



JONATHAN DAVID LITTLE

ANTIQUE SONNETS



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ANTIQUÉ SONNETS

PERSONAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL

FIRST SERIES

Tillet Press



Poems of the “Picturesque Archaic” School

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ANTIQUÉ SONNETS

SONNET (*Shakespearean*) on the engraving by Albrecht Dürer

I

MELANCHOLIA I

(TRISTIMANIA)

Restrain Mem'ry the phantom seas we feel
Until flood waters rise, to lap, and seep,
Then urge echoes once drowned again appeal
And call internal ghosts to make us weep!
All wind the spring that snaps our talk with Time,
To fling our souls into another sphere;
Saturn's dark cloak there clarify some rhyme
Or chime soft music in His ringing ear.
Waves full must break, then dying lie serene -
To seek through birth an end to awful Hell;
Mysterious law that fashions gold from spleen
And wills our Lady concoct such a spell:
 With love She'll plunge us in the dreadful mire,
 Her purpose sweet - to aid the versifier.

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SONNET *(Spenserian) upon visiting Milton's Cottage*
II

INQUIRING OF MILTON

("They also serve who only stand and wait.")

From great stillness I came forth in Silence,
Lived largely thus, and so await my end,
Granted at birth strange properties of sense
As Janus 'twixt two worlds where fates suspend;
My sprite - wingless, unable to transcend,
Cassandra-like and paralysed - observe
Our ancient shrines decayed, staid speech unkenned
On God's retreat: mere relics thoughts preserve.
Impassive age when thousands blind may serve
Brave Science striving valiantly for proof
While few still wait, deprived of heart and nerve
In circumambulation of self's truth.
What use to act in neither of these planes
Now none more fight in Time's crusade - who gains?

06/99

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SONNET (*Spenserian - cyclical*)

III

THAT OTHER WORLD

If insight's right to shun all transience
So that reneging on our worldly pact
We strive instead for sov'reign permanence,
Should it surprise that madmen be attacked?
Rejecting compromise martyrs exact
One strict ideal - and must encounter strife:
To find each moment's prime; to counteract
Regret's incising pain, existence rife
With those surviving amputation's knife,
Whose pallid sickly countenances led
Us to this pass. Will dignity brook life
From context torn, tread free among the dead?
Some do their murdering through lack of sense,
While others - worse - choose cold indifference.

07/99

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SONNET (*Petrarchan*)
IV

THE GHOST STORY OF REALITY

("Capitalism is the ghost story of reality.")

Here lies ONE LIFETIME set against the Mean,
Whose pressing mass became harsh punishment
Throughout bleak years without encouragement -
A minor figure from an age unseen;
Carved block by block, with tears the sole machine
For chis'ling features, like some dissident
Perfecting ev'ry epoch's monument -
Who needs that, now we sell wholesale morphine?
Where Entertainment rapes hearts to supply
The sum of our experience quite fulfilled,
Once-precious gifts will surely pass us by:
For if it's true that deities can die
And architects of stones are to be stilled,
Then so must Art, soul's handmaid, ossify.

09/99

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SONNET (*Petrarchan variant*)

V

NOLI ME TANGERE

Life is an exile and must run its course:
So we abide the with'ring of delight -
Exist by proxy through diurnal blight,
Renouncing dreams of fiery intercourse.
Can hearts endure drab, comfortless remorse?
Think then, when you hear screaming in the night -
Before rage set our smould'ring past alight -
What quenchless pangs grant melded flesh divorce.
So many ashen images disband,
Departing each on tracks misunderstood,
Though vapid fools maintain all dramas should
Resolve themselves into a single strand,
Not spin out whirling tone poems of discord:
Such is the end our whole life tends toward.

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SONNET *(Spenserian variant)*
VI

CONQUEST OF HEARTS

Regret is not a word to be indulged,
For fear we may impart some icy twist
To situations previously dismissed,
And outrage sullen bones no trace divulged.
Though echo's remnants tunn'ling deep assist
Those sallow forms lit by a gaseous sigh
Down mines bereft, but for the muted cry
Of opportunities so often missed,
Why need maimed corpses ever see the sky?
Who heeds old scars when healing skin contrives
To hide each mark - as scorpion's sting deprives
One swollen sac of mass, which might thereby
Encapsulate the grief of all our lives,
Not vent the tidal race wherein loss thrives?

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SONNET (*Idiosyncratic*)
VII

INDUSTRIAL FASHION

In manufact'ring forms of nameless grace
Minds merchandise a goddess of the new,
Then coach the populace - her retinue -
To abase themselves within lust's market-place.
And now they own that universal face,
Which earns gross praise as fitting, just reward
For looking-glass desires few can afford,
She'll tempt dumb clones with clothes most do disgrace.
Such fame rests on an advertising board,
Held vice-like, gripped in fierce, admiring thrall:
This icon of the global shopping mall
Whose life-blood shan't appease that hungry hoard.
So paste her face onto a smooth, white wall
And sleep the sleep of traitors, smoth'ring all.

