

Introduction

The poet Artur Lundkvist recalls Harry Martinson for "the open heart of his naiveté, ... his undamaged trust in life, which later would show itself more clearly and give him his supremacy, his power to overcome all resistance as if it were a game and self-evident." Martinson's joviality, as Lundkvist implies, rose out of desperate beginnings. His father dead, his mother fled to America, he and his sisters became wards of the parish in south Sweden, farmed out for their labor to the lowest bidder. At sixteen, after a decade of such abasement, he sought liberation and dignity on the sea, but found little of either. Down with black-lung disease, a common affliction of stokers, he came ashore for good in 1927.

Once cured of his illness, he could find no work, but begged on the streets of Gothenburg in an unreformed Sweden murmuring with pre-revolutionary have-nots and causes enough to energize them. From among these Young Socialists and anarchists Martinson took a wife in 1929, and over the next decade the two established their reputations: Moa Martinson, through her radical political engagement and her novels; Harry, in poems and books of travel whose fresh language made the natural world of his harsh experience a place of genius and joy. The disparity in their works, however, would eventually defeat their partnership. They were deeply dissimilar.

When in August 1934 the Martinsons attended the All-Russian Writers' Congress in Moscow, he balked at its ubiquitous motto from Lenin: "The writer is the engineer of man's soul." The engineer's concern for right procedure and standardization was for Martinson no unalloyed virtue. Martinson looked for a renewal of man's spiritual force not in a new-patterning and new-furnishing of human life, but in a primitivist, Lawrentian empowerment of the good promptings long repressed which unite men with the natural world. A man devoted to the wholesomeness of liberty could not stay married long to a woman devoted to the wholesomeness of a statist order; in 1940 there was a divorce, a private grim event in the midst of worldwide calamity.

In the winter of 1939-40 war flared along the Russian-Finnish border. Martinson had set off as one of the service personnel for the Swedish volunteers in the campaign, but conditions proved too harsh for his uncertain health, and his winter months in Finland would be followed by years of illness and silence, a time for observing and absorbing the dark new "world of outsized playthings" (Martinson, *Verklighet till döds* [*Reality unto Death*] 30) that the war, greedy for goods raw and manufactured, had inaugurated with its "great ultramaterialistic Christmas Eve" (35).

With his volume of poems, *Passad* [*Trade Wind*] (1945), and his novel, *Vägen till Klockrike* [*The Road to Klockrike*] (1948; tr., *The Road*, 1951), Martinson rose to all the major literary prizes reserved for Swedes, and in 1949 he was elected to the Swedish Academy. In autumn 1953 the first poems of *Aniara* appeared in his volume entitled *Cikada* [*Cicada*], forming a section called "The Song of Doris and Mima," which culminates in the nuclear destruction of the city of Dorisburg as recounted by "the Detonee," the last voice from Earth to reach the space ship "Aniara."

As Johan Wrede points out in his exhaustive *Sången om Aniara* [*The Song of Aniara*] (Stockholm 1965), there was much in 1953 to foster the somber contemplation of catastrophe. On August 8 the Soviet Union announced that it had a hydrogen bomb "100 times worse than the 'ordinary' atom bomb," as the national daily *Svenska Dagbladet* thought to feature it; and *Dagens Nyheter* quotes the American physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer as having recently said, "The atomic clock is striking more and more quickly. We [the US and Soviet Union] can be compared to two scorpions in a jar, each with the opportunity to kill the other, but only at the risk of its own life." Four days later the Soviet Union detonated its H-bomb. Outer space had also been much in the news that summer. On the last day of the International Congress of Astronautical Federations, held in Zurich in early August, the astrophysicist Wernher von Braun revealed American advances in propellants able to send rockets into orbit for the construction of a space station. Further, Wrede notes an August 1 article in *Dagens Nyheter* reporting observations that

showed the Andromeda galaxy to be twice as far and thus twice as large as previously thought: 1,500,000 light years from the Milky Way (27). Later that month Martinson turned his own home telescope to the unusually clear heavens, finding Andromeda "shining more intensely than he had ever seen it before.

He even went and woke up his wife [Ingrid, whom he had married in 1942] for her to share the experience with him. This forceful experience of outer space turned his imagination in that direction, so that soon afterwards he began having the illusion of being located on a space ship. At first this feeling was chaotic and full of anxiety, but gradually the visions began to clarify themselves inside him....(22)

Great aircraft were also prominent that summer. On August 7 came the American government announcement that the first non-stop jet flight across the Pacific Ocean had been made on July 29, 1952, from Alaska to Japan. And overnight on August 13-14, 1953, the world's largest plane, the US Air Force six-engine xc-99, made its first trans-Atlantic flight. With gigantic airships already capable of staying aloft over great distances, it is easy to imagine space shuttles like the "Aniara," even more so when close to home the ultramodern Swedish superliner "Kungsholm," launched in October 1952, was being readied for service from Gothenburg in October 1953. Small wonder that the earlier and ill-fated superliner "Titanic," Martinson has stated, had much to do with his conception of the "Aniara"; in fact, in a letter to Wrede of July 4, 1962, Martinson called the space ship "that Titanic of outer space which my fancy one time launched" (Wrede 44). Out of the fears and wonders of 1953 alone Martinson had rich inspiration for his "The Song of Doris and Mima," a song of nuclear disaster, huge ships bearing refugees onto "cosmic seas" (*Aniara* 55), and disaster in those seas. The sad images of half of a century converge here, to expand still more in the 74 additional poems that make up the complete *Aniara* of 1956.

The work went on sale on October 13, 1956, and became a cultural "phenomenon" for the next five years and more. The reviewers were universally impressed; radio and television interviews, readings and discussions brought the enthusiasm to an even broader public. If sales were slumping by the end of 1958, they were soon revived by the Swedish Royal Opera premiere, on May 31, 1959, of Karl-Birger Blomdahl's operatic version, which was taken to the Edinburgh Festival later in the year and played at Covent Garden as well. Other stagings of the opera, especially the one done in German at the Hamburg Staatsoper, and translations of Martinson's poem spread the reputation of the original. Yet Martinson's small, even sour way of speaking of it in 1962 suggests that he was unhappy that a work so grand was now a standard by which his future works would be measured. In an interview in a Helsinki newspaper in January 29, 1963, he complains, only somewhat humorously, that "to have written *Aniara* is like having done a large rya rug. After that you can only sit down and do little mats, and people say: Why doesn't he get a rya done instead of these lousy old mat-ends?" (q. in Wrede 50).

Martinson was not imagining things. His 1960 volume of poems, *Vagnen* [*The Wagon*], received mixed reviews; and, despite a success with *Tuvor* [*Tussocks*], published in January 1973, Martinson was prevented from following it up. Only a week after its appearance, he was hospitalized for a long-postponed operation. Medically it was a success, but he had needed all his strength to sustain it physically. Not even the 1974 Nobel Prize shared with an old friend, the novelist Eyvind Johnson, could re-energize him. He died on February 11, 1978.

In *Aniara*, not ten years after the publication of *Passad*, the inward ecstatic journey anticipated there has turned into the exodus of great multitudes of refugees in some far-distant century when radiation has rendered much of the Earth uninhabitable. These new voyagers are being taken to labor camps on Mars or Venus until the planet can be detoxified, and this by now is an old story. But they will never reach the camps. The "Aniara" will become a ghost ship.

knocked off course by an asteroid, its steering mechanism irreparably damaged. Passengers and crew, trapped inside the antiseptic craft, drift ever farther from Earth, or Dorisvale, the "cosmic Zanzibar" (Poem 17), the one spice island in the universe; and even as they float away from it, it too explodes, in the final nuclear war.

We learn of these events through a speaker who, in Poem 1, is merely one among the masses registering for a probable evacuation. We know nothing about him, except that he has been smitten by the loveliness of this world as embodied in the woman whom he calls Doris and who alone sheds the light of her blondness upon the universal murk. Then, too, Doris speaks intelligently (though in the bland formulas of her instruction sheet) when everyone else sits in tense silence until the departures are announced, not in words, but in mere blasts of sound, "the take-off siren of a rocket ship" (1). These vestiges of what was once to be loved in the world—its light and its language—win the speaker's rapture. So little does he expect from "the utter nonsense of this way of living" (1) that even these meager gifts are thrilling.

Not until Poem 6 are we informed that the speaker is the man who tends the Mima, a miraculous accessor and transmitter of information from all over the universe. More than a mechanic, the Mimarobe is its confidant as well; for the machine has become a being, also to be stricken after a time by the physical and moral cataclysm to which man has brought the world. The Mimarobe, as Martinson's speaker, is to some degree Martinson himself; and his technical skill, like Martinson's, is at the service of a mind great in its powers to conceive and connect and driven by a passionate commitment to knowing and showing the things of this Earth. It is "in the name of Things" that Mima wishes peace from the destruction of even the most perdurable of them: "She had beheld the granite's white hot weeping/ when stone and ore vaporized to mist./ She had been much troubled by those stones' travail" (28). If Mima is a reflection of Martinson's concerns and apprehensions, the Mimarobe's function as impresario of such shows is analogous to the poet's powers of conjuring and communicating "things in thousands which no

human eye/ could ever dream of seeing" (6).

The Mima who "tells no lies" (3) and her Mimarobe faithfully transmit the signals, "her cosmic catch" (6), from all the intragalactic seas while almost all the rest on board practice denial and worship the Mima for validating that denial by the vividness and constancy of her transmission. If life this real makes its way on board, then they have not really left its sphere. Even when at the end of Poem 6 the emigrants "have begun to comprehend . . . that the only world/ which we are given is this world in Mima," they can still draw on their powers of self-deception to pursue "the usages of Dorisvale" (7). Or they can misuse Mima by letting her divert them from bitter memories of Earth to visions from temporarily more intriguing planets: "For frequently the world that Mima shows us/ blots out the world remembered and abandoned" (7). Mima is perverted into a shipboard movie studio, manufacturing exciting travelogues that permit the viewers to think of themselves as the stay-at-homes, like the audiences at travelogues back on Earth, and to deny that they themselves are the travellers.

There are other recourses for that vast majority that needs to deny its severance from "Sun and Earth . . . and Dorisvale" (2). Daisy Doody, the shipboard dance queen, insists that the ultra-modern dance rage, the yurg, is exactly like the yurg they do back home in Dorisburg; and for her "everything called yurg's magnificent" as she wriggles through its steps and "slings at Death's void the slang of Dorisburg" (12). The Mimarobe himself falls in with the sexual excitement, the positive charge, of this hedonist and her faddist's devotion to the tiny wedge of reality she can negotiate. He cannot speak to her of his desolation, nor can he even speak to her of hers ahead when the Earth itself is blown to bits and Daisy, "squirming hotly when the dance is done,/ knows not that she herself some hours ago/ was widowed of the town of Dorisburg" (27). The Mimarobe seeks out her animal comforts after fuming at still other forms of denial, such as the bland reassurances of High Command "newspeak" that, as calamities go, this one is not so bad— in fact, this calamity is a lucky thing: "We are favored people. We've not

crashed/ on any star or stellar satellite./ Instead we have our trek ahead of us,/ a lifelong journey onward to an end/ which would have come in any case, and comes" (11). At Poem 13 he flees from a lecture by the chief astronomer, whose still more sophisticated denial takes the form of depriving the ship and its journey of any significance whatever, both because there is no way the mind can know the importance of anything—"knowledge is a blue naïveté/ which with its measured quantity of insight/ imagined that the Mystery had structure"—and because the "Aniara" is rightly understood as "a little bubble in the glass of Godhead":

In any glass
that stands untouched for a sufficient time,
gradually a bubble in the glass will move
infinitely slowly to a different point
in the glazen form, and in a thousand years
the bubble makes a voyage in its glass.
Similarly, in a boundless space
a gulf the depth of light years throws its arch
round bubble Aniara on her march.

Objectivity like this annihilates its object, and the Mimarobe goes to "beg a tryst" with Daisy in her "womb of hair/ where death's cold certitude does not exist" (13). Sexuality is at least urgent; there is nothing urgent about a bubble moving at an undetectable speed.

Inhuman and unskilled in human evasions, Mima, "a telegrator without pride" (9), begs to be delivered (28) from works and visions tolerable only to a mind aloof from humanity, "cast-iron" (16) and proof against all shocks and appeals. Though free from sin, the divine Mima dies her willed and exemplary death and, Martinson dares to suggest, will revive "in myriads of years," reborn under a new sun (24).

With this exemplar of humility gone, the spaceship "Aniara" moves deeper into its woes. It is left to the imperious mystery of "the Cosmic Way" (82). This Tao-like mystery which transcends such

dichotomies as mind/matter, life/death, is travestied in the figure of the dictator Chefone, "the fierce lord of our craft" (30), who appears at the start of the new (1956) *Aniara* poems with an appeal to the rule of law which is simply a device for the better satisfaction of his mindless sadism, a transparent expression of his malignity. His power derives from his Hitlerian inculcation of fear into the Aniarans' consciousness, a fear that without him they would all fare terribly in the Hell he claims they are going to—as if with him they would fare any better in any better place. Chefone, enraged by the breakdown of Mima, unjustly persecutes the Mimarobe and other technicians for their alleged malfeasance. On a technicality the accused are set free; but, as pleasant as this news is to them, it is merely another instance of the lost cogency of scientific argument:

Protesting we were innocent, we sought
to reason without learned reference
and in the language most of them were taught
propound the barest modicum of sense.

But this same language, meant to clear up all,
grew murky for us too, a rigmarole
of words avoiding words and playing blind
amid the clarity of cosmic soul. (31)

As positive as this clarity of cosmic soul might sound, it is in fact clear as a mirror is clear, only reflecting accurately the puzzled face that looks into it. The clarity is the cloak of the Mystery. "The Tao that is displayed is not the Tao," writes Kwang-Tse. Before that Mystery, science and reason break down; and that is why Chefone, that "bullet-headed breaker of mankind" (92), who represents a parody of that impenetrable fact, stages his Fête for the Cosmic Way, the twentieth-anniversary celebration for the lift-off of the "Aniara" (82). The fiasco of this festival rite, however, foreshadows the breakdown of Chefone's rule:

And many thousands were weeping
and several hundreds said:
This truly is Fate's way.

Goldonder Aniara
has carried on its journey
for twenty years today.

And many stood unspeaking.
But suddenly someone said
a light-year is a grave.

None of Chefone's concoctions bears up under scrutiny. His "flying plantations" (54), the pleasure grounds reserved for him and his cohorts, fabricates a land of faerie complete with ballad-heroine and ballad-dragon; and there, for a moment, the overwined Mimarobe is taken in by the allurements of this "spring everlasting." But the "beautiful wight" who has attractively composed herself beside "a tussock of grass hyssop-blue" turns out to be one of the annihilated citizens of Xinombra, which had gone up in obliterating atomic light, and she is among the screamers after vengeance on the likes of the poor Mimarobe, complicit as he is in the worldly results of advanced science. Eventually, Chefone himself breaks down, that hidebound hoodlum, into a kindly being who, before pining away and dying, "helped the sick and tried to warm the freezing" (93). Thus, even within the "thrasonical" (92) Chefone lies the reality of a persistent grace, working mysteriously and "exceeding fine" toward the looming of a new creation.

The clearest presence of that persistent grace in the poem is not on board the ship. In the earlier section described as "hardly pretty,/ pale little Nobby, radiation-mangled" (15) and thus a sufferer like Doris and Mima from the malignant energies overcoming the Earth, in the continuation, in the long recitation entitled "The Space-hand's Tale" (40), Nobby or Nobia walks as both worshipper and guarantor

of a natural kindness scarcely recognizable in the transmogrified Nature of the "Martian spring." Its near-metallic willow-leaves "are from the spirit's wood," writes Nobby, sending them back as keepsakes along with little notes to the space-hand. They are transformed by her grace into instances of beauty, just as the "Cockerel, gaunt and spare,/ became transformed into a bright Blue Bird." Martinson seems to be thinking here of the Blue Bird from Maurice Maeterlinck's 1908 symbolist drama of that name, a bird whose possession means a triumph over the refractoriness of the things of this world, like Nobia's feats of sympathetic loving kindness in "this terrain of starkest, plainest forms."

As Nobia transfigures the hard black willow leaves into leaves "from the spirit's wood," so the blind Poetess performs "the visionary's play on weal and woe" in "Songs of Rind she made up in the dark" (48). Like Nobia too, the poetess also spent time on the Martian tundra camps. In her case, she returned to her desolated homeland of Rind only to find that it had become tundra too, "All plant life injured." She had gone back on a tour to raise money for a project called Save the Tundra, although the popular cynicism calls it "what none could do, but what all men desire." Now she sings to the captives on board the "Aniara," given over to Chefone's senseless pomps, the pastimes of empty sexuality, Sandon the comic's vaudeville turns of vulgar self-mockery or songs of meretricious sentiment like "Little Bird out in the Rosewoods Yonder"—anything that mimics human power, like the song of make-believe invulnerability, "'The Cast-Iron Song' that every Gonder/ sings so often here in our goldonder" (49). In her special set at the end of Poem 49, however, she sings different songs: the first, against the fierce Chefone and his reign of sacrifice and sadism; the second, an aria celebrating a return to Earth, that most desired event for those on board, but here in the sense of burial and re-entry into the soil itself from which Adam was made in the image of a God who works in soil:

With the limbs of their bodies ravaged into soil
daily they celebrate their god gone blind

who knows all things and has no need to see
those shapes of life whose raiment he assigned.

The final song of the Poetess forecasts the return of "the soul of life," as "unself-aware" as the currents of Nirvana which will range through the "Aniara" at the very end of the sequence. To these eschatological comforts, however, Martinson allows the Poetess's audience a last dismissive word:

What lovely words she summoned to her aid.
What lovely words she came upon in Rind.
But merely words they are, and merely wind.

These people, like the cosmos they inhabit, will not yield to grace.

