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TO SPIN IS MIRACLE CAT

Poetry by Roger Zelazny

*With a foreword by Ursula Le Guin*

UNDERWOOD-MILLER

San Francisco, California

Columbia, Pennsylvania

1981

ROGER ZELAZNY lives in New Mexico with his wife Judy, sons Devin and Trent, and daughter Shannon.

He has been writing professionally since 1962, and has written many novels, including *The Changing Land*, *Lord of Light*, *Dream Master*, and the five volume Amber series, as well as numerous short stories, including "A Rose For Ecclesiastes," "For A Breath I Tarry," "The Doors of His Face, The Lamps of His Mouth," and "The Last Defender of Camelot."

His work has been translated into twelve languages, and has been adapted for stage, screen and radio.

This is his third collection of poetry.

Forthcoming is a novel, *Coils*, a collaboration with Fred Saberhagen.

Mr. Zelazny is a past secretary-treasurer of the Science Fiction Writers of America.

He has won three Nebula and three Hugo Awards.

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By  
Roger Zelazny

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1961



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FIRST EDITION

"Lobachevsky's Eyes" originally appeared in *Doorways in the Sand* by Roger Zelazny, copyright © 1976 by Roger Zelazny.

The poems "Ducks "; "Nuages"; "Testament"; and "Tryptych" have also been previously published.

## To Jeanne and Ron Dobler

1. The first time I saw you

1964

2. The first time I saw you

1964

1964

3. The first time I saw you

1964, 1965, 1966, 1967

1967

4. The first time I saw you

1967

5. The first time I saw you

1967

1967

1967

6. The first time I saw you

1967, 1968, 1969

1969

1969

1969

7. The first time I saw you

1969

1969

1969

8. The first time I saw you

1969, 1970, 1971, 1972, 1973

1973

1973

1973

1973



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## FOREWORD

by Ursula Le Guin

Henry Moore at eighty leafs through a book of sketches of his baby grandson and says, "I draw in order to know. I know Gus very much better after drawing these, you see." Later in the interview (aired on PBS) he shows us drawings of roots, trunks, branches. "I love trees nearly as well as I love Gus. I draw them in order to see them. . . ." How shall we tell love from knowledge? How shall we tell the dancer from the dance? People assert the incompatibility of science and art as glibly as they insist upon a quarrel between science and religion, for the human craving for quarrels and compartments is insatiable; but as insatiable, and far more profitable, is the human craving for knowledge. If art is considered a form of knowledge, a means of learning to see, the quarrel evaporates and the compartments remain only as useful distinctions.

To very few artists is given the central, massive certainty of a Henry Moore, but all artists like to thumb their noses at the box-makers and dance with the buoyancy of Disney hippopotamuses across the boundaries drawn by anxious mapmakers of the mind.

Where a good many people are literate, poets may become the cautious members of this unruly chorus-line, keeping their

elbows close to their sides, careful where they put their feet. Poets deal in words, and so do we all. People who won't dance, and won't paint, and won't act, and won't whittle, and won't sew, and wouldn't even put tissue paper on a comb and hum *The Bear Came Over the Mountain* to entertain the baby, do talk.

And they write. They write advertising copy, technical specifications, interoffice memoranda, newspapers, shopping lists, love letters, poison pen letters, postdeconstructionist exegeses, and FUCK on brick walls. And thus, being word-users, they kind of keep crowding the poets. Some of the poets quite rightly respond by saying: We have nothing, nothing whatever to do with you; our words are entirely different from your words; you speak English, more or less, but we speak Poetry, and you may think you can judge us, but you can't. Fortunately, however, writing is not the only activity involved in being literate, and lo! light as the Disney hippos, thumbing their noses gallantly, come the readers, pirouetting over the boundaries, bouncing on the boxes people, even poets, build to hide in. Boldly they read what the poets write. What for? In order to know. They want to know more, they want to know better, they want to see the world, because knowledge is love; or, as Keats put it, beauty is truth, truth beauty.

