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The Body of Light : Poems

Alicia Matheny

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The Body of Light: Poems

Thesis submitted
to the Graduate College
at Marshall University
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in English

by
Alicia Matheny

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Abstract

This creative thesis explores the different facets of Pink Floyd and their music, drawing inspiration from albums varying from *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn* (1967) to *Dark Side of the Moon* (1973). Using images drawn from nature, the cosmos, and Pagan mythology, this thesis also incorporates biographical details found in Nicholas Schaffner's important biography, *Saucerful of Secrets: The Pink Floyd Odyssey* (New York: Harmony Books, 1991). There are also experiments with form in the poems, in that in many of the poems, instead of commas, there are tab spaces. Each space expresses the silence between each word. Poetic influences are important to mention as well: Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton, Walt Whitman, and Emily Dickinson. Each of their books: Plath's *The Collected Poems* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1981), Sexton's *The Complete Poems* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981), Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* (New York: Doubleday, Doran, & Co., 1940), and Dickinson's *The Poems of Emily Dickinson* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1999) have influenced this thesis in terms of imagery, form, voice, and point of view. Whitman and Dickinson have also particularly influenced this thesis in terms of tone, for there is a spiritual, mystical tone in them, and also here. One example of this can be given from the thesis with the poem "The Other Side of the Moon:" "A blinking signal from another planet, / you are shamans / of the light, / blinding us with its brilliance" (8-11). All in all, this thesis looks at Pink Floyd and their music through the lens of the spiritual, using imagery, form, and tone to accomplish its work.

Marshall University, 2007.

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Introduction

This thesis is a tribute. More than a tribute, it explores spirituality beyond organized religion and what happens when traditional faith fails to fill the hole inside. The poems in the thesis use metaphors such as islands and the midnight sun of the Arctic to describe the mystical experience and its relation to listening to music and the creative process. Further, to describe the creative process I have used erotic metaphors, as well as pregnancy and childbirth, to illustrate the creative process involved in the making of this thesis.

The tribute in question is to the band Pink Floyd—particularly to their founder, Syd Barrett, who established much of their distinctive sound and who eventually left the band because of LSD-induced mental illness. Yet, with their early psychedelic sound, interests in science fiction, and the general otherworldly, music-of-the-spheres mood created by their music, it is easy to find the spiritual with them. To me as a poet and as a fan, Pink Floyd and their music represent the power of the spiritual in the midst of a cynical society which has lost its faith in traditional religion on one hand and is beset by literalist, fundamentalist interpretations of traditional religion on the other. Indeed, religion is in a state of decay, so new images, new metaphors are needed, and some non-Christian fundamentalists have turned to alternative religions or Eastern mysticism for help and answers, and for the most part they have gotten what they have sought. Others have found help and answers in seemingly secular sources such as philosophy, literature, music, art, and poetry. I am one of the latter.

I began with traditional religion, as a Christian; I even got “saved,” but the personal relationship I was supposed to have with Jesus Christ ended up as little more than

having an imaginary friend. Of course, I'm not against Jesus: his teachings are important guidelines for human behavior, and some have experienced genuine mystical, spiritual experiences with Jesus at the center which have made them better people. The behavior of many Christians I knew and certain questions the faith could not answer, led me into my spiritual exploration and seeking. In this journey, I have had many experiences, but none have filled me with such mystical insight as my experiences listening to Pink Floyd, with or without Barrett, and Barrett's solo work as well. In each case, their music has inspired feelings in me ranging from mysticism, a sense of the ineffable, to a resultant spiritual awakening and a sense of powers beyond human control, in short, of the Ground of Being, leading to inner fulfillment and a connection to the greater power where these angels came from. Indeed, in the case of Barrett, who said that Christ is the only Son of God when we are all sons and daughters of the uncreated source?

To express the spirituality I feel when I listen to the music, I have used all sorts of images and metaphors in the thesis poems. These range from the mundane, everyday images of hospitality (i.e., serving a cup of tea) to the spiritual (i.e., traveling through the realms of darkness to the realms of light). This emphasis on physicality is acutely realized with erotic metaphors representing mystical union. The poems also comment on the poetic creative process, with pregnancy and childbirth being metaphors for writing down poems, the poems being children and the muse being the mother (or in this case the father) of the poems, such as in the poem "Children of the Light." These metaphors of creation are combined with biographical information about Barrett and the Floyd themselves, that being gleaned from Nicholas Schaffner's definitive

book on Pink Floyd, *Saucerful of Secrets: The Pink Floyd Odyssey* (New York: Harmony Books, 1991). *Saucerful* covers the history of the band, from their childhoods and the early days to the time of writing, with detailed information on their albums, the details focusing on the song lyrics and the musical style. Together, the biographical references, metaphors, and images express themselves in the poems in myriad ways and reveal the spirituality of Pink Floyd's music and how it affects me.

Organization of Thesis

Two groups of poems bookend the thesis: the first group is "The Piper Poems," which consists of five poems and analyzes Barrett's schizophrenia along with describing the psychological and emotional of his music on me. The second group of poems, "Letter to the Piper at the Gates of Dawn," is a longer sequence and attempts to communicate the mystical experience of listening to Barrett's music. This sequence uses mystical imagery referring to Dionysus, the Greek god of wine, and his worshippers, the Maenads, along with Mother Goddess and her Son imagery, which is traditionally reflected in ancient Egyptian religion through Isis and Horus, and the seventh poem in the sequence alludes to the Christian Virgin Mary and Jesus. The title poem, "The Body of Light," is the central poem in the thesis. It ties together the poems that are on either side by being about Barrett's death—his recent passing on almost a year ago. All the other poems are about life—his and my own, and how one interacts with the other.

