

## E. D. Blodgett / BESTIARE

### 1

Music is naked, it wears  
the rain and stillness after rain.  
Music is grass  
of no colour,

the wind where grasses move,  
ascetic, disappearing against the ground  
returning, grass moving,  
touching without touch,

its giving up a gift.

When Francis from Assisi spoke, the birds  
as one removed their music from the air,

the wind fell, the little world awed.  
When Francis spoke, he spoke of how we are—

nothing's children—being what we breathe:  
they did not hear the words, but heard wind

if one should speak the wind. And when he raised  
his hands, it was not hands they saw, but trees

that they had touched. But how they marvelled most  
to gaze into his eyes: for birds who fly

where the seas flow, it was to see them all  
exposed, the last treasures bared, a sea

of glass, beauty fathoms below, the weft  
of fish, the sound of their wakes untranscribed.

Francis, your eyes are fish, deep pools  
of fish, their food the sun and other stars.

Is this the bare  
translucent place  
where the least air  
leaves its trace,

absence where flute  
and timbrel play,  
the music mute  
and far away?

And what does Francis  
hear, his eyes  
the orifice  
where earth and sky

duet and dwell  
in harmony,  
bright bagatelle  
of agape

and absent friends?  
Where do you stare,  
to what ends  
of music's spare

start in space?  
Tell me, Francis,  
is this grace,  
the genesis

of song to see,  
the place where I  
may come to be  
within the sky

beside the sun  
and evening star?  
Of music one  
chord we are,

you, Francis, and I, the birds you tamed,  
 and other beasts that once Neruda  
 turned to word—his birds consuming night,  
 his pigs that hold dawn in the brilliant air,  
 his fleas, ancient and Sanscritic—one

ode of elemental joy to speak  
 (Neruda who wanted to converse with pigs,  
 Francis who marvelled when the birds became  
 a cross and flew away, and I who gaze  
 upon the world turned to zoo) and say

the metaphor of music is the place  
 where pigs and fleas, spiders, birds and snails  
 become one, singing where Francis passes  
 by, and learn where they begin—falling from  
 the mouth of God, chanting for each bird

all the variations that they  
 will need to know, then to fall mute.  
 So the songs that pigs and whales recite,  
 and so mere pigs, polyphonies  
 transcribed to mud and then returned to where

fugues originate. The metaphor  
 of music is the holiness of bees,  
 the metaphor of music is the pig who speaks  
 the way Neruda speaks, the metaphor  
 of music is the death of whales, the death

of every elephant, the metaphor  
 of music is the word that Francis spoke,  
 singing when the war was done, of all  
 his sisters—moon, earth, water, stars—  
 and all his brothers—fire, wind and sun.

But Orpheus—the trees stand  
 forever rapt, their leaves refuse  
 to fall, the wind sighing and  
 the very birds bemused—

Orpheus, this elegy's  
 for you, your body everywhere,  
 your head within the Po amazed.  
 I think we breathe an air

charged with Orphic remains, a rain  
 of Orpheus, pianos that play  
 where the wind strikes the trees and then  
 desists, funereal sighs

of beasts entranced. Orpheus,  
 you never sang but wept: I hear  
 the earth, its crying *sparagmos*,  
 the tearing of the air

your one song. Wherever you sing,  
 the rain is blood. Orpheus,  
 the docile beasts he tamed, this song  
 a dirge for each of us.

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Music is synapse, somewhere between its end  
and where it takes its rise, circumscribed

(snakes burrowed in glass, bears in pits,  
allegories of birds, blood congealed).

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Francis stripped:  
the war with Perugia,  
Egypt's slaughter,  
crusades failing,  
the song of Brother Death,  
a cell on Monte La Verna,  
blood,  
a painting by El Greco,  
an entry in a dictionary.

The image of music as holiness:  
 it gazes  
 into itself, one  
 note an eye  
 that seeks the sun—  
 cosmic lullabye.

The image of music as silence:  
 its absence  
 a snow that drops—  
 I do not know  
 where music stops.

The image of music as closure:  
 its composure  
 the small death  
 of snails—  
 my breath  
 fails.

The image of music as cantico  
 for pigs: *do*  
*re mi* it sings—a scale  
 that has  
 no tale  
 but as.

Think of music blind: it never saw  
 the sun, nor saw the place  
 where fish descend. Music is

meditation's counterpoint, the leap  
 of music making light, a light that only  
 the blind behold, an absence that

the wholly naked wear. Come:  
 I have  
 no outside.