Keats said that was all we need to know, but he said nothing about the business being easy, or safe. In poetry, there's nowhere to hide. Not for the rash poet, not for the gallant collaborator, the reader. Every word's a UXB; the flash when one goes off can illuminate the whole landscape of a heart, and the light is merciless. As for the white stuff between the lines, that's totally unsafe. A poem is a risk taken. A poem read is a risk shared. The thing about collaborating at risk is, it makes us aware that we may be lonely but are not alone; we're all in this together,

often losing words to circle  
and movement to other leaves  
like trees to spin. . . .

To Spin Is Miracle Cat



## Recent



## LOCKER ROOM

You words damned well better do as you're told.  
Get in line. Sound sweet. Stay on your feet.  
When I need a pun I'll ask for it.  
Match sound to sense, sense to sound.  
Block that image of the wraparound  
windshield's revealing/concealing in sun's glare.  
Whatever's there needs care in the display.  
Technical honesty's the note for the day.  
Stop talking to each other. When I call,  
you come. When I say shit  
you say what color. Is that clear?  
Get back here! Words can't walk out on

## DANCE

Any minute now  
the words will replay themselves  
within the mind's ear:  
The clown and the singer  
fail at last,  
 juggler of hearts  
and crier at the sticking place  
falter,  
 footing lost, voice broken,  
embracing in the downward spinning,  
and clown take up the cry,  
falling caller  
catch the dark staccato  
laughter, netless  
in the minute's eye.

## SONG

When I learned the other day  
that everything Emily Dickinson wrote  
can be sung to the tune  
of "The Yellow Rose of Texas"  
I was crushed.  
It was true.  
I can no longer read Emily Dickinson  
but Lone Star ghosts flit across the page,  
the Alamo is not forgotten  
and I hear the thundering hoofbeats  
of the great horse Silver.

I wondered then  
whether every person who pens a poem  
has a tune,  
a secret melody which will destroy him  
if the word gets out.  
A small thought, perhaps,  
not quite as profound as it sounds;  
and those who fool with *vers libre*  
should be safer than most.  
Yet the notion nags.  
There's an awful lot of music in the world . . .

To be trapped by John Cage  
or crushed by Leadbelly  
would be bad enough.  
But I have this nightmare  
of being done in by a hymn.  
If *Rock of Ages* gets me in the end,  
mocked Emily's diamond eyes  
may sparkle like the dew  
in stillnesses that lie  
between the words and the Word.

## SONNET, ANYONE?

Save for Berryman's, who wants the sonnet?  
— A fusty hangover from ages dark.  
Take a thought, hang fourteen lines upon it,  
Prime it and crank it, force it to a spark,  
Then halting rhyme in pattern archaic,  
Play with the choke until the engine sings  
(Wondering when you'll get that certain kick),  
A stilted song of common imagings.  
While the oldfangled buggy, pushed with pride,  
Jolted to a motion, at times repays  
Mechanic hands, mostly it's a rough ride,  
With that Model T we drive on Sundays,  
Bumping down twisted country roads, my love,  
Where each must go who has something to prove.

## SPRING MORNING: MISSIVE

Recently  
I have escaped Legionnaire's Disease,  
lost a day, gained one,  
and learned that the Emperor penguin  
gets laid only once a year.  
I have also spent time wondering  
for whom the galaxies wheel  
and the oceans thunder.  
It has been a fairly busy spring.  
You ask after my health.  
It is there.  
I can go many lines without metaphor or moral  
to show my stamina.

I shook my head at the disease at first,  
but it is probably its own fault.  
Like the penguins  
it must have let opportunities slip by.  
As for the days,  
I cheated.  
I dropped one Datelining,  
did a double-take on the way back,  
landed on my feelings for a beat.  
As for the metaphor,  
Life is a pair of doxies  
leaning over a bridge rail  
seeing who can spit farther.  
As for the moral,  
ask not for whom the galaxies wheel  
and the oceans thunder.