Most of my poems make stylistic use of language that is broken up. This broken-up language could be considered modernist (James Joyce has a similar style too in *Ulysses*). With influences such as Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton, Emily Dickinson, and Walt

Whitman, not to mention Marina Tsvetaeva and T.S. Eliot, my style is generally an attempt to balance ordered lines and stanzas with a free-form, stream of consciousness poem style and emphasis on imagery. This imagery, in the case of the poems in the thesis, is spiritual and mystical, with the sources being Christian, pagan, and Gnostic imagery ranging from the Mother Goddess and her son/consort, as found in the third poem, “Letter to the Piper at the Gates of Dawn,” via Christ and Sophia, who is Wisdom in Gnostic theology.

The influence of Plath, Sexton, Dickinson, and Whitman shows in the ordered lines and stanzas and in the free-form length of most of the poems, whereas Tsvetaeva’s influence shows in the emotion, and Eliot’s (particularly from *The Waste Land*) shows in the broken up, fragmented language, mining Barrett himself. However, unlike Plath, Sexton, and Eliot, and like Dickinson and Whitman, my poetic language is mystical, spiritual, and for the most part, bright with optimism.

But the fact that the form is broken-up indicates a fissure in the reality of the world of the poems. This craft is my attempt to imitate Barrett’s solo songwriting style, which uses disjunctive, broken-up language, not to mention wordplay. These techniques reflect the Pink Floyd founder’s own state of mind, broken from mental illness and the overuse of LSD. Therefore, I recreate his fragmented mind and give the reader an idea of what schizophrenia might be like. This fragmentation is admittedly a hallmark of modernist and postmodernist art and literature, whereas most works of previous ages, including the mystical literature, were more unified in concept and presentation. This fragmentation could also be considered a sort of glossolalia, a speaking in tongues, and shows an awe-

struck, wondering narrator who has not experienced anything outside the mundane world before.

A deeper exploration of the images and metaphors shows that they involve the physical, from offering a cup of tea to sexual union, in an attempt to portray mystical union with the greater power, represented by Barrett and the Floyd as muse. In each case, they attempt to express what cannot be expressed—spirituality and mysticism, or at least a mystical sense of deity, of greater, higher powers working in Pink Floyd and their music—a sense of the sublime and the ecstatic, expressed in each of their songs, whether dealing with gnomes, unicorns, and bikes, as in the Barrett era songs, or dealing with time, madness, and approaching death, as in the post-Barrett albums. My poems attempt to work with ostensibly secular subjects and imbue them with spiritual meaning. This thesis is an expression of my attempt to find my own meaning—and my journey. As a last thought, I will share an explication of three poems from the thesis and illustrate how I have integrated the formal and thematic discussed earlier, guiding the reader in their encounter with the poems.

My poem “The Midnight Sun” (6) recognizes boundaries—between light and dark, heat and cold, north and south, and day and night—and connects such associations with music, specifically Pink Floyd and their first album *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn* (1967). On that album, one voice dominates—their founder, Syd Barrett, who established the band’s unique sound and who left the band early on. Although the poems in *The Body of Light* acknowledge Pink Floyd, homage is made to Barrett, an homage that goes beyond honor to the point of worship.

A careful analysis of elements in “The Midnight Sun”—words, sentences, even spaces that represent the silences pregnant with meaning—illustrates the speaker’s homage to her inspiration. For example, the words “light” and “dark” (9) denote the two different but interdependent worlds created by the presence or absence of light. But Barrett appearing in the speaker’s life changes the world for her, at the very least turns it upside-down:

Your kiss woke
the Midnight Sun,
making for black curtains
that break the border
between light and dark,
madcap who laughs. (5-10)

“Midnight Sun” (6) refers to the Arctic phenomenon, the summer sun which remains in the sky twenty-four hours a day. A person who does not live in the Arctic would either be terrified or amazed upon seeing it for the first time. The mention of “black curtains” (7) refers to some Arctic people who cover their windows with black curtains to block out the midnight sun when they sleep. It is also a metaphor for the mysterious, surreal strangeness of Barrett himself and the effect that the music has on the speaker. Indeed, the speaker reacts to him and his music like a blind person who has been healed, who opens the curtains to discover the continual light: “My life separated into / days and nights, / but you appeared / in my screen sights” (1-4). The words “separated” and “appeared” contrast in that they are a picture of the speaker’s life before and after the event, the first word

indicating a routine, the daily grind, the second word indicating a break in the ordinary, mundane world, as indicated by “screen sights” (4). The rhyme of the words “nights” and “sights” further suggests contrast and change. The intralinear spaces indicate a silence—a paralyzed silence, an inability to speak except in glossolalia. It is as if the speaker wanted to talk about her experience but had no words, no language, so fumbles in her attempt to speak. The spaces also represent an attempt to convey Barrett’s madness, as evident on the last album with Pink Floyd, *A Saucerful of Secrets* (1968), and on his solo albums *The Madcap Laughs* (1970) and *Barrett* (1970). Indeed, Barrett’s and the speaker’s relationship parallels that of Jesus Christ and Mary Magdalene, in that the speaker, gendered female, acts as supplicant to Barrett, much as Mary Magdalene washed Christ’s feet with her tears and knelt to worship him at his resurrection. The reason for the speaker’s attitude is the change that his inspiration has made in her life, as if she had seen the midnight sun. One gets the feeling that if the two had met in another universe, the speaker might be “Mrs. Barrett,” just like Mary Magdalene could have easily been “Mrs. Jesus.” In any case, an obvious change in the speaker’s life, outlook, and views has occurred, and she is not shy to say it aloud.

