

ABSTRACT

Colpa di Fulmine

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Colpa di Fulmine is a artistic work that uses text and music to create an aural depiction of the struggle to determine what is true when even one's own ability to discern between truth and falsehood is subject to doubt. When the surrounding society is as polarized as it is politicized, standing in the "middle ground" in respect to a divisive topic (such as the "identity politics" regarding sexuality and gender, or the nature and degree of the authority of religious doctrine) is tantamount to standing *against* both sides of the contention. Although the work cannot truly recreate the experience that it depicts, it endeavors to give the listener a maximally true-to-life glimpse of how it is to live life while seeing the world through the particular lens that the speaker has developed as a result of their life experiences. The text—a multilingual patchwork comprised of the composer's own prose and poetry, excerpts from instant-messaging conversations, passages from the Bible, and the lyrics of the *Battle Hymn of the Republic*—is accompanied by an original musical score that invokes quotations from pre-existing works as well as original themes. The textual sources interact with and even reframe one another throughout the piece, and their interconnections convey the psychological and philosophical intricacies of the speaker's experiential reality. Likewise, motivic repetition and permutation in the score augment and provide insight into the message of the text to which it is intimately and multiply joined. Together, the two elements (text and music) form a portrait of a quest to find oneself when "identity" might be a mark of deception; of a battle between the rational mind and the apparently irrational parts of reality; and, ultimately, of hope that is held even when no hope seems to withstand scrutiny.

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COLPA DI FULMINE

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents	i
CHAPTER 1: Work Overview	1
Explanation of Title	1.1, p.1
Textual and Musical Sources	1.2, p.2
Central Concepts and Themes	1.3, p.2
<i>The Core Struggle: “Two Sides At War”</i>	1.3.1, p. 2
<i>Self-Doubt and Stalemate</i>	1.3.2, p. 5
CHAPTER 2: Musical Elements	16
Instrumentation and Texture	2.1, p.16
Melodic and Harmonic Material	2.2, p.20
<i>Tonal Material</i>	2.2.1, p. 20
<i>Atonal Material</i>	2.2.2, p. 24
CHAPTER 3: Usage of Atonal Elements	27
General Overview of Conceptual Groups	3.1, p.27
Cluster Groups	3.2, p.28
Text	32
CHAPTER 4: Composer’s Reflection and Vision	75
Personal Reflection	4.1, p.75
In Hindsight, Moving Forward	4.2, p.76
Appendices	78

APPENDIX A: <i>Never At All</i> (poem)	79
APPENDIX B: <i>The Battle Hymn of the Republic</i>	80
APPENDIX C: Fundamentals for Understanding 12-tone Music	81
Background: Tonal Music and “Functional” Harmony C.1, p.81	
Atonal Music	C.2, p.82
<i>Pitches and Pitch Classes</i>	C.2.1, p. 82
APPENDIX D: Explanation of Foreign-Language Content	84
French	D.1, p.84
Italian	D.2, p.89
APPENDIX E: Note on Foreign-Language Gloss	91
Glossaries	92
Gender and Sexuality Terms	92
Musical Terms	93
Bibliography	95

CHAPTER ONE

Work Overview

Explanation of Title

The name of the piece (*Colpa² di Fulmine*) is an Italian phrase that the composer coined as a way to convey the core struggle that the work depicts, as well as make reference to the central role that the Italian language plays in the musical material.

The phrase *colpo³ di fulmine* (lit. “strike of lightning”) is the Italian equivalent of the English phrase “love at first sight”; while it does not have the same explicit specificity of the English in identifying exactly *when* falling in love occurs, this Italian saying adds an extra shade of intensity in likening the experience to being struck by a lightning bolt.

The word *colpa²* means “fault”, “transgression”, or “error”; it appears in the phrase *essere in colpa*, “to be at fault or to blame”. In combining this concept of culpability with the *fulmine* (“lightning”) of the above-explained phrase, the title draws a connection between love and error. Additionally, the meaning of the “lightning” is further refined by references to the hymn *The Battle Hymn of the Republic*, whose lyrics (see Part II) describe “the lightning of [Christ’s] terrible swift sword” as an instrument of the wrath of God

²Note the -a ending of the word *colpa*.

³Note the -o ending of the word *colpo*.

against sinful (and therefore *in colpa*) mankind. The effect of the twist of words is, in short, to draw a parallel between ‘falling in love’ and ‘falling into sin’.

Textual and Musical Sources

The vast majority of the text of *Colpa di Fulmine* is the composer’s original work. Most of these original portions can be divided into two types:

1. *Monologues*: Longer stretches of continuous material, such as the Romantic Attraction Monologue or the Death Monologue.
2. *Excerpts from an Instant-Messaging Conversation*: Text taken near-verbatim (with the occasional addition of a word or two for enhanced clarity) from a conversation that the composer had with a friend via Facebook Messenger.

The non-original parts of the text are quotations from various English translations of the Bible. These are cited in the written transcript (see Part II) where used.

Central Concepts and Themes

The Core Struggle: “Two Sides At War”

The driving force in *Colpa di Fulmine* is the internal struggle that the speaker attempts to articulate at various points in the work. The speaker understands that something about their current situation ought to compel them to give up in some way –that is, they might as well throw in the towel now, because to continue to fight would be to risk loss (or further loss) that might otherwise be avoided (or at least not worsened). At the same time, however, they also recognize that all is still not yet lost; it is not yet certain

that the “only” (meaning “only reasonable”) option is to surrender all hope of achieving the more-desired outcome. The conflict between these two realities is what impels the speaker both to seek answers and to simultaneously be unable to accept any, and is most iconically embodied by the phrase “I don’t know why I can’t just give up...” that punctuates most of the work’s key segments.

The Core Struggle and The Four Threads. This central struggle manifests itself in the FOUR MAJOR THREADS that run interwoven through the whole work:

- (1) UNREQUITED LOVE. The first monologue in the text describes the speaker’s romantic attraction to a girl who does not return their affections on the grounds that she is, as the speaker paraphrases, “only attracted to men”. While this is not necessarily an outright disqualification of the speaker (see item 3, Gender), due to the fact that they perceive that many of the qualities that androphilic people find attractive in men (such as “broad shoulders and big hands”) are beyond their grasp, the speaker interprets their love interest’s assertion as a definitive rejection –even while they admit to having difficulties with allowing their understanding of what is most likely the case to eliminate other possibilities from consideration. Thus in this thread, the struggle is between on one hand the understood rationality of moving on and letting go of the possibility (or perhaps more accurately, the non-possibility) of a future with her; and on the other hand, the speaker’s inability to do so, on account of their woefully persistent optimism that cannot accept impossibility until it is logically necessary to do so.

- (2) **SEXUALITY.** In addition to their romantic orientation, the text also discusses the speaker's sexual orientation. The conflict in this thread arises from the dissonance between the speaker's experience of sexual attraction to women as an AFAB¹ person and the tenets of their complementarian Christian upbringing, which hold that abstinence is the only non-self-destructive course of action for those who experience same-sex attraction, and that all other paths necessarily involve embracing a lie to their own destruction. However, the speaker's logical mind recognizes that this may not necessarily be the case, since the worldview they developed under the tutelage of their parents could be flawed. This possibility contributes to their inability to "just do what [they're] supposed to and surrender everything to God".
- (3) **GENDER (IDENTITY).** The speaker also faces difficulty when it comes to their gender. At numerous points in the work, they raise questions about whether they identify as a boy/man despite their female anatomy. This facet of the conflict shares elements with the conflict surrounding their sexuality: They see that there is the possibility that it is necessary for them to give it up and surrender it to God, but they also see that there is the possibility of it being "okay" (rather than self-deceptive and thus self-destructive) to embrace. Additionally, this third thread involves another component that renders it even more complicated: the speaker's "trans doubt", or the doubts they have regarding the veracity of their male identity that they have despite being AFAB⁰-that is,

¹Assigned Female At Birth. See the Gender and Sexuality Terms Glossary.
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whether or not they are truly transgender. The speaker understands that it is statistically unlikely that they are transgender, and that therefore unless there is unambiguous and irrefutable evidence that they are trans, the most rational course of action is to simply accept that they are (probably) not trans. However, this understanding of probability pushes directly counter to the speaker's drive to hold on to the "small, glimmering possibility that maybe" they can embrace that path for themselves without later sorely regretting having embraced a falsehood. This conflict and the above-described religious concerns form the basis of the core struggle in regards to gender.

- (4) (NOT) WANTING TO LIVE. The fourth thread applies the core struggle to life itself. The speaker repeatedly asserts that they want to die, yet they also state that they are not suicidal and are "not going to kill [themselves]". They desire death because given the facts, it is apparent that continuing to live will most likely be agonizing for various reasons, such as the factors behind the conflicts in the other three threads. But —just as painfully yet irrepressibly as in the other threads —the speaker finds themselves to be unable to abandon hope of a less bleak outcome while it yet remains logically possible to maintain that hope.

Self-Doubt and Stalemate

Each of those four threads presents an instance of the core struggle in that they involve a stalemate between two positions that appear to be equally-matched opponents. In each thread, the two sides make interpretative assertions about an aspect of reality; and in each case, both sides' evaluations are at face value plausible interpretations of reality. However, because their claims are (as the speaker understands them) incompatible and mutu-

ally exclusive, it is necessarily the case that they cannot both be right. The difficulty lies in determining which of the two has the true view of reality, and which is mistaken.

Interpretation and Ambiguity. The nuance built into the matters at hand is a large part of what renders this task so challenging. Indeed, often-times the two sides of the “debate” are not completely at odds; rather, they hold much in common, and more often than not it is how they *interpret* what they agree on and fit it into their respective theoretical frameworks that sets them at odds¹. For instance, in the Sexuality thread, the disagreement is between the *affirming* Christian view on homosexuality and the *non-affirming* Christian view on the same. The non-affirming Christians acknowledge that gay Christians may experience positive feelings when they embrace their orientation rather than reject it, but they do not agree with gay Christians’ theoretization of those feelings: Gay Christians understand the positive feelings as the lifting of a man-made burden and experiencing freedom to live for God, while non-affirming Christians believe that the positive feelings are rather an indicator that gay Christians have suppressed their guilty conscience and thus do not realize that in reality, they are moving further away from God, not closer to him. Similarly, both sides are generally in consensus over the reality of non-affirming Christians’ experience as regards to the feeling that to compromise their stance on homosexuality would be moral

¹The sources *Doctrine and Experience* Zito, Christopher C. 2016, *Taking the Bible Seriously* White, J. Benton 1993, and *Beyond Belief* McDonald, James 2011 step through some of the intricacies of interpretation as regards Christian doctrine.

laxity on their part. However, affirming Christians would argue that what non-affirming Christians label “conviction” is not truly the prompting of the Holy Spirit on their conscience, but rather discomfort with going against tradition and unease with the unfamiliar.

If either side lacked internal consistency, it could be dismissed as not possibly true. But both are internally consistent and therefore possibly true; on their own, neither take on the situation can be fully demonstrated, and neither can be disproven. They reach different conclusions not because of fallacies in their lines of reasoning, but because their lines of reasoning are based on different assumptions. Thus, an examination of the truth value of those assumptions is necessary in order to further evaluate the soundness of the arguments themselves.

Part of the conflict in the third thread, Gender (Identity) exemplifies this characteristic. *Transgender* people are, in the simplest terms, those who experience discomfort because the *gender* (boy/man or girl/woman) that they intuitively sense themselves to be is incongruous with the gender that generally corresponds to their *anatomical sex*. As of the writing of this paper, in most circles this discomfort due to gender incongruence is called *gender dysphoria*.

Some people hold that trans people experience dysphoria because their *gender identity* is at odds with the gender that generally corresponds with their anatomical sex, and that their gender identity is no less legitimate than the gender identities of those whose identified gender and anatomical sex are not at odds. In other words, they reason that anatomical females who have gender dysphoria—that is, they feel that their primary or secondary sex characteristics are “incorrect” or surreally foreign, and/or they experience discomfort at being lumped in with girls and designated as “other”

than boys —have a “boy” gender identity in the very same way that most anatomical males do. Therefore, transition is a viable treatment that helps align the body with the brain. Evidence for this often includes the scores of trans people who testify that transition has helped them to be more comfortable in their own skin.

Not everyone, however, shares this view. Other people believe that while so-called “transgender” people may very well experience some sort of gender-related discomfort, they do not believe that this reflects a incongruity between gender identity and anatomical sex, but rather is indicative of some other issue. That is, the unfortunate phenomenon that transgender people experience is not caused by a mismatch of gender identity; rather, the problem’s origin is located elsewhere in the brain or in the psyche. People of this position do not believe that trans people should alter their body through transition to align it more closely with what they perceive to be their gender identity, since that so-called “gender identity” is not *truly* a gender identity but rather the illusory delusion of a confused mind. In regards to the trans people who claim to have benefited from transition, some from this camp allow for exceptions (“Perhaps it is helpful for some”), while others adhere to a more rigid position (“It is still a tragedy; they believe they are happier only because they do not realize that they are sadder than ever”).

Both sides draw reasonable conclusions from the assumptions that form the foundation of their theoretical frameworks. If what trans people understand as their “gender identity” really *is* a gender identity in the same way that non-transgender people have gender identities, and the only difference between the gender identity of a non-transgender persons and that of a transgender individual is the congruency or incongruency of the anatomical sex with that gender identity, then the trans-affirming view is the ratio-

nal one. If, however, it is not possible for gender identity to diverge from anatomical sex—that is, if it is not possible for an anatomically female person to have a gender identity that corresponds to the male anatomical sex—then the non-trans-affirming, or trans-skeptical view clearly holds. The soundness of each position depends on the soundness of its premises. Therefore, in order to determine which view is the more accurate interpretation of reality, it is necessary to examine the presuppositions upon which they rest.

This might seem like a relatively simple problem to solve—after all, how hard can it be to answer one question (*Are trans people’s “gender identities” really gender identities?*)? However, to set a hand to this seemingly uncomplex step is to open a Pandora’s box of back-and-forthing: The trans-affirming side presents as evidence for their base assumptions a study that claims to demonstrate that *in utero* hormone levels might play a role in the development of gender identity (as well as in the development of anatomical sex). But the trans-skeptical side questions the reliability of the study and its research methods, and additionally questions the relevance of this particular study, pointing out an apparent flaw in the trans-affirming side’s reasoning in citing it. Still not debunked, the trans-affirming side presents practical but positive peer reviews of the study, and points out fallacies in the trans-skeptical side’s criticism of its reasoning. Equally undebunked, the trans-skeptical side presents reasons for why the peer reviews might not be reliable sources of information due to bias or underinformation... And so on.

While there are a couple of references to that debate in *Colpa di Fulmine*, in regards to gender the piece mainly focuses on the speaker’s doubts regarding their own gender identity. Even if trans people’s gender identities

truly *are* gender identities, the speaker is unsure as to whether or not they themselves are truly transgender, and worry that they may be mistaken. While they are certain that they experience gender-related discomfort, they are also aware that there are a number of reasons that people experience gender-related discomfort other than being transgender. In the same way that sexual trauma or oversexualization can cause discomfort that closely resembles the chest or genital dysphoria that trans people experience, negative media depictions or cultural conceptions of men or women can cause people to desire to disassociate themselves from those genders in a way that is not easily distinguishable from the gender disconnect that trans people experience when perceived as being of a certain gender rather than another. The difference is that while both groups are uncomfortable with their anatomy or inclusion in a category, their discomforts have different root causes: The gender-related discomfort of an oversexualized or gender-non-conforming female, for instance, stems from her interactions with others, and if not for the presence of such external factors she would likely never have been dissatisfied with her female anatomy or a girl/woman identity. In contrast, a trans man's discomfort stems from an innate sense of disalignment, and even if he were to "spend the rest of his life alone on a desert island", as one popular *Am I trans?* thought experiment goes, he would still feel more comfortable standing in the "man" box than in the "woman" one. The key to the resolution of these two different varieties of gender discomfort lies in addressing their respective roots: Many would advocate therapy for the first, and transition for the second.

It is crucial to avoid applying the solution for one to the discomfort of the other; they are not interchangeable, and the results of treating them as such are often disastrous and pain-inflicting. There are corners of the inter-

net that are full of cautionary tales from both groups; the gender-focused portions in *Colpa di Fulmine* focus on elements that appear in many *detransitioner* (*detrans*) narratives. For instance, the speaker wonders if their discomfort with their female primary and secondary sex characteristics and their desire for a male body stem from a male gender identity, or if it instead come not from a male gender identity but rather from internalized misogyny that makes them want to be a man rather than a socially “lesser” woman, or from internalized homophobia that makes them believe that the only way to make their gynephilic¹ sexuality acceptable is to fit it into heteronormative society by transitioning to male. The speaker’s worries regarding transition are due to their fear that like the detransitioners, they may be mistaken in categorizing themselves among the second group described above (whose gender discomfort stems most fundamentally from *internal* factors) while in reality they are among the first group (whose gender discomfort is rooted most essentially in *external* factors), and that therefore if they pursue the solution for the second (medical transition) they will sorely regret it later, as do many detransitioners. This potential for misjudgment—and the high (and permanent) price to pay for making decisions based on a misguided evaluation—significantly raises the stakes and makes it all the more imperative that the speaker determine which view is correct.

In addition to those questions based on common detrans tropes, the speaker also raises concerns that extend beyond the secular realm. For instance, they admit that they feel guilt when they are happy to be seen as a

¹Of or relating to romantic and/or sexual attraction to women, or to one who experiences such attraction.

male. On one hand, they acknowledge that one possible interpretation of this fact could be that it is because they know they are lying to themselves and/or to others in embracing a male persona, and/or because it is “going against God” to do so instead of surrendering their inherently sinful gender identity to his will. Yet on the other hand, they also maintain that there are equally plausible alternative explanations for the guilt, such as the fact that the strictly religious, complementarian ideology their parents raised them with taught them that desiring to be male was shameful and something to hide.

Not only do each of those two sides lack the type of evidence that would enable them to completely debunk the other, but especially due to the Christian lens through which they see the world, the speaker also has reason to doubt their own ability to evaluate the evidence that each side *is* able to present. The idea of the self as a sort of unreliable reasoner is built into Christianity inasmuch as the fallen state of man forms the basis for the significance and relevance of Christ in most traditions. This is reflected in many of the Bible passages quoted in *Colpa di Fulmine*, such as Jeremiah 17:9: *The heart is more deceitful than all else / and is desperately sick...* (New International Version, Jer. 17:9). The brand of Christianity with which the speaker is most familiar teaches that people’s ability to perceive and recognize truth as such is hindered and corrupted by the fallen and corrupt nature of man. That is, mankind is distorted and inherently inclined to choose actions that are sinful, or that are in other words deceptively self-destructive in that they serve an end that is only an illusion of the good that it professes to be.

In light of that view, the speaker views their own non-neutrality (in that they prefer one of the possibly-true views over the other) as reason to doubt their own judgments, since according to the doctrine of their upbringing-

ing sin and desire can easily cloud the evaluatory faculties of quick-to-stray mankind. The effective result of this self-doubt is to automatically render more suspect the side that they prefer—not because it indicates any lack of integrity on the part of the preferred view, but rather because it indicates the possibility that the speaker’s judgment might be skewed in favor of it. Therefore, whenever that more-preferred side *appears* to make a convincing point, the speaker must remember to question whether it truly has the appearance of soundness, or if it only *seems* that way to them because they are biased towards perceiving it that way.

This self-mistrust comes to a head in the struggle with death that each of the four threads of the core struggle—and even the core struggle itself—points to. Each thread traces a battle between holding on to hope of a preferred outcome on one hand, and accepting or surrendering to the reality that the alternative and dispreferred outcome is the only one that can and will truly occur (or has been and/or is already occurring): The speaker prefers to hope that life will not always be agony; that they are indeed trans and can resolve their gender incongruency through transition without sorely regretting it as a mistake; that they can embrace their sexuality without embracing a God-condemned lie and sending themselves down a spiraling path of self-destruction; that the girl they like will someday like them back and they will not have to die a thousand horrible deaths when she inevitably marries someone else. And as long as there is still some possibility that those hopes can rest on, they also prefer to hold on to them (and they prefer to be able to continue to do so). To give up on any of them would be a sort of death, whether physical or metaphysical—and, as the speaker repeats often enough, they do not want to die.

However, in Christian doctrine, dying is depicted as a gateway to truly

living. The death of self, “dying to yourself”, is regarded as the key to experiencing the “abundant life”, the “life to the full” that Christ promises his followers in the piece’s opening quotation. According to non-affirming Christians, the fact that gay Christians embrace their orientation shows a neglect to surrender that aspect of their lives to God; if they were really in complete submission to his law, they would abstain from acts (such as forming and/or maintaining homosexual/homoromantic relationships) that run counter to it. The conclusion of this argument is that such so-called “Christians” are not true or full-fledged, whole-hearted followers of Christ, regardless of what they may believe themselves to be. Rather, they are holding on selfishly to an aspect of their lives instead of dying to themselves and surrendering it to the will of God. In the famous injunction to “carry your cross daily”, Christ says that those who seek to preserve their own lives will wind up losing them, and vice versa; non-affirming Christians cite this passage to support their reasoning that gay Christians are seeking to preserve their own lives and therefore cannot be living the abundant life, which is only given to those who relinquish control and surrender every hope, dream, and desire to God and are ready to part with whatever is not within his will.

In regards to that the meta-instance of the core struggle (the conflict with death), the difficulty is like in kind to the core struggle’s other manifestations, but with a composite anguish that has the force of the others in combination. The speaker recognizes the possibility of the desired outcome, but doesn’t want to turn away from it because it is not yet completely necessary to do so; but their having a preference automatically makes the preferred outcome more suspect and calls their affidability as a reasoning agent into question, and pressures them to choose against their own desires. Yet it still stands that they can continue to hold onto the possibility and do

not yet have to surrender and accept loss. They question themselves, then question their questioning; they are in dread of walking across a field of hot coals and yet are also resigned to the journey. They hold within themselves a tension between two opposing forces, weary and weary of their weariness, yet do not relen because to do so would bring no true rest. They know that there is no peace to be had in letting up the fight in either direction, because while it is possible —and often easier —to accept an answer simply because the current brings you to it, merely “going with the flow” (of tradition, of popular opinion, of the “default”) can never guarantee that the truth you have settled cozily up with is not a lie.

CHAPTER TWO

Musical Elements²

Instrumentation and Texture

Colpa di Fulmine makes use of different sound colors to several effects: Some instruments and instrument families are associated with particular emotions or ideas; others correspond to particular sources of text; and some are tied closely to both. This consistent and deliberate application of colors and textures helps evoke certain emotions as well as add clarity to the division of voices from different textual sources. The motivic nature of this methodical recurrence is increasingly more striking in effect as the reappearances build upon one another throughout the piece and infuse the ideas and feelings that they accompany with increasing meaning and weight.

For instance, the *brass* (and the ominous cinematic-style percussion that eventually undergirds them) make their strongest appearances with the passage from Romans 1, of which a segment appears before nearly every major subdivision of the piece; especially notable is the trumpet solo on a fragment of the *Battle Hymn of the Republic* that precedes each quotation from Romans 1. Over the course of the piece, the dark, thick texture that the composer creates with the brass becomes associated with the ideas that most strongly color these passages: a good-versus-evil conflict, judgment, and the wrath of God in meting out punishment. Thus, when the brass reap-

²A Musical Terms glossary is available on page 93.

pear as embellishments on other textures, such as the “Bible synth” that accompanies the assortment of quotations from other parts of the Bible that occur throughout the piece, the brass texture brings with it those connotations. The brass are also used to more subtle effect when the composer adds a discreetly-applied brass section or two to more overtly “positive” textures to subtly “sour the mood” or imply that all is not, in fact, well.

The brass sections —particularly the French horns —are also used in the romantic attraction section (and later on in the piece where its themes reappear) to add an extra touch of sentimentality or sweetness to the tones of tragedy and heartbreak that characterize these sections. The primary colors associated with romantic orientation, however, are the strings and the piano. They convey the joy and the sorrow of love and longing, and carry those sentiments with them everywhere they occur. While they remain firstly and foremostly tied to romantic attraction (and later on, to orientation in general —see below) they also lend their sound to a few of the gender portions of the text as well. This occurs particularly towards the end of the piece, when the speaker’s discourse on orientation and their dialogue on gender begin to converge. This convergence culminates at the point where all the primary colors of the piece finally fully unite to undergird what becomes a portrait simultaneously of what might not be, what cannot be, and what perhaps must (or, conversely, must not) be.

While all the instrument sounds in *Colpa di Fulmine*, including those described above, are computer-synthesized due to temporal and financial limitations, there are also some sounds that are *supposed* to sound synthesized. In much the same way as the orchestral instrument sections, several *synth* (*synthesizer*) sounds accompany particular elements in the piece as they recur. Similarly to the motivic use of the above-described sound palette,

this deliberate reutilization of color serves to enhance the continuity of the textual themes from one instance to the next, as well as “set the scene” for certain sources of text and orient the listener more quickly (and less ambiguously) to a particular idea space.

For instance, there is a *synth pad* sound that sustains through each of the assorted quotations from the Bible (other than the Romans 1 passage quotes, whose texture is, as explained above, predominantly brass-based) that punctuate the piece. Its sound conveys the all-encompassing, plenary nature of God’s power and sovereignty, bringing to mind something that might be overbearing if not utterly intangible. The recurrence of this distinct texture also helps further the “connecting the dots” role that these passages play in the work.

Similarly, a short *ping*-like sound effect is used in the Facebook Messenger conversation excerpt sections, representing the sound that a cell phone might emit to notify the user that they have received a message. Because the speaker only reads aloud the messages that presumably are those that they have written and sent to the other party involved, only one side of the conversation (the speaker’s) is presented to the listener. The “notification sound” serves as a sort of aural placeholder for the messages to which the speaker is understood to be replying and helps to preserve some semblance of the rhythm of the exchange. Later on in the work, the notification sound is eventually drawn out into a lovely clean *synth lead* that in later parts of the piece represents the speaker’s conflict regarding gender identity, the main subject of the Facebook Messenger conversation from which the sound originates.

In addition to the above, there are a number of other *pads*, *leads*, and other miscellaneous synthesized sound effects that also recur throughout

the piece. They generally appear in tandem with the same subset of other sounds and can primarily be divided by association into three main groups. These three groups correspond to three concept pairs; the most central color or colors (typically one featured synth pad and/or one featured lead) transform their group's texture by changing the parameters that control the character of their sound; thus, while still fundamentally recognizable as the "same" voice, they tint the auxiliary sounds of the grouping towards one or the other side of the duality they represent. The first of these pairs is Sin/Judgment, which in the context of *Colpa di Fulmine* are essentially two sides of the same coin, or at the very least tightly linked; the second pair is God's sovereignty / his authority as Creator, which generally appears in association with Sin/Judgment¹; and the third concept pair is Death/Surrender². Due to the great degree of interconnectivity between these concepts, a variety of equally logical conceptual pairings or triples are possible; the atonal melodic and harmonic material (described below) draws the lines in a quite different way, but its observations are complementary —and not contrary —to the insights provided by the composer's use of the miscellaneous synth sounds. The particular configuration into which the synth sounds arrange the ideas draws different connections and establishes a different grouping and hierarchy, but they are both windows into the same reality, albeit from differing angles, and thus present diversely faithful representations of the speaker's lived reality. Neither configuration is more or less legitimate or accurate in its de-

¹See also the analysis of Foreign-Language Portions 5 and 7.

²In addition to the different senses of "death" found in the conceptual overview in the previous section, also relevant is the explanation of the relationship between death and other concepts in the atonal melodic material found in the following section.

piction of reality than any other possible framework; each structure merely serves to highlight a different, but equally valid and “real”, dimension of the experience.

Melodic and Harmonic Material

In addition to texture and color, the music in *Colpa di Fulmine* also uses the melodic and harmonic to contribute to the overall message of the work by interacting with and enriching—and at times even providing a lens for re-interpretation of—the text.

Tonal¹ Material

Quotations from Preexisting Works. Brief quotations from the melodies of other musical works are somewhat woven into several of the musical themes in *Colpa di Fulmine*; typically these are dramatically altered in terms of rhythm and may also include intervening notes (or measures), and therefore may not be extremely apparent to the casual listener. Not all of the works referenced in the piece will be mentioned in this overview, for personal reasons as well as in the interest of preserving the listener’s opportunity to discover for themselves what they might be. However, although there are numerous “Easter eggs” in the piece that contribute additional depth of meaning, the following are among those which it is most crucial to understand in order to benefit from the aid they provide in the comprehension of the message of the work.

¹See Appendix C.1, Background: Tonal Music and “Functional” Harmony for background information on how tonal music differs from atonal music.

The *Battle Hymn of the Republic* (of which the lyrics can be found in Part II) has at least some presence in the majority of the work's segments. The melody of a line from the verse, played by a solo trumpet, precedes each of the (textual) quotes from Romans 1 that mark the start of nearly all of the main segments of the work. With such instrumentation it is reminiscent of a bugle call and possesses a somewhat militaristic flavor. To those familiar with the lyrics of the *Battle Hymn* (which describes the coming of Christ to "trample out" the work of wrongdoers and smite them with his "terrible swift sword"), this casts a rather ominous shadow over whatever follows: As the solemn trumpet tones steadily progress through the lines of the song's verse, all the while keeping pace with the text's progression through the doom-and-destruction Romans 1 passage, the combined effect is to mark the advance of Christ and his forces and the impending doom of those to (and against) whom they are coming. The final line of the verse, "His truth is marching on", falls at a crucial moment where such a simple yet effective summary of God's sovereignty—and the implications of it—is to poignant effect.

On that same note, *Colpa di Fulmine* also includes in a few places the chorus of the *Battle Hymn*, typically to underscore the speaker's grief over those implications. In contrast to the harsh, cold tones that convey the song's verse and evoke detached, almost clinical condemnation, the invocations of the chorus (melodically, harmonically, or both, depending on the instance) feature warmer colors that imbue the tune with candid authenticity, lending those passages both proximity and passion. Rich with emotion, the tex-

tures that carry the chorus enhance and amplify the sense of raw brokenness conveyed in the text that they accompany.¹

Original Material. The melodic motif that is most crucial to the piece is the one that first appears near the end of the romantic attraction section. It can perhaps most effectively be distinguished by rhythm (assuming a time signature of $\frac{3}{4}$, two sets of sixteenth-note triplets followed by two quarter notes) and is especially significant due to the text with which it nearly always coincides, particularly in its first few appearances: “This is what it means to me to be attracted to a girl,” the speaker intimates each time—at times in resignation, at others in rapture, and at still others in rueful reflection. At its first occurrence, after the romantic attraction segment, “this” could be a reference to the preceding description (through a poeticized retelling of a conversation) of the speaker’s experience of romantic attraction; it could also alternatively or simultaneously refer to the grief the speaker feels due to their experience of unrequited love (incidentally an indirect result of said romantic attraction). The phrase and its accompanying musical motif next reoccur after the sexual attraction section and the monologues on sexual orientation and religious restriction; the meaning here has a dual nature similar to that described in the above discussion of the phrase’s role in the romantic attraction section.

Interestingly, later restatements of this motif occur after or during

¹*Note from the composer: Ideally there would be at least one part where the chorus was actually sung, so that the lyrics could be an “official” part of the piece. Due to various resource limitations this was not possible for this initial incarnation of the work.*

gender identity segments as well; although the speaker does not explicitly say “This is what it means...to be attracted to a girl” in these sections, by that point in the work the melodic motif has reoccurred enough with that phrase to establish a solid link, and the reappearance of the motif alone is enough to suggest that textual meaning as well. That is, the meaning that the motif picks up — “This is what it means to me to be attracted to a girl” (which really in most instances can also be interpreted as “This is what it means *for* me to be attracted to a girl”¹) — also applies in some way to the experiences that the speaker describes in the *gender identity* sections: Experiencing romantic and/or sexual attraction is a factor in, or is at least a part of, multiple facets of the journey on which they have found themselves embarking. Their quest to be “at peace with [themselves]” and find the truth (and, they hope, their own fulfillment, or at the very least some semblance of it) involves attempts to discern their own *gender identity* as well as the true nature of reality and Who Can Be Trusted; it involves the acknowledgment and discovery of their romantic orientation and their sexuality; and it involves the struggle to distinguish true conscience and conviction from brainwashing and bad fruit from false teachers².

¹Fascinatingly enough, even this altered phrasing is ambiguous: You can take it to be merely equivalent to the original phrasing, a simple statement describing the situation, or you can interpret it as more focused on the implications for and effects on the speaker: “This is what it means *for me*...”).

²See the explanation of the French portions of the text and how they dialogue with Matthew chapter seven regarding the sheep and the wolves and good and bad fruit.

Atonal¹ Material

The score for *Colpa di Fulmine* also has an extremely significant atonal component. The atonal material is not totally independent of the tonal material, as the two occasionally intermix and can also be seen to derive motivic vocabulary from one another. Moreover, the tonal and atonal material interact multidimensionally with the instrumentation and texture, whose variation contributes additional semantic meaning (as described above).

Pitch Class Collections. The pitch class collections (groups of two or more pitch classes¹) used throughout *Colpa di Fulmine* have an extra layer of meaning in that they use pitch classes to spell out various Italian words. To make such musical “spelling” possible, the composer wrote out the 21 letters of the Italian alphabet and then assigned each letter a number 0 through 11 (repeating as necessary), representing the twelve pitch classes traditionally used in Western music: C corresponded to 0, C \sharp (or D \flat) to 1, D to 2, and so on. They then used this letter-to-pitch class mapping to spell several Italian words. (See Figure 2.1 on the following page.) A list of these words (along with their “pitch class alphabet” spellings and English translations) can be found in Figure 2.2.

¹See Appendix C.2, Atonal Music for terminology.

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	Z
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	t	e	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	l	m	n	o	p	q	r	s	t	u	v	z
9	t	e	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	t	e	0	1	2	3	4	5

Figure 2.1 – The letters of the Italian alphabet and their corresponding pitch class set numbers.

Figure 2.2 – ITALIAN WORDS AND CORRESPONDING PITCH CLASS COLLECTIONS

2.2a: 5-letter words

ALPH. SPELLING	PITCH CLASS SPELLING
	t9059
(love) AMORE	0t034
(lie) BUGIA	16680
(fault) COLPA	20910
(strike) COLPO	
(women) DONNE	30ee4
(fire) FUOCO	56020

2.2b: 6-letter words

ALPH. SPELLING	PITCH CLASS SPELLING
	510111
(to cede) CEDERE	243434
(men) UOMINI	60t8e8
(potter) VASAIO	704080
(truth) VERITÀ	743850
(desire) VOGLIA	706080

ALPH. SPELLING	PITCH CLASS SPELLING
(boil (cf. Dante's Inferno)) BOLLORE	1099034
(cream, the densest part of a substance) CREMORE	234t034
(maker, creator) FATTORE	5055034
(lightning) FULMINE	569t8e4

(cont'd)		
(judge) GIUDICE	6863824	
(goldsmith) OREFICE	00125e1	
(sin) PECCATO	1422050	
(exchange) SCAMBIO	420t180	
(Lord) SIGNORE	486e034	

2.2c: 7-letter words

CHAPTER THREE

Usage of Atonal Elements

General Overview of Conceptual Groups

The use of pitch class collections in *Colpa di Fulmine* is structured around the interconnectivity of the work's conceptual themes, or central concepts. The piece's atonal material divides these central concepts into four main CONCEPTUAL GROUPS, all of which are comprised of a BASE CONCEPT plus several AUXILIARY CONCEPTS that are each related to the base in some way. Both the base and auxiliary concepts are expressed through *pitch class collections* (which for the purposes of this piece are Italian words spelled in music), whether captured in a single pitch class collection (Italian word) alone or conveyed through several such pitch class words.

Regardless of the quantity of pitch class collections (Italian words) constituting the base and auxiliary concepts, the function of the auxiliary concepts relative to the base concept is the same for all four of the conceptual groups: Each group's conceptual base is more or less vague, and is thus ambiguous when it stands alone; the group's auxiliary concepts serve to disambiguate between the multiple possible senses or interpretations of that base idea. In other words, the combination of a given base with any one of its auxiliaries evokes one of the possible disambiguated applications of the

base concept, which is ambiguous when it stands alone and is not paired with any auxiliaries¹.

Two of the four conceptual groups reoccur freely, drawing upon different concepts within the group as befits the context. These two “cluster groups” solidify the bigger-picture connections between their base and their auxiliary constituents. The other two concept groups develop a linear chain of auxiliary concepts that mirrors a progression of ideas in the text; for these, each recurrence includes more of the sequence than the previous instance. These “linear groups” reinforce the succession of their auxiliary concepts as well as their connection to the base concept.

Cluster Groups

The two cluster groups are each comprised of two base chords (which together represent their group’s base concept by means of the Italian words that they spell in “pitch class alphabet”) plus multiple pairs of auxiliary chords (which, like all the chords discussed in this section, also spell Italian words). When played on top of the group’s base chord(s), the auxiliary chords disambiguate the meaning of the Italian words spelled by the base chord(s). That is, each group’s base chord has multiple possible interpretations, and the composer selects a particular meaning by adding to it one auxiliary chord pair or another.

¹The following analogy may be helpful:

BASE +	AUX	= RESULT
DOG +	(<i>nothing</i>)	= ???
DOG +	HOT	= hot dog
DOG +	CORN	= corn dog
DOG +	ANIMAL	= Fido

These last two sets of pairings have a particularly interesting connection. The first of each set of three ends in the same three letters (-ORE). The second items in the sets of three also end in the same three letters (-ICE); and the same for the third items (-ORE); this means they also end in the same pitch classes. There are also conceptual parallels between the two sets of auxiliary chords: The first items (FATTORE/*maker* and SIGNORE/*Lord*) both are a title or type of authority; the second items (OREFICE/*goldsmith* and pcword/*judge*) are both roles that the authority figure plays in judging or evaluating the goodness or worthiness of something, such as the quality of gold or the purity of a soul); and the third items (CREMORE/*the good part of a substance* and BOLLLORE/*boiling in hell*) both depict a kind, end, or purpose in the use of fire. Thus, these two sets of three auxiliary chords enrich the *fire* concept by reinforcing the “meat” of its appearances in the work: They highlight two different types of fire used by two different types of agents who have two different types of authority, yet are the same entity –which is what generates a lot of the dissonance the speaker experiences in relation to the two types of fire, and by extension to the two types of death.

FATT <u>ORE</u>	OREF <u>ICE</u>	CREM <u>ORE</u>
SIGN <u>ORE</u>	GIUD <u>ICE</u>	BOLL <u>ORE</u>
<hr/>		
(title/authority)	(agent role)	(use of fire)

Figure 3.5 – Parallels drawn in the second concept group

The remaining two groups of auxiliary chords are triples; like the VOGLIA+AMORE pair, the auxiliary triples present further variations on the incendiary theme: The auxiliary chords FATTORE+OREFICE+CREMORE (*maker+goldsmith+the “cream” of a*

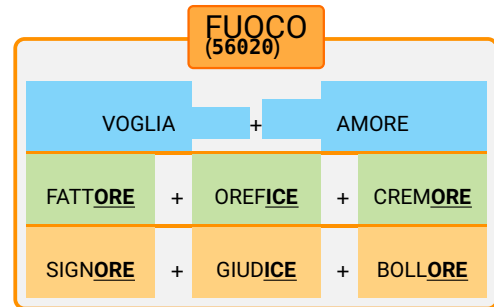
