a Christian civilisation.

Lines 81-82: At Nagasaki, after the atomic explosion, skin hung from people's hands.

'Hark how the minstrels 'gin to shrill aloud
This merry music that resounds from far,
The pipe, the tabor, and the trembling crowd ...'

(Edmund Spenser's Epithalamion)

The 'trembling' in my lines has changed to a different cause. Eastern music survives the terrible detonation. As Eastern thought survives the Kaliyuga.

Line 89: It is said that in the Kaliyuga, the last of the four world cycles (Satya, Treta, Dwapara, Kali), we concentrate on food and derive our energy principally from this. The four world cycles, lasting many hundreds of thousands of years, are a descent stage-by-stage from golden perfection to total disintegration. 'When the mind is immersed in worldliness it dwells in the three lower planes --- at the navel, at the sex organ, and at the organ of evacuation. In that state the mind loses its higher visions --- it broods only on 'woman' and 'gold' ... In the Kaliyuga the life of a man depends

entirely on food ... In the Kaliyuga it is difficult to have the feeling, I am not the body, I am not the mind, I am above disease and grief, old age and death' (Sri Ramakrishna).

The 'golden perfection to disintegration' development is easier to see in the past (e.g. the ancient Greeks, the Romans, the Alexandrians) than the theory of progress which began to obsess the Christian mind in the nineteenth century. Obsessive rationalism can even see in this century of the two fiercest wars ever known, and the fiercest massacres, a climax of civilisation or 'knowledge'.

Line 90: 'gorging on the dead' etc. Namely on the dead of history, and on the animal-dead (our meat-eating being unprecedented in the history of the world, outside of cannibals and certain shortlived noble classes). We return to cannibalism in the hope of receiving visions again, precisely as the Voodoo-ists did.

4. A New Spartakus Manifesto

The title is a reference to the revolutionary movement in Germany after the First World War. Germany was at that time a cauldron of all the struggles that later spread throughout the globe.

Lines 94-107: The problem of survival reaches its most acute when the 'visions' collapse because there is no further energy to take the race forward. It may coincide with a period of maximum prosperity and social liberation. These come about as a result of the concentration on digestive, procreative and evacuative functions.

Line 102: ...

... 'yet none knows well
To shun the heaven that leads me to this hell'

(Shakespeare, Sonnet CXXIX)

The first ruthless industrialists, at the opening of the nineteenth century, practised their cruelties on women and children in coal-mines and weaving factories in the interests of future marvels. The heaven of doctrine leads to a hell of an actual life.

Lines 113-120: An image from my childhood --- an industrial area, treeless, hopeless. An atmosphere of fear was perfectly embodied in the white ambulance that arrived to take away the sick and the dying, watched from behind curtains, and in the dark-suited 'rent man' whose rat-tat-tat on the door struck terror in the heart, and in the great number of cripples.

Lines 121-128: These lines are not only a reference to the obvious connection between the progress of experimental physics and the progress of the explosion. It is a warning that rationalism ('child of order') is also 'mother of crime' (that is, irrationalism). The Christian World, in the grip of this rational-irrational dichotomy, has warped those powers of discovery which do not depend on the mind. Its rational side relegates all these powers to the irrational side ('instinct', 'nature' etc.) Such a psychology shows no way out of the prison of thoughts. How can more and more thought solve the nightmares produced by a thought-gripped society and a thought-distorted nature? With more thought, with more education, with more kindness in the civil population, we must expect greater currents of hatred that again and again destroy the fabric of intimacy that despite everything is always weaved. Education here means the indoctrination of rationalism, or the view that the mind alone is an avenue to truth. Serving this doctrine, it builds a narrow space-time cosmology which can only explain a limited field of experience. It narrows even the science, which it is designed to realise. It naturally leads to régimes of terror, overt or otherwise, for the simple reason that mind used as the only valid

medium of experience excites the animal powers to excessive compensating action. Again we must return to the sixteenth century for the first clear expression of this crisis: statistics, logarithms, anatomy, book-printing come in for the first time and produce the first book-consulting civilisation. If you want mass benefits you must expect mass graves. Or, the greater the rationalism, the greater the war.

Lines 124-7: The witches in Macbeth are the engineers of the tragedy. They are here personified as 'thought and number and time', that is the mathematical or rationalist analysis of the universe.

Lines 128-9: 'Down by pleasant Tempe's shore', from Edmund Spenser's Prothalamion. Tempe, the lovely vale in ancient Thessaly, is here the scene of an attempt to make new life, but 'no skins were found to fit any more', after Nagasaki.