If the corrective to such waywardness can be found, it will be found in the work of Isagel, "our female pilot" (5), a kind of intellectual emanation of Doris. But, unlike the Doris of Poem 1, Isagel is a deeply distraught victim of interplanetary disaster. Even before Mima's breakdown, the general trouble was "seen most clearly in our female pilot", who would gladly have committed suicide there and then were it not for the Mima's "fuel/ for spiritual light" in all that oceanic blackness the ship of man had blundered into. Isagel's homage to the Mima leads to her "luck" being granted: an infant is born out of her own mind:

She shrieked with gladness, hugging to her heart
the vigorously kicking inspiration
which, born of her, was joyously conceived
in deep love for the Law of Aleph Numbers. (39)

The child, however, while healthy in itself, stands for (or is) a truth that has no way to be implemented. It exists on board light-years away from the tangible Earth, where alone the truth has vehicles for its expression:

Here her breakthrough never could become
in any manner fruitful, just a theorem
which Isagel superbly formulated
but which was doomed to join us going out
ever farther to the Lyre and then to vanish.

Isagel never recovers from this frustration of her genius by the brute circumstances of a post-terrestrial world. She cannot put her in-spiration to any use; her "baby" has been born in vain.

As Isagel loses her faith in her scientific activity, she gains in warmth, becoming indeed a sister to that Libidel whose rites she had once attended. If, in the "Secret Dirge" for Libidel (73), the singer (with a typically Aniaran, i.e. human, belatedness about his solicitude) suggests to the dear "star" that "in Alpha Centauri's puzzle/ we'll shed hot tears and nuzzle," in Poem 81 the Mimarobe and Isagel mirror that scene:

Clasping my heroine to me,
I could taste her warm tears as they poured.
And she was the warmth of the living
that still kept me company on board.

For a while the Mimarobe can stanch her tears by invoking durability and resistance, "asbestos and silicon," and the even distribution of stress which is the subject and goal of statics, "statical science," and the hard knowledge that sins must be atoned for. But Isagel's mind, steeled even to a Chefone-like plan for mass extermination by heading straight into "an unknown sun" (87), does break down (88), wounded by the brute universe:

into my friend's soul a shard had slid,
a fragment from all that we had met in space
when we collided with the Leonid.

She has grown self-accusatory, feeling "like Death." Longing for a new

dispensation from the heart of things, "where the Aleph Numbers all are stored," Isagel vanishes into a primordial Mind which, anterior to laws, is free to establish new ones bearing the unflattering name of Chance, "the world's new overlord."

In her new phantasmal existence, awaiting her rebirth into form, she pays one final visit to the Mimarobe in a dream, "illuminating/ my heart in unimaginable beams" (90). For the Mimarobe it is an epiphany. Isagel stands revealed as "the mima's inmost self, . . . Mima's soul". The two are identical in that both combine within themselves the subtleties of pure mathematics and fastidious moral sensitivity of which latter they eventually "die." They are both, as Anna Törngren has noted, searchers. In Poem 5, Isagel's eyes are lit by "a hunger-fire searching after fuel/ for spiritual light"; in Poem 6 Mima "searches, searches, searches" for the signs of life that can alleviate the distress of the disoriented passengers. The two of them use their powers of intellection, derived from material processes whether electrical or biochemical, to reestablish connection with the material world, with Things, for in the substance of the world is the active kindness that binds us to it. Matter is suffused with spirit; it is the home of worth. When the Things of the world go elsewhere, Mima and Isagel will go to that primordial elsewhere until a new age can be inaugurated.

The twentieth century was to have been such a new age, and yet its most marvelous advances in knowledge have in fact deprived "things" of their ultimate reality. In an ever more advanced technological world things "are simply vanishing," and "only the poet still remains true to them" (Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics* 71). The utter reliability of cosmic mechanics which classical or Newtonian physics had triumphantly demonstrated was undermined by the work of Planck, Heisenberg and others. Einstein's formulation in 1905 of the equivalency of matter and energy shattered the old idea of sturdy material substances. As a case in point, in Tord Hall's words:

de Broglie's hypothesis on matter-waves further
emphasize the fundamentally dreamlike character of
the material world. A lump of lead is a weave of

the same web as dreams. (*Vetenskap och Poesi* [Science and Poetry] 84)

A man like Martinson, who had expressed antipathy toward the cult of the machine and the Marxist notion of a poet as engineer of the soul, a facilitator of the mind's paces in becoming a mere tool for state and social good, leapt to the freedom which the foremost physicists had extended:

For a poet this development in natural science has a negative and a positive side. The negative is of course the completely abstract character of the [new] world image, for the poet wishes to make things visible; he seeks images or visions. The positive element is the opportunity for the artist to free-shape things as he wishes, which is a consequence of the physicists' having renounced giving clear directives on how the world image is supposed to look. (84-85)

The Taoist world view exhilarated Martinson the most. Indeed, Gunnar Tideström says the number of articles Martinson wrote in the 1940's expressing his sympathy with it amounted to a kind of missionary work on its behalf. Taoism is, of course, the source of the concepts of Yin and Yang; however these opposites are specified: Yin as the dark, cold, female principle, and Yang as the principle of light, heat, masculinity; or Yin as the activity of earth and Yang as the activity of the stars and planets. The Tao itself, as the unity that requires and energizes these two opposites, is translatable as the Way, the Law. On the "Aniara," the Earth, receding farther and farther into the confused lights of the galaxy (19), becomes what it had always been, a part of those heavens which have been called "God's spirit." The Earth-Yin and the Star-Yang are one and the same in this important instance of the fading-out of Doris which is also a fading-in. So too are they in Isagel, both the subtle thinker and "the faithful

servant on the farm of numbers" (39). It is through this conflation of opposites that Isagel, introduced as the reserved and rational thinker, is also the alter ego of a pungent, humming, physically zealous Doris. This Doris, for Martinson still the Lawrentian primitivist, cannot be too closely attended to, too fully loved. Yet mankind has turned its back upon her, literally in the fictional flight of the "Aniara" and morally in the destruction being wrought whether by feats of war or feats of progress.

The moral error of turning one's back on the Earth Paul Tillich has identified as the spiritual crisis of mid-century man—one which he sees concretized in projects for space exploration:

One of the results of the flight into space
and the possibility of looking down at the earth
is a kind of estrangement between man and earth,
and objectification of the earth for man, the
depriving "her" of her "motherly" character, her
power of giving birth, of nourishing, of embracing,
of keeping for herself, of calling back to herself.
She becomes a large, material body to be looked
at and considered as totally calculable. ("Effects
of Space Exploration" in *The Future of Religions* 45)

Tillich foresees, as does Martinson, that the behavioral result of this loss of the Earth and the things of the Earth in a world befuddled by the abstract beauties of a brilliant physics will be the "indifference, cynicism, and despair" that blights the sad companions on Martinson's ship of death.

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Translators' Note

The contemporary reader may find it surprising that Harry Martinson, in the mid-1950's, should have written so many of the *Aniara* poems in regular meters and rhymed stanzaic forms. The choice was untypical for him, but at the same time it is indicative of his artistic integrity; for, in reverting to traditional poetic devices, he has made it difficult for translators to bring his work the recognition and admiration of a wider than Scandinavian readership. He made a principled decision, based upon the grandeur and the urgency of his theme, and in as many instances as honesty and ingenuity allowed we have felt obliged to honor it.

Aniara is a book of prophecy, a panoramic view of mankind's possible doom; and if Martinson, in his guise as speaker and highly vocal lover of the victim planet Earth is to save the beloved, he has to speak in words and forms most people can take readily and seriously. Most people are most moved by the strong, recurrent stride of blank verse or by stanzaic forms with regular line-lengths and rhymes to attract the mind and focus it on thought that moves in deliberate stages, from line to line and from rhyme to rhyme. The reason that these poetic devices exist is to command attention; the theme of *Aniara* should command the most sincere and concerned attention from the greatest number of people.

If traditional poetic devices offer reassurance to the broadest possible readership that something grave and also intriguing is being said, it needs to be reassured as well of a sincerity behind their use. They need to be understood as expressive of an urgency coming over a mind or minds unused to these rhetorical resources but embracing them as ways of adding point to ideas. For the reader to have such an understanding, Martinson must first establish the basic colloquial style from which he can then depart. What seems occasionally to be flatly journalistic in the English and Swedish is in fact a deliberate layer of the minimal language common to anxious and demoralized people. Thus, the chief speaker of the poems is not a philosopher or scientist but a Mimarobe, a mechanic in charge of

the Mima's circuitry, who speaks initially in Poem 1 through unrhymed lines and, for someone who will soon be uttering some grand ideas in formal verse, remarkably prosaic phrases. Even the venerated Doris, Martinson's personification of Earth, is first seen mundanely making out cards and acting like any dead-pan governmental functionary (12ff). The flat repetitious introductions to her remarks—"she says....She says...."—fix the low tonality of broken man. Rhetorically unprepossessing characters come and go in the pages of *Aniara*: the Space-hand with the lumpish opening to his Tale, "The transfer out to Tundra Three took up nine years/ Evacuation Gond took up ten years"; the blind poetess from Rind whose simple sentences at the start, "I started feeling cold./ It was in fall," do not presage the "lovely words she summoned to her aid" by the time her lengthy poem ends. And diction can go very low indeed in Daisy Doody's slang from Dorisburg, in Libidella's song before her mirror, and in the Secret Threnody for her that parodies "Bicycle Built for Two" with a lubricious version of a love-death: "O nuda you/ Pitch nudie woo/ In a moonwood of lutes for two." We have been faithful to Martinson's deliberate inelegances, for they make more prominent and beautiful his eloquence when it lavishly comes.

Equally daring in its challenge to critics and translators alike is Martinson's invention of a forbidding space terminology, so blandly knowing about celestial mysteries, so ugly in its words as to call in question the depth of its knowingness. Wherever we could, we have left these terms unchanged. In most cases they are based on Latin and Greek roots familiar to English-speaking readers, and in these cases we have simply anglicized the "Swedish" originals—"transpodes," "transtomizers," etc.—or left them untouched when they seemed to be deliberately whimsical and obfuscatory in the "Jabberwocky" style—"the indifferent tacis of the third webe," for example, a pseudoscientific phrase as dark in its way as Daisy Doody's slangy confession that she is "wathed in taris." Both levels of discourse elevate language above what it refers to, calling attention to their own syllables rather than clarifying what they purport to speak of; therefore they should be left as is, whatever blotches of static they produce

in the text. Martinson needs them there as recurring splashes of noise to clash with and validate the thoughtful, authentic language which surrounds and, it is to be hoped, will someday supersede them.

Other sorts of Martinsonian word-play require more translational risks, and we have attempted them with the "letting-go" that Walter Benjamin considers imperative: "the language of a translation can—in fact, must—let itself go, so that it gives voice to the intention [the intended effect] of the original not as reproduction but as harmony, as a supplement to the language in which it [the original] expresses itself, as its [the translation's] own kind of intention" ("The Task of the Translator", in Hannah Arendt, ed., *Illuminations*, tr. Harry Zohn 79). Thus, when in Poem 29 Martinson has the last communicant from Earth identify himself as *Den Söndersprängde*, literally "he who has been blown apart," the black humor of this physical impossibility, of a man in bits "stammering and detonated," needs to be accounted for in the English. We thus came up with "the Detonee," with its legal suffix implying sardonically the inclusion of so grotesque a status among the predictable features of a civilized society. The word renders the literal meaning while drawing on that current of pleasantry in *Aniara* that not only keeps its tale from being overbearing, but also provides reason to hope that the despair is premature. We have been especially desirous of retaining as much of Martinson's drollery as we could, particularly as he himself has so apportioned it that the poem's serious intent does not topple from the force of his essential good humor. The retention of jokes, however, does mean that some liberty must be taken with literal meaning. Thus, in Poem 59, the jingle of *ångersånger*, songs of remorse which the speaker thinks little of, has been rendered as "recanting-chanting" in order to preserve the speaker's tone. Chefone's flowery taunt in Poem 56, *hur hörs sången av gök och trast i år från Dorisdalen*, "What do the song of thrush and cuckoo sound like from Dorisdale this year?" is so awkward in literal translation that we have substituted the sarcastic "What do the birdies say?" As a final example, we freely admit that the rhyme of "widow"/"kiddo" in Poem 73 does not exist in the Swedish, but the

boozy nostalgic cajolery of this parody music-hall song seems to us to permit this stretch, particularly as the general meaning of the Swedish lines is preserved.

As full of sardonic whimsy as the technical and slang terms are, our chief duty was of course translating that strong Martinsonian voice, thoughtful and grand in its words, monumental in its gravity and import:

And out toward the luminous Lyre
drove the ship with its hull full of scars
as mementos of those scalding meteors
we had met in the suite of the stars. (Poem 81)

This round confident tone comes to predominate as the sequence progresses, as, paradoxically, cause for confidence all but vanishes. The style becomes a control upon the content, and thus we have felt compelled to reproduce, wherever we could, the discipline of form and rhyme which Martinson employed to lower the volume, as it were, of the powerful message he was delivering. We are aware that for many this might make the poetry seem outdated (though not so deliberately antiquated as Martinson's Poem 83, "The Song of Gond"); for others, however, it might help to do in English what Martinson did in Swedish—to draw these images and thoughts into a traditional form which can steady them, through its own equilibrium, into sources of comfort and strength. It is the Lyre, after all, for which the "Aniara" is headed, and it is Martinson's "lyre" that the tale of the ship has reached, the lyre of a poet whose devices can still bring pattern and intellectual pleasure in a still unfathomed world.

This present version is a revision of the translation of *Aniara* published in Sweden (Vekerum förlag; Södra Sandby, 1991) under the auspices of the Harry Martinson Society and its former and current presidents, Dr. Ingvar Holm, Lund University, and Mrs. Ingegerd Bodner Granberg. We are grateful to the late Mrs. Ingrid Martinson

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We wish also to express our great respect for Mrs. Elspeth Harley Schubert's version of *Aniara* (1963), undertaken with Hugh MacDiarmid, which for nearly thirty years offered those who could not read Swedish their only access to Martinson's extraordinary poems.

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My first meeting with my Doris beams
with light to make the light itself more fair.
But let me simply say about my first
and just as simple meeting with my Dóris
that now it forms a picture all can see
every day before them in all the halls
sluicing refugees to lift-off zones
for urgent excursions to the tundrasphere
these present years, when Earth, become unclean
with toxic radiation, is accorded
a time of calm, repose and quarantine.

She fills in cards, her five small nails a-glint
like dim lamps through the concourse twilight.
She says: Sign your name on this line here,
where the light is pouring down from my blond hair.

She says: You're asked to keep this card at hand,
and should some danger of the kind that stand
listed here on page two hundred eight
threaten havoc to our time and state,
then you come here and in the space assigned
put down exactly what you have in mind.
The part of Mars where you'd prefer to go,
the tundra east or west, is checked off here.
One jar of uncontaminated soil
is owed by everyone, as stated there.
At least three cubic feet, as sealed by me,
will be recorded for each traveler's share.

She looks at me with the disdain that beauty
so easily conceives when looking round
at folk on twisted paragraphic crutches
scrambling up and down the steps at lift-off ground.
Off through the fire-exit, numbers more and more
she watches disappear, to new worlds bound.

The monumental foolishness of living
is thus made obvious to one and all
who'd spent years hunting for one crevice giving
access for a gleam of hope to fall
into that hall where processed emigrants
start up each time they hear
a rocket-siren squall.

2

Goldonder Aniara shuts, the siren gives the wail
for field-egression by the known routine
and then the gyrospinner sets in towing
the goldonder upward to the zenith light,
where magnetrinos blocking field-intensity
soon signal level-zero and field-release occurs.
And like a giant pupa without weight,
vibrationless, Aniara gyrates clear
and free of interference out from Earth.
A purely routine start, no misadventures,
a normal gyromatic field-release.
Who could imagine that this very flight
was doomed to be a space-flight like to none,
which was to sever us from Sun and Earth,
from Mars and Venus and from Dorisvale.

A swerve to clear the Hondo asteroid
 (herewith proclaimed discovered) took us off our course.
 We came too wide of Mars, slipped from its orbit
 and, to avoid the field of Jupiter,
 we settled on the curve of I.C.E.-twelve
 within the Magdalena Field's external ring;
 but, meeting with great swarms of leonids,
 we headed farther off to Yko-nine.
 In the Field of Sari-sixteen we gave up attempts
 to turn around.

As we held our curve, a ring of rocks
 echographically gave back a torus-image
 whose empty center we sought eagerly.
 We found it too, but at such dizzying angles
 that the passage to it led to breakdown
 of the Saba Unit, which was hit hard by space-stones
 and great swarms of space-pebbles.

When the ring had moved off and space had cleared,
 turning back was possible no longer.

We lay with nose-cone pointed at the Lyre
 nor could any change in course be thought of.
 We lay in dead space, but to our good fortune
 the gravitation-works were still in service,
 and heating elements as well as lighting
 were not disabled.

Of other apparatus some was damaged
 and other parts less damaged could be mended.
 Our ill-fate now is irretrievable.
 But the mima will hold (we hope) until the end.

4

That was how the solar system closed
its vaulted gateway of the purest crystal
and severed spaceship Aniara's company
from all the bonds and pledges of the sun.

Thus given over to the shock-stiff void
we spread the call-sign Aniara wide
in glass-clear boundlessness, but picked up nothing.

Though space-vibrations faithfully bore round
our proud Aniara's last communiqué
on widening rings, in spheres and cupolas
it moved through empty spaces, thrown away.

In anguish sent by us in Aniara
our call-sign faded till it failed: Aniara.

5

The pilots are more nonchalant than we
and fatalists of that most recent stamp
which only vacant spaces could have formed
through seeming-changeless stars' hypnotic force
on human souls agog for mysteries.
And death fits altogether naturally
into their scheme, a constant crystal-clear.
But still one sees that after five years now
they too look down the pinnacle of fear.

At some unguarded moment, close-regarded
by me who read the features of their faces,
grief can shimmer like a phosphorescence
from their observer-eyes.

It's seen most clearly in our female pilot.
She often sits and stares into the mima
and afterward her lovely eyes are altered.
They gather a mysterious sheen
of nebulosity, the iris of the eye
is filled with mournful fires,
a hunger-fire searching after fuel
for spiritual light, lest that light fail.