“The Midnight Sun” conveys the change in the speaker’s life, from the mundane, ordinary grind to something more magical, more fairytale-like. Thus, a simple, even blunt, feeling characterizes this poem, even in its broken form, a feeling of general excitement and joy.

Found further into the thesis, “The Other Side of the Moon” (11) is a tribute to Pink Floyd and their music. Its metaphors, mostly cosmic in nature, fit snugly with the

otherworldly nature of most of their music, as the title inspired by Pink Floyd's 1973 album *The Dark Side of the Moon* shows. The poem's Sylvia Plath-like form, shown by the ordered four-line stanzas in the poem, connects it with not only Plath herself, but with other confessional poets like Anne Sexton.

The poem opens with the title "Masters of space / and of sound" (1-2). The words "masters," "space," and "sound" are connected in that the first denotes control of the elements, which is represented by the other two. The plural of "masters" suggests the presence of more than one person in charge of "space" and "sound." The use of the phrase "the dark side of the moon" (4) reminds the reader of the Pink Floyd album while the words "saucer / full of the cosmos" (5-6) refer to Pink Floyd's 1968 album *A Saucerful of Secrets*.

As for "a blinking signal from another planet" (8), "blinking signal" suggests a beacon, a light guiding the way for a lost person or ship. "Another planet" refers to extraterrestrials, to otherworldly things—and Pink Floyd is well-known for their cosmic references. "Shamans / of the light" (9-10) draws upon shamanism for its summoning power and echoes the band's early psychedelic sound. As well, "blinding" (11) and "brilliance" (11) are related in that "blinding" makes it impossible to see for the "brilliance" of the light made by Pink Floyd.

The mention of lovemaking in line 12 connects Pink Floyd and their music to love, pleasure, and the continuation of the human race. This reference is reinforced by the use of the word "tribute" (13), which denotes honor paid, in this case, to a person, Syd Barrett, and to Pink Floyd in general. In associating Pink Floyd with pleasurable experiences, like

sex, the speaker is communicating only positive memories concerning them. However, the gender of the speaker, is neuter, so this poem, unlike, for example, “The Midnight Sun,” which is spoken by a female, could be spoken by either a male or a female.

But above all, the references to light dominate the poem, with such lines as “shimmering in your glory” (14), and “you blind us / with your million suns” (15-16). Indeed, the word “blind” (15) is used twice, reinforcing the trans-visual power attributed to Pink Floyd while the use of “million suns” denotes luminescence of a very high grade, power found only in supernovas. Indeed, “stars” (18) is used at least once in the poem, to refer to Pink Floyd and their music in a cosmic context, as are “light-speed” (17) and “other planets” (18). The result of these cosmic associations and listening to Pink Floyd’s music is the last line: “thrilling us with sound” (19), echoing the delighted screams of fans in a stadium upon hearing Pink Floyd play their cosmic music.

The poem is written in a tight, Sylvia Plath-like form, with the lines in ordered stanzas of alternating length, a four-three-four-three-four-one pattern. The use of enjambment is prevalent throughout the poem, as if the speaker had more than one thought to say and did not have enough time to say it all at once. Indeed, the lack of the glossolalia of broken English, so prevalent throughout *The Body of Light*, is noticeable here. Rather, “The Other Side of the Moon” is written in straightforward, past, present, future, linear English, with sentences presenting a progression from one thought to the other. In short, creativity and freedom are expressed within the economy of a contained form.

“The Other Side of the Moon” pays homage to Pink Floyd by using their music’s

cosmic references developing as metaphors to express a power of extraordinary, cosmic force. The use of alternating four-three-four-three-four-one lines add variety and give the poem a stable form for its thematic ambitions. With these homages to Pink Floyd and Sylvia Plath, “The Other Side of the Moon,” like the thesis itself, roots itself firmly within the related fields of music and poetry. With this, I now turn to the last poem, “Fallen (or, The Maiden and the God.”

“Fallen (or, the Maiden and the God)” (16) uses Pagan mythology to tell the story of Syd Barrett, the founder of Pink Floyd, and his rise and fall. In this poem, the Pagan myth of the underworld conveys a sense of Barrett’s descent into madness. However, there is also an element of attempted rescue, by the speaker, who again is gendered female, except more explicitly this time, in the title and the poem (“maiden”) (16). Therefore, a story resembling the Demeter and Persephone myth is told, except whereas the Greek myth is about a female saving a female, and not totally, this poem is about a female saving a male, or at least healing him from the wounds he has incurred through stardom.

Barrett’s weariness is illustrated through such words as “wobbly” (1) and “exhausted” (2), portraying a physical and a mental state of exhaustion. Indeed, a reader who is familiar with Pink Floyd and their history could guess that the addressee is Barrett himself through the use of his name, “Syd” (1) in the beginning. Cosmic references again appear, with words such as “star” (6) appearing to describe Barrett. However, the words “fall” (1) and “descend” (12) describe a fallen star—in this case, a comet or a meteorite, a shooting star. Therefore, these references allude to a person who was great but who fell

from the sky of fame.

As for the speaker, she attempts to be his savior. She describes herself as “your shadowed maiden” (15) and “your dark servant” (16), referring to her underworld origin and identifying her gender. She announces that she will “catch your torn body” (17), breaking Barrett’s fall, and offering him a chance at healing and redemption, which he has given the world, now she will attempt to heal him. Indeed, the speaker could be identified with the poet, in that she is a caring fan who has long enjoyed the hero’s music, and she expresses a wish to help him.