Lines 129-130: Nevertheless, such a destruction was created. 'The theory decided what may be observed' (Einstein). Space and time and form (see Kant's Critique of Pure Reason) are of the person perceiving, not in the sensations received. Thus we bring the rational universe forward ourselves as our own luggage of perception. We need its 'laws' to pick our way through life. But the laws are self-made. When one of Einstein's pupils argued that there was no such thing as a scientific fact, only 'perceived possibilities', Einstein thought this was going too far. He claimed that God 'did not play at dice'. But it was a valid conclusion from his own doctrine, which like Kant's undermined rationalism while seeming to bolster it. Both Einstein and Kant clung to the belief that certainty could only be attained through rationalism (i.e. 'the universe is rational, or in the form of the human mind'), while showing that the objective world was a chimera.

5. Be stone no more

The title: Winter's Tale V, 3, the admonition to emerge again into history, into life, after the stone-struck period of film- or two-dimensional living.

Lines 136-141: Films are here regarded as the make-believe of peoples who have lost the power to act. Other arts wilt before this machine-form of the defeated. When history is being made there is a strong sense of posterity. With the destruction of posterity as a feasible concept the sense of a living present ceases too. The past is closed off as dead, the future as an area of catastrophe. The film began its importance with such a history-less epoch. It derives from the novel, the work of an observer who freely moves from town to town, continent to continent, generation to generation in a moment with the authority of an all-seeing and never-corrupting eye. Like the eye of the novelist the camera suggests, but more effectively, that it is not a relative eye like human eyes but occupies an absolute position in space and time. The novelist was a child of rationalism. His medium collapsed with relativism. The film will in time undergo the same rejection. For only the rationalist yearns for the framed story with nothing relative, nothing uncertain, except the relativism and the uncertainties of the framed characters. With the withering-away of the rationalism/irrationalism dichotomy, its media will naturally fade too.

6. The Mask of Cupid

The title is that of Edmund Spenser's poem from The Faerie Queen in which he describes a masque where ease, fancy, desire, doubt, danger, fear, hope, dissemblance, grief and fury are

personified, with Cupid himself the fearful blind-folded engineer.

Lines 153-7: Here work is seen as Cupid's mask in the world, transformed, beneath which the passions fester and burn. Work is part of the operation of 'seeming'.

Lines 158-163: The executive who works night and day, namely the determined egotist, has a 'trembling' wife because the mask of work renders him unapproachable. The rationalist dare not break his schedule to open the steaming cauldrons of intimacy. It also creates rebellion in the woman --- hence 'in her right hand a fire-brand she did toss' --- Edmund Spenser is describing Fury ('full ill appavelled in rags'), again The Mask of Cupid.

7. The Host.

It is not a thought, it is not rational much less irrational, it is not a sensation, it is not in space or in time. It cannot be perceived. It is not a feeling. It is the absence of all these things. Certainty is found not at all in the rational, as the rationalist hoped, nor in the irrational, but in that which can be experienced without being perceived.

Lines 170-2: An Italian saying, A tavola non s' invecchia mai, 'at table one never grows old.'

Lines 202-9: We are made so perfectly at home in the world, we forget that the house was ever designed. In other words we take it as real. But it is manifestation. This is surely the most wonderful magician's trick! We may even believe that there is no experience beyond our furniture and our rooms!

8. Whence is that Knocking?

The title: the murderer asks this just after his crime (Macbeth 11, 2)

The supreme crime ('Nagasaki') liberates, in destroying all law. Rationalism never succeeded in creating genuine order. It only achieved ordered plans in stark contrast to the wildest disorder when the plans were realised. The ruin of earth, sea, air, the eclipse of hope in the young. Rationalism and irrationalism are necessary bedfellows.

Lines 216-7: The more we applied ourselves rationalistically to the making of civilisation, the more it fell to pieces, since the stronger human forces were not in play. The rational and the irrational are here the weaker human forces which together wrecked the possibility of a stable life. The eighteenth century, or the epoch of encyclopedism, was the crucible of nineteenth-century science, namely the analysis of matter defined as reality. The self-named civilisation had to fall in order to liberate us from this doctrine. For example, the reply to the nineteenth century was the orgy of irrationalism called Nazism, which swept Christian civilisation away. This refers to 'western' civilisation but the whole globe is involved because the East has long been engaged in absorbing western thought. The eastern collapse will follow almost at once, after its spectacular repetition of the Christian nineteenth century. Eastern doctrines will be disgusted in the heartbroken west, as we shall witness the reappearance of Christ from the east!