After all, sailors steer  
by pieces of the one,

crossing the others,  
black-tie birds  
do something similar,  
spit in the ocean  
is a popular hand,  
spit in he hand  
much less so,  
London Bridge has fallen  
to Havasu Lake,  
days without number  
are devilish for diarists,  
Legionnaires are falling down  
the oceans' wheel,  
the galaxies' thunder;  
the day is much too bright,  
too warm for thought,  
but note, and again,  
there's no escape  
from images unsought.

## AUGURY

A fistful of entrails  
makes all the difference in the world  
at a time like this, oh king,  
and these guts say you're in trouble.  
It could be the lord chamberlain  
or – God forbid! – the queen  
that bears watching,  
but the innards indicate the stranger.  
The people themselves,  
heirs to your benevolence,  
typically ungrateful,  
screaming for your head,  
as usual,  
have a new twist to their defiance.  
They used to say it's wars, taxes  
and the recent executions,  
but now they're after  
social security,  
a 40-hour work week  
with paid vacations,  
workmen's compensation  
and a comprehensive  
medical-dental plan.  
Now, that stranger in the dungeon  
and the glowing bubble he came in –  
We all know he's mad,  
with his talk  
of flying machines,  
thinking machines,  
killing machines,  
but this segment, here,  
ties him to the current unrest.  
I believe he found an audience

before we got to him.  
So it comes to this:  
We must burn him as a sorcerer  
or offer him a cabinet post.  
Offhand, I'd recommend the latter.  
You see, it's really a matter  
of vocabulary.  
His words have found them ill  
they never knew they had.  
So let him talk awhile  
and place a moratorium  
on the penning of dictionaries.  
Drown his words in realities  
and the next time they come by  
it'll be his head,  
like a grisly lollipop,  
passing down the avenue.  
Then give it a year, I'd say.  
The people will forget the words,  
saying it's wars, taxes  
and the recent executions.  
I feel it in my guts.

TO HIS MORBID MISTRESS

Two hundred-six bones,  
held together with passion and flesh,  
four hundred-twelve bones,  
ditto,  
cushioned against rattle and stress,  
facing the future with a smile,  
show entropy's got poetry inside.

Be my Valentine, awhile.

## EVANGEL

The moth,  
seeking a gateway to another dimension  
where moths wear crowns,  
trusts the flickering door atop the pillar.  
Have I overlooked the comparison?  
You, to whom I address these lines,  
have asked for my trust.  
I did not crawl out of my cocoon yesterday.  
I came to pray; mocking, I stay.

## LOBACHEVSKY'S EYES

Lobachevsky alone has looked on Beauty bare.  
She curves in here, she curves in here. She curves out there.  
Her parallel clefts come together to tease  
In un-callipygianous-wise;  
With fewer than one hundred eighty degrees  
Her glorious triangle lies.  
Her double-trumpet symmetry Riemann did not court —  
His tastes to simpler-curvedness, the buxom Teuton sort!  
An ellipse is fine for as far as it goes,  
But modesty, away!  
If I'm going to see Beauty without her clothes  
Give me hyperbolas any old day.

The world is curves, I've heard it said,  
And straightway in it nothing lies.  
This then my wish, before I'm dead:  
To look through Lobachevsky's eyes.

*[It begins and ends,  
that's what it does,  
and then again begins,  
with tremulous cadence slow,  
usually getting me off the john  
or out of the bathtub.  
The eternal note of sadness  
is what I call it,  
among other things . . .]*

Ask not for whom the bell tolls  
and you often get stuck with a collect call,  
as I that one from thee.

I suppose it's easier  
to be a Number than an Islande,  
but I resent the use of one  
much more than the other  
and wish to remain unlisted  
though I've no objection to being mapped.

As any idiot with nothing to say  
delights in calling to say it,  
I eagerly await my diminishment in thee,  
geographical anomaly,  
if continenthood  
be the best one can hope for.

