

# **NATHANIEL TARN**

**“OLD FRIEDRICH, SILS-MARIA, 06.30.28”**

**“AURELIA’S MAIDENHAIR”**

**FROM EXITUS GENERIS HUMANI**

## OLD FRIEDRICH, SILS-MARIA, 06.30.28

### ONE

Here now to the embraces of the mountains,  
high tower circles naked above the valleys,  
rock arms round my life. All dispossessed of  
family & friendship, abeyance from disaster.  
Was ever more than this...this total isolation  
bred into lineage, inheritance, or expectations  
regarding futures? Ever a father? mother? sib-  
lings? I remember nothing save, rising from a  
grave, assembling back his limbs, his stature  
to my eyes, a man invisible and preternatural  
calling me to loss. I see the future. For now  
however, the deep green childhood meadows:  
rioting flowers in such profusion no botany  
encompasses them all. Moment by moment on  
my long walks, I re-acquaint myself toward  
kind names, their colors gradually restored by  
this or that re-visit with a childhood moment --  
as when, for instance, I had climbed a mountain  
torrent, -- a cataract it seemed to me -- my boots  
sliding from rock to rock and each rock lived  
on by a flower as I now live on this room. Float-  
ing, free of philosophers, historians, artists &  
poets, mongrels & mongers of every discipline,  
the uncreative, the competently deathly: free  
of that whole infernal crowd. Interminable pain  
even in a ghost's limbs -- but blissfully at work  
*through* pain to guarantee my universe release.

## TWO

A plenitude of orchids – What! Orchids outside tropics?  
*in the blue-green cathedral under the northing iceberg,*  
skyfulls of flute-like, and trombone-gentians lurking  
*on walls sunk to a planet's crust at the sea's fundament*  
among the grasses; larkspur; monk's hood jockeying  
*as if you walked on sand back home in broiling desert*  
for open skies, the purple aquilegia reminiscing rome;  
*as you did, rapt and fiery, through the helling canyons,*  
the clematis -- star of the alps; buttercup gold aflame  
*never have human eyes seen this before, nor ever will*  
and globe-bloom, hoisting will to power over fellows,  
*enter the kingdom some may call of god -- but it is not*  
mustard & cress; stoncrop & saxifrage; and artemisia;  
*of god, it is of distant ancestors who paled at creatures*  
clover & potentilla; rose; iris; sunspark; meadow-saffron;  
*so dangerous they fled in panic to the closest shoreline*  
silene & willow-herb; foxglove; snowbell & crowfoot;  
*and slow, from frightful sinews of maws and tentacles,*  
fireweed; myosotis (O my Nerval!); campanula & fern,  
*shrank and moved on into our arms, legs, uprightness,*  
yarrow; vetch; daisy; edelweiss -- heraldic of the only  
*gods, i.e. our earthly selves, now worth our trouble...*  
But always a catastrophe to our own kind, so nothing  
*gained us out of that mortal sea.* And rain engulfs the  
mountains. Ah! meadows drown. *Here beauty reigned,*  
beauty alone, without a menace, only a dream of fields  
*survives -- like bird-calls heard where our last bleak*  
extinction fades away. Deep in the misting jungles  
*the race has done exploring: all the land's mapped out.*  
Mostly, the wise men say, our species won't survive.

### THREE

My room as simple as it could be, not one item of furniture *de trop*, the writing tools on desk as limited as possible to clarify a mind's intent. I work against a head in shards, eyes almost blind, vomit in throat at any moment, the fall & sink of nausea, the dizziness, the need unquestioned to crash into my mattress and float till I can parse again. My room a box among these wildernesses, a dream, within a sleep, within a death -- that last to come so soon is my belief -- but "positive!" is a last flag of this my nothingness. Death as a box within this body, room within room and far too deep for anger. I have discredited all the external causes and unsubscribed mankind to all divinities, all outside help for the atrocious misery in which it ferments. On the behalf of spirits, mankind has wasted worlds that it was given, continues trashing them and will go on *idem* until they and mankind enjoy their death together. "Consider the lily of the field" an enemy pronounced: I love my enemies! Consider it indeed and all the tribes of plants and all the tribes of animals that feed on them, consider the whole tree, the central pillar: do we not pull it down? To this proposal I bend my life here, all my activity. Had our time, could we not have prevented more disasters, worked out more cures, dominated hell, returned man/woman back into their garden assuaged the doubts and terrors of our only goddess -- if there be need of gods -- this lonesome earth?