Underworld references appear, referring to Pagan mythology. Indeed, the words “underworld” (13), “shadowed” (15), and “dark” (16) convey the idea of the underworld as a cave—dark, a place of shadows. The only figure missing is Hades, who is not mentioned in the poem, but the words themselves convey its reality. The word “winter” (11) also refers back to the underworld, for it is the season of hibernation and seeming death when snow covers the ground and the trees are bare of leaves. Moreover, the nights are longer, conveying the idea of expanding darkness and shadows. However, “winter” is just a season, and a temporary one at that, to be replaced by spring, as the speaker’s unspoken promise seems to be when she offers her “arms” (2) to the hero.

“Fallen (or, the Maiden and the God)” conveys a message of fall, descent, salvation, and redemption (or at least an attempt at it). Like all the other poems in *The Body of Light*, it centers itself around Pink Floyd, Syd Barrett, and his rise and fall from rock stardom. As such, it offers tribute to the power of music to affect a person and undertakes an exploration of pagan mythology to renew a dead religion.

The Piper Poems

I. Piper

A madman,
You go about
Singing shattered songs,
A jester
Entertaining the king.
The gnomes and unicorns
change to ghosts waiting on the dead shore
as your mind is torn apart
by the acid flood.
That's why
They laugh,
And point their fingers,
Stiletto-sharp,
Mocking you.

Off you go
Like a lost traveler, searching
For your kingdom,
Longing for a palace to live in,
But you get

A hovel instead.

II. Schizophrenia

In your inner space,
You have become
An oblivious cloud.
Weird seas you're seeing
And dreamlands fading into
The clouds.

You've cut
Your last cords.
The world
Behind you,
You leave
To dance with the stars,
The piper
On your
Floating island.

III. Swimming in the Mad Sea

Sometimes
I'm angry
And want to die
I enter your head lonely neuron
Alight in your brain
Your shattered case
Of sharded thoughts all unquiet in the midst
Of the once-cool ocean
Now boiling
I've two prongs
For hands then
Just enough to get by

IV. Dark Spiral

Screaming,
The laughing fool
Sweeps by
With a flourish
Of his cape,
Rioting with colors,
And whispers
"Follow me," but you already know
The sheer dementia
He'll give you.

Crystal-clear,
Feeling like a sylph,
His phantoms pull you in.
He tells you so
With his song.
He pulls you, sucks you down.

V. Ghost Man

Laughing, ghost man
 In the corners.
He's rumored to be dead,
 But he breathes still,
 Waiting in
 The shadows.

As I play
 At this spinning wheel.

He's hiding
 In myth,
 On his bike, ready,
Waiting to lure
 The unsuspecting children
 To his lair,
While Fata Morgana
 Throws new riddles
 To the wind.

Gothic melodrama

Struggles to be born,
In him embodied.

The Midnight Sun

My life separated into
days and nights,
but you appeared
in my screen sights

Your kiss woke
the Midnight Sun,
making for black curtains
that break the border

between light and dark,
madcap who laughs.

A Picture of a Life

1

I look in my book there you are,
staring from the page,
a black-and-white entity

milk-skinned spirit,
your hair brunette, your eyes
open windows revealing

emptiness liberated within.
Yet a shadow
threatens you,
one that you will, tragedy

of a tragedy, hide from
to save yourself.

2

What have you lost?

What have you gained?
I do not know.
But I do know

you have found paradise
in your little garden
secluded from strangers
and their prying eyes,

and I do want
your certainty,
your desire to remain
unobserved, just a speck

on the window.

In One Ship

Madcap brother,
who haunts inner corridors
and wanders among ghosts,
We shall join hands,
scamper in the woods,

No hatred between us.
We shall go to our Faust-lab
and we shall blossom as an
awakening flower.
Then we shall exit this world

And enter these maple-thronged woods
called the Summerland.
We shall not cower before
the black hate-shadow there.
Instead our enemies shall ignore us

And hunt in fallow lands
We shall dance and sing

in the twilight,
under the maple trees
whose leaves do not fade,

Who never fall down.
There we shall live,
a starfish in its center,
the moon in its light.

The Other Side of the Moon

Masters of space
and of sound,
you lead us
to the dark side of the moon.

You give us a saucer
full of the cosmos,
expanding to heat death.

A blinking signal from another planet,
you are shamans
of the light,
blinding us with its brilliance.

People make love to your music,
a tribute to your power,
shimmering in your glory.

You blind us
with your million suns;
your guitar runs race light-speed

through the stars, past other planets,
thrilling us with sound.

Gemini

I gaze into the mirror,
And I can maybe see you,
Mad, beautiful you,
Gawking back out at me.

We could be
Brother and sister,
Locked in the same pod.

You crown yourself
with Brylcreem and Quaaludes melting
in the strobe lights,
I daydream about gardens
full of daisies.

You're my dark sphere,
My great globe
Which I could lose
My sense in,
My sanity: books unfinished, poetry gestating,

Following you down
The dream road
Of your songs,
Riding on the wings
Of your sound.

Survival

I look at you blank stare
resident in your eyes
attempt to see
the brilliant spirit
that possessed your shell.

Notice the colors
sparkling around you,
The trees
Greeting you
With their spring flowers!
But I know:
life took you
and shook the money
out of your pockets
till you were poor.