\* \* \*

Yet, while it's doubtless difficult being  
an Islande, the shrinkage does seem worth  
the effort, J.D., if other reports bear true,  
and I will keep at it.

The 17th Century having no number  
I can reach, I am writing all this out  
and would welcome any second thoughts  
you may have had on the matter,  
for it's hard (that's a little conceit)  
much of the time,

and I would welcome  
shrieking gulls, mindless surf, gutsy winds  
in place of all these confused alarms,  
tolling for, telling at,  
belling after me.

*R.S.V.P. via bottle.*

cc: M.A.

## HANDS

Where the last flag is raised  
and the last body laid  
two birds in a bush  
and one in the hand  
are equivalent no more.

\*

The sound of one hand clapping  
requires a face  
for its fulfillment.

\*

I never let the right  
know what the left was doing.  
Consequently, I castrated myself  
while opening a can of beans.

\*

A Great Big Hand  
For The Little Lady  
came in through the window  
and whisked her away.

\*

The Devil finds work  
for the idle,  
such as this.

## WALL

I would like to come and live in your utopia  
where brotherhood, sisterhood, joy,  
simple communal pleasures, each to every,  
dancing, singing, studying, sacrifice,  
group therapy, nationalized poverty,  
healthy pacifism, modern dance,  
lots of wholesome food, mass calisthenics,  
cold showers, jogging, writing workshops  
and maybe a little flagellation  
add backbone to the salt of the earth,  
so to speak.

I will build you a great long wall.  
Give me your wretched refuse  
who do not believe in all of the above.  
We will cause them to stand  
with their backs against the wall,  
blindfolded, as they were blind to the truth,  
and I will help to preserve your ideals,  
for even the best of us need protectors  
every now and then.

TORLIN DRAGONSON

Beneath my feet  
grass withers.  
Poison drips  
from my lips.

I smash orchards,  
burn churches,  
sink sailors,  
foul rivers.

I rend white knights,  
raze castles,  
gulp virgins,  
breathe arsons.

But love's my hoard,  
where gold's gleams  
comfort me,  
just like thee.

## PARANOID GAME

Paranoia is fun.  
I once thought of inventing a board game  
with that name.  
*Roll the dice. Deuce.*  
*Go two.*  
*Draw a card.*  
*Your cat has died*  
*after eating the dinner's scraps.*  
*Go to hospital. Have your stomach pumped.*  
*Forfeit a turn.*

The possibilities are endless.  
Read the instructions:  
*Watch out! They are all around you.*  
*I wouldn't be too quick with those dice.*  
*Keep an eye on the other players.*  
*Listen.*  
*What you do not hear is also important.*  
*Or see, or feel, or taste,*  
*touch, smell or kinesthese;*  
*none of the above;*  
*or all of these.*

*It is a good day.*  
*Sort of makes you wonder.*  
*Don't be the first to move.*  
*Neither a borrower nor a lender be.*  
*One of the other players has instructions*  
*for a different game.*  
*It is called Manic-Depressive.*  
*He/She is watching too, just now,*  
*but the adrenalin is rising.*

When things get desperate,  
you could draw a card.  
Or not.  
Nobody wins, of course,  
but the best loser  
is undefeated in a certain spiritual sense.  
The way out is to draw the black card,  
though it may only say "Taxes".

Something is rotten,  
but Dad's ghost on the castle wall  
is not to be trusted either.  
(Remember the stories he used to tell?)  
Offhand, I'd say there's something to do.  
But you never know.  
Keep your eyes open, your feet on the ground.  
If it feels right, don't do it.  
Watch the other players watching.

## RIPTIDE

Riptide and *foristan*. *Tal vez*, too. *Vielleicht*, perhaps.

I sometimes think of stories I have never written . . .

He has made it through the 470-meter navigable aperture  
at the spinning disc-edge of a black hole  
equivalent to eight solar masses.

(Clever computer, Anubis-like, to guide him.)

Now, telling the story,

a page from *Descent into the Maelstrom*,

as he flashes by,

he shows his alien audience

his own ship, *this* ship,

hanging there, bug-in-web-like,

upon the event horizon.