## AURELIA'S MAINDENHAIR

All night devouring the streets of Paris,  
as if I'd never left the unforgiving city --  
city I thought I'd die of if I ever left it.  
Maidenhair on the desk. Sixty years since  
a book was written over these fronds,  
out of these very leaves, [face fallen into  
them]: they have never evolved, as this  
man has, toward oblivion despite the  
stretch of evolution. A fill of sixty years  
after such greens hallowed the writing  
desk: ready to talk. Between and latterly  
they were reviewed along the roadsides  
of the emerald Andes. But giant there, so  
large you thought one plant could fill a  
province. In that southern night, sudden  
electric eyes of *hope*, dead all the mean-  
time, opened [opened once only in the  
night], [alas for once!] and it was like a

kind of adoration, of recognition -- a thing  
I had, maybe had had, & lost in the far past?

But that immense, immeasurable *hope*,  
working on down the ages, the everlasting  
& immemorial, & seeming indestructible,  
timeless apparently but riddled yet with  
time -- it is a *lie*, no longer living -- kept  
moving only by men's insanity, aimed at  
giving another a clearer reason to his lives  
than even sun hands down in diamonds &  
in gold. She had belonged, no, not to me,  
never to me, brightest that shines the dead-  
lier, but to the other irretrievably & I could  
only yield. And since: the dying bloom of  
*hope*. But he is blind from birth on now: he  
cannot use those eyes. Hanging from some  
lamp-lighting post, gray in the bowels of no  
city but in a cruel desert. And hardly singing  
from that lost day forever into this other life.

## FROM "EXITUS GENERIS HUMANI." SECTION 1, #1.

### 11 VISITOR

A)

Today, in a passing moment, in the rear garden, sees, hidden back of *chamisa*, a golden seedling of the dead, something he had not ever planted here -- ambassador from light -- a newborn sunflower. Exhilaration. A song rising spontaneous, a song from opera rarely performed, unknown, he owes to Pyotr Ilyich and would embrace him for it were he alive. (Somehow had been most moved by those his sufferings that P. could never share. For songs of love, for melody, this man had few or no competitors). Major discovery late that same morning: no moment dedicated *in toto to itself* could be other than *joyful*. Can recognize the word that have not spoken it for eight decades? No "sitting:" with sore back, desperate legs & arms, interminable cramp & dormant buttocks (allegedly existence-in-the-moment): you call *that* by the holy name of *joy*? When care has terminated in the realm of meaning (determination to do good to animals, humans, cultures, societies); when it has drowned in the ferocious wind of wounded hope, screaming its rage out at the universe, the whole black misery (life as the preview of the realm of hell); when there is nothing left to do can count achievement in its repertoire; when all's absurd and thus acceptable -- *then* and then only, sing the melody by god, by the Illusion! Then and then only can moment and the *joy* be imbricated on each other: for why condemn off-hand moment to misery? *Carpe* you imbecile! Why not? What else can there be possibly to do and matter?

B)

That you, who filled a life heavy as lead & mournful  
with cries and curses, could suddenly love like a  
lion this dying world, this *pourriture* of time, this  
perishable race! And suddenly be seen to smile  
when asked how the hot time of day would sit with  
you, be heard to answer, it is fine, *f, i, n, e*, as if  
meaning held in such terms your state of mind, this  
was akin to “miracle.” Brought by the sunflower.  
Next a.m. visited is stalk three inches off the ground  
Flower & leaves all gone. The sunlight smothered. A  
traveling rabbit ate the show and left no calling card.



