



EXHORTATION AND PRAISE

Posted on December 1, 2019 by Evan Underbrink



The Man-Made Machine

I.

Frail men, full formed but fallow,
unhallowed in hand-wrought harvest;
still, we dream.

But oh, what a mighty machine we are become!
What noble dreams dawned today,
and hereafter shall scrape sky and split atoms.

What boundless strength of sapient, what might of mind,
endless we stretch out our hand,
to grasp the sea and sky our birthright.

II.

High hollow human, great flesh golem,
made of the last men, manic in motivation,
misplaced prayers bind befouled flanks.

There you walk, wondrous idol-urn,
each arm wrought with people, their eyes glued
to cell phone screens, their bodies endlessly groomed.

See, each body finds abode in the sky-tall tyrant.
But watch the people sleep, sigh,
hold out on hallowed, unhelped hopes.

III.

I, in the still-small strains of rasped gospel songs,
in the white noise,
I see for me a small empty space
in the man-made machine;
I must fill it, or be forgotten.
And I am afraid.

For the Fleshpot Vessel, with its billion mouths,
and tongues like hairs upon its bare breast,
holds all power of bread, and homes, and names.

There is no fleeing from the man made machine,
who drains rivers and eats the dry land,
whose veins are lightning and mind of numbers,
and crushes those who will not fit their mold.

IV.

And still, I dream.

Yes, there was some oath of sand and stars,
of wine with bread, bought by some fey fairytale,
a person pincushioned to planks of pine.

Perhaps, such hopes are also man made,
and lead back again to the machine-beast,
but as my life expires before computer screens,
it is good, at least, to have some hope.

Antophon I

Father, we are your daughter,

sing to us and we shall sing.

The land lies quiet, desiring
cool dew wetting lips for kisses
winter fires reach their arms,
all flesh and fur and wings thrum,
hesitate between no and yes,
waiting for the angels to come.

Father, we are your daughter,
sing to us and we shall sing.

A virgin greets the morning temple:
soft sound of broom strokes on silence,
a bird thrills, cats look with startled eyes,
a dog barks, and the wind whispers,
“a messenger arrives, ave, ave,”

Father, we are your daughter,
sing to us and we shall sing.

The people gather to discuss pregnant things,
make pregnant choices, and the girls weep;
but for angel dreams and faith,
there is no holy family, only
broken homes.

Father, we are your daughter,
sing to us and we shall sing.

The women gather around their round bellies,
round faces, round smiles, and all is warm.
A baby dances, leaps, and a mother knows,

a bush on fire, unconsumed, carries,
light from beyond the world.

Father, we are your daughter,
sing to us and we shall sing.

At last, the sun comes, the sky breaks open,
the rooster crows, the cows low,
a child is born onto earth,
all heaven fanfares, a secret held by shepherds,
and God says, sings, at last, "all shall be well,
and well, and very well."

Father, we are your daughter,
sing to us and we shall sing.

The photo shows, "Poem of the Soul," by Anne Francois Louis Janmot.