Grand final image.

(Or would photon-decay do it in?)

Didn't like it. Not really a story. Hence, nothing.

Except for that damned image . . .

Watching your own eternal doom. Cracking jokes about it . . .

One of the great pleasures of mortality, I suppose,  
is knowing that others are suffering, too.

And of writing, that others have fragments  
that drive them just as mad:

*Medusa smiled . . .*

*God Owes Me \$6.57 . . .*

*Itself Surprised . . .*

*The Cyborg Connection . . .*

"Send them an Apocalypse Card."

"Think dead thoughts."

"You have ten minutes to fall in love."

The greatest argument I know for sadistic deities  
is that inspiration comes in pieces  
and some of them never fit.

Objective correlatives are nice things to have about,  
but these are untidy scraps that almost make it,  
and could, I suppose, correlate  
if they tried just a little harder.  
But they won't. After awhile you feel sure.  
It is from their species that I learned  
the true meaning of love-hate,  
a lesson one can usually do without.  
Somewhere deep within there may be a message,  
but they hung up before I got it.

There should be a divorce-getting,  
stake-driving process available,  
a rite of exorcism for not-quite-ideas  
that simply won't give up.  
Seizing them and strewing them across the ergosphere  
may be the only way.  
But if they were to make it through  
that damned aperture  
and return to show me themselves,  
bug-like, in the web of forces, waving —

Day of Homeothermy, The Man with the Wooden Heart,  
Startangle, Cheeterwing, Chuttle and Pocketstar —  
I would . . .

Bleed upon them, I suppose,  
curse, send the tracenfeef, shiddoes and slugell  
off to the Quickwind where the Dweeble dwells  
to struff their guffs where the antiblob  
flarts before the Logrus.  
Even then, I wonder . . .  
There may be things of which I never shall be free,  
immortal as myself, bugging me down the ages,  
proof against revenge.  
My world is crowded and an alien valley.  
They sing against the closing of my eyes.

1955-60



## AWAKENING

As I watch the billion-nuanced dawn stream  
    through pages of my brain,  
Like Loki screaming back to Asgard  
    with his hair afire,  
I feel I have gotten upon the moment  
    three monsters which shall destroy the world:

My world, designed of ice,  
    looped in supple frame, gray,  
And pillaring the heavens on furled cloth towers,  
    as still as the inside of a jewel,  
Has shuddered to a sluggish consistency  
    with the crowing of a cock upon a dunghill;

The steps on a bridge, once broken,  
    heave the hateful rainbow  
        over my sea-son's home,  
As Hel, my burning daughter,  
    all wisdom and half-corpse,  
Stirs beside me now within the incestuous parabola  
    of a poorly reconstructed Faust  
        regretting a beautiful moment;

The sheet of flame has risen,  
    wall behind me now —  
        immolating cerement to better time —  
As the mechanical ankles  
    of a man who has sired deity  
        paraphrase in numbed warmth away  
The treading of a Wolf behind the icy sun.

NUAGES

Our Lady of Guadalupe  
to thee we pray  
Deliver us the living  
Bless the souls of our ancestors  
writhing in the Great Snake  
on outward fits of day

Talk to the silent  
Breathe on those without breath  
Wreath in greatnesses of grace  
Thy sun-dog and his kin

who move through sand  
in winnowings of coral  
tide by sand  
past apertures of star

Waft on high the mothers of our men  
Bless them

who pry careers of molten sun-pearl  
the open mouthed clamshells of cloud

## CACTUS KING

It has been said that no land lies so vile  
but kingship would console one's presence there;  
no spit of Hell too small  
for Lucifer to dwell supreme,  
post-fall.

But Lord! the exile autocrat  
imprisoned by such reign!  
with two-edged sword of Proust  
that pricks a will to power  
(nettle of reply from out a fading past) —

as here, most lovely Bonaparte,  
my master of the rocks,  
we dub the bowing, red and cactus head.