## FROM “EXITUS GENERIS HUMANI” SECTION 1, #7

### 71 LUNGS FLOATING, SLICK

i)

Vast lung of the vast earth: right lung now floating. All the indigenous animalcules rising and falling within the wrathful soup – for on this lung and its green brachiates depends duration and their genes. A viscous mass rises from *de profundis*, carried into the mouths of waiting men (slaves of the floating). No longer food-consumers. Oil-eaters; the excrement of hell they swallow, to then regurgitate for a dependent “loved-one.” Deep forests: indigenous resistance sets barbs will peel criminal snakes back from their spines, scorch them alive. The cruelty of rise and shine! So vast lung sinks and rises in the selfsame moment, with us paying the daily shifting taxes and powerlessly calling for a halt. Resistance calls a halt, flies flags in ancient capitals to warn their chiefs the time has come: thinking they’ve won a battle when they’ve lost a war. Ah Ecuador! Peru! Immense Brazil! While the immortal slick spreads further, in the lung. Paradisal birds fall headlong into it, the bat, the viper fall headlong –even the greater beasts: cats, mammoths, megatheriidae, massive heliovores still lurking in the forest mind, fall headlong to the slick. They have no other hatred deep as this, as all encompassing, those poor, small slaves accumulating wages in the slick, gathering not enough, never the threshold of enough. So hate a slime swining its dividends in distant corporations.

ii)

Meantime, in the left lung, a small and noxious pit, the price of ages rises to the surface, the bones of astronomic aeons of past lives float upward through the slick, revealing structures of a forgotten world lived long before the oil. Bird surfaces, with wings spread out, and bat with wings spread out, delicately made of dust here, pasted onto the present so that the future holds their shapes and destinies. (You see, we can insert a line of “poetry.”) Touchingly sweet dead universes of dry selves with all their friends and allies rise in a shower of scales must be humidified so that the fossils do not crumble. A spirit knowing nothing of the smell of meat rises to sing. The earth with its two wounded lungs can breathe again a while (not very long for this is finals) – but little *momentitos* so that we may remember how air used to perfume our wilderness of heart in love with sheer existence when it ran free in our free throats... and unpolluted.

## FROM "EXITUS GENERIS HUMANI," SECTION 3, NO.7

### 71 INDIVIDUALITY, SOLITUDES

Our small, low, tidy bushes of the desert: hardly can they be called by name of tree -- each one an individual, not merging in the mass, into the global and indivisible. Used to such trees now, used to such trees, unable to enjoy tall trees for long in other climates. In the same breath, a terror of our trees, an overwhelming fear of their aloneness -- or rather a division of the self into a multitude cannot be joined together in discourse or in thought. Fear of the sole, one, absolute desire they face from seed to drought (which brings them down so black) under relentless desert suns. And such as well the sight of any crowd, a dagger in the chest at such a thought as "how is, say, one thing among this crowd able all by itself from livid dawn to tarnished dusk, from birth to death, tentacles out, tentacles in, now, now and then, second by second, minute by minute, hour by hour, and day by day, hundreds, thousands of days, how can it be itself out there and nothing other in the dark, that dark -- whether of day or night -- unending dark night of the body (never "soul"), an unrelenting dark of such a solitude as no known thing, human or animal, kin or affine, parent, child, lover, friend can ever put an end to, how this great crowd of solitudes speaks to our solitude, or does not speak, most times unwilling or unable so to speak, so that we perish at the very end in a distortion can only grow, never diminish and -- choking at thoughts of its own end, sneers even at the vastness of the skies, interminable marching of the

galaxies, the furthest stars, most solitary stars, moving  
along their paths and out beyond all knowledgeable end  
horizon to horizon, orb to orb, into the definition of infinity.

The solitudes are set to grow and to expand until they eat, devour, digest all thought we know to be our own (expanded by the prophets we respect and have grown up with). The empty brains of children rattle in their skulls grown dry by much exposure to the sun. The sun, we know will harrow these poor minds until they prove incapable of any further good. *O mio ben*, the *agathos*, the good: no serenade, no aria, no song can ever bring to life again that flowerfull potential. The bulb has rotted in the earth, the earth dried in the pot, exposed too long to the relentless master planet. No matter how we move against the stars, escape will be repulsed, frontiers will never be erased, no ship will home in these dead seas.