

FOUR POEMS



Peter Rose

THE MELANCHOLY GOD

No protection in a chic space,
reality stark for a blue proscenium,
music formidable in its royal box,
angled view and tanglement of wire.
Behind the players, behind memory
and its exiguous props, Botticelli's
beauty stares in her scallop,
survives calamities of rhetoric,
the hollow in the audience
equally ineloquent. The blood
is false, the mind a very opal.
Comedy is blither for its blackness,
ritual humiliations in a cage,
the clown's careering spite.

ME-TOOISM

Just, in a sense,
the lowering recompense,
silver squandered after you,
a coinage daily new,
or wakeful tear
of perpetual Here
and Now, the vicious bolt,
coarse lunge to a halt
the fulcrum of a dream,
its glamorous scheme
of poisoner and cell,
the way our nights excel
at foolishness,
the sessile mulishness,

blunt instincts of a brute
in mortal minuet.

AMPHITHEATRE

No one has performed in this space
until now. No one has needed to.
Day's commerce frantic and done,
midnight observes its own latitude,
acoustics like a memoried bliss.
Ours is the first performance.
We have created these roles
in the towers of memory.
Promptless and unlit we dawdle,
the audience alien and elsewhere.
Concentrated in you, I am
your raptus, your ovation. Silent,
I lay down my glasses, my score,
mark you in the whirling darkness.

QUARTET

All day, I don't know why,
I long for cigarette
as a canny novelist craves dirty sex
to swell a scene,
the hero rifling through laundry.
It's in the contract,
panaceas clausid in tar.
We signed, we have our witness,
the eventual moon contradicting
a child's impossible shadow,
idlings on a loveless platform
etched on the century.
Rhetoric of destiny fails to dissuade,
nor the livelong anecdote
you will us to sustain
like some long-breathed melody.
The grass is snaked and poemed by turns,

the crossing fitly perilous.
Afternoon briefs us with four dead lambs,
teasings of slaughterdom,
one for each of us, airless mascots
taken in different ways—
tenderly, with indifference,
more contentious work, then the gore.