## TESTAMENT

Strange, that here I should think of you.  
The ashes are not bitter,  
nor the dust excessive.  
There are no trees  
to hold the three small beasts:  
fear, shame, and mocking laughter . . .

but yesterday discomfort  
fell black across this path,  
sapping seas of innocence  
I'd builded in a waste:  
diminutive dimples of darkness  
slashed shadow to prairie dog's stare:

adjudicant, still angel cast of brownness,  
preposition to fire, despair . . .

## STORM AND SUNRISE

. . . machine of day pulling taffy.

FROM A SEAT IN THE CHILL PARK

Green wrestles yellow on that pillared island,  
scuffing occasional brown clods.

## DUCKS

Landed by the bullet  
the banded angel  
breathes orison  
her final wing

PAINTPOT

. . . perpetual spa of blue  
where clouds boil and dip chameleon hue.

## THE LAST

And sorely bites the blade  
behind Cassandra brows!  
Waters mirror murder, fuse  
with care-cut faces, darken all  
about the chariot of disbelief.

They will not hear the word,  
truer than their thousand syllables'  
beauty, but bear its black fins  
wrapped in nets of apparency  
upon their choral back;

and the ever gentle mutter  
of cloth about rushings  
works wordless concordance  
with golden and double doors opened  
to blood-struck Agamemon down.

ST. SECAIRE'S

Triple topped steeples  
of brass,  
steel,  
and I forget what other —  
poking with massive  
and insect probosci —  
suck a passing cloud,  
prick to sudden star-wound  
night's most Negro thigh . . .

Ye I salute,  
holiest of vampires!  
bread of metaphor,  
being,  
and I know not what,  
in many-topped minds  
of the minder.

## ICEAGE

O  
why  
the sky  
so torturéd  
today? one says  
aloud, quick finger  
uncoiled sudden up over  
their heads. They touch at  
them then with meaning, so that  
is all there was to vision this day  
so blue and taut, that spotless lay  
under stone fingers, which the play  
of steel muscle tore brittly at  
and beat, while a blind cat  
amid the snow grew her-  
self an extra, fur-  
less tail, laid  
in cannonéd  
chimney  
lea

## THE GOD AND FRUSTRATE SHRINE

Tower and weep,  
o steeple.  
The flashing phalanx  
waves  
its ton of fist.

## THE GAME'S THIRTEENTH STRIKE

Each nettle shreds a silence,  
needling in furrows  
of forehead seeming shine  
to setting pins  
in passionate gallery.

## STORM

Ferocious moment,  
written on the eye when  
movements writhe to incandescence  
the hour,  
dynamiting sight to detour sleep.

Self-tracing, everything apart and wholly  
scribbles this inaugurated mud  
to its own exaltation.  
The sight is upon me now,  
though I lid myself,  
lapping my mind within pillows.

The glowing room,  
shameless at this retreat, pencils  
prayers of fire on my skin.

## TRYPTYCH

*Sappho*

"The moist flowers along Acheron  
open as my eyes' close.

Let me lie and call death lovely."

*Li Po*

"The terrace of darkness is drenched  
by the sun of sobering morning.  
My friend the mountain laughs  
as the Emperor bids my words follow him  
along the garden walks."

*Rimbaud*

"Purer than absinthe and stronger than love is the disease of my hand,  
wearing as it were the motions of manhood and touching to fire the  
banalities."

## NIGHT OF FISTING

Fragments of dimness cling in corners;  
center is a bonfire of flesh and time  
where rushing orients of limb  
ride hide hammers, glistening  
behind thrown turmoil;

heavy hacks pierce frenzied prayer,  
removed in gloom and stench.

The stippled Gipsy bows and wipes his nose,  
then strong, straight for gut goes,  
as Minneapolis Bob cracks  
like a brand burnt  
through, circles with a poker for the blaze,  
and dabs in dimmed excitements down.

