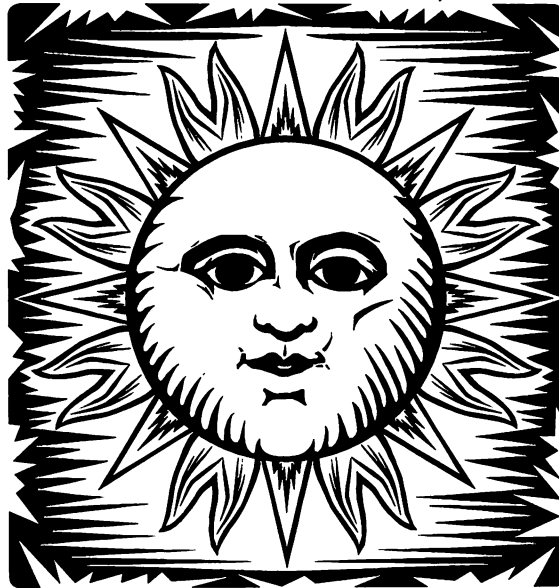




Ora et Labora

A poetic exploration of the Royal Art



by Reginald Freeman



Calcination

Blinded,
Bound and
Abandoned;

My dense and heavy Leaden body
Brought before the Great Mountain
Of the Philosophers,
I am beginning to sense that
All my light was darkness;
My truth but a hideous
Disfigurement of the Good.

Could I turn away now if I wanted?

This living mount is fed by a Central Fire.
A living font of Regeneration.
Or so I'm told.

But the fire awaiting me is not so noble.
Raw, searing, purgative
Hellfire greets me at the gates;
An arid furnace with only one purpose:
To utterly destroy the dross;
To eliminate all that is not eternal.
The air, if it can even be called that,
Is stale and stifling.
Saturn's scythe slowly slicing.
My undulating flesh flayed,
Seared and slipping from the bone.
This sensation can no longer
Even be thought of as pain.
The serpent's coil
Constricts my remains.

Rapidly evaporating.

There is no prayer here.

I am returned to my essential being.
The beginning of Wisdom.
All that is left is the
Pure virginal Black Earth.
Prima Materia.
Holy Mother unformed,
Untouched by human hands.
What mysteries hide within
This primitive Salt of the Royal Art?

Dissolution

My soul is naught but ash.
Bone dry dust, fresh from the furnace
Which may no longer exact
Its purifying vengeance.

Gentle Winds lift me up and
Carry me off toward a still, warm stream.
Submerged in this sweet solvent, I am
Soothed in the Waters of Forgetfulness.

As Jupiter extends his hands
Across the heavens, so too
Am I expanded throughout
This flowing mirror of Art and Nature.

I don't remember how I got here.
But I have an inescapable feeling
That an Act of Faith has led me
To this inseparable consciousness.

Conscious-less.

All is One here.

D r i f t i n g u n b o u n d i n b l i s s f u l a b a n d o n .

Separation

From the third celestial sphere,
The Lord of Initiation
Descends from his great Iron Throne.
With Martial intent, he thrusts his
Will as a dual-edged blade,
Upon my undivided essence.

Strike!

Clash!

Cleave the Primal Unity!

I was One,

I was None,

and now I am Three.

The God of War segregates
My Spirit from my Soul.
Sulphur and Mercury are my names,
And Salt, subdued; hidden conductor
Of this sacred Operation.
Currents flow strong in this
Tripartite solution.

Past the pillars of Solomon's porch,
Incense rises from the thurible;
Sanctified smoke carrying
Psalms of praise to the Most High God.
Distinct now are the sweet and pungent scents
Of Frankincense, Myrrh, and Benzoin.

The Wholeness in broken again.

The veil is rent!
A ray extends from the Holy of Holies,
Beckoning, as a bride awaiting her bridegroom.
This longing desire; the promise of holy union;
For this was I divided.
Sweet ecstasy awaits.
A vague memory of a Primitive Estate.
A birthright denied no more.

But alas, my reflection
In the Fiery Water
Reveals Cerberus lurking.
A stark and fleeting reminder
That the Keys of Hell and Death
Unlock the Elysium above.
But what hero will rise up
To quell the torrent within?