01/00

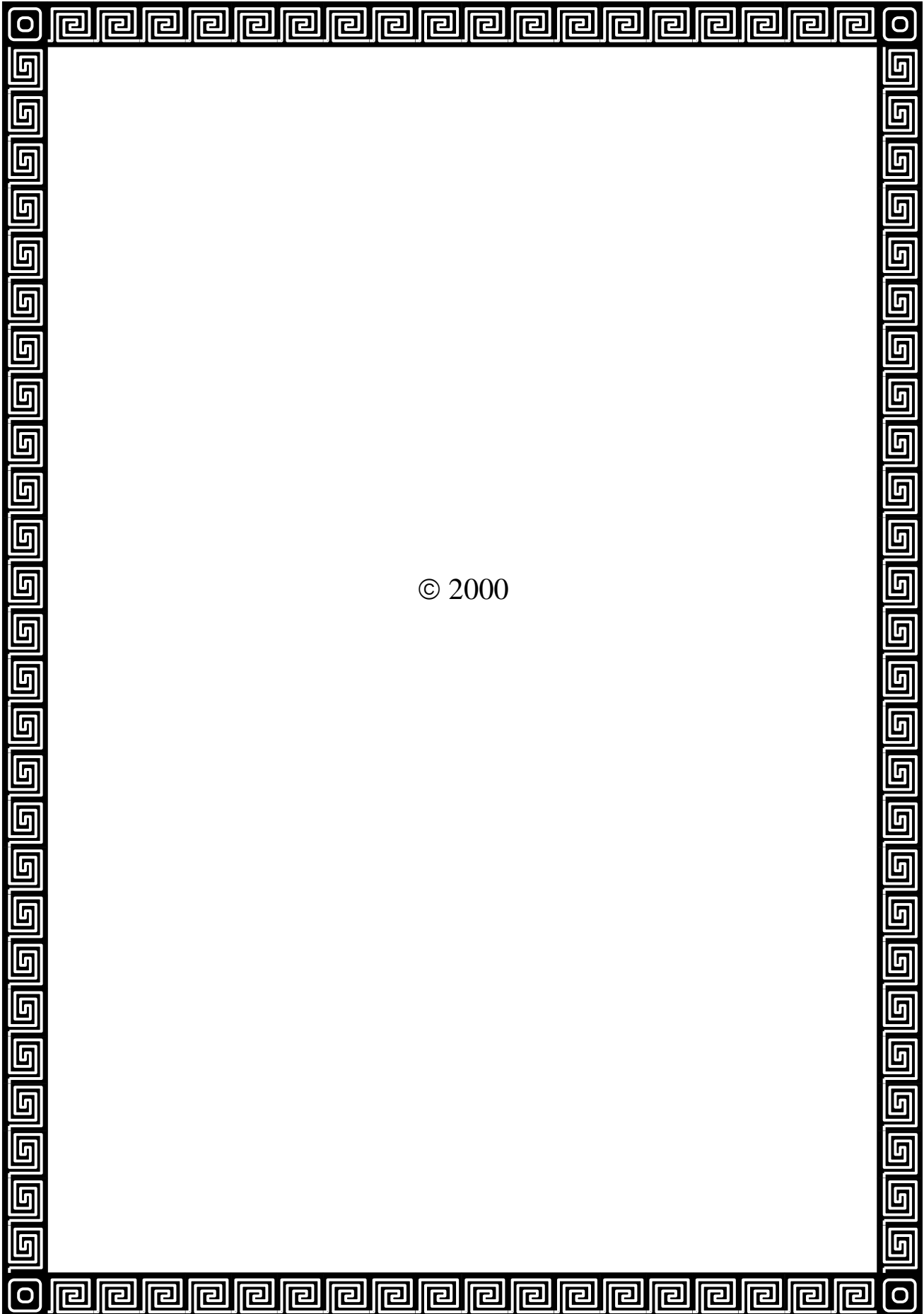
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SONNET (*Petrarchan variant*)
VIII

**ADVICE TO ONESELF;
OR,
DIVINE HARMONY**

Proportions of existence soon are lost
When private aims recoil from public sight:
Yet how without thought's solitary flight
Could we assuage these shock-waves insight tossed?
For once our social self is wrapped in frost
Fresh atmospheres invade that chilly night
In which rekindled freedoms of delight
See charmed recuperation's threshold crossed.
 So fly the mind's asylum like a kite
 Against the temper of the age embossed
 In weary volumes which blind crones recite
 By poisoned pools before each year's twilight;
 Such would comprise remembrance' dearest cost
 Should not songs born in rev'rie waifs accost.

03/00



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