Lines 226-237: The more rarified the thought, the more obsessive the meat-eating, because animal-desires are increased. Peasant populations the world over subsisted on largely meatless diets until this century.

Lines 238-246: Even in fear, when we seem to be purely the victim, we are the creators of the so-called circumstance, which is only thought to be objective. It is said that in the Kaliyuga we only have a small inkling of this power of creation (Sri Ramakrishna).

Lines 247-8: Heaven and hell, as states to happen after death, were the invention of the early monasteries, in the so-called Dark Ages, to slake the barbarian thirst for reward and revenge. We must remember that the monks themselves were 'barbarians', with a tribal background, and had the task of appealing to the barbarian mind, and quelling its hot impulsive demands. The hottest demand of all was to get paid for one's actions. A shining reward was therefore offered for the future, after death, and alternatively a horrifying revenge in eternal fire. The Old Testament shows no interest whatsoever in such an idea, which was reached by an adroit misunderstanding of the New Testament. Here 'heaven and hell are now.' That is, the murderer has his hell in the horror of the act itself, the creator has his heaven in the marvel of the act itself.

9. Unruly Night

The title, from Macbeth 11, 3 'The night had been unruly; where we lay, our chimneys were blown down.' A reminder of global catastrophe caused by rationalism. Thought operates destructively when it is unsupported by the other human powers, and believes that it is the door to all reality.

Line 250: The philistines are here the worldly, not the 'inartistic', since artistic interests are, in the Kaliyuga, the philistine's chief mark and mask. It does not do socially to be without them. Under rationalism the savage must curb his violent nature in order to achieve his ends of bogus order. When no longer even he can act,

3

due to the catastrophes that engulf him, he is in a certain sense 'beaten'. Despite the fact that he controls rationalism, and quiet thinkers are his salaried tools, he cannot any more point to a safely ordered world as the guarantor of his operations. It is his moment of conversion. In fact rationalism can be seen historically as the crude effort of the barbarian races, groomed to a better life by the monasteries, to grasp the order which they have just heard about. The de-barbarianising process takes thousands of years, and the Christian effort is barely two thousand years old. We have to remember that the races of the western world were the most unthinkably savage ever known, and it is therefore not at all surprising that their successors, while purporting to be thinking out reality, should in fact be plunging into the most frightful wars! When control of the barbarian mind passed beyond the monasteries, during the waning of the middle ages, the crude battle of thought began. And every 'advance', whether in anatomy or astronomy, was matched with some new terror.

Line 251: The certainty of the Host (see Part 7) survives all catastrophe. The soul is always in joy, whatever happens.

Line 265: Sir Philip Sidney, Astrophel.

Lines 266-280: These lines are addressed to the moon but also to the adored one..

10. Song of the Mediterranean

The title refers to the Mediterranean as the most graphic scene of catastrophe, and especially Italy.

Line 281: 'seat of civilisation' refers specifically to Italy, but by deduction to ancient Greece. Hence 'Troy': see Thomas Dekker, Troynovant.

Line 288: Government, due to the ravages of rationalism, with its implacable plans and accounting systems that calculate the future as well as the past, must become criminal and no longer even purportedly a protector of the citizen. More than this, it must, under pressure from the dominant power-groups, become the chief protagonist of the irrational. The poisoning of the atmosphere, the soil, the seas has been under state protection, indeed quite often state subsidy.

Lines 289-291: Thomas Dekker, Troynovant.

11. Eastward in Eden

The title: Genesis 2, 8.

Lines 306-9: The soldier is mistakenly thought dead by the rest of his company during a battle. An event in my own life.

12. The Filthy Witness

The title: Macbeth again, 'go get some water, wash this filthy witness from your hand'. Partly another reference to 'Nagasaki'.

13. Now the Hungry Lion roars

The title: Puck's lines in Midsummer Night's Dream.

In this section number is regarded as a convenient but false analysis of matter (mathematicae non sunt verae scientiae, Pico della Mirandola). It is wrong, that is, to take a useful mathematical analysis as a statement about reality, as it would be to take the crutch for the leg. Leonardo da Vinci was deeply disappointed when mathematics did not yield him the understanding of nature he was after. The obsession with thought, the obsession with number, the

obsession with time as duration fragmented into ticking seconds and 'developing' into decay or birth, are the same obsession in the end: a flight from a reality which is one, or numberless.