Conjunction

(a villanelle)

A bridal chamber veil'd in Red and White.
The Sun and Moon a Sacred Marriage be.
Behold the coming of the King of Light.

The staff of Hermes rises to its height.
The Queen of Heaven sighs in ecstasy.
A bridal chamber veil'd in Red and White.

Boaz and Jachin, pillars set aright.
The arch between them purest Harmony.
Behold the coming of the King of Light.

Serpents entwined, their bodies coiled tight.
This Sulphur dancing 'round with Mercury.
A bridal chamber veil'd in Red and White.

Sophia fallen longs for freedom's flight.
To dwell in Light, Life, Love, and Liberty.
Behold the coming of the King of Light.

The Dragon and the Eagle do unite.
Conjunction's Child restores humanity.
A bridal chamber veil'd in Red and White.
Behold the coming of the King of Light.

Putrefaction

A blood moon hints at the harvest to come;
Future fruits of Love's unceasing labor.
But the Lords of Karma have summoned
Unholy winds. Kismet's clouds swirl about,
Enveloping me like a cloak woven
Of night itself. This storm's onyx eye
Pulls at me, as a portal
Into the vacuum of space.

A gaping chasm, blacker than full midnight,
Beckons my descent. Abaddon awaits
As I plunge into a cesspool of filth.
A fog hangs heavy and low, carrying
The sickening sweet stench of decay down
To the floor of the Forest of Errors;
Where fear takes form, and depravities dance
Like dryads drunken on the blood of virgins.

Corpses embrace me as one of their own.
In this final Ordeal, I must face
The Second Death. Like Christ hanging
Upon the Cross, that crucial hour
Is drawing near, wherein I must shed
This temporal shell; this shadow of self.
The cherished tools of Art that brought me
To this moment are no longer of use.

They cannot help me cross the Abyss.
I am a dweller on the threshold.
From the brink of sanity I see
The bright and Morning Star obscured;
Venus eclipsed. I am made to drink
From the Water of Remembrance.
The bitter tonic of Knowledge
Delivers me from this infernal womb.

Fermentation

The Caput Mortem is
Severed, awakening me from
The long dark night of the soul.

Holy Spirit, Barbelo,
Mother of the Aeons;

Pregnant with the Logos of
The Unknown Father of Light;

Hear my prayers of thanksgiving,
And grant unto me the sobering

Intoxication of your
Rapturous love, that I might

Be forever joined in the joy
Of your glorious embrace.

I am a child in the womb
Of the Woman clothed with the Sun.

The lovely Virgo Lucifera
Heralds the coming of the coppery dawn.

Through this gestation, the transformation
Unfolds as the five-petaled Rose
Upon the Cross of Gold.

Distillation

The Serpent rises,
Shooting forth his venom.
Concentrating,
The silvery dove descends;
Condensation
Falling as dew upon the lotus.
Evaporation
Sets the process in motion once again.
Repetition
Strengthens Lunar potency.

Coagulation

I stand at last atop the
Philosophic Mons, between
The Fire that renews all Nature,
And a light and misty cloud.
Seven angels seven trumpets sound,
Signaling the resurrection
Of the long-awaited King;
His face ruddy and full
Of the glory of the Sun.

The Lost Word has been recovered;
The Holy and Ineffable Name pronounced.
He is the living Lapis; and
With this Rectified First Matter,
A Tincture of Transmutation is made.
Through this Eucharistic celebration,
The Body of Christ
Becomes the potable Gold.
Through this Communion, the Great Work
Is accomplished; the Reintegration
Of the Archetypal Anthropos;
The Regeneration of Heaven and Earth.
By this Elixir of Life,
I am united in
The consciousness of Christ.
Salt, Sulphur, Mercury,
Are One, this Holy Trinity.

I descend from this mountain
With a new law written on my heart.
A perpetual proclamation in
Angelic tongue, by which the
Written words of old will crumble;
Dried up shells of forgotten faith.
But my Faith is in the
Knowledge of the Most High,
And my Hope lies in
His limitless Love.