I look at you,
And I see

the empty stare, directed at me from your
reclusive, hiding body, a round sphere,
trying to forget your
bright past.

Fallen (or, The Maiden and the God)

Syd, you fall, wobbly,
exhausted...

and into my arms.
You have spent yourself,

a star racing through
the sky, bright white,

a short fire.
So you go out, burning

your long flames,
your season over,

the winter just beginning.
You descend

to the underworld,
where I wait,

your shadowed maiden,

your dark servant,

to catch your torn body,
attacked by hawks who

hunger for the light
you shine, predators who

devour the lost.

Hymn

I, broken,
 stumble, fall
 into your snake pit,
 your abode.

You wander,
 Lost in acid broken memory,
 it snatched you from
 security crowned you

Dionysus, god of madness, ecstasy,
 and suffering; in despair people
 beseech you, depressed, crazy.
 You understand, reclusive piper,

why they feel melancholy,
 captured by the light
 in the open field, like you
 So you comfort shadows

ghosts
 unwanted children
 existence itself
 moan with grief,

Crying your name:
 "Syd, Syd..."
 I'm crying your name:
 "Syd, Syd..."

A choir, a sad choir,
 singing hymns colored with sorrow
 despair green longing
 for joy.

Take us up in your hands,
 each of us a butterfly,
 and kiss us, for your breath-sound lifts
 a hand.

We will then, through you, dip our hands into the Universe.
 For because of you,

we have hope again.

Pronouncing the Name

(after Marina Tsvetaeva)

Your name violin singing
 in my mouth,
 its music my voice.
 Your name cut diamond bright,
 shimmering million facets.
 Your name three letters,
 the sound making choral harmony.
 Your name impregnating me
 with light.

Hearing your name I fly into the stars
 shimmer twinkle
 eyes radiant.
 your name produces
 a smile and a laugh of mirth,
 bell-like, from my throat.
 For it all depends
 on the power of a name your name is a pair of
 angel wings attached suddenly
 to my back, the feathers
 lifting me into the sky
 of freedom.

Your name derived from Sydney,
 meaning St Denis sunrise
 with a trillion suns blinding
 me.

Your name speaking to my heart,
 it trilling in response.

Your name a silent lullaby
 I fall asleep to dreams
 of you.

Your name warmth
 of winter fire, warming
 my body from the cold.

Your name the spark
 blazing fire
 a bonfire inside me.

Children of the Light

I write my spirit-children surround me,
born of my mind-womb seeded
by the piper,
invisible but listening to my thoughts.

Approach me,
souls made of light!
Multicolored, you blind me
with your splendor,
hot young blue stars.

Thought-progeny, you
dazzle me!
So much, so much you
amaze me,
a kaleidoscope like your sire!

I, your dam,
Shall feed you my milk you shall grow
and wax into strength you shall become
people of wonder I will help you
each word, each sentence I write,

another child is born.

Lament

Departed piper!
motley musician you arose
from white, shining English mists
to play pipes.

You fell,
broken-winged,
into shattered words.

Fleeing to your home-cave,
a mound you became,
a kurgan hiding your lost spirit,
denying that ethereal elf
you were.

Now even your body has failed,
your soul fled.
You have returned to the
garden, wild with manic marigolds,
your original home.

But remember this:
We rose to your
resurrecting breath.

Strange Journey

The elevator
Goes up,
And there you are.
Take me
By the hand;
You take me through
As the door opens.

You guide me by my hand through
The Baroque building,
Lead me through the maze
You dazzle me,
You embrace me radiant,
Lost hero
Journeying through
The inner space of
Psychedelic acid visions,
But cannot return,
Traveling forever
Through the eiderdowns
Of your dreams.
You take me through,
The elevator goes down.
I just stand

There wondering
The elevator goes down,
You stand,
Staring at me,

Black holes peering
From your eyes.

Vestiges of Light

He trudges

 Along, this fat old son
Of England.

 Furtiveness his gaze
elusive look into black Void of time.

Hiding his magic,

 he raises the walls
of his house-protection from the pressing crowd.

His true calling

 was Art—paintings his work,
which he brought to the music,
 all splashes of teatime and Siamese cats
running to the sea.

Unicorns flew out of

 his song.

However, they became clowns

 as his mind ran aground
on the shore of madness.

Praise Song

It's the word of God.
He sings, and I am
Swallowed into his voice,
Resounding of
Grimble Grumble and of
The scarecrow,
Of Matilda Mother and of
The unicorn
That he's riding,
High up in the celestial sky
from he has descended where.

I want to join him,
To ride behind him
On his unicorn,
But I know
I cannot come,

So I just remain
On the ground
Watching him
As he disappears
Into the sun,
Leaving behind
Glittering magic dust.

The Court Jester

My mind
is fertile anything
can spill its seed,
something would grow!

I court
Clowns, jugglers,
Madcaps, jesters,
Happy people all!
Come to my ancient castle!
Play! Entertain yourselves!

Dance! Sing!
Laugh! Jump!
Tumble! Juggle!
Entertain me!

The Madcap is
The king of all madcaps,
And as such
He is my favorite.
Once he was great;
He sang, the wind in the willows,
And played the pipe
At the gates
Of dawn.

The Madcap laughs
insane crazy
I feel
the need to muddle on,
Go along
With him I do,
from him into me,
the jumbled-up mess

of his mind.

Resurrection

There he is,
S.C. saying,
“I am the Resurrection
And the Life”*
 before his last gasp,
his head sliced
 from its seat
By a quick, sharp blade.

