

*\*The Virginian Book of the Dead\**  
*Trevor Hoag (11 February 2018)*

*Psalm I: Invocation*

This terrible clarity

a gift?

a ring turning over

and again

Twisting to the core

A mouse rattles in the corner

Is it me?

This tiny mammal

scurrying upon

the surface of

volcanic ocean tides

magma, spun by

gravity, churned

into digestive

tracts

with tracking

systems

first ears and eyes

then blinding

The screen of life

full information of the Sun

translated  
for all, rather than  
only some  
or fewer

*Psalm II: Without Judgment*

Summations, summaries  
like chirping of the mad

Poe-born creature with whom  
I nondeclinably cohabit

billions  
trillions—all-too-human quantities  
and quantizations

but not at  
all quantum, able to  
defy contradiction  
(though dance)

and Single-story  
lines

of code—one day  
a machine will  
translate, I hope, this  
tiny illiterate cry  
and forgive me

by simply withholding  
judgement

beyond the force that  
separates us, divides us  
into subjects  
each warring to  
maintain  
its own bacterial kingdom

*Psalm III: On Values; On Crawling*

There again—

I hear it  
accompanying my prison  
  
scratching, clawing,  
crawling for life in  
every moment

O' hath nature blessed us  
with at least a veil  
of symbolic separation

or else

we'd all be mad,

*Eigenlichkeit* as animals

chewing, gnawing  
it no longer considers my presence

a threatening response

how vegetarian

how weak and bovine,

akin to most

values

we've been fed.

grass

tastes good.

Like the yellow

wallpaper

of this cardboard

institution

though whose cameo cracks

one can briefly manifest

*Psalm IV: The Arrow*

So—

it is *à propos*

to note a certain

proximity to

Edgar Allan and other

nervous Nietzscheans

lives wound tight

arrows drawn to

full length  
and held, quivering,  
until breath  
no longer sways

and stars  
fall.

*Psalm V: Death, the Question*

And now I see them,  
for the second time tonight

why is my impulse,  
first, then, not to  
fumigate, trap,  
intoxicate or  
otherwise slowly  
Kill?

Clarice's clairvoyant  
centerfold communed with  
vermin as well.  
Kissing a crushed and oozing roach.

This is where life is  
actually taking place—

Not the sick *Chockerlebnis*  
hum, the warm churning

alcoholic night  
after night  
after night

like a rat  
a thousand times larger  
more vicious

and surely carrying plague  
as apparently every culture's  
*Juden* are wont  
to do

claws on seabeds?  
anywhere sleep still  
resides  
but not tonight

not in this dim city, not  
with battering Acid in its  
flashing machinic  
veins

automation  
red and green

perhaps art is rendered unnecessary  
because so too has suffering

a world

inconceivable to any finite being  
who says I

the small  
gray and white and perhaps also  
black mouse

who takes up residence  
inside me, since that's

What, we, I, fears  
most, contamination  
by an outside

—drawing on a twisting  
inward-boring pain, traumatic  
fascist hate

isolating ourselves  
from everyone, while  
horribly  
holding them in the  
palms of  
our bleeding hands

the endless spectacle  
of watching one another die,  
and endlessly apologizing  
for being unable  
to intervene save a Like

*Psalm VI: The Sound of Shells*

somehow to be everywhere at once

(what a deflection!,

it squeaks)

where is the new Beat?

the punk

anti-productive

anti-rhythmic

palpitation

of a generation's

pen and digital

Fucking, Inc.

Try and think your way

out of this one,

(crunch, crack)

reminders of teeth

What are you chewing,

if you don't mind me

asking — as I don't

recall purchasing

anything (from) within a shell,

even peanuts



which apparently are a fried  
Southern delicacy

to be served with a  
slathering side-dish of  
assault-rifle apathy

*Psalm VII: On Memory; Or: What is a Lie?*

the rural,

rodent corners of America

—wherein, I,

as a child gazed  
and was told  
that life was  
guaranteed  
as long as you were  
good

A lie, of course—  
gnashes the nameless one  
strangely  
aware now of  
me, this  
other mammal, for the  
first time

—as I become aware of it,  
its every vermin gesture—

until following, stalking,  
only to burst beneath  
a ruby red slipper

what will  
it have mattered?

No more than  
your life or mine,

yet we scramble  
amid the piss  
and stinking vomit

of bile-burning

blackness, the numb  
unbecoming hinge  
as one  
does, where

writing appears  
a last and rusting anchor  
to some  
already distant shore

What need  
have I to state the dozen poets'  
names who happen here  
to rhyme?

None are more eloquent  
in their tragic dying as  
the little gray  
and white mouse  
lost somewhere  
far, far from home  
and peace.

Death, delightful, Yes,  
but alas,  
and alack – and other  
Early Modern already  
drivel then  
when bards knew  
it was drivel  
  
yet we lap it up with  
metallic lips  
strewn with golden  
flakes of golden  
global neoliberal shit

—that has robbed an entire  
Millennium, who stares me daily  
in the face—

and I am supposed to  
give them hope,  
with flashy applications,

distraction from an abject subjugation.

*Psalm VII: Prison Song*

Now the dog barks  
not to be outdone  
in this mammalian chorus

should I dare to translate  
after the night is done?

but when—  
when will it come?

Still, alone, imprisoned, still, with  
only animals to  
keep me friends  
Zarathustra's kin

Is it any wonder, then,  
It seems we've gone insane?

*Psalm VIII: Hot Pink Neon*

my mice friends, apparently  
frequent these openings  
and crossways,  
necessary as  
bypass  
surgery

an attempt to  
repair forty years of slowly  
burning  
As though this  
wasn't what they  
wanted all along

to be dead  
the terrible secret wish  
of every living thing

freedom from desire

Why do you think they  
so fiercely sell it to you?

death. itself  
in hot pink neon  
lights, flashing prostitution

Andy Fuckol Warhol.

death for sale.  
that's what art is.

*Psalm IX: The Kill at First Light*

At this strange silent hour

No mouse

Nor dog

Nor human sound

Sleeping with rodents

That is what

They've reduced me to — Their Justice

What else to do

to a Nordic mind fallen

out of time,

but whip fuck lie rape

break steal burn tear

all words that should

shake us still,

but have become

eerie bedfellows,

familiar ringing in our

ears,

like shells emptied

from a shotgun on

a cold Winter's

morning in

Kansas, surrounded by the

cold dry

openness of brittle grains

and sunlight

until delightfully

dragging back one's

corpse upon to feast

—How alien this holy celebration

has become.

To Eat. The Dead.