A year or so ago she once remarked
that, personally, she would be quite willing
for us to polish off death's bitter pill,
make that our farewell dinner and be gone.
And many must have thought like her—but the passengers
and all the naive emigrants on board
who even now scarce know how waywardly we lie,
to them the Cabin has its bounden duty
and now that Cabin's duty is eternal.

6

The mima tuned us in to signs of life
spread far and wide.
But where, the mima gives no word of.
We pull in traces, pictures, landscapes, scraps of language
being spoken someplace, only where?
Our faithful Mima

does all she can and searches, searches, searches.
And her electron-works haul in,
electro-lenses give her screener-cells
their coded programs and the focus-works collect
the tacis of the third indifferent webe
and sounds and scents and pictures emanate
out of lavish fluxes.
But where their sources lie she gives no word of.
That lies outside and always far beyond
a mima's technics and her powers of hauling in.

She fishes metaphorically her fish
in other seas than those we now traverse,
netting metaphorically her cosmic catch
from woods and dales in undiscovered realms.

I tend the mima, calm the emigrants,
cheering them with scenes from far-flung reaches
of things in thousands which no human eye
had ever dreamt of seeing, but the mima tells no lies.
And most do understand: they know, a mima
can't be bribed, she is all probity.

They know that the mima's intellectual
and selectronic sharpness in transmission
is three thousand eighty times as great
as mankind's could attain if it were Mima.
As before an altar they bow down
whenever I come in to start the mima.
And many times I've heard them whispering:
Imagine, though, if one could be like Mima.

So it's to the good that the mima has no feelings,
that pride has no place in the mima's insides,
that as from habit she delivers images
and tongues and scents from undiscovered countries
and tends to this unmoved by blandishments,
secured by probity, unshaken by incense.

She takes no notice that in this darkroom
a sect of mima-worshippers bows down,
fondling the mima's pedestal and praying
the noble mima's counsel for the journey,
which now has entered on its sixth long year.

Then suddenly I see how all has changed.
How all these people, all these emigrants
are realizing that what once had been
has been and gone. And that the only world
which we are given is this world in Mima.
And while we voyage on toward certain death
in spaces without land and without coasts,
the mima gains the power to soothe all souls
and settle them to quiet and composure
before the final hour that man must always
meet at last, wherever it be lodged.

7

We still pursue the customs formed on Earth
and keep the usages of Dorisvale.
Dividing time into a day and night,
we feign the break of day, the dusk, the sunset.
Though space around us is eternal night

so starry-cold that those who still abide
in Dorisvales have never seen its like,
our hearts have joined with the chronometer
in following the sunrise and the moonrise
and both their settings viewed from Dorisvale.
Now it is summer night, Midsummer night:
the people stay awake hour after hour.
In the great assembly-room they all are dancing
save those on watch in the infinitude.
They're dancing there until the sun comes up
in Dorisvale. Then smack comes clarity,
the horror that it never did come up,
that life, a dream before in Doric vales,
is even more a dream in Mima's halls.

And then this ballroom in infinitude
fills with whimperings and human dreams
and open weeping none hides anymore.
Then the dancing stops, the music dies,
the hall is emptied, all move to the mima.
And for a while she can relieve the strain
and rout the memories from the shores of Doris.
For frequently the world that Mima shows us
blots out the world remembered and abandoned.
If not, the mima never would have drawn us
and not been worshipped as a holy being,
and no ecstatic women would have stroked
in trembling bliss the dais of the deity.

Our soul is spent on dreams, we're ever rubbing
 dream on dream for want of something real,
 and each new mummerly becomes a ladder
 to the latest dream-beset vacuity.

And everything far off becomes our home;
 indeed, beyond all pales lies our relief—
 I share with Dorisvale my every grief,
 and longing ceaselessly to sojourn there
 itself is health, is artful living here.

Seldom do we take the slightest note
 of our majestic wonder of a boat,
 and only during sermons at a grave
 does this world dawn on us as all we have;
 then come a multitude of black thoughts flapping
 through these vaults that hold us bound
 filled with the echoes of a prior life
 and threading an outlandish void of sound.
 Then we scurry to the mima to beseech
 those comforts we may see but may not reach.

Then thousands mill in an unending flock
 through every corridor to Mima's hall.
 Then suddenly we might remember in a flash
 that this craft's length is sixteen thousand feet,
 its width three thousand and the population
 milling in its vaults eight thousand souls,
 that it was built for large-scale emigration,
 that this is only one ship out of thousands
 which all, of like dimensions, like design,

ply the placid routes to Mars and Venus,
that we alone had canted off our course
until one day the ranking astrolobe
informed us that we were no longer lying
in the inner field, but everything
that could be done would certainly be done
so life within the outer field would be
a pioneering voyage and a probe,
the farthest so far toward the field beyond.

When afterwards it struck the High Command
that there would never be a turning back
and laws obtaining in the outer field
were different from those in clear control
of placid flight-routines in inner space,
first panic set in, then came apathy
laying between the tempests of despair
its chilly doldrum-world of dead emotion
till the mima, like a soothing friend in need
and filled with specimens of life from other worlds,
to soothe us all unlocked her vision chest.

9

There are in the mima certain features
it had come up with and which function there
in circuitry of such a kind
as human thought has never traveled through.
For example, take the third webe's action
in the focus-works
and the ninth protator's kinematic read-out
in the flicker phase before the screener-cell

takes over everything, allots, combines.
The inventor was himself completely dumbstruck
the day he found that one half of the mima
he'd invented lay beyond analysis.
That the mima had invented half herself.
Well, then, as everybody knows, he changed
his title, had the modesty
to realize that once she took full form
she was the superior and he himself
a secondary power, a mimator.
The mimator died, the mima stays alive.
The mimator died, the mima found her style,
progressed in comprehension of herself,
her possibilities, her limitations:
a telegrator without pride, industrious, upright,
a patient seeker, lucid and plain-dealing,
a filter of truth, with no stains of her own.
Who then can show surprise if I, the rigger
and tender of the mima on Aniara,
am moved to see how men and women, blissful
in their faith, fall on their knees to her.
And I pray too when they are at their prayer
that it be true, all this that is occurring,
and that the grace this mima is conferring
is glimpses of the light of perfect grace
that seeks us in the barren house of space.

10

The sterile void of space is terrifying.
Glass-like is the stare encircling us
and the systems of stars hang frozen and still

in the round crystal windows of our ship.
Then is the time to cherish visions in dreams
from Dorisvales and preserve, here in the sea
where no water, where no waves are moving,
every dream and every rush of feeling.
The smallest sigh is like a gentle wind,
all weeping a fountain, the ship itself a hind
dashing in silence toward the starry Lyre
which, all too far for any human mind
to understand the distances or times,
has not slid one small inch to either side.

Everything looks as if solidified
and frozen to the mount of Everlasting,
like grains of diamond in a crystal sheath
encompassing the very boundlessness
in a massive, radiant hall of utter distance.
But all the words that have been used to death,
misused on mountains and on tracts of water
and landscapes where they never did belong
were drawn on in advances by a race
with no thought that the words which they were wearing down
might at some future date be sorely needed
right where they suited best: right here, on board
this space ship on its way out to the Lyre.

What has been left for us who most have need
of every word answering to limitless
immeasurably far-outlying Hades?

We are compelled to seek out other words
able to shrink and shrivel all to comfort us.

The word for Star has now become indecent,
the low names high for loins and woman's breast.
The brain is now a shameful body-part,
for Hades harvests us at its behest.

11

A man from High Command stands amid the people
in the great assembly-halls abaft.
He pleads with them not to despair, but view their fate
in the clear light of science. He maintains
that it is not the first time this has happened.
Sixty years ago a large goldonder
with fourteen thousand souls on board was lost,
had instrument-failure heading for Orion
and plunged with rapidly increasing speed
toward Jupiter, got swallowed in its wastelands
and buried in that giant star's dense husk,
its evil death-quilt of gelid hydrogen
which to a depth of near ten thousand miles
armors that devil-star in helium and cold.
It could have turned out just as badly here.
But we are favored people. We've not crashed
on any star or stellar satellite.
Instead we have our trek ahead of us,
a lifelong journey onward to an end
which would have come in any case, and comes.

12

The orchestra plays fancies and we take the floor.
The girl I lead about is hors concours.

Originally she's from Dorisburg,
but though she's danced here now for several years
in Aniaya's ballroom she insists
that, far as she's concerned, she hears
no difference whatsoever in the yurg
they dance here and the one in Dorisburg.
And when we dance the yurg it's evident
that everything called yurg's magnificent
when Daisy Doody wriggles in a yurg
and chatters in the slang of Dorisburg:

You're gamming out and getting yile and snowzy.
But do like me, I never sit and frowzy.

I'm no sleeping chadwick, Daisy pouts,
my pipes are working, I am flamm and gondel,
my date's a gander and my fate's a rondel
and wathed in taris, gland in delt and yondel.

And lusty swings the yurg, I'm tempest-tossed—
the grief I'm nursing threatens to be lost
upon this womanchild who, filled with yurg,
slings at Death's void the slang of Dorisburg.

13

In the sixth year Aniaya fared
with undiminished speed toward Lyra's stars.
The chief astronomer gave the emigrants
a lecture on the depth of outer space.
In his hand he held a splendid bowl of glass:

We're slowly coming to suspect that the space
we're traveling through is of a different kind
from what we thought whenever the word "space"
was decked out by our fantasies on Earth.
We're coming to suspect now that our drift
is even deeper than we first believed,
that knowledge is a blue naïveté
which with the insight needful to the purpose
assumed the Mystery to have a structure.
We now suspect that what we say is space
and glassy-clear around Aniaya's hull
is spirit, everlasting and impalpable,
that we are lost in spiritual seas.

Our space-ship Aniaya travels on
in something that does not possess a brain-pan
and does not even need the stuff of brains.
She's traveling on in something that exists
but does not need to take the path of thought.
Through God and Death and Mystery we race
on space-ship Aniaya without goal or trace.
O would that we could turn back to our base
now that we realize what our space-ship is:
a little bubble in the glass of Godhead.

I shall relate what I have heard of glass
and then you'll understand. In any glass
that stands untouched for a sufficient time,
gradually a bubble in the glass will move
infinitely slowly to a different point
in the glazen form, and in a thousand years
the bubble's made a voyage in its glass.

Similarly, in a boundless space
a gulf the depth of light-years throws its arch
round bubble Aniara on her march.
For though the rate she travels at is great
and much more rapid than the swiftest planet,
her speed as measured by the scale of space
exactly corresponds to that we know
the bubble makes inside this bowl of glass.



Chilled at such certitude, I take flight
out of the mima-hall to the ruddy light
filling the dance-hall and, finding Daisy there,
I seek admission to her womb of hair,
in her savior-arms I beg a tryst
where death's cold certitude does not exist.
There's where life remains in Mima's room;
the Doric valleys live in Daisy's womb
as in ourselves, no cold or threat to hound us,
we lose track of the spaces that surround us.

14

A sect that's called the Ticklers has sprung up.
They gather to be tickled and to tickle.
It's mostly women, but the chiefs are men
and called the Tinkers,
an old word from the pre-goldonder age.
The word is cited in the Blue Archive
and has to do somehow with feeding
in the older manner, and with flames.

More I do not know.
As a child in school, of course I saw
on some occasion natural fire.
It was kindled, I remember, from a piece of wood
which then was shown around, emitting smoke
and some heat too.
When everyone had looked, the wood was dipped in water.
The piquant little flame was quenched.
Wood was a rare material. Had existed
in pre-goldondic times, but later dwindled
steadily through nuclear catastrophes.
It rather moved us, I remember, watching
in a circle as the wood-chunk gave out light.
But that is long ago, ah me, so long.

15

I shut down the mima, walk one round and listen
to the emigrants, the crewmen,
and hear an old space-mariner tell of Nobby,
doubtless the great love of his life:
By normal standards she was hardly pretty,
pale little Nobby, radiation-mangled.
Three times she was branded and came very near
to fluttering away, but was pulled back
with help from gammosal and Tebe-rays.
And after a year or more in dreary wards
of barracks-hospitals on Tundra Two
she took a bargain-fare goldonder home
from Mars to Earth, resuming her assistance
to refugees and regular collections
for people needing help on Mars and Venus.

All Marsfolk needed respite from the tundra-cold;
the Venusfolk, safety from their swampy climate.
Did she wear her health down? Rest assured.
Nonetheless I held her very dear,
my little Nobby, and cannot forget
the scanty moments when we snatched our dreams
on Tundra Two on my rare visits there.
At that time I was just a volunteer
aboard Goldonder Fifteen—name of Max,
an old tramp off the Venus run, converted
for shipping aid and exiles to the tundraball.

The Thirty-second War had just then ended,
Control Plan Three was being closely followed.
You're all aware how all of that turned out:
new Dick on top, hot times in the cellar
for those who'd voted nay to Dick. The others,
whipped to shape already, got their rucksacks
and were sped on Prison Spacecraft Seven
to three years' gathering peat on Tundra Nine,
among the worst tundras you could run into
on that slum planet. We went out there once.
But enough of outsides. All the inward changes
that followed with the punch-card age were worse.
The heartlessly hard, the nonsensically gentle
changed places on the punch-cards many times.

With regularity the good in man
was moved to a punch-card hole for cruelty.
In this melancholy jungle of controls
we have to admire the mimia, who can order
a chaos of numbers we wish we never knew.
For everyone was playing at least four roles
in political games of specters' peek-a-boo.

Through doors that are forever whirling round
 like turnstiles for the torrents of mankind,
 some voices rise triumphant from the hum
 that blends them all: despair, good faith, high mind.

And there are scattered voices singing songs
 of burdens such as mystics might have sung
 in seeking incombustibility
 from vacant space and from the mima's visions:

"Soon the time will come of cast-iron and balm
 when I may keep intact while fire and cold
 consume the forms of life around my calm.
 Soon the time will come of cast-iron and balm."

But on the humming swells, all seek the mima
 and cry aloud as at a wailing-wall,
 till from lost worlds the mima's comforts bring
 her illustrations of a far-off spring.

The mima caught for us the blessed shore,
 shining for hours in full beatitude.
 But now the world of blessings is no more,
 hurled into a new infinitude.
 Among dark shades that splendor has been drowned,
 by torrents that no mima can turn round.

And we again are shivering and unsound.

The spuriously deep descents you make
 to those supposed depths you'd gambled on
 are all without the slightest value here
 for here there are no depths to undertake.
 Here we can follow the descent you make
 and see how very far it is, how sheer.
 It's never stunning on the crystal screen
 where we can see how your maneuver turns
 spiraling back to where you dove before.
 Now we believe in your descents no more.

The space-aware makes no dives as a rule,
 and if he does dive in the lucid pool
 he's quickly back and puts off happily
 what science gave of outdoor finery
 for shorter expeditions on this sea.

His business merely was to cast an eye
 upon the only cloud in this cold sky,
 that long hard cloud made of a white alloy,
 luminously painted and standing there
 motionless, stiff and still, what though she fare
 at a velocity to curl the hair
 of those who don't know of the speeds we muster
 as Aniara moves on toward the Lyre cluster.

Once I was sent outside for an inspection
 of Mima's cell-works and, from this direction,
 almost eight thousand meters radially,
 our Aniara was a magnitude.

From that celestial ocean, stirred, I viewed
our good old craft from Doris come so far
approaching the Lyre from cosmic Zanzibar
with cargo that the tooth of time had chewed.
Ivory of that kind is heaviest of all
as, marked with hard names born of metaphor,
from a hidden world of hostile force
it cruelly bears down on Aniara's course.

18

Efforts at escape through flights of mind
and slipping back and forth from dream to dream—
such methods were to hand.
With one leg drowned beneath a surge of feeling
the other braced by feeling dead and gone
we'd often stand.
Myself I questioned, but gave no reply.
I dreamt myself a life, then lived a lie.
I ranged the universe but passed it by—
for captive on Aniara here was I.

19

Our female pilot steps inside the mima-
chamber. Wordlessly she signals me
to activate the mima.
How grand she is, how unapproachable.
She wounds you in the way that roses wound,
though not, as has been often said, with thorns.
A rose will always wound you with its rose
and, though the sore may be a briar-scratch,

still more often it may be a wound
from utter beauty, utter burning beauty.

The lovely Doris, in the sixth year now
changed ever more into a distant star,
a sun that like a cinder burns my eye
and stabs its infinitely long gold pin
into my heart across dizzying-bright spaces—
she burned more broadly when she was close by,
but stings more deeply when she's far away.

I start the mima, take a seat and wait
to see in little time the features brighten
with wondrous alteration on the face
of our fair pilot, frostily withholding
the subtlest modulation of her beauty.
But the mima's running, making all things clear.
The fair one's white cheeks brighten instantly
and hotly blush: she fills with heavenly transport
when the mima shows her everything there is
of pleasure inaccessible in worlds of space.
She smiles, she laughs, ecstatic and engrossed
as though she suddenly were seized by gods.
But just when she seems cleared for perfect bliss
the third webe shifts the mima's focus-values
and the world's other glimmering guises flood the mima.
The fair one's face soon turns another shade.

I close down the mima. It is there for comfort,
not for making human beings shudder
at worlds like-featured with the one they left.
Pains and problems we were all enmeshed in

when we were stirring in the Dorisvales
are nothing to exhibit to this woman.
I stroke her softly when I close the mima,
for the mima's truth is incorruptible,
a frank display of everything created. /

The fair one rises up and nods to me
her sober thanks for closing down the mima.
At the door she turns, asks me to call
for her should the mima ever have received—
she doesn't say the word, but I can guess.

The warming Doris and the kindly Doris,
the distant Doris now a noble star
to pine for. Now she is the star of stars.
O could I but know where she is gleaming
in this sixth year, so inconspicuous
among the suns of space I'll never find
that star again. The noble star of Doris.

20

All that we had long dreamt of receiving—
distant views of torments gone before
and joys exhausted long ago—we take
in the mima from the troughs of waves of yore.
The picture shifts in ripples far remote
and in a cryptic echo-curve it's hurled
labyrinthine round the endless world,
and all the cosmic tidings reach us all.
Through space the evil tidings ever stream;
there are good tidings, but with tracks less clear,

for goodness has no part in active life,
its light is the same light
 this year and every year.