The sultanic sentinel makes pixilated crucifix  
above the worming ember; corner moth-dances  
solicit rages of acclaim.

We lean to warm our hands — fan, stoke, draw  
up fires to height of man —  
when, from stretched throats,  
the croak of chaos  
rides in smoky quick wind  
that winds the incandescence,  
switched, bell-with, off.

The fallen eye of omniscience  
shatters with slammed seats;  
and we speak, as our hunger  
for fearful time  
fades to phosphorescence  
within the enormous dark.

RODIN'S 'THE KISS'

Stasimonial inquiry and reply  
despite stone, where have I seen thee  
before, mandala amid the eye?  
Guitars, the organ, or one violin  
draw but in perpetual anticlimax  
thy hewn pause past sound,  
and the numbers of no poetry  
embrace no thing with such staticies'  
armed coherence. Where? I do not know.

Love-locked lips forever,  
whose witnessed conversation  
secret stays, will not tell me —  
unwanted voyeur worshipper — undoing  
silences that never can be spelled.

But I, most sure, have seen thee,  
before this eye might keep,  
or tongue lisp its trilling tribute,  
and know thee in a way past memory's cant:

Something sudden here  
exclaims that arch of neck,  
and thigh-caressing palm below thy bend;  
something, like my living blood —  
flesh-blinded, swirling visionary;  
formless rusher after rushing form —  
statuizes seeing's sympathy.

## CHORUS MYSTICUS

Beginning with a snort and ending with a sigh,  
time cannot raze nor confusion alter  
this monument we rear against the gods.

## SPINNING THE DAY THROUGH MY HEAD

Nothing above.  
Nothing below.  
Here is my heart.  
Where shall I go?

Nothing to left.  
Nothing to right.  
Here is my song.  
Where is the light?

Nothing behind.  
Nothing before.  
Here is my brain.  
Where is the door?

There is no door.  
There is no light.  
Go with the song,  
Else all is night.

## FRIEND

While it does not blaze,  
always sparkles,  
the procession of they wit.

While it does not thunder,  
always grumbles,  
the stomach of thy wrath.

While it does not wing,  
always hurries,  
the caravan of thy heart.

And like a mountain lake,  
art thou a deep, cool,  
magnificent swindler of the sun.

NAMELESS GRAVE BY A NAMELESS SEA, PROBABLY GREEK

Bright air by brighter honor signed,  
and wounded things, all left behind,  
mean nothing in a travesty of sleep.

The arrows of Thanatos miss no man: Weep.

## SHADOWS

Bleak disappointments  
rage  
this coming-together-place:  
menace of sighs  
in jeopardy of time.  
Vindication and mortality  
meet on the plains of Troy;  
and though the dead forget the dead  
in the House of Hades, Patroklus,  
even there shall he remember thee,  
and this day.

But the ember does not burn backward  
to timber;  
its visible music  
shapes the air  
to heat,  
but the day is no longer.

## SENTIMENTS WITH NUMBERS

### I.

The veil you have rent  
with every strained skill  
of hungry fingers  
hid either Medusa or emptiness,  
else would you not  
ever mirror it.

### II.

The idle idols wait  
the non-idyllic day.

### III.

You are crux ansata arms  
and standing man behind.  
The arms and the man are empty things,  
  
and you, beyond ruin,  
the terrible power of position.

### IV.

Beat your way to chaos, then!  
I would rather destroy  
a library of worlds in my mind  
than build one  
I believed in.

V.

And even must the final word  
be walking,

as my blood footsteps  
now even  
my brain  
toward blacking day.

VI





## I WALKED BEYOND THE MIRROR

I walked beyond the mirror.  
I met a mirror-man.  
He held a backward walking stick  
within his backward hand.  
He offered me a reversed smile  
and struck a left-right pose.  
He spoke a backhand compliment.  
I struck him on the nose.  
"Oh, East is East and West is West  
and ne'er the twain shall meet,"  
said he as the full force of things  
knocked him from his feet.  
"True," said I, offhandedly,  
"and then again reversed.  
I offered you the best of both.  
It somehow turned out worst."  
"No matter, no matter," cried he,  
"you meant me no left hooks.  
I love you like a brother.  
Perhaps I like your looks.  
We shall embrace and clasp our hands  
at the sound of the reversed tone."  
We backed away, we turned away.  
We found ourselves alone.

