

Jonathan Everitt

Fugue in Blast Zone

The clock in the hall booms eight in low bass
as a tableful of guests sit down to dine on bread and wine,
accessorized with heirloom diamonds, black brocade.

White roses, how divine! swoons one, but soon,
the dining room will pixelate by atom bomb, its platinum-laced
plates and Baccarat melting into linen by candlelight.

Chandelier bursts into snow that settles on a catered spread
of plattered duck and pumpkin bread. Eight bulbed arms
dismember, bubbles crater like dying moons.

Before the power grid evaporates, the doorbell's gong
sounds its broken Ode to Joy as window drapes
flutter, collapse into blackbirds, circle the space,

then exit the windows for the setting sun of a mushroom cloud.
Host's mouth is frozen on *bon appétit*. Futility. Each guest
might just as well carve tender paw, lift finger slice to crisp lips.

Bach's background baroque falls quiet as eight diners' still
silhouettes laugh against damask, devouring themselves,
ash snapshot of civility in shadow.

Their host had practiced to himself *I've brought you here tonight
to break important news*, but the revelation vaporizes—
a canary stilled in his coal throat.

Body Orchestration*

The concertmaster rises
to tune this machine of
machines with one bold
stroke of bow across string,
and soon cacophony of
instruments gives way
to symphony. Rachmaninoff
washes warm over the hall
as we, the sea of auditory organs,
tune in captivation to our
counterparts on stage. Call us
the orchestration synchrony.

Each sympathetic nervous
system shifts gears and cogs
between our ears until
ba-dump ba-dump ba-dump
our hearts find the same
time signature. Our exhalations
follow suit. Music's motor
triggers each chest's bellows.
Imagine what an infrared eye
would see as we blow our heat
in synchronicity. A blast. A chord.

External factors can induce
such common rhythm
in a crowd, we've learned.
It arouses one meter out of many.
The biology of a violin
can stir our mitochondria.
When the final measures fade,
we each feel it in our skin.
What would move a madman
to sink his missile through
the roof of a music hall filled
with such sweet machines?

* "Live Music Synchronizes Audience's Heart Rate, Breathing: Study"; *Newsweek*, October 5, 2023

Tarts & Vicars

“And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication:” Revelation 17:4

What sanctuary is this, sprawling private parish house in checkered floor and winding stair, candelabra licking low light on night-black cassocks, each strung with sterling crucifix, each beady Christ head straining toward the cocktail in the clergy's hand. A jazz quartet moans dirty saxophone out back as hallways teem with bishops, cardinals, priests, virgin-perfect tip to tail. But they are not alone, no not one. Aproned servants circulate their silver trays of crab cakes, quiche, plump sausages nailed to crust with toothpick. Lipsticked whores' pieholes roar, each the envy of Babylon, manicured claws tickling clerical collars to raise the dead. And which am I? In a powder room upstairs beyond the balcony, I've stripped bare. Two sets of clothes hang on two door hooks in the mirror. Black cassock's dozen buttons binding with machine precision? Or crimson velvet waistcoat and perfume to cancel out the frankincense?

*No matter what you
wear, we're all for sale. Love, there's
nothing to forgive.*

Reverse Apocalypse

Not vaporized as feared—
Atomized with frankincense,
warm smoke must for the ages
under gothic beams, glowing
glass, rows of sacred moments.

Hallelujah!

Not left behind by the right
God for the wrong creed—
Elevated armoire bursting
bright woolen vestments
royal palace prince in purple.

Hail!

Not Armageddon down from Tigris—
Eden disarmed of flame-sworded
angels banning strangers at the gates,
Tree of Knowledge swollen ripe
and beckoning every heretic.

Take, eat!

Not sacrifice, not lamb, not Son—
First supper in upper room
that serves us each a bowl of
meat and juice, hot, bread-dipped,
wine-chased, Eternal Easter.

I rise.

Not tomb or bomb or golden dome—
Cathedral of cedars, sweet incense
shaken from thurible chained
to no one, none chained,
unendurable redemption done.

Amen.