21

But doubt is an acid that corrodes more dreams
than any dreamer ever could propose,
and only through the mima can we see again
the warmth and beauty of our dreaming-shows.
For this reason I preserve what matters:
what bears comfort's colors and resembles life.
And on our ship, whenever anxiety patters
and dread and unease play havoc with our nerves
I serve up helpings of the mima's dream-preserves.

22

Meanwhile the doctor who observes our eyes
and sees in them that lust for life is fading
flinches at the lacus lacrimalis
where no more does the crocodile go wading.
Such flooding tears in halls where Mima reigns
are highest praise for Doris's green plains.

And even so it is as if those tears
for all their authenticity were cold
insensate waters rising from the depths.
Their fall is too transparently designed,
like drops of rain too pure to touch the soil:
our lucid tears in an Anjara of the mind.

23

The senior astrolobe came to our aid,
expert in the blazes far stars made.
But, without warning, reason's star went dead
inside the senior astrolobe's own head.
Forced to its death by bodings unallayed,
his brain broke down and died, soul-deep afraid.

24

Impotence runs wild in its own way,
blaspheming, execrating time and space.
But many think that now we've come to face
just punishment as toward the Lyre we pace.
For we ourselves by space-law rigorous
have locked us into this sarcophagus
and honor our live burial on high
till our vainglory puts its scepter by.

In thousands or in myriads of years
a distant sun shall capture and enfold
a moth that flies toward it as toward the lamp
when it was harvest time in Doriswold.
Then we shall end our journey through these regions,
then deep asleep shall lie Aniara's legions
and all be swiftly changed in Mima's hold.

25

We ride in our sarcophagus in silence,
no longer offering the planet violence

or spreading deathly quiet on our kind.
Here we can question freely, answer true
while the vessel Aniara, gone askew
in bleak tracts of space, leaves vile time behind.

26

The stone-dumb deaf man started to describe
the worst sound he had heard. It was past hearing.
Though just when his eardrums were exploding
came a sound like the sough of sorrowing sedge, the last—
when the phototurb exploded Dorisburg.
It was past hearing, so the deaf man ended.
My ear could not keep up with it
when my soul burst and scattered
and body burst and shattered
and ten square miles of city ground were wrung
inside outside
as the phototurb was bursting
the mighty city once called Dorisburg.

So he spoke, the deaf man, who was dead.
But as, so it's been said, stones shall cry out,
so the dead man did his speaking in a stone.
From the stone he cried out: can you hear me?
From the stone he cried out: don't you hear me?
My native city once was Dorisburg.

Then the blind man started his report
upon the light horrifically intense
that blinded him.
He was unable to describe it.

He mentioned only one detail: he saw by neck.
His entire skull became an eye
blinded by a brightness beyond flashpoint
lifted and sped off in blind reliance
on the sleep of death. But no sleep came.

In this respect he is much like the deaf man.
And as, so it's been said, stones shall cry out,
so he cries out from stones as does the deaf man.
So they cry out from stones one with the other.
So they cry out from stones as did Cassandra.

I rush in to the mima as though I could
prevent the ghastly deed by my distress.
But she shows all, candid and upright,
unto the last projecting fire and death,
and, turning to the others, I cry out
my pain of pains beholding Doris's death:

There is protection from near everything,
from fire and damages by storm and frost,
oh, add whichever blows may come to mind.
But there is no protection from mankind.

When there is need, none sees with clarity.
No, only when the task is to beat down
and desolate the heart's own treasury
of dreams to live upon in cold and evil years.

Then the mima's blinded by a bluish bolt
and I am dumbstruck at events that pour
on wretched Earth; out here their lightnings bore

down through my heart as through an open sore.
And I the mima's faithful priest in blue
receive in blood run cold the evil news
that Doris died in far-off Dorisburg.

27

My only comfort left I beg of Daisy.
She is the only woman left who speaks
that lovely Dorisburgian, while I'm
the last man left who understands what Daisy
with her splendid tongue, bright as a decoy-call,
babbles in her lovely dialect.

Come rock me loose and fancy, Daisy wheedles.
Go dorm tremenzy and go row me dondel:
my date's a gander, I am flamm and gondel
and wathed in taris, gland in delt and yondel.

And I who know that Dorisburg was razed
to nothing ever after by the phototurb,
I let Daisy be just what she is.

What use is there in breaking the enchantment
which only Daisy kept up, unawares,
so well that she, now lying free of cares
and squirming hotly when the dance is done,
knows not that she herself some hours ago
was widowed of the town of Dorisburg.

She urges me to sing along, and I take up
the ballad of cast-iron that I learned
about the town of Gond that melted down in war.

But Daisy babbles gladly, unawares, ,
and her entire existence was created
to sing the praise of dance in whirling yurgs.

What would I be? A brute, if I should break
the spirited enchantment she has mined
from out her breast, from her heart itching for joy.

She babbles as in fever till she sleeps.
Round where we lie Aniara's senses fade,
but not to sleep. The clear mind is alert
to Earth which here it has to do without.
Only Daisy's heart beats safe and sound
on Aniara, to its brightmare bound.

28

With Dorisburg molten, the mima ailed for days
with heavy static from the phototurb,
her third webe battling as against a cloud
of distant compact shame. Upon the third day
the mima begged deliverance from her vision.
The fourth day she had some advice to give me
on the scanner-transpodes in her cantor-works.
Only on the fifth day did her calm return,
upon transmissions from a better world,
and once again her cell-works lit up brightly—
all her strength appeared to be reviving.

But on the seventh day there came a drone
out of her cell-works I had never heard.
Indifferent tacis of webe number three
switched off, reporting they'd gone blind.
And suddenly the mima called me forth
to her inner barrier and, trembling,
I went to stand before her awesomeness.

And when I stood there, moved, cold with fright
and filled with worry for her situation,
all of a sudden her phonoglobe began
talking to me in the dialect
of higher ultramodern tensor-theory
which commonly we'd use on working days.

She bade me tell the High Command that she
for some time had been just as nice of conscience
as the stones were. She had heard them cry
their stonely cries in distant Dorisvale.
She had beheld the granite's white-hot weeping
when stone and ore were vaporized to mist.
She'd been much troubled by those stones' travail.

Darkened in her cell-works by the cruelty
man exhibits in his time of sin
she came now to the long expected phase
(which mimas reach) of finally decaying.
The indifferent tacis of webe number three
see a thousand things that no eyes see.
Now, in the name of Things, she wanted peace.
Now she would be done with her displays.

But it was all too late: I could not stop
the people crowding toward the mima hall.
I cried, I screamed to them to turn about,
but no one listened, for, although they all
wished, horrified, to flee that mimadrome,
they moved on, mad to watch what things would come.

A bolt-blue light flashed from the mima's screens;
across the Mima's halls a rumbling rolled
like booming thunder back in Doriswold.
A jolt of terror pitched into our horde,
and many emigrants were stomped to bits
when Mima perished on Aniara deep in space.

The final word she broadcast was a message
from one who called himself the Detonee.
She had the Detonee himself bear witness
and, stammering and detonated, tell
how grim it always is, one's detonation,
how time speeds up to win its prolongation.

Upon life's outcry time does increase speed,
prolongs the very second when you burst.
How terror blasts inward,
how horror blasts outward.
How grim it always is, one's detonation.

Now came a time of bitterest discontent
and long I sat there silently to ponder
in the Mima hall where evil sent
its storm of dark rays from the back of yonder.

Frantically I sought to activate
our hallowed Mima's comfort-works and art
and with the tensorides to operate
the hub of marvels at her godly heart.

The voice inside the phonoglobe was still,
and what few calls the sensostat could find
came from a Boeotian shade, so imbecile
it fell below both god and humankind.

And, further, I was pinned down by the pack
hounding me and heaping me with scorn,
while I was weighed down in my cul-de-sac
by all my heart's calamities far-borne.

And Chefone, the fierce lord of our craft,
would enter every day to vilify me
and, though his schadenfreude plainly showed,
his threat was merely that a court would try me.

He often sought through mystic rigmaroles
to magnify his station in our caravel
and uttered devil-dictums to our souls
to make us think that we were bound for Hell.

By such means day by day he did quite well,
and, buttressed by that specter-like infinity,
he struck you as a man out to compel
his people to decline and asininity.

31

Chefone now ordered persecutions,
and I and many others were secreted
in shelters farthest down in the goldonder
until the bowls of fury were depleted.

There sat technicians trained in each pursuit
involved in the Fourth Tensor repertory,
whereas all those who ceaselessly pollute
pure intellection wrapped themselves in glory.

In endless muddle people sought to prove
the mima's tragedy was our misdeed,
for all our egos had defiled her screen
with private thoughts which made her sights recede
and dirtied comfort's flood with private dreams
and dimmed her radiance, her cosmic streams.

Protesting we were innocent, we sought
to reason without learned reference
and in the language most of them were taught
propound the barest modicum of sense.

But this same language, meant to clear up all,
grew murky for us too, a blind-man's buff
of words avoiding words and playing blind
amid the clarity of cosmic mind.

We then tried drawing for them as for brutes
and savage tribesmen such as were, books say,
alive in that great age which constitutes
the lowest reach of time in spirit's day.

We drew signs representing plants and trees,
we sketched a many-tributaried flood,
Building texts up by these strategies
which, with the pictures' aid, they faintly understood.

For us too these were alien inflections
in language far from cybernetic land,
so that we made small sense of the directions
whereby we meant to lend a helping hand.

The upshot was, this court of arbitration
which might have freed us from the doom of space,
was of a hundred minds in its opinion
while the bridge between us stayed an empty place.

32

By systematic logostylic sounding
of Mima's language-cycles phase by phase,
in two years' time I'd won so good a grounding
in how to see through all things as through glass
that three years from the very day I saw
Mima burst apart in Aniar's hall
I plumbed the transtomizers for the law
which predetermines what shall rise or fall.

And, finding it, I went almost insane.
A dreadful-drunken, deeply unreal glee

at once transformed my soul to space and eye
within the dwelling of infinity.

Then I was taken from the bottom jail
—our female pilot too sat in those cells,—
back into the holy mima's halls.
And rumor ran. I heard the joyful yells.
And all spoke of the treasure brought to light,
and Mima come back in the starry night.

33

Too quickly I rejoiced in Mima's hall:
on each solution a mystery waits to leap.
I saw the key now, but as through a wall
of space-clear glass and crystal sheaths miles deep.
Without the mima, by whom I'd been sustained,
in spirit undernourished, I was teetering,
the mind's blood, in my shock, was being drained.
Bereft of Mima, I found petering
and dying at her base a mirror-world.

Slumped by her remains, as by charred brands,
I gazed into her breast and saw a hearth grown cold.

34

Myself, I have no name. I am of Mima
and so am called no more than mimarobe.
The oath I swore is called the goldondeva.
The name I'd borne was cancelled at "last rounds"
and had to be forgotten ever after.

As for Isagel, our female pilot,
the matter of it is that her position
establishes her name, which is a code word.

The inmost name she bears and which she whispered
close against my ear I may not breathe.

In her eyes there is an inaccessible
but yet a lovely glow of things unspoken:
the radiance which enigma oftentimes possesses
when it's the beauty of the mystery that impresses.

She draws curved lines, her nails are glowing
like feeble lamplights through the chamber's dusk.
She tells me: Take a reading of this arc
where the shadow of my sorrow sheds its dark.

She rises then to leave her gopta-board,
and over me her radiant thoughts are poured.
And our eyes meet and lock, and soul to soul
we stand, unspeaking. Isagel I love heartwhole.

35

But the rigors of space impel us into rites
and altar-services we'd scarce performed
since pre-goldondic times now half-forgot.
And Aniar's four religious forms
with priesthood, temple-bells and crucifixes,
vagina-cult and shouting yurgher-girls
and tickler-sectaries forever laughing
appear in space, jostling one another
for the cerie deserts of eternity.

And I in service as the mimarobe,
responsible for all the burst illusions,
must make room in Mima's sanctuary
and blend all spectacles and all their sounds
when libidine dances with voluptuary ,
to ring in their god by orgiastic rounds.

36

The women have made themselves a lovely sight
—the pains that many had to take were slight.
There Yaal's astir, a dormifid yurghine
with amatory powers at their height,
and there stands Libidel from Venus' green
and ever-pullulating jungle spring.
And up against Chebeba yurg-enamored,
an ornament from Kandy on her thigh,
stands dormi-juno Gena, round whom clamor
the novice flock on whom she keeps an eye.

For some time I was buoyed up by a plan:
have a thousand mirrors put in place
to give us everything that mirrors can
by their reflections—falsely widened space
which optically can stretch out every inch
eight thousand inches' worth of false dimension.
When twenty halls were furnished door to door
with mirrors we had taken from fourscore
the end result of this was so top-hole
that I for four years by these looking-glasses
wholly beguiled the shivering of soul.

To train our eyes from our trajectory
and on the multi-mirrored world of gaiety
I turned so many minds to the carouse
my mirrors offered in the mirror-house
that even I myself took time to yurg
with Daisy Doody out of Dorisburg.
But also with Chebeba and with Yaal
my mirror-image swung in Mima's hall.

They come in flock by flock, I see them waken
to yurgs and cults and I look on admiring
where they, by yurgs among the mirrors shaken,
are by octupled mirrors overtaken.
From all sides where the yurghing circles round
they view themselves as heaven's host in dance
reflected in an eightfold radiance,
for Chebeba eight times as for Yaal
and Gena too in an octupled hall.

There's Libidella with her expert hand
stirring up a man from Dorisland.
And there's Chebeba in a yurghic ring
whirling toward the mirrors' Not-a-thing
where dance eightfold Chebebas to and fro
with breasts and feet repeatedly on show.

Each object yields up all it can of show
when mirror legs and mirror dances go
and in the yurghing-hall those shows blaze trails
to mirror canyons and to mirror vales.

37

Desire and piety crowd into one place,
in rolls the chariot drawn on by a brace
composed of men and women of the cult.
The chilly stave held up by Isagel
is lifted while with cultic lantern Libidel,
augustly followed by eight libidines,
assumes position, lying down to please.
And when they have been warmed by pelvic fire,
all lying happy, sleepily at ease,
Isagel comes forth with lowered stave
and touches with her lamp three times for luck
our reliquary, blessed Mima's grave.
There comes a sough like river reeds when Yaal,
her bosom peaceful, sated in her needs,
pauses at the saintly vault and pleads
in gentle whispers to the deity's bier.
And what deep peace around her features plays
when swells the holy hymn of "Day of Days,"
and Isagel and Libidel and Heba
form the graveside chorus with Chebeba.

38

Behind the mima-hall fair Libidel sat
one winter's evening, making herself up,
wearing a thigh-bell and a buddha-cat:
a mirrored brooch clamped by her navel-cup.

A heart gleamed in the charm-pit of her breasts,
which served to warm the precious mirror-gem;

these had an inky field around their crests
for when the thyrus light would fall on them.

Closing in on her in expectation,
her secret rivals purred their panther hymn
while poised to devastate her reputation
and twist it till her charms had all grown dim.

She still was fair of form and led the gambols
in the Cult's den, but there would come days
when her bikiniette more showed the shambles
of her curves than sparked her devotés.

Already she'd begun to hide from view
prospects but an inch from sacred places
and round-the-hip Xinombran fabric drew
one's eyes away from physical disgraces.

But many adepts, once her votaries,
in secrecy were ripening their doubt,
not crowding in as once to seek their ease
upon her lap when she was leading the devout.

A-tremble Libidel adjusts her hair.
To her the navel-brooch feels like a wound
but still she hopes her breasts, an ample pair,
in fellowship with two alluring thighs
will mean for her another year's survival
at altar-height, though autumn prophesies
already, with grim portents, its arrival.

In sun-red sarathasm and plyelle
the luscious Yaal is standing by her side—

till her year comes she's young enough to bide,
the year when she herself will be the belle
one night of falling stars, succeeding Libidel.

39

A breakthrough which had never been foreseen
was made by Isagel, our female pilot.
One morning she sat silent in the Gopta room
where she was occupied with Jender curves.

Thereupon she called me to the Jenderboard,
where lightning-swift she'd stabilized her breakthrough
provisionally in its final form.
She shrieked with gladness, hugging to her heart
the vigorously kicking inspiration
which, born of her, was joyously conceived
in deep love for the Law of Aleph Numbers.

And, studying the child, I plainly saw
that it was sound and had the model health
which always had distinguished Isagel,
the faithful servant on the farm of numbers.

Such a breakthrough made in Doric valleys,
had the Doric valleys still remained
a passable abode for number artists,
would at once have markedly expanded
and changed profoundly all of Gopta science.

But here where we were fated to the course
dictated by the law of conic section,

here her breakthrough never could become
in any manner fruitful, just a theorem
which Isagel superbly formulated
but which was doomed to join us going out
ever farther to the Lyre and then to vanish.

And as we sat there speaking with each other
about the possibilities that now stood open
if only we weren't sitting here in space
like captives to the void in which we fell,
we both grew sorrowful but kept as well
the joy in pure ideas, the kind of pleasure
which together we could share in quiet
for the time still left to our existence.

But Isagel at times burst into tears
to think of the inscrutably great space
with room for all to fall eternally—
as she herself now, with the unlocked mystery
she'd neatly solved, but which was falling with her.

40 THE SPACE-HAND'S TALE

The transfer out to Tundra Three took up nine years.
Evacuation Gond took up ten years.
I myself was on the eighth goldonder.
We alternated with some other space-ships,
Benares, Canton, Gond and others still.
In five years we took something like three million
frightened people to their current star.
The memories still feel like tender wounds:
mainly visions of the lift-off zone,

time after time the same unruly scene
where tears and gnashing teeth mix merrily
with cheerful songs from space-cadets, still green.
When that day's group of Gondians, each one
with punch-card passport and an I.D. pin,
are led forth to escape Earth's shame and sin,
they still recoil at the departure time,
but by their very numbers they're squeezed in
ever nearer the goldonder's holding-pen,
where several hardened Venus-going men,
their eyes lit by that star, examine them
and wisecrack: Welcome home, ahem, ahem,
to Heaven's kingdom from Jerusalem.