## DREAMSCAPE

Graham crackers on the patio  
and peace in the afternoon.  
It was a two-piano Sunday  
under the darkness trees.  
*Lady high on the mountaintop  
let down your auburn hair . . .*  
Cathedral bells in the city,  
coffee in crystal cups . . .  
The greenness of lawn  
beneath unfurling cloud . . .  
*The notes have reached the dancer  
at the center of the earth . . .*  
*The train bearing dead relatives  
will come . . .*  
Pianos build an escalator of glass  
tinkling in the middle air . . .  
*I have heard it said  
that they will come . . .*  
Rainbows dance  
on tread and riser,  
the coffee steams in the cup.  
High in the noon of June  
a lopsided moon  
drips venom  
to the vectored eye.  
The woods decay,  
the rivers halt.  
The world falls to the dancer,  
Sunday apple,  
earthdance cadenced, Mountain Lady,  
blindeyed watcher,  
falls, silent, Lady,  
in ellipse and default —  
I heard the bells expel.

Down then like diamond dominos  
the stairway shuffled, fell.  
*Lady, Lady, let down your hair . . .*  
*The train is coming, an eye*  
*behind every bullet hole,*  
*from out the vanishing point,*  
*on tracks of gleaming bones.*  
The scapulae of buffalo  
lie in the right of way.  
*. . . in ropes of auburn mercy.*  
Sacrificed pianos  
and shattered cups  
upon the fading lawn . . .  
The ghost wind sings  
thundersong.  
*One strand down the*  
*firmament, Lady,*  
*to world awake away . . .*  
And crumbled Graham crackers  
feed the black birds . . .  
The train fills  
up the sky, mechanic  
throb and eyes  
like coded bullets . . .  
I cannot see  
the mountaintop. The  
shadow grows before  
the engine. The world  
belongs  
to the dancer, the dance  
belongs  
to the dream.  
*Dead eyes and iron thrust.*

PHILIP K. DICK

God or gods, there is a music.  
Once I thought it a stringéd thing,  
but now I know it's pipes.  
Listen as it stills the cricket note  
in the soul's dark night.  
Love is only part:

Hate in our time  
and partial mind  
may bring the soul of man to God.  
But then again, Cratylus,  
who knows? Which Sistine roof  
was Michael Angelo's proof?

Under Santa Ana's lights  
Philip Dick has known dark nights

*barrel of gun*  
*note of pipe*  
*Easter picnic eve*  
*despair koan*

and scratched these lines  
where neon glows:

Where sound the notes  
in every order,  
traffic pass —  
worlds without end —  
by.

Pipe now the last  
insomniac shephard

beyond the dawn,  
where bars of light  
hold up delinquent day.

Traffic turn left  
where fat horses  
gambol.

The world's a world away.

## TO SPIN IS MIRACLE CAT

a line of dust behind me  
dust beneath my wheels  
having lived at all  
is miracle cat  
and peace is war by other means  
said a wise old man  
the clarity of the blue curve  
overhead the bowstring of day  
veed taut the tinny notes  
of this my radio the sad call  
from the pages of a book  
are all if truth be known  
I can hold within my head  
deer on the mountain  
blackbird in the air  
the world is circle  
and movement I its center rider  
and each is something else  
by other means dust  
beneath the wheels line  
behind the car our  
paws need licking when we  
pause to sort the way  
that cat is the quantity  
the maximum quantum  
leap of dust to blaze  
of day starting with eye  
sometimes catching language  
often losing words to circle  
and movement to utter leaves  
like trees to spin  
is miracle cat



TO SPIN IS MIRACLE CAT  
by Roger Zelazny

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