There I am,
A.M. saying,
“I am the madman’s
Soul-sister”
Innocent girl, not knowing
Whether my words are foolish,
bird droppings
From a warm tongue,
 quick and long,
Fraudulent in its claim?

Making up birthrights,
Rising anew from the grave
Of my ignorance,

Hoping for the story
To begin
And continue...

**From A Tale of Two Cities*
by Charles Dickens

Bilboesque

Goodbye, Mama,
Don't cry for me.
I'm with someone,
A piper-wizard who
Summons fairies with
His song.

To slay the dragon
I'm going off,
To free his booty,
Golden crowns and
silver swords, encrusted with sapphires
born of blue fire.
The Dwarves created these things

But the dragon stole them
For his bed.
But when we are done with that foul reptile,
It will be free.
Then everyone can take a sapphire, a sword.
I, too, will give you
A diadem of gold.

So don't cry for me.
I'm going off
With the piper.
He'll lead me around
To the corner
Past the grazing cows
Into the magic lake

Opening into his world.
So don't cry for me.

The Challenge

Flaming man, you woke me up
when I lay dead.
Now another pulls my shoulder,
demanding allegiance.

Dark, like you,
he can bend reality
even further than you could,
twisting the minds of people

into perversion and
away from light,
towards evil thoughts,
towards lust and murder.

Syd, protect me from
turning away.
Point me at you magnetically,
like a compass towards True North.

For you will always be
my Firebird,
when the day ends
and the night ushers in

the dark powers,
like the Master of Reality
that I just mentioned,
bright shining light.

For he drives me to
poisoning my family,

killing my friends,
as he offers the wine cup of
transitory pleasure,

in exchange for my soul.
I admit I have

accepted a drink
from him,

but he has not
drowned you out totally you whisper faintly
in the back of my mind,

you remind me of the truth,
in spite of his lures,
offering me the world

His temptations mine
if I bow and worship him.
I am almost swayed
by the skirted man's promises,

but inside they are lies

that would run me aground
if I followed him I beg you, piper,
help me resist him

until I am fully restored
to you storms of adultery
cloud my brain

he's netted me with his blue chiffon trapped me with his
mouth, snared me with his black gaze
Help!

Need my vision clear and focused
on you,
you solely,

no more of his dark suggestions
infecting my mind,
leading me to sin he is the eternal grave

from which no one returns,
unless they meet you.

In the Underworld

You I see
in the wombdark cave;
its limestone icicles
hang from the ceiling.
You sit alone,
your eyes vacant.
At me and through me

eerie light glows in
your brown hair,
your gnome-likeness delicate
in shape.
I want to approach you,
and embrace you,

comfort you in your lonely sorrow,
happiness unknown to your memory,
my arms a circle around your body,
reminiscent of a childhood pair of arms:
your mother rocking you to sleep.
There we shall remain
until the winter ends.

Then we shall go to the
pond at the top of the hill, the cows
ignoring us, and we shall dance
in celebration of the rebirth
of spring the promise of
a new year from the old,
gone with the cold
and the melted snow.

Biography

I feel like the Crazy
Diamond sometimes,
When I'm lazy
Like Cheshire Cat many times.

He saw things
In the darkly lit globes,
Like Nostradamus for kings
Predicting their deaths.

But his visions
Were in the mind's eye;
First joyful gnomes running by the river,
They became tattooed brains.

He jumped to strange
Quickly, a light-speed change.

About "See Emily Play"

Love:
a red heart burning
to the palest shade of white-hot.

*

*"Free games for May,
See Emily play..."**

With your dream-eyes,
you glimpsed her:
a girl with the loveliest smile
on her blushing face.
Was she blonde, hair colored
Marilyn Monroesque?
Was she a redhead, complete
with freckles?
Or was she brunette, like
you, the dreamer?
Like me?

Did you dream me?
Or did I dream you?
Blue seas, white clouds...

*

Her smiling figure vanished
when you woke up,
a misty ghost whispering her name:
Emily.

*Lyrics from "See Emily Play"
by Pink Floyd, and written by
Syd Barrett.

Crazy Diamond

Syd, you painted rainbows with your voice,
your light made flowers spring up.
your friends were driving one night;
they left you at home

your light made flowers spring up,
mystery reflected in your eyes.
they left you at home.
the girls became maenads when you spoke.

mystery reflected in your eyes,
ecstasy was your way.
the girls became maenads when you spoke.
you were not just an artist, you were Art.

ecstasy was your way,
as a crazy diamond you glowed.
you were not just an artist, you were Art.
I tremble with joy when I hear your name.

as a crazy diamond you glowed.
your friends were driving one night.
I tremble with joy when I hear your name.
Syd, you painted rainbows with your voice.

Magic Spell

Oh, Syd, you who saw people on the ceiling,
who stared from vacant eyes,
who wore high heels and lipstick,
who was eaten by the rock 'n' roll machine,
you have snatched me
from my ancestral home.

You have eaten me.
Now I am the devoured one,
wise and magical, like you.
I ride on your winds,
your song carries me
around the earth.
The sun and the moon shine together
to your voice,
the stars twinkle brighter
when you sing.
Your mind fissures, and the madness
arises to life.

The Severed Cord

Before I had the connection your spirit
within my body,
whispering sweetly to me,
yet quiet and still,
of other worlds,
green and blue,
their million suns shining
upon them,
moons following them,
pale yet bright reflections.
In your defense I spoke to the courts of public opinion
I testified.
I prophesied for you.
I was carried
in your talons there was joy in your wings.

the cord has been cut I am stranded
on a lonely island
where everything is hostile
tigers approach me
blood in their eyes it was an accident
that caused this
can you fly down

and save me
before I am eaten
and bones are all that is left
of me?