Fast talking brings disquiet under control
until each punch-card matches with the soul
identified by prior testing; in
it goes to microrolls at rapid-spin
which make a note of every loss and win.
Then, lifted up into the cosmic field,
they reach the tundra kingdom to be steeled.
But others go to Venus' marshy shore.
We know what both locations have in store.

In murky mines they shut up all the nations
used and misused like things without a soul
till finally the rejects are expelled
into the Chambers over at Ygol.

Incomprehensible this cruelty.
No image can conceivably describe it:
with cold official headsman serving daily

at spigots, bolts, and circuit-switches.
And glass-equipped surveillance-ducts
into the Chambers
at whose outer walls the death-attendants,
their blinking held in check and they unmoved,
peer in with cold satanic eyes, following
the captives' battles
with the stonework wall.

On, soul (too late to balk at memories),
to Tundra Two, where stands the plexi-housing,
where I with Nobby hoped to go out browsing
in Martian spring, contamination-free.
There proudly those black frigitulips grow,
tempered to the planetary freeze,
and through the tundra comes the Cock's hoarse crow
to claim the tundra's few amenities.
Widely worshipped, though sadly starved and gaunt,
what doesn't that bird know of cold and want!

Else, only arctic willows prosper there,
—if we may pause now at the vegetation—
trailing camellia-like, hard as ironware,
and blackened leaves well nigh inedible:
fitly toughened for this frozen plain,
digested only by the Cock whose crew
employs a set of stomachs in a chain.
When on such leaves as these he stuffs his gut
it's as though you listened to the last bolt shut
on life's capacity for pulling through.

For all you see then is the endmost crow
clicking like a lock, and, when it swallows,
transfixed and shuddering the viewer follows,
though in the same breath he'll be laughing too.

To this terrain of starkest, plainest forms,
Nobby yet was bound with all her soul,
for bitter years of want bring other norms
than those when nature is in full control.
In these last rations of the Martian cold
she found in sighing willows music greatly-souled.

She walked the heaths and sang about the spring
when the Cock was crowing and the thaw begun
and round the tundras went the willows creeping
in hungry stretches toward a half-size sun.
She often sent off willow-leaves to Earth
and wrote: These leaves are from the spirit's wood
and on the soul's moors the winds of spring are blowing.
My heart is filling; yes, you've understood.

It was the evil time when Gond in the flame
from the phototurb was twisted to a spiral,
a swirling pillar made of torrid gases,
a migrant city crossing Dorisvale.
Compared to that the superchilled clear air
of Tundra Two was much to be preferred,
and the figure of the Cockerel, gaunt and spare,
became transformed into a bright Bluebird.
Nobby's pleasure in the Tundra's breath
makes perfect sense against that land of death.

Indeed, this was a masterstroke of hers,
that she got something out of all these things
so quickly counted. I believe there were
no more than ten life-forms the whole sphere over.

Observe her walks among the prison barracks
and the grimness of the men when in a grisly knot,
wolfishly starved, uncovering the pot,
they flocked to eat the Martian in its stock,
the skinny and unstewably tough Cock
no tundra-cook could tenderize one jot.

But Nobby was a girl unlike the rest.
She saw no point in rising to protest
to men who'd shortly lie concealed in tundra-rind
and just as shortly slip the bondsmen's mind.

The life she lived appeared cartoonish, crude,
in the mirror that displayed her days and ways,
nor had she the style to seem less rude—
and scarcely bettered by the somber gaze
each prisoner afraid and shaken would rest
on that mirror where the truth must be confessed.

I love to linger at the dear remembrance
of such a woman who shared all things known
back then as suffering and sacrifice,
though now their names have a much colder tone.
When altars grew too worn with blood collected
the sacred fell away, so one suspected.

It was the last spring nature was alive.
That springtime nature perished of a wind

that plunged at typhoon strength among the mountains
and with its thunder filled the land of Rind.

A sunroar came, the lightnings ramified.
I still hear the screams and screeches—Sombra! sombra!—
from souls already blinded and afraid
and rushing out to God in search of coolness.
They did not know God too was in the fire
of matter which, combusted and befouled,
with flame primordial chastised Xinombra.

The giant force of the external grew.
The unimaginable years set in
when all was inundation from without.
Though souls were trying hard to hold their own
with what inheritance they had within,
the giant torrent took them one by one.

The mental image of their destiny
that torrent shattered and made meaningless;
the drama that was them just previously
was outflanked by a loose, but nonetheless
unyielding deluge of enfeeblement.

They shattered into cellules in a State
which made claims on them as it used to do,
no matter that it just had melted down
the psychic structure held to be its due.

So mankind knew, upon its sentencing
to deportation out on Tundra Two,
nought, nothing, of the nature of its crime

but much more of the giant's cruel claim.
And even more about the brutal time
it went to serve within a quarry's jaws
and in a towering transparent keep,
with rational surveillance as its cause,
spun round the edges of the cesium quarry
at Antalex, in Penal Territory.

God's Kingdom was not of a world that hard
and grew still less so every passing year,
and those who could ascended heavenward
with bodies first, although their souls stayed here.

You could observe how many muckamucks
broke camp from Rindish vales when time grew late.
And we had fistfights with some rowdy bucks
and roughnecks crashing the goldonder gate.

The pious should have stood up to those bucks,
of course, and bared their teeth to make them cease.
Their peacefulness was overdone; the roughnecks
changed it very quickly to eternal peace.
The unresisting souls on all our lands
died complaisantly of those rough bands.

The shyly fearful and the deeply tactful
were left back in a gamma-lethal glen
and made for Heaven in some other way.
They never entered into Mima's den.

Of such things I as space-hand can report,
who nearly thirty years have plied the spaces

between Earth's ball and that bare pate of tundra.
Such an occupation leaves its traces.

With time we all have something to relate
that doesn't come from daydreams in the skies.
And without Nobby there to compensat ,
would life be anything a man could prize?

For Tundra captives she had cleaned and sewn
and gone without, all for the love of man.
And but for me you never would have known
the tale of Nobia the Samaritan.

41 THE INFANT

Chebeba was sitting in her finest year
with boundless joy beside the little bier.
Upon the bier there lay the buttercup
she had protected against growing up
in Aniara-town.

In came Yaal then in her finest year.
She saw the infant dead upon its bier
and spoke up in a harsh and ringing voice:
You're going home. But we stay, not by choice,
in Aniara-town.

And Gena came as well. And Gena said:
To you, my child, in worship I am led.
I don't dissemble. I have full respect
for you who went to sleep without defect
in Aniara-town.

Yaal slipped away and Heba took her place.
She could not speak, could only turn her face
and on the poised and settled infant gaze,
asleep, afloat into the day of days
from Aniara-town.

42 LIBIDEL'S SONG AT THE MIRROR

My life is in a funny place.
Come here and look and touch it too.
And if you plead and give with grace
my little life belongs to you.

Your gallop under Lyre's cluster
will make a memory when it's through.
Life dwells in folds of silken luster,
that little life that's best with you.

Rider from the Lyre so wild,
tap at my door for a rendezvous.
With your seed I'll grow with child
in that little life that's best with you.

It's staring. Staring cold outside.
Come in, I'll bring some warmth to you.
Suppose that in our arms cold died,
O, what hot thinking in the blue.

Then Libidel would be admired,
not smeared as now she is by swine.
Behold my body, how desired
it's been in words and in design.

In Mima's time we were arena ghouls,
 who all crowded around Mima and elected
 to see and hear, risk-free, all she projected
 of pain and struggle upon Gondish ground
 and who, when our excitement found release
 and in our mouths we marked the taste of blood,
 made the mima-tender switch the channels,
 alter range, and make the next go-round
 show something else. And so our bill of fare
 proved a well-balanced diet, as an evening's death
 alternating with a joyful dawn
 dismissed the questions flung out in distress
 and torment by some far-off settlement.
 This equalizing factor then appeared
 as something to the good, and Gond was found
 a land which, having once seen better days,
 was ripe for evil now to have its round.

Harnessing that eye of probity
 we felt ourselves Xinombrian sensations
 as we, amid our journeyings on high,
 converted others' pains to views and music.
 And although Mima for Xinombra's ill
 no less than Dorisburg's was seen to quaver,
 we loved to trail those victims to the kill,
 hyenas granted the hyena-favor
 of risk-free presence when the lion springs
 and power to shrug off conscience when it stings.

The number of butchereries we thus beheld,
 the number of see-saw battles we were in,

is legion. We would look upon the felled
lying prone and still, but then rushed past
to be in on it when the next wave swelled.

The faithful mima relayed all of it
with steadfast clarity and no redactions.
And even if sometimes we might well sit
rigid and repelled by many actions,
still these actions were so very many
that memory could preserve only the worst.
These we named the Peaks, and put out of mind
the gulfs to which the others were consigned.

44

In Chamber Seven are the files of Thinking.
Very few visitors. Still, they have things there
that merit being thought of times on end.
There stands a gentleman called the Friend of Thought,
giving everyone who's so inclined
the fundamentals of the laws of mind.
He points in sadness to a crowd of thoughts
which might have saved us were they timely set
to work upon the soul's development
but which, since soul was not much evident,
were hung up in oblivion's cabinet.

But as our days of vacancy would drag
someone always came here and besought
a look at this or that old line of thought
which, given a new twist, might briefly snag
new interest until that too would flag.

45

The Calculator running all the time
to calculate our minimum of hope
outpaces all our flights of thought
and pulverizes objects of our thought /
so comically that on perfection's ice
the very act of thinking takes a spill.
Then the brain laughs out the way brains will,
a snob exposed in slipperiness of mind,
a mental brute now totally hemmed in
by the quotients of the calculator-works.
A shrug inherited from former days
is all he's up to: mind's icy sneer
of bitter barrenness, a world-grimace.

46

We listen daily to the sonic coins
provided every one of us and played
through the Finger-singer worn on the left hand.
We trade coins of diverse denominations:
and all of them play all that they contain
and though a dyma scarcely weighs one grain
it plays out like a cricket on each hand
blanching here in this distraction-land.
Through the Finger-singers in our rings
we keep some slight connectedness with things.
And now the goster-pieces play their rondies
and now the rindel-pieces pipe their gondies.

Her hand held tight against her lovely cheek
and Finger-singer pressing her ear's tip,
Heba listens to a dyma-coin,
but flinches suddenly and switches dreams
upon her Finger-singer: sudden streams
of yurghing pleasure captivate her ear.
I asked her, after finishing my round,
Why did you flinch? And she replied:
I picked up calls for help and pleas for mercy.
This coin is carrying a scream from Gond.

47

A number-group philosopher and mystic
of the aleph-number school comes often
with filled-in query-card to feed the Gopta-works,
bows silently to Isagel the bright
and tiptoes down Aniara out of sight.

And Isagel, who finds the questions reasoned,
takes in his flock of formulas and codes them
for the Gopta-board's third thought-position.

And when she has transformed the number-sets
and gopted carefully the tensor modes
she takes them over to the Gopta-cart
to which she hitches space-assistant Robert,
our brains-trust's loyal dray for number-loads.

When our numerosopher returns
Isagel must tell him how the land lies:
despite all Robert's unremitting tries,

on what he asked no Gupta can advise.
The question dealt with "rate of miracle"
in the Cosmos mathematically conceived.
It seems to coincide so much with chance
that chance and miracle must have one source;
one answer seems to do for either force. '

And Dr. Quantity (we use that phrase)
makes a silent bow, resigned to grief,
and tiptoes down Anjara's passageways.

48

A poetess arose within our world
with songs so beautiful they lifted us
beyond ourselves, on high to spirit's day.
She blazoned our confinement gold with fire
and sent the heavens to the heart's abode,
changing every word from smoke to splendor.

She was a native of the land of Rind,
and Rindi myths enveloping her life
collectively became a sacred wine.

She herself was blind. From birth, a child
of nights in thousands with no glimpse of day,
but those blind eyes of hers appeared to be
a dark well's floor, the pupil of all song.

The miracle that she had brought with her
was human soulplay on the soul of words,
the visionary's play on weal and woe.

And we were silenced by the holiness
and we were blinded by the loveliness
in spaces bottomless where we would hark
to Songs of Rind she made up in the dark.

49 THE BLIND WOMAN

The lengthy way I've traveled here
from Rind to these environs
is night in color like the way
I took in Rind.
Dark as before. As always.
But the dark turned cooler.
That was where the change lay.
All tolerable dark abandoned me
and to my temples
and to my bosom, kindred to the spring,
cold darkness came and settled in
forever.

A dismal rushing in the Rindic aspen
rattled in the night. I started shivering.
It was autumn. They talked of the maples ablaze,
the sunset in a valley not far distant.
It was described as red
with gleaming spokes and evening-purple.
And facing it the forest stood, they said,
flaring against the night.
They mentioned too the shade beneath the trees
ever whiter with the coming of the frost
as if its grass had been the summer's hair
quickly aging.

This is how it was described to me:
a backdrop of a fresh-frost white on gold
that flamed up when the summer paid in full
its debt to the collection-agent, cold.
And autumn's grand excesses were described:
all golden things cast into summer's grave.
The splendor spread before us, so they said,
was like a funeral in gypsy style:
its mustering of red and yellow cloths
and golden banderoles from Ispahan.

But I stood cold and silent in that dark,
only hearing everything I loved
vanish in a dark and icy wind
and the aspens' final rattling told
that soon the summer would lie dead in Rind.

The wind then shifted round
and in the night
came the black and terrifying heat.

I fell into the arms of someone
running toward me.
And this someone frightened me.
How could I know in that hot darkness
who it was
that caught me as I fell, embraced me.
If it was a devil or a person.
Because the roaring grew, the hot wind swelled
into a hurricane,
and he who held me cried out ever louder,

yet in a voice that seemed so far away:
Shield your eyes. It's coming. You'll be blinded.
Then I made my voice as piercing as I could
and shrieked in answer: I am blind
and therefore shielded. I have never seen,
but always only felt the land of Rind.

Then he released me, running for his life,
where I don't know, in the dark's hot roar
outvoiced only by a sudden burst
of fearsome thunderclaps from far away
rolling in my direction, and I blind.
Then down I fell again and set off creeping.
I crept the forests of the land of Rind.

I succeeded in reaching a hollow in the rocks
where the trees weren't falling, the heat was not intense.
There I lay, happy almost, amid rocks
and prayed god Rind for help and for my soul's defense.
And someone from the roar entered the hollow
(O miracle)
and bore me to a van with closed compartments
and someone transported me all through the night
to Rindon airfield
where a refugee-agent, silenced
by a voice shout-shattered, hoarsely wheezed
my number and my name and bade me join
the current bound for the goldonder-sluice.

The years that followed were my destiny.
On the Martian tundra I learned how,
like an envoy sent from Rind, to move the guard

with sad songs for a destiny so hard.
I learned to read the braille of mighty screams
in faces which I felt of with my hand.
It was as songstress for "Reclaim the Tundra"
that later I would go back to my land.
It was cold there now, all plantlife injured.
But stubborn wills persisted in their plan
to save the soil by means of a new substance
science had discovered: geosan.
How that would come about I can't explain,
and many said the idea would misfire.
"What none could do, but everyone's desire"
the plan was called in common conversation.
So I up and left my home and inspiration
for my songs about the land of Rind and sought
the post of singer, serving Chamber Three.
I'm there now, singing "Ah the Dale, ah me!"
and "Little Bird out in the Rosewoods Yonder."
But also "The Cast-Iron Song" a Gonder
sings so often here in our goldonder.

All struggling for heaven is a struggling for joy
and the aim of every heart is paradise.
How baleful, then, if shady powers should lead
and gather those consumed with wrath and greed
into that struggle, darkening its advance
with flags of vengeance, hate, intolerance.

How hard for mankind to perceive the true
as a natural desire that can be realized.
How hard to know one's way so early on.

How hard to stand there droning at the altar,
appealing to a god about whose laws
the only thing we know is that he suffers
from all that does not wholly serve his cause.

How hard to fit belief to daily living.

How hard to grasp a god of sacrifice.
How hard not to be thinking in our silence:
must still more sacrificial blood be let
and why have executioners not vanished yet?

How hard not to be thinking in our silence.

And practices of grace, how hard to grasp
for one who's never spoken with the dead
and never found an answer from those graves
to which no fairies steal with magic staves,
for from death's bonds only one has come
to meet his god when all the others, dumb
and blind among the miseries of decay,
must lie there till all time has passed away.

How hard to keep one's faith in life to come.

How right to have the wish for life to come.
It witnesses to a delight in living
and an urge to see its loveliness once more,
not simply die like dragonflies on shore.

How right to witness a delight in living.
How right to set one's life above one's death.
How hard the squirming in a grave-deep crevice.
How easy to believe in life to come.

Sunk in earth the generations lie
in stark-blind fields beneath the springtime wind
and as one choir they raise their voices high
in blindmen's anthems to the land of Rind.

With the limbs of their bodies ravaged into soil
daily they celebrate their god gone blind
who knows all things and has no need to see
those shapes of life whose raiment he assigned.

The tender elements will rot away,
the solid elements are meant to hold;
but time does pass and soon there comes a day
when solid elements decay to mould.

And soon with ease their chorus is delivered
to the tops of trees, and every leaf is breathing
to any breeze that may be passing by
that death, lapped in summer, makes a joyful seething.

As selflessly as lovely summers do,
so the soul of life goes, as ungraspable
as lovely summers which have gone away
and every year come visiting anew.

Enthralled, we listen to the sightless maid.
Then several speak from where they stand, tight-lipped:
What lovely words she summoned to her aid.
What lovely words she came upon in Rind.
But merely words they are, and merely wind.

50 THE ARCH-COMIC SANDON

The arch-comic Sandon was living in space and delighted
each woman and man whom sensations of light-years united.

When the sun had averted its blaze from the bands of deported,
at our nightmare paresis the arch-comic Sandon cavorted.

If delight dropped to zero from suns glaring out from afar,
the arch-comic Sandon gave voice to a screech called a Blahr.

We howled when he entered on stage with his three-legged car.
Our thanks was a howl and he answered right back with a blahr.

But everything falls to the grave, which adores jeux d'esprit.
The arch-comic Sandon was lost in the vast cosmic sea.

Used up and worn down by the burdensome fortunes of man,
the arch-comic gave up his blahr, filling out his life-span.

51

A lady of the world, a beautiful gold leaf
upon a choice branch of the Yedis nobles,
exquisite of shape, her hair divided
on the left side blue, the right side black
and with a splendid stone comb

of rarest Yabian fire-agate
in a finely upswept bun, the height of hairstyle,
is describing to another Yedis lady
how, in her palanquin, she once looked out
from Geining Highland to the Setokaidi Sea,
where the moon rose like a perfect lantern
with the sated glow of autumn.

I find both of these ladies
on a day when I am sorting mima shards
and playing them in shock and solitude.

Once the mima captured their attractions,
the wonder of their beauty, Yedis-eyed.
And the language they had spoken at one time
by the Setokaidi Sea.

To think that Mima is no longer with us.
To think that Our Superior is dead.

I cannot grasp it. Nothing now makes sense.
The goddess dead of grief. And we condemned.

52 SHARDS FROM MIMA

Look at her, the one wound tight
in the latest fashions, walking in her casing
like a mannequin.
Ah me, she is forever worthy by the sea
that curves from Teb to Cape Atlantis
in aphroditic surreality
to be preserved forever uncorroded
by time and salt.

Don't believe it.
That woman has lain moldering
four million years, and nobody,
not even the mighty culture
that bore her, has left the faintest trace.

O, what a beauty.
Lord God, how can you?
And what lovely and modern clothing.
Heba, do you see
that marvelous belt
and the cut of the waistline,
what attention
to the possibility of women living
a garment's life
in time, season by season
but all the same
so deeply merged with art and beauty
that its proper backdrop is the sea
at Cape Atlantis.

God, how can you?
Where is pain the greatest?
In you who garner all?
In us who see and know
how all is garnered?
Your omnipotence—our impotence.
Switch off. We'll go and yurg.
Did you see?
That outfit can be partially co-ordinated
with the Tany line, with Yibb and Sesi-Yedis
and other styles of cut
from Dorisburg.

53 THE SPEAR

In our eleventh year we saw a vision,
the narrowest and meagerest of visions:
a spear that traveled through the Universe.
We both had come out of the same direction
and it did not veer off, but held its course.
Its rate of speed exceeded the goldonder's
so that the spear
moved promptly off beyond us.

But afterwards we sat in groups for hours,
speaking excitedly with one another
about the spear, about its path and origin.
But no one knew, and nobody could know.
Some tried to guess, but nobody believed.
In some sense, it was not to be believed,
lacked meaning as an object of belief.
It was simply flying through the Universe.
The Void-spear moved along its pointless course.
But nonetheless this vision had
the power to alter many people's brains:
Three went mad, one was a suicide.
And still another started up a sect,
a shrill, dry, tediously ascetic crew
from whom Aniara long had much ado.

So we were all struck by the spear, head on.

54 CHEFONE'S GARDEN

Intending to keep in close touch with the Researcher Corps,
the High Command gave them a dinner in "Spring Evermore."

the sort of a greenhouse goldonders have always in place,
in folk humor known as “the flying plantations of space.”

The best part of man there keeps watch over all that is born.
They are miniature Edens where nothing is ragged and torn,

where from nights of the clear staring spaces and glinting machinery,
mankind can be back and at home among soft living greenery.

Our High Command sat now alongside the Researcher Corps,
and the question was: how to protect our own “Spring Evermore”?

How act to preserve ever more of the life of the race,
how safeguard our heirloom of “flying plantations of space”?

They cast their eyes first on the beautiful park all around,
encircled by arches that vanished in grass-mantled ground.

Picture-perfect it was: the glowing spring heavens, the Edenic hedge
with a circular streamlet contrived along its inner edge.

Up to the sky, which the eye looked on last, a dove flew.
A woman unclothed was sitting in grass hyssop-blue.

Ample of bosom and posed for her beauty's enhancing,
she seemed to me wondrously fair, for the dusk was advancing.

Why, to her very eyebrows the woman's great beauty held bright,
and that was the cause for my stepping so close to the sight.

But in spite of the drinks I had lately got under my belt,
seldom had beauty dealt pain like the pain this one dealt.

I kept rubbing my eyes, not believing that I was awake:
for this was the Maid of the Mount whom a Dragon did take.

That hackneyed old ballad which no one could tolerate singing
was reality here in the seas where goldonders were swinging.

They dismiss the adventure, and see just the woman undressed.
Will the Mount be dismissed? Will the Dragon too be dispossessed?

But I, though the High Command's guest, nonetheless wanted fact
about how dragons order their lives, how they manage and act.

I asked her: How is it, my beauty, so charming, so bare,
could this park where you dwell serve the Dragon perchance as his lair?

She answered: I'm one of the folk in the fire crying Sombra
and you're of the folk who cremated all life in Xinombra.

My hate for your people's as hard as my loving embrace
of each tree, of each plant in "the flying plantations of space."

Then Chefone's chamber grew dark as I entered, astounded,
and by blackening shame my abundant distress was compounded.

I had to recoil at the look that the slave maid conferred,
and I no more found meaning in anything else that occurred.

In silence I bowed to her nakedness, then walked away
as up to the heavens all manner of birds raised their lay.

And with Chefone hardly concerned that I stay in my place,
I slipped off unobserved from "the flying plantations of space."

But long did I think of that woman so lovely and bare.
And long did I feel that the Dragon and I were a pair.

55

At the Planetarium deck, which is protected
by a bright transparent plexi-bowl,
the lifts are emptied of whoever wish
to use the star-deck for a quiet stroll
and see approaching us a nova's flare
from out the coils of Berenice's hair.

The astronomer—made humble by his trade—
tells us how a universe is gaming
in distant galaxies with novas flaming
and, tired of gifts forever being made
the photophage, with unimaginable ire
suddenly breaks down and flings the fire
of an exhausted love's concluding blaze
into the photophage's thankless rays.

A cheeky space snob listens with contempt
and in a stock tone of the Late Gondorian
wherein one instantly perceives the Gondian
disgustedly he hones a phrase and down
it sinks into a whisper of derision
level with his weary, deep-space frown.

This caused the ship's astronomer to freeze
and close with apologies that evening's show
of points of interest in the cosmic seas.

One day I met Chefone in the passageway
 leading into Gupta Chamber Three.
 With scorn he asked: "What do the birdies say
 this year, your Doris-thrush and chickádee?
 Is the mima now recovered from her smart?
 I saw you hunting long and feverishly
 beneath her bosom for what ailed her heart.
 Perhaps you found the wee locality?"

I blurt a scared goldonder-salutation,
 reporting to him that she died of grief.
 Although clairvoyant, she saw no salvation
 for people caged within this demon-fief.

Then Chefone guffaws as though he saw
 the funniest of sights in Mima's dens,
 and I want to collapse in mute despair,
 remembering my home in Doric glens.

But Chefone, bored senseless by all tears,
 walks on and leaves me standing stiff and cold,
 minded when springtimes of a thousand years
 turned winter without end in Mima's hold.

Is our redemption ever to be won
 in Aniara after that event?
 I look in every corner but find nothing,
 worrying every wish and argument.

57

The collapse of fair Libidel came
with the drug she had placed on her tongue.
We sang by her grave where the flame
caught hold of her, no longer young.

Our shuddering conscience was blocked
in cynical regions ice-cruised.
The rustproof sepulchral vaults locked
in zones where, instead, love had rusted.

58

A rival religion to the Cult arose
which the strain and torment of the dark inspire.
They worship Light as concept and as flame:
the goddess of this new cult is a fire.

Their chosen priestess was the maid from Rind.
And the chorus wells up like a stormy wind
when such a songstress, her eyes gone dark,
rises at the altar like a kindled spark.

She chants her songs about the god of Light
and witnesses to how in Rind she lay
beholding light, with skin her means of sight.

The vision burned her. This is what it is
to be blinded in the skin by a god of light.

The ecstasy is on her. None hears well
what she is saying, but a mighty swell

of choric voices raises her on high.
And, saintly-blind, amid a thousand candles,
in fireproof cloak of kieselguhr wrapped round,
she's pushed off to the photophage's wall
to cry out after light for Rindish ground.

Not seldom would I wander to that hall
where this sect met; on me it left its mark
and on many others in this sea of dark.

59

In the Memory Hall there are recanters' fêtes
and those immersed the deepest in recanting
have gathered, ashes strewn upon their pates,
torturing themselves with their recanting-chanting.

"Stand up and confess. The walls of grievous rages
are closing on the fate we engineered.
Our doom is mirror-image to the cages
at which from outside we ourselves once jeered.

When good excuses end their counterfeits
the mirror makes a Hades all its own
and the mirror's hot, be careful of your mitts.
It mirrors what was spoken, what was done.

Day in, day out from gray fakirs of rue
I listen to the hideous anthems rise
and I'm appalled. Could anyone outdo
the tramlings of the self enacted here?

For me, to find a cure is more the issue,
a cure to rouse the mima's broken breath
and to refashion the celestial tissue
burst by the breakers from the land of death.

60

With all the high-strung thousands here on board
it's good to hear the placid intonation
of our astronomer when he reports
on pre-goldondic times and glaciation.

He notes how meaningless it is to speak
about a cosmic time-clock for fatality
when cosmic rhythmicity show another pace
than does a culture based on time's centrality.

Those generations meant for such a doom
will have reposed a thousand years in sand
when space brings down its hyperborean whip
with one late wallop from an ice-age hand.

In easy images he tells at ease
the course of the most recent glaciation,
when Twenty-third-century pre-golddynasties
slid off their thrones in that refrigeration.

The thousand-year empire was about to see the light
when by the dark of war its dawn was scattered,
and they were just about to dig another site
when humane projects were forever shattered.

The friginebula of Golmos met the sun,
and the sun began a transit through the long
night of Golmos with shadow-play that racked
our world with ice-age winds' unsparing song.

The cap expanded circumpolarly
along the Earth. And ever larger surfaces
were cased in ice-sheets kilometers thick.

It was not arctic snow alone that settled
—a paralytic orbit's hexagons—
but cosmic snowfall from the nebula
compounding winter seasons into eons.

An ice-shield came to lie all over Europe,
which, hidden under its gigantic cake,
was bedded down for sixteen thousand winters
upon which not a ray of sun could break;
and countrymen from Europe's many nations
carried south their technical expertness
and held out for a while, but then declined,
chilled through in the barbarian inertness.

People for twelve thousand years were savages
with odds and ends of science left behind,
waiting for the sun to mend the ravages
in nature's forests and the realms of mind.

For generations working in their mills
among the wheels and wires of crude machines,
they had to be retrained for brutal fates
and well-acclimated to ice-age scenes.

The friginebula now left the sun,
but mankind of the pre-goldondic ilk
for fifteen centuries saw it as a crape
and a titanic cloth of coal-black silk
rising every evening in the skies of night
dark with its widow's veil that hid the galaxy.

And yet the black cloth did keep moving off,
diminishing against the sky's expanse;
and gradually receding in the distance,
it lost the look of a funereal crape.
And after scarce eleven thousand years
from the ages when the sun abandoned Golmos,
moving forward in full radiance,
this carbon-speck had almost wholly left
the new-lit backdrop of the sky's tableau.
The ice by then had melted: new generations
had the favor of new springs in Gond.

61

Despite grave difficulties I devised
a screen consisting of two kinds of beams.
I learned how seemingly to fix the screen
in space a few miles out from the goldonder.
Against this beam-screen I would then transmit
a third beam which became the video wave.
In this way I could organize in space,
through images that seemed to form a wall,
a sort of picture-curtain in the void.
I made these pictures teem with woodland scenes
and moonlit lakes, or mountainsides and cities.
Sometimes I had a large and mighty force

of men march off with flags of triumph flying,
all to gather a mirage from walls
that shut out an intolerable space.

Soon I had another wall laid out
in space, but this one on the other side,
and in between these walls prolific
of mirages the goldonder moved ahead,
screened off from those unthinkable abysses
which were unable now to stare at us
as they'd been doing for the last nine years
with shafts that stung and needles' piercing lights.

But even tapestries of fantasy
have need of some support from human will:
a little offering from within of dreams
from those who just demanded, giving nothing
to us but their blankness, like a hole
to fill with pretty pictures by the roll.

Now this blankness has been turned on me.
I'm driven to the spacecraft's worst recesses
and given death threats if I don't at once
account for why the blankness still oppresses.

I tell them how it is and how it was:
one's private blankness no one can conceal.
Like Humpty Dumpty who fell down and spattered,
against time's waves the soul of Mima shattered;
and Humpty Dumpty nobody can heal,
still less am I the person who can heal you.
Your blankness is appalling, that I feel.

I do my level best with magic arts
in truth not worth the spirit I expend,
but you contribute nothing from your hearts.
So those fine pictures came to no good end.

62

We try the wheel of a routine. I lecture
to space cadets upon the Gopta theory.
Through the vista-window suns peer in at us,
looking calm of eye, although we know
their thunderous roars amid the roentgens blasting,
their flailings in the gorge of Everlasting.
And while inside my head I hear them booming
like fearful drumbeats in the war which light
forever wages on the fierce dark's might,
I hear my own voice answer, pussyfooting,
the Gopta questions I had just been putting.

“With this new age's re-evaluations
and new expansions of the tensor doctrine
the way was opened for the possibility
of finding the proportioned symmetry
which by the Gopta formula through qwi
was simplified and proved the right approach
for every longer run in heaven's coach.”

The space cadets rise to their feet and leave
in model files for the adjacent hall,
where their next master, calm and cool Twelander,
will lecture on constructing a Goldonder.

A Gondian woman who is widowed now
came often with her husband to the vista-room.
For many years they'd sit there with their bundles
ready, as if waiting for a landing.

And although many looked with irony
—increasingly space-cold—upon that pair,
the two preserved their touching expectations,
gazing with confidence toward Lyreland.

Inside their reverential brains there stirred
a scent of thyme from meadows they had known
and the bread she had been baking in the oven
that they had left back in the land of Gond.

How many thousand times they sat and read
in Heaven's prospect, huddling close together,
no mortal knows in years of cosmic space
coldly elapsing without other trace
save that the two of them turned gray at last
and she became alone, sat left alone
thinking silently of days now flown
when he was still alive as in times past
in Gond, until they heard the siren blast
signalling "Last couple, step inside"
to start the exodus from far and wide.

At Goldon's lift-off zone, huddled close,
they bade a grave farewell to Dorisvale
and then with a departing prayer they left
their exile problem in the hands of fate.

Over many years I have observed
the widow sitting lonesome, mute and bent,
while we who, high beyond the firmament,
ingeniously administered Fate's hand
grew more despairing of the Promised Land.

64

Hear us who from Xinombra
harrow you with memories.
We dead ones wise too late
harrow you with visions.

In silence over years and years there fell
a snow of Xinombra's ashen column.

Each time you wake we rush at you full tilt
with our seared arms,
drawing out your guilt.

Xinombra's ashen pillar drifted
on through Rind.
It reached the coastline on the fifth day
and Cape Atlantis on the seventh day.
There wasn't any hope for refugees
not even in the open sea
where medusas were seen dying
and octopi were floating upwards from the deeps.

Xinombra's ashen column lay like waterbloom
of death across the oceans.

The demons floated round with water-angels
and all of them were dead.

Religions were tangled on the lines of thought
in gulfstreams of death.

The stone of wisdom
wrapped in the slaughter-mask of genius
was shot to the heart of Xinombra City,
which died a third time.
Oh, that jewel.

65

We rigged up a curtain for dreams.
And between us and our memory of Xinombra
came a grand forgetting
filled with its own life.

Magnified and modified
our senses flew
transformed
into adventures deep in the dimensions.

An insufferable point of pain dissolved.
We clearly felt the point
breaking up
and welling out
toward nameless blessedness
where there was no Aniara
where Chefone was dead, no one knew how
and no one asked about it.

A lightness lifted all with equal ease
and Isagel among them.

Libidel along with all the libidines
and dormifids slipped in
transfigured by the drug
as by the dews of dawn
in flawless groves.

66

Ever deeper each among the doomed
has found the Eden I must herewith name.
But once our opium is all consumed
and paradisaal visions are dispersed,
in the shrieking Xinombranos burst,
swearing eternal vengeance for Xinombra's shame.

67

I'm wakened by a scream. It is Chebeba.
She gazes at me with her pupils fading,
losing their luster, slowly dying down.
She cries out: God, I don't want to live in here
where joy and comfort can be found no more.
My memory of Xinombra, how grim, how clear.

From every side came drought
whose culmination
soberly prepared for in dry formulae
was the phototurb,
converting every wind
to oven-torrid air.

The season was autumn.
Refugees would tell us tales
of chilly lakes where people to the end
tried to sink themselves.

Now it is over.
And no one's left to blame.
The men in charge? All dead.
The instigators fled in time.

The tools of power that maintained
the whole thing
with fireproof hand
turned glaze and ashes.

Everything that could burn turned to ash.
And stones were vitrified
down to a four-inch depth.
In certain regions it went deeper:
a molten foot or more
of granite surface boiled.
But no one had to look.
All had whirled off earlier, round and round
as floated ash.

What occurred inside the houses?
Practically nothing.
It went too rapidly to really happen.
Imagine an alarm clock on a nightstand
set to measure out the time in seconds
is caught offguard by its own liquefaction

and then boils up and whirls away as gas
and all this in a millionth of a second.
And she, asleep in bed and unaware,
wakened seconds earlier by chilly air.
Oh, spare us this, I hear you crying now.
From penitential shades come cries for *sombra*
like the folk who shouted *sombra* in *Xinombra*.

68

We felt a pull out of our course
and started to hope the conclusion
was well on its way in the void.

For the old it was like a transfusion
to feel the ship toss in her track.
From all who had wearied of pain
and now pined away for nirvana
the cry came: she's tossing, the beauty,
she gave a bad toss in her track.

The unspoken hope turned explicit
and no ridicule was exchanged
when doctrines and world-wide religions
convened in the halls, where they ranged
their emblems and banners and crosses,
and prayer-slips and lotus-motifs.
Her tosses came hard as she flew
and hope was unbalanced by terror
but lifted its banner anew.

We entered something not unlike a fog-bank
thickening with every day that passed,
until on the fifth day it began incandescing
off the goldonder's bow. Thick and fast'
thereafter came doings of great oddity:
a rainbow-shimmering but cloudlike mantle
wove around the ship fantastically.
Its play of colors was beyond compare—
a vast and unexampled show of fireworks
dazed Aniara's kingdom with its blinding glare.

This quasi-festival did not last long:
we met resistance of an unknown kind,
and a typhoon of incandescent particles
gave rise to deathly terror and to dread
that seized at once upon the general mind.

We thought we must be foundering and dying.
The many-thousand people occupying
the full four-thousand rooms in the goldonder
thronged the passageways in utter panic.
A good one hundred passengers from Gond
were trampled down in the assembly halls
and several thousand injured otherwise.
Dislocated gravity,
spreading all over, discharged chaos waves
through our souls
with thousands of vibrations, as in smash-ups
on hard mountains, setting each heart quaking
in such dread that nothing on our journey

matched the ghastly anguish that soon filled
with howls of horror halls and passageways
where the crush
was murderous:
a human mill,
by human terror driven,
in maddened maelstroms pulverized itself.
Like a spiral drill, as driven by the Titans,
the goldonder bored into a cosmic sand-cloud
which, blazing, blinding, burst into extinction
against the shocked metals of the fuselage.
And like a top spinning in fire, refulgent
as from a nearby sun, our spacecraft ground
in the thunderous uproar of the substance
ever deeper into it.

And later
as abruptly as it started
it all was over, the goldonder dove
along the loxodrome
to which in her fall she clove.

What could it have been? came the question.
In spite of all our dead that's what came first.
It was in some strange way of greater weight
in that fantastic world where dread pursued
its now-familiar passage toward the Lyre.
And in the middle of the dead and trampled
the High Command pronounced what it believed
and what it looked upon as probable:
a cloud of cosmic granules or of ice
of some material, cosmic powder-firn

floating for eons—an everlasting snow
floating around for several billion years
and searching for its mount
to settle on,
to settle on in peace.

And the people were pleased with this communication
and, bending down, they lifted up the dead
whose souls had now a peaceful habitation,
composed and cool as snow
settled at last
on spirit's mount.



But many were the changes in the life
we led in the world that had become our own.
The hall of mirrors which for four years running
prolonged our illusion
lay smashed and shattered
and fragments in the hundred thousands covered
in heaping drifts the floor that we had danced on.
And among the jagged fragments, cut to pieces,
lay many a beauty halted in the yurg
the cloud had just been dancing with our ship.
With trinkets high up on her thighs lay Heba;
and Daisy, lovely still, as well as Yaal,
lay dead beside the badly hurt Chebeba.

All of this befell us in our twelfth year
of travel, reckoning from Dorisvale.

Once more we drifted in a workaday way
 and as before in Ghazilnut we lay,
 the name for that lobule of our galaxy
 in line with man's star-terminology.
 But this is not to say that Ghazilnut
 is bridgeable or recedes
 into a frame no larger than life needs;
 no, Ghazilnut signifies, the way things stand,
 a smaller lobule of four galactaves.
 A galactave is fifteen light-years wide.
 In astronautics they are wont to put
 the total area of the Milky Way
 at eight hundred thousand galactaves.
 No, what good are measures in explaining this—
 Anira swallowed up in the abyss.
 To show how Anira's swallowed in the void.

71 THE SPACE-HAND:

Each time I search my recollections well
 I think that I can trace back Nobia
 to Tlalocitli
 a little ill-ville in the Doraíma Highlands.
 It is a town that no one sees
 with hospitals set deep inside the mountain.
 An old abandoned mine was given over
 some time past for putting up that town, which
 —after some essential propping-up
 and alteration of the mountain's innards—
 was laid out at a depth
 of fifteen hundred feet from valley-level.

I travel more and more now
in thought to that locale,
where from collection-boxes the Samaritans
have bought up everything and settled in.
They say it cost
—I've heard the figure of three million dymas—
—in Gondian coin five hundred thousand gondi—
—in Rindian sound-coin five million rindi—
Eleven years they begged alms for their town
and then they built far down, for safety's sake,
a mission-station in Doraíma's mountain.



When one has long resided among demons
such goodness seems like an exotic land
bearing the fruit by which it may be known
and where the joy of simple things peals clear
as a cuckoo in the valley of the heart.

72 THE SONG OF KARELIA

Time passed and years went over to the frigid, bitter spaces.
Life grew less and less time-bounded for the many as they sat there
peering through the massive windows, waiting for a star to shake
loose
from the others, heading this way, always narrowing the distance.

Growing up, the children played upon the tundras of the interned,
on the worn floors of the ballrooms pitted more and more and
rougher.
Changing times bring changing manners. Yurghing had been long
forgotten

and the dance-besotted Daisy slept forever in her helix
in the vault where none but adepts of the dance were laid to slumber.

But I myself sat still and thought of glorious Karelia,
where I had my life once, where I kept for some men's lifetime,
stayed for more than thirty winters and for nine-and-twenty
summers
till once more I came to hazard other countries, other fortunes on
my torpid transmigration.

The recollection comes in flashes. Nothing blocks it in these spaces,
beams of every age converge here, and I glean from sundry nations
fragments from my long migration.

Fairest far among fair glimpses comes the vision of Karelia,
like a lake a gleam through branches, like a lustrous lake in summer
in the June-illumined season when no sooner evening darkens
than the cuckoo fluting clear sends the tender Aino summons,
bids her take her misty mantle, rise above the June-eve waters,
hasten toward the risen vapors, meet the cuckoo in his capers
in the rustlings of Karelia.

How, alas, can one take counsel,
counsel wise from bygone ages
whose commandments have no force now
and whose fields time set afire.

Sit down here in Mima's chambers.
Mindful that we were alive once
in another life, receiving
wisdom from the simple breadloaf.

Sit down here. Where is my mother?
Sit down here. Where is my darling?
In a better world than this one.

Was the knife I used the reason
that I do not win my dearest?

Plunged it in my guardian's bosom
when he swaggered from the sauna
took my love's breast in his fingers . . .
Where on earth? Oh yes, I have it.
There's the meadow, there's the forest
in Karelia of the rune-songs.

I sit here beside these others
talking big about their own worlds.
How they thrived there, how they lived life
lushly on their Star Majestic.

But ninety centuries past, one evening
I sat silent in the fallow
with my love, before it happened
and the Chief Judge sent me outlawed
from Karelia of the fallows.

Good that sometimes we forget things.
Good that only for brief moments
are we served up with our memories.

Good not always to be mindful
of our torpid transmigration.

Best to look while saying nothing.
Gods may have their watchmen sitting
here and listening. What do we know?

If I'm quiet, if I suffer,
if I feel remorse in silence,
maybe then I shall one evening
see the finish of my memories,
finish out my transmigration
and, scrubbed clean and marked as worthy
of the lovely Star Majestic,
settle deep the way a bird would
in Karelia of the fallows.

73 LIBIDELLA (Secret Dirge)

Does my dog nose where your nightwood grows
Libidella?

Does my little sly cat pretend to doze
my purring Libidella?.

Is my ear whispering its own soft calls
Libidella?

Do I have a home in another man's walls
listening Libidella?

Lib i della
pass me your Isthmus vase.
Now let stella
kindle her alpha-blaze.
In Alpha Centauri's puzzle
we'll shed hot tears and nuzzle,

O nuda you
pitch nudie woo
in a moonwood of lutes for two.

Libidella
let's head for the Dog Star's rays.
Let it swell a-
gain, dear, your Isthmus vase.
The merry old widow is slinking
and setting the others to thinking.
O nuda you
pitch nudie woo
in a moonwood of lutes for two.

Libidella
naked in nudinell
raise to stella
moonwhite your nudibell.
In Alpha Centauri's beaming
we'll toast with teardrops streaming.
O nuda you
pitch nudie woo
in a moonwood of lutes for two.

74

In spaces all too clear stares the horror
and, thinking nothing, sees into it all.
Gratuitous, this space-death glassy-clear.
Gratuitous, the emptiness enabling
the pellucidity of the absurd.

Gratuitous, the horror star-like blinking.
My friend, you know too much for having done no thinking.

You slept, and by the boundless clarity
of cosmic seas your daydreams all were razed
and like a sun the light of horror blazed.

75

A prize is promised of ten million gondi
—a sum to make the competition bold—
to anybody who can rotate our goldonder
and aim her nose-cone straight for Doriswold.

But now the years have passed, the contest now
involves the Comfortress in Mima's hold.

Who'll penetrate the mima's mysteries?
Who'll give the fairy back her fairy-wand?
That is our cry in the oceans of beyond.

76

My calculations on my lap, I sit
in silence, while the space historian lectures
about the pioneers in these sea-regions
which, conquered now, were once the grave of legions.

In olden times the lift was steeper. (Witness Icarus.)
Yes, there actually were people who believed
that we, with proper purchase, could be shot
from rocket-rig rotundas and still clear

the curving-vectors and the flexure fields.
When that naive idea came to naught
—and many victims did it cost the nations (witness Thanatos)—
came Period Two, the so-called Age of Heaven Ladders,
when by a series of ascension-boosts
their vessels throbbed ahead beyond the fields
—a quite good method in and of itself,
but cost-inefficient and not without its risks.
The curve of mishaps as we here observe
speaks for itself as to the way things stood
back when space was still a maidenhood.

Gauged against the curve of present times
and gauged against our numbers' new sum total,
the curve of former times looks far less good.
In fact, we're right to say that it was brutal."

77

At the telescope we shrink to see
a coal-black sun extinguished namelessly,
a black-draped sun in cosmic burial ground,
both blackened corpse and solar funeral mound
that first in firestorms blazed along time's Cape
and shot flames where the jaws of darkness gape
till in good time and by entropic law
sucked down whole in the photophage's maw,
which left no more than slag and scale to mark
its grave in barren valleys of the dark.
One of the many thousand dark-hued mounds
that no one sees, but in their darkness stand
an endless night in cosmic burial grounds.

It reflects no light, but rather strikes the eye
as an eclipsing of a group of stars
which no more than a month ago were seen
exactly where the sun of darkness now
appears as sharp-edged as a coal-black coin.
Now in coal-dark majesty it plants
its rounded profile on the gas-bright nebula.
It is a dark and globe-round giant mountain
deep in whose dismal cave the genie of the lamp
died very long ago in the dark's embrace
and, hemmed in by the coal-black slag, is frozen
nameless in light's grave and without trace.

78

Our Chief Engineer
a man from Upper Gond
a brilliant expert on the yessertubes
departed this life
on fifteen November which was Wednesday.

In recognition of his years of service
and major contributions to goldondery
his wish was granted to be laid to rest
within a rescue-module
then to be shot out
on course for Rigel.

A numerous throng accompanied him
to the exit room
with the rescue-capsule on the catafalque
and the people singing in farewell
"Broad the Breast and Far the Harbor."

And then they all withdrew;
the exit room was closed.

One only heard the rumbling
from the units.
The death-capsule was channeled through
to its light-year grave.

79

We came from Earth, from Dorisland,
the jewel in our solar system,
the only orb where Life obtained
a land of milk and honey.
Describe the landscapes we found there,
the days their dawns could breed.
Describe the creature fine and fair
who sewed the shrouds for his own seed
till God and Satan hand in hand
through a deranged and poisoned land
took flight uphill and down
from man: a king with ashen crown.

80

In the midst of the blazing sun
there is a pupil, a core
that with its curious whirling
makes it the star of love.
Whenever it looks upon Earth
a meadow arises and flowers
day after day, sending seed
gaily through glad summer hours.

The flowers hoist from the ground
their bunting that lives and stirs.
Butterflies dance there with yellow
veils round the thistle burrs.
Bumblebees hum in the grass
that the shade of the blades cross-hatches.
Coolly the summer wind plays
in quivering poppy patches.

Gladness is fleeting—a moment's
windfall of fair-weather luck.
Far from all folly and ruck
shines in the summery wood
the summer-star of love,
the flower of midsummer seasons.
What could have offered more reasons
for us to be happy and good?

81

The dark in our minds neared its worst
after nineteen years in space.
I sat with my pencil, immersed
in goptistics regarding the trace
of increased radiation from Lyre
suggesting one thing or another.

So we sat in the twentieth spring
and studied the Lyre-star's blaze
and Isagel read through a string
of beta and gamma rays.

And ironical winds of the soul
alternating with cold gusting fears
accompanied Isagel's breath
in the ebb and flow of her tears.

And all the romantic heart-achings
once mocked for their tears beyond measure
now counted as sober essentials
in darkness so distant from pleasure.

Clasping my heroine to me,
I could taste her warm tears as they poured.
And she was the warmth of the living
that still kept me company on board.
And out toward the luminous Lyre
drove the ship with its hull full of scars,
mementos of those scalding meteors
we had met in the suite of the stars.

And Isagel wished nothing sung.
But I was insistent upon
addressing my hardening tongue
to asbestos and silicon.

A song out of statical science
I sang my disconsolate bride,
sang of man's honor set at defiance
and irreparable deicide.

And Isagel ended her weeping
—though perhaps there are other things worse.

In the twentieth year this befell us
on a journey that had our hearts' curse.

82

An event you might well call outré
has been heralded and much fêted
in space upon this day.
The High Command had us dress up
in our very finest clothing
to fête the Cosmic Way.

We used a hundred staircases.
All four thousand rooms,
two hundred thirty meeting-halls,
they emptied right away.

In the massive central mall
that holds a good ten thousand
(called the Light-Year Hall)
we met up, you and I.

Then only did we notice
how hard the years had been
on all both low and high,
when under chandelier-lights
we were placed in that sea of people
that are all called "you and I."

It was as if all the souls
had come up from the Earth
and gathered today on high.

And the songs of angel choirs
and speeches of goldondiers
one after the other sped by.

The Chief Goldondier gave a lecture
on the moment's great import,
on this great holiday.
How tremendous outer space is,
how huge its mystery,
how small a part I play.

And you heard the chorus swelling
in the Light-Year Hall's abyss
and the crowd of people thrilling
at the infinite precipice.

And many thousands were weeping
and several hundreds said:
This truly is Fate's way:

Goldonder Aniara
has carried on its journey
for twenty years today.

And many stood unspeaking.
But suddenly someone said
a light-year is a grave.

Those twenty years of journey
are sixteen hours of light-path
on the sea of the light-year grave.
Then none of us were laughing.

Near all of us were weeping.
A light year is a grave.

The Goldondier-in-Chief made a flourish
at all of us with his stave.
And we climbed up the hundred staircases,
ending our conclave.
And everyone walked in silence.
A light-year is a grave.

83 THE SONG OF EROSION

The legions of atoms that overlay Nineveh's blocks
decamped in the end and departed the seats of the great.
The moldering shows in each stone as its fissures and pocks.
Off march the moldered lions and priests in high state.

O pitted stone, hold them back, let them not disappear.
See how time has been lapping and lapping the lion's fine mane
as the manhood that once lapped at woman in ancient Assyr
as the tower of Han was dissolved by the spittle of rain.

To their unending sins of erosion the seasons have plodded,
for its orgies at graveside corruption is joined by the rose.
With their covetous tongues the degenerate grasses have prodded.
The lupus of caverns has altered the stony wolf's nose.

As the stones are eroded, so men sink their teeth into right.
Each hypocrite well knows the clandestine smell of decay.
The things insight permeates all are revealed in its light
as hollows burnt dry in the lava from ruin's great bay.

Listen to the shattered trombones. Here a splintering zither
plays songs of the sphinx in the sand-barrens, leprosy-chewed,
to solace the nations who witnessed their decencies wither
like stones at the teeth of the ages, gnawing and lewd.

84

The Chief Astronomer shows us the image
of a galaxy that lies out very far.
And many people sink down to their knees
and start to pray: Lord, closer, here we are!
They're members of the galactave religion.
And when I see them praying I recall
how Sister Nobia had once described
the massive tableland of Doraíma
where the neighbor-galaxy in Andromeda
on cloudless nights ingeniously enlarged
—so as to be seen from rooftops in eight cities—
seemed gleaming out from miles-wide giant mirrors,
like a goldfish for the folk of Doraíma.

85

The galaxy swings around
like a wheel of lighted smoke,
and the smoke is made of stars.
It is sunsmoke.
For lack of other words we call it sunsmoke,
do you see.
I don't feel languages are equal
to what that vision comprehends.

The richest of the languages we know,
Xinombric, has three million words,
but then the galaxy you're gazing into now
has more than ninety billion suns.
Has there ever been a brain that mastered all the words
in the Xinombric language?
Not a one.
Now you see.
And do not see.

86 SONG FROM GOND

A god of the roses draws nigh,
for nigh are the days of the roses.
And the goddess of lilies is here.
What joy when the eye of man closes.

See, curious fairies pass by,
in caskets the tints are a-making.
The violet god wishes dye.
The days of the violets are breaking.

We droop in the deities' bowers,
turn humus and pistil and ray.
And the gods are soon tinting the flowers
by dint of our bodies' decay.

As more of us cease to exist
the less shall the gods do of keening.
Our lives, like the snow, turn to mist
when the summers of gods begin greening.

And time went by, the changes came about
like worn spots in upholstery and seating.
The apathetic mind and forfeit soul
would sit incapable, reduced and listless
in cosmic ease which had seen better days
but dwindled through the world's entropic ways.

Ennui, that limit to the life of ease,
had long ago been reached and now was crossed
and souls again sought cures in injuries
and sufferings by which our times were tossed.
And modish words and modish dances rushed
swiftly past, and each in turn disdained,
and on time's vapid stream which merely flushed
its musty waters deathward to be drained.

The idle brain became a burden to itself
and splendid minds, unread upon the shelf,
cold-shouldered all whom torpor had made fat
and no one's thinking ever could get at.

The strangest omens would be seen in space
but, since they were unsuited to the program
of our day, they promptly were forgotten.

We came, to give one instance, rather near
an unknown sun, a half-extinguished neighbor
of the one that finely shone in Dorisdale,
and Isagel came in to me and said:
How shall we, dearest? Should we? Yes or no?

I answered that the time was surely ripe
but space was still an open-ended game.
We therefore might be wise to keep the moth
some distance for the moment from the flame
now offering itself as our cremator.

And Isagel left everything at that,
but yet her eyes appeared to phosphoresce
in anger, which at such an hour was holy.
Behind the backs of our benumbed cohort,
she spared Aniara from that last resort.

88

The splendid mind of Isagel broke down:
a fevered demon rose into her eyes.
The pupil dilated to the wellspring of her soul.
She heard appeals and echoes from far skies.

She spoke to me about a voice that hailed
her by a name that she had never heard
and often its appeal had wailed and wailed
in Mima's chambers since this first occurred.

It came from Mima's grave, and while all slept
one night she listened to that voice exhort
and to the tiles that marked that grave she crept—
there sat a herald from the Eternal Court.

I feign belief, because I know her case,
how into my friend's soul a shard had slid,
a fragment from all that we had met in space
when we collided with the Leonid.

Now it is not only cosmic barrens
and psychic emptiness through which we fare,
but also many a secret fate whose marks
on fortitude are deep and hard to bear.

Seated in thought, she let slip the remark
that she not seldom felt like Death, who waits
on Aniara flying in the dark
and keeps account of life's ungenerous fates.

I thought it first a jest, mere spleen in wastes
that held no rescue for their astronauts.
But, seeing where it was that she was tending,
I tried to win her soul to other thoughts.



Stay of our spirit, sovereign of pure thought,
she was preparing for the realm of glory
and in her heart knew more than cosmic wastes
had instruments to register the story.

Unseen by us, she slipped away to where
the Laws of Aleph Numbers all are stored:
there infinite reserves are to be opened
when Chance approves, the world's new overlord.

89

When someone you have loved has reached death's door
space stands harder and more brutal than before.

We're more and more weighed down, we're devastated
and never will our souls be liberated
out of the clutches of demonic space.

And from the Picture Archive I uncase
my gleanings from the days of Mima's grace.
The mima hall is now a cave close-packed
where splinters from the Mima scenes refract
as afterglow in Aniara-town,
a cavalcade, a red sun going down.

90

With Chefone I once fell out of grace
and, sought out by his goons, I am escorted
to the lowest cellar room, a space
where only men of violence were deported.

I still thought: there are bound to come those days
when Chefone, though much to his disgust,
must free whoever knows the gopta's ways.
That day I shall resume my former trust.

And, almost as an answer to my thoughts,
through the ship a violent shock was felt.
It was like greetings sent by Isagel
from that enshrouded kingdom where she dwelt.

And after lock-up on that very night
Isagel drew near to me in dreams
of supernatural light illumining
my heart with unimaginable beams.

And with the practice I had had in reading
signs and then examining their code
for what could be of use for new ideas
appropriate for Mima's language-mode,
now tremblingly I could identify
who she was, my Isagel, and why she still
at all my questions faithfully stood by
to give me, when the need arose, reply.

And it was plain to me that Isagel
my mind's magnificent and dazzling bride
in cosmic space beyond the God of life
was the mima's inmost self,
was Mima's soul.

Aniara's aerial-fitted gopta vaults
still shook with Isagel's anxiety,
as did Chefone. I, at his command
but much against his will, was led back, free.

In layman's terms (a Dorian legacy)
this shaking meant our gold-dense gravity
was close to losing equilibrium.
And, loosed from chains to locate the defect,
I was returned to Mima's gallery.

91

We were in the abyss. It sounds a fairy-tale
written in panic fear in all our eyes.
But unanimity was quick to galvanize.
The mass psychosis was of ample scale.

An undetermined fault in the gravity-works
gave sinking feelings and the strong illusion
that we, no matter what, would still keep falling
like a plumb-line, downward through a space
no more with rounded sides and convex crown,
but altered to a well sloped sharply down.

My goptatory served us in good stead
and seldom were there people seen so glad
as when by means of goptical fifth Tadd
I lifted in three hours the load of dread
and deadweight off the brain and breast.
Among the stars that day was of the best.
Where are you, Isagel? Now comes the glory,
a patent triumph for the goptatory.

92

All the fire that in us had burned
took its light, its soul from Mima's beam.

Nevermore to us would be returned
what we saw when huddled in her gleam.

It grew very hard for us to keep alive
the faith that time had gnawed at past the core
and we, in emptiness, prized all the more.

Ceaselessly practising their threnody,
the supplicants all stood in Mima's hall.
Swollen mouths sucked blood from their divinity.

Human sacrifice became respected,
though custom had worn down its holiness
with pledges streaming numberless
and, soon as made, neglected.

Soon these offerings were in style no more
among our circle, for whom no force lay
in laxly conjured sacrificial gore
that doubt let dribble pointlessly away.

People trained on phototurbic form
and Gondian Xinombra's bloody days
found slaughters here ironically lukewarm
remembering Xinombra set a-blaze.

Recollections too from Mima's times
did their part. And shamefaced they inclined
in attitudes of prayer, mere pantomimes
of rites they'd practised once with purer mind.

To the Cultic priests, whose souls were frozen through,
the flow of sacrificial blood seemed cold.
By what was left of Mima, who loved the true,
they knew their deficiencies were thousandfold.

So they refused their services canonical
for the rite that Chefone designed.
What a crushing blow for that thrasonical
bullet-headed breaker of mankind.

Few sacrifice-resisters could be found
 once Chefone struck back ferociously:
 between four liquidator-magnets ground,
 each rebel died in nameless agony.

From that day on none visited the rooms
 where Mima slept and where the Cult went dead,
 where hope was slight against such glooms,
 that even Chefone succumbed to dread.

In lightscript on his screen he offered ways
 meant to alleviate our final days.
 He gave his goons Samaritan costume
 and urged them ease the manner of our doom.

And with a new deportment, strange to tell,
 he played with ointments and was very pleasing
 and, what is more, as though beneath a spell
 he helped the sick and tried to warm the freezing.

94 DEATH CERTIFICATE

An ill-willed hateful self-devourer
 a froth-mouthed feeder self-absorbed by his travail
 sat a while here in Mima's hall.
 He'd rooted out a nation over by Ygol.
 Now he was Chief to us of Dorisdale.

Having eaten himself up well
 leaving only bits

entirely unable to devour themselves,
he vanished.
The floor he had been sitting on rejoiced.
His name was Chefone of Xaxacal.

95

I no longer set the tone of things
in this crevasse between to seem and be.
And no one came requesting an illusion.
We all had seen through what there was to see.

As if within a giant crystal tomb
they all, or nearly all, saw where they sped;
all things were windows on the hall of dread
where words of comfort found no welcome room.
Apart from stars millions of miles away,
nothing was there to watch our tomb proceed
in space with Dorisvale's distinguished breed.
And, clappers in a glassy mourning bell,
in dread ecstatic all souls raised their knell
of rounds that rang on the transparent wall.

We gathered together in the mima-hall
and I was wedged inside with all the others
and dread expunged all thought of Doric plains.
I joined the rest of them in present pains.

96

The High Command could no more keep concealed
the swift approach of cataclysmic days,

and yet wrapped every fact inside a shield
of formulae from tensor law, fifth phase.

I was shown out of the Computer Block
and of the room where they prognosticate.
But anyone who's learned to read a clock
can forecast when the time will be too late.

I went to Mima's grave and there a-sprawl
I lay at prayer, who knows to which divinity.
In my despair, I begged in that cold hall
a miracle from that dead circuitry.

And then, although no outward sign I spied,
I heard that circuitry in silence utter
a mystery deep and mutely magnified
by the lights of mima's grave, about to gutter.

97

In the beginning of our twenty-fourth year
thought broke down and fantasy died out.
Overwhelmed by the perpetual enigmas
of star-strewn galaxies without an end.
Our every dream submitted and acknowledged
its lowly rank in Lobule Ghazilnut.

The darkening pervaded many souls:
they roamed the halls, reality blown apart,
and questioned one another on the road
to home, on distant things known to the heart.
They flocked about the lamps as moths abound
in autumn over distant Doric ground.

98

As former conjuror in Mima's hold
I invoke the devastator of all cold.
I pray the seraphim that they stand near.
I pray the visions that they reappear.

I pray that in this chamber Isagel
rise unharmed from her ossuary shell.
From ashen death, O Isagel, ascend,
O Isagel, assist me at my end.

99

I paced the halls and it was very late,
paced Mima's hall one night and I was cold.
Still colder, far from all things temperate
roared memory in my soul for Doriswold.

With ever more savagery time's tooth bored
to every nook our dreams had thought to save
and like the sand of time the filings poured
on floors and tables in our space-enclave.

Aniara traveled in year twenty-four
with undiminished speed to Lyre's figure,
the star of Doris was commingled now
among the thousands in a starry horde
which seemed forgathered as in company
but which in actuality were hung
so sparsely scattered in eternal cold
that every sun was martyr to the void.

Ever more mute and numb lay Aniara's ship:
once proud goldonder, now sarcophagus
which, lacking its own power, through empty space was flung
in line with the loxodrome
to which in her fall she clung.

The pilots' cabin had been empty for some time,
and those who had watched here in the hall of marvels
now lay where Daisy Doody slept for many years:
the queen of yurg surrounded
by her maids and cavaliers.

A hush had fallen on the halls, but somewhere
from the vastnesses within the giant hull came sounds.
If you walked in their direction several thousand steps
you came to the mima's chamber where a crowd
of cosmic emigrants sat shivering yet.

Playing the infinite in mortal chess,
there they fiddled with their deathly problems,
and one of them who quietly went mad
stepped up magniloquent on verbal ladders
to lecture on the human race's travels,
on Punt and Tyre, on Vinland and da Gama.

But in his mouth the rhetoric congealed.
This last of speakers closed his mouth again
and, shivering, looked around in Mima's den
where the journey of life had now gone farther
than any place once dreamt of in Tagus' glen.
And only death's echoes were heard answering

the talk he gave the dead as they increased
and now, stiff-frozen and with glass-clear eyes,
looked to the Lyre from Aniara of the spaces.

100

There were no longer any lights to light.
At Mima's grave burned one lamp of devotion
where now the last, helpless in their plight,
had met to turn their backs upon death's ocean.

The last hours of the era of mankind
addressed the flame with questions in their eyes.
So too on Earth had many sat confined
beside their last lamp's light and seen its flame
and heard the firing squad dressing its line
outside where hard stone walls reflected back
the muzzle flashes of the rifles' crack.

For the fierceness of space does not exceed mankind's.
No, human cruelty stands up more than well.
In the desolation of a death-camp cell
space made of stone enclosed the souls of men,
and the silence of the cold stones met the ear:
Here mankind rules. Aniara's ship is here.

101

It was our final night in Mima's hall.
Self after self broke down and disappeared;
but before the self had wholly ceased to be
the soul's will rose more clearly into view,

extricating time at last from space
and lulling fast asleep the Doric race.

102

I had meant to make them an Edenic place,
but since we left the one we had destroyed
our only home became the night of space
where no god heard us in the endless void.

The firmament's eternal mystery
and wondrous physics of the constellations
are law, but they are not the gospel truth.
Compassion flourishes at life's foundations.

We crashed into the Law's precise command,
and found our empty death in Mima's dens.
The god whom we had hoped for to the end
sat wounded and profaned in Doric glens.

103

I turn the lamp down and appeal for peace.
Our tragedy is done. Occasionally
I've used my envoy's warrant to release
scenes of our fate through the galactic sea.

With undiminished speed to Lyre's figure
for fifteen thousand years the spacecraft drove
like a museum filled with things and bones
and desiccated plants from Dorisgrove.

In our immense sarcophagus we lay
as on into the empty seas we passed
where cosmic night, forever cleft from day,
around our grave a glass-clear silence cast.

Around the mima's grave we sprawled in rings,
fallen and to guiltless ashes changed,
delivered from the stars' embittered stings.
And through us all Nirvana's current ranged.

Notes

Doris: The Earth, to which Harry Martinson gives the name of a district of ancient Greece lying just to the north of Mount Parnassus; the name would thus express both the natural and intellectual beauty found upon Earth. Only in Poem 1 is the name applied to a person (Poem 1).

the tundra globe: Mars.

Goldonder Aniara: The name for the type of spacecraft most likely derives from the Swedish *gondol*, "gondola." One possible derivation for the name "Aniara" may be the Greek *aniaros*, "in distress" (2).

gyrospin, gyromatic: Martinson indulges here as elsewhere in spirited play with scientific and quasi-scientific terms descriptive of the processes within the computer-console of the mima.

the Lyre: The constellation Lyra (3).

the mima: A wondrous electronic console processing signals from all over the universe into sounds and images so captivating that the passengers have made it into a goddess (on this account the name is often capitalized).

the Blue Archive: Presumably an encyclopedia keeping, and keeping faith with, the human past. It may be noted that the major work of Tibetan religious history bears the name of The Blue Treasury of Records (14).

cosmic Zanzibar: Earth, the one spice island of sensuous beauty in all the wastes of space (17).

stones shall cry out: Cf. Habbakuk 2:11 (26).

priest gone blue: He is blue because of the blue light of the explosion.

in the name of Things: I.e., as opposed to the abstractions, theories, surmises and wild guesses which have brought the world to this self-immolation (28).

a Boeotian shade: The ancient Greek district Boeotia was proverbial for the folly of its inhabitants (30).

goldondeva: *Deva* is Sanskrit for “divinity.” The oath, then, would be named for its invocation of the “goldonder divinity” (34).

Isagel: The name suggests Isis, the Egyptian goddess associated with the cosmic order.

gopta-board: Martinson has invented the equipment of an applied science for the gopta (Sanskrit, “occult”) mystagogy.

Chebeba ... a jewel of Candian fashioning: Perhaps the woman’s name derives from Cybebe, a variant of Cybele, the Phrygian fertility goddess. The city of Kandy in present-day Sri Lanka was renowned for its gemstones.

thyrsus light: The thyrsus was the phallic staff waved by the female celebrants in the rites of Bacchic worship.

Xinombra: Martinson has invented this Central American city, destroyed by a still earlier holocaust.

sarathasm and plyelle: “... in the epic of *Wigalois* these two splendid fabrics were woven by salamanders on a mountain in central Asia and had the distinction of being fireproof” (Holm 368, n.p. 291; trans. Klass).

aleph numbers: The first of the transfinite numbers of modern set theory (39).

Gond: The historical Gondwana, or Land of the Gond, was a supremely civilized highland kingdom of central India from the 12th to the 18th century, until the pressure of a Mahratta invasion scattered the Gond into cultural decline (40).

the chambers over by Ygol: Reminiscent of the gas chambers of Hitler's Europe.

Bluebird: Perhaps Maurice Maeterlinck's Blue Bird, from his drama (1908) of that name, a bird which, if captured, will tell man all there is to know.

Rind: Martinson has said that he gave this German word for "tree bark" to the country of the blind poetess because of his memory of a young woman in South America who was blind with trachoma, a disease which covers over the eye as with a bark (Tideström 115).

sombra: Spanish, "shadow."

Antalex: *Anta*, Sanskrit, "end, completion"; thus, the name could mean "the completion of the law," the law in question being the strict logic of the cosmos over against which Martinson posits in Poem 102 compassion and "the gospel truth."

numerosopher: I.e., the philosopher of number sets (47).

Yedic, Yedis: Forms of Yedo, the former name of Tokyo (51).

the Maid of the Mount: A figure from Scandinavian ballad (54).

Berenice's Hair: The constellation Coma Berenices (55).

kieselguhr: A friable chalky earth used to absorb the nitroglycerin during the manufacture of dynamite (58).

loxodrome: A directional line (69).

Ghazilnut: Nut is the Egyptian sky-goddess. We have not yet been able to identify Ghazil (70).

Tlalocitli: Tlaloc is the Aztec god of rain (71).

Doraíma Highlands: To associate it with Doris, Martinson has renamed the real Roraíma Plateau in the Amazonian jungle.

Karelia: Formerly an eastern district of Finland, but now partially incorporated into Russia. As the scene of the Finnish national epic, *Kalevala*, and imbued with an exoticism deriving from Russian and Byzantine sources, Karelia stands for an irrecoverable, paradisiac heartland (72).

Aino: In Rune IV of *Kalevala* the disconsolate maiden Aino drowns herself in a lake rather than marry the bardic demiurge Väinämöinen. At news of this, the tears of her mother form rivers whose waters carve out mountains, and on the treetops of those mountains sit golden cuckoos whose gay songs plague her forever. Martinson is here proposing Aino's resurrection, an event which does not occur in *Kalevala*.

my wielding of the knife-blade: No specific circumstance can be traced here, but it seems that the speaker is casting about for some reason for why he (standing for the human race itself) should have brought about such a calamity as the loss of paradise.

rune-songs: The cantos of *Kalevala* are called runes.

Libidella: To the tune of "Daisy Bell" ("A Bicycle Built for Two") (73).

your Isthmus jar: Presumably her breast, though no satisfactory explanation for "Isthmus" has yet been found.

the Comfortress: Mima (75).

Icarus: In Greek myth, the son of Daedalus who, attempting to emulate his father, flew too close to the sun; its heat melted the wax which held his wings fast to his arms, and he fell into the sea and drowned (76).

the lantern's genie: Cf. Aladdin and his lamp (77).

statical science: The study of stress and strain, of forces in equilibrium (81).

the tower of Han: An allusion to the Chinese Han dynasty (106 B.C.-220 A.D.), though no particular tower can be identified (83).

Andromeda: The galaxy nearest our own (84).

goptatory: The body of gopta doctrine (91).

thrasonical: Vainglorious (92).

Punt, Tyre, Vinland, da Gama: Punt, a country south of Egypt, from which the ancient Egyptians bought spices, ebony, ivory, etc.; Tyre, the chief city of the ancient Phoenicians; Vinland, the Viking name for a portion of North America; Vasco da Gama, the Portuguese explorer (99).

Tagus' glen: Lisbon lies at the mouth of the Tagus River.