Flying

Go, I go bid.
I fly like Syd.

I find no love.
I fly like Syd.

I see much hate.
I fly like Syd.

I lose my bet.
I fly like Syd.

Fly not sane.
Alicia, fly like Syd.

In Search Of...

I plunge
Into earth
To drink
Burning core,
Hot heart
The beating contradiction,
Breathing life.

I've been scared
To jump
With both feet,
For fear
I'd melt.

Boiling,
 Roiling,
Burning,
 Churning,
Turning
 mess,
Turmoil
 and
 delusion

Shattering
 you
 into
 mirror
 shards,
 reflecting
 me.

Elysian Night

Ah. Ah.
Ah, piper,
You are
Truly mad,
You want to dance me
To Elysium,
Where you love
To visit
And spend
Beautiful days.
You want
To steal me
From the eyes
Of the world,
To find me
In a
Glass box.

The Body of Light

On earth, your body was flesh
 supported by a framework of bones.
You breathed clouds into the sky,
 And they floated over the world,

Like bubbles from a child's summer mouth,
 Covering both outer ground and inner space.
But now, you have ascended
 to the heaven with its white sun,

Never extinguished.
 Now, in place with the body
of failing matter,
 you have a body of light.

The Piper and Me

The piper and I
Explore the green forest, while

Elusive elves pop their heads down
From their tree-haunts to glimpse us

Walking by.
As we pass, they greet us with a soft “Welcome,”

And a star of realization catches my eye.
I suddenly think of

Not being in America {Mundane City Halls
and gray streets weeping car-tears,

Smoke exhaust breathing into the sky }.
I guess what he represents—

Rolling Cotswolds, magic megaliths and dead dolmens,
Silent sheep grazing, their lambs at the teat—

Calls up singing fairies in my heart,
And I escape into another universe.

Ordinary Day

I walked
Down the street I saw
A man,

empty eyes,
puttering along the sidewalk,
muttering to himself,
crescending into a rant.

I thought
To join him, to walk with him,
But something
Stopped me.

There was a disturbing air
About him,
Disquiet distemper
In his mind,

a madness.
So I did nothing,
But glanced
And went on my way.

In The Presence of Memory

I look in my mind's eye,
And I see
You, in your Summer of Love robes,
In your psychedelic garb;
I look through you,
Your looking glass image.

You were a failed messiah,
Who tried to bring up
The world
Through your Art
But was burned at
The black stake of fame
Until nothing was left
But a skeleton amidst ashes.

I see you,
Your dry bones
Tied to the burnt palisade,
And I want to put clean,
warm, living flesh and hair
Belonging on you and those
Dry bones
Again.

But the only thing
To do
Is tell your story,
So your extinction
Won't occur.

I am obligated
To mummify you,
To wrap you up in bandages
And pull out your brains through your nose
So that you can be eternal,
And not truly dead,
For with each word retold,

You breathe again,
Resurrected.

Gratitude

“Help!—”
You arrive
Just on time.

Threatened
you have chased them away.
You offer a hand to me.

I grab it holding you lifeline
From night-blackness to shining sunlight
I return.

Because of you
No longer helpless
cold street

Of the night-mind.
You have saved me, piper
yet again

Dreaming

Faced with a problem,
I run to you.
blind with terror,
I call your name—

“Syd, Syd!”
from inside your voice
answers—
—”Do not be afraid,”

shed my fear.
go to sleep at night,
you are there.
You visit me in my dreams.

You show me
Paradise
you are a native there

compare it with
This world,
find physical reality lacking.
I ask you:

“May I fly away with you?”
you reply:
“Not yet. Not until you
Go to sleep forever.”

“When will that be?”
—”Not until the time approaches.”
accept my fate,
Which is to wait,

Wait until old age has
Claimed me, and then,
My spirit, forever youthful,
You will release.

In Defense

Some would say: "You're crazy!"
Others would say: "You're beholden to a man!"
Yet a few more would say: "You hold
very little to reality."

you are luminous light,
I shine bright from inside with you.
All my critics can open my breast
and find you, my heart, throbbing within.

make me moan with longing,
desire slaked by the pen—
fill me with yourself,
spill your seed within me,

impregnate me with thought!
I give birth to poetry.
breathe life into me, piper,
and I shall live to write.

In your humanity,
you were not perfect,
but, no one is.

After the Resurrection

Here I am,
Lost.
Nothing to say,
Nothing to lose.
I've been drowned
And risen up
From the dead,
Alive, but strange,
A hint of Persephone
Attached to me,
The carrion stench
Of death.
I play you,
Marooned.

A Poem for a Piper

It's as if
You never were.
What's it?
The wheel goes by,
Measuring the days
And the nights,
Casting the die of human fate.
Yours spun
Out of control,
And fell off
Its pivot,
Collapsing and breaking
Into shards.
You remained,
Shattered inside,
Your watch
A broken clock
Whose shattered seconds
Still sting...

Confusion

You are like Sydney Carton,*
Who died for
Charles Darnay,
Or are you like Mad Syd,
Who was eaten by
The predator insanity
Like a robin
Caught and devoured
By a cat?

La Confusion

Tu es comme Sydney Carton,
Qui est mort pour
Charles Darnay,
Ou es-tu comme Le Fou Syd,
Qui est devenu
Malade mental,
Et qui est tombé
Comme un avion
Qui est oublié
Comment est perdu
La joie de la vie?

*Sydney Carton: A character from Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*. He died on the guillotine in place of French aristocrat Charles Darnay.

Epilogue

I'm following you there,
To your crazy heart,
You crazy diamond, you.
In the aftermath of your life,
You stumble around,
And your footsteps leave
Breathless onlookers—
“It's a ufo! It's Syd!”—
Looking after you, eyes staring.
Others could
Express you
Better than I could,
Summon you up from your song,
Especially your comrades
Who cry out
To you, begging you
To come home.
So I'm following you there,
To your crazy heart,
You crazy diamond, you,
Flying blind,
Can't see where you're going,
So you drop
In the chasm,
Icarus incarnate.

Hades

There's no one
To catch you;
You have fallen
Into an abyss.
Now you loiter
In the dark,
Hiding in
The caverns
Where brimstone
And doom are made.
Frustrating journalists
With your people on the ceiling,
You command
The demons
Of your delusion
To go forth
And multiply,
And make
Not gods,
But monsters,
That, like their parents,
Whirl like smoke
Out of
Your pipe.
One puff—
They appear!

Shine On

Oh, Syd, when they deserted you,
your Floyd, your band,
the world shifted like sand,
and fell apart too.

They did not know this,
but you would linger,
the unearthly singer,
and they would miss

Your abdicated mind,
Lost in the woods,
Trapped in the binds

Of madness majestic that
Gave you mercurial moods.
In short, you lost your hat.

The Journey

We hold out our hands,
(How many people can form rock bands,
Like you?), pull up
The deadened psyches like a cup

With tea in it, ready to drink,
We give them their thoughts to think
For themselves, freeing them
From the sleepless prison built by him

Who would destroy the human race,
So he kidnaps them to a space
Empty, shouting "Obey or die!"
Offering certainty for the buy.

But you you woke me with
A kiss; you did not carry a scythe
In your holy hands to kill
My being, or a shovel to fill

My grave for me to dig first.
So I trusted you I almost burst
With perfect love and perfect trust,
and a slight touch lust.

I travel with you,
My body following too,
And you teach me lessons in peace,
Every part, every piece.

Communion

I see myself
inventive distanced
From myself
in the corner
I watch myself
Riding, riding

Rubbing myself,
Naked, on top,
I quicken
I rise
I come.

orgasm throughout my inner sanctum
you come
inside me,
all over me,
drenching me
with your white milk,
your seed.

Bathe me!
Cleanse me!
Wash me!
For I'm dirty, grimy
with hateblood, violencemud.

Take me!
Enter me!
Fill me!
Save me!

Letter to the Piper at the Gates of Dawn

1

They say you have hidden yourself
quiet seclusion from
the world occasions present
an intrusion into your space.

But I believe that the one
in that silent darkness
is not you you are somewhere else

Some say that you came here to America,
Some say you married,
Still others say you died.
If you did come here—

And I know you did—
I welcome you.
I make a cup of tea
for you to sip, spreading

Its gentle warmth through you
on this winter-cold day.
I sit at the kitchen table
drinking tea with you.

If anyone crucified you,
I was not among the tormentors.
If anyone condemned you,
I was not the judge.

That said, you are the
friend I share my coat with,
lighting my straight road,
so I can see.

2

You are mortal,
You will die someday,
If not now, then several years away.

An everlasting spirit,
You will never fade into darkness;
How can you, psychedelic you,

Fall to an eternal grave?
Syd-a god in disguise,
I can glimpse you standing

On a beach at the end of time,
Persisting in spite of flesh;
Even then, outlasting the moment

Of final death.

3

My psyche you exist alongside
My own thoughts speaking mysteries
Words of love,
Bright colors flash.

Born of the Universal Mother,
Syd, you were, at the beginning of time;
Her favorite son, she granted you
A creative spirit.

Reality was born
In all its incarnations.
We walk on the solid earth physicality an
Illusion

Hiding the authentic world
Of spirits ever-green forest where
The leaves never die.

4

Great piper, sing forever
On frozen record,
Your words captured sound.

Like you, I write my thoughts
On paper they remain
Used by others

Open to the world.
Unlike me, however,
Your voice rings

On and on, poppies, cornflowers, roses blooming
Red, blue, and yellow.

5

(After Marina Tsvetaeva)

To the President, the White House,
To the cow, her calf.
To the chick, its egg,
To the cave, its darkness.

To the sleeper, dreams,
To the lover, the beloved.
To America, the Beats,
To me, your name.

6

You seize me with the urge to write.
My days think of you,
My nights dream of you.

Therefore, I speak.

Your name—Syd Barrett—is the
gentle moon watching over
the quiet night, for with

Your light people dream
by cats wander their eyes glow
with you by night dark.

They long to touch you,
but you are far away.

7

Creator of phantasmagoria, you
send Maenads dancing. They fly in madness

towards you, the center
of the unseen, the painter of music.

You appear to them
in visions, where you speak

prophecies, and they circle together, spinning
wild around you.

8

You made rock 'n' roll,
Sending it to cosmic height.
You touched my soul
The first time you were in my sight.

I since have been awake
From my previous sleep.
I shall, for your sake,
Make the unforeseen leap.

I would give away everything—
My money, my possessions, even my life—
To have the something
You give without strife.

I see my wall,
But inside I see you.
Lighted by Sol,
You blind me too.

The Dawnkeeper

Brown hair waves crown him,
his violet eyes shine stars,
then gape a black hole.

His mad stare pierces my flesh.
He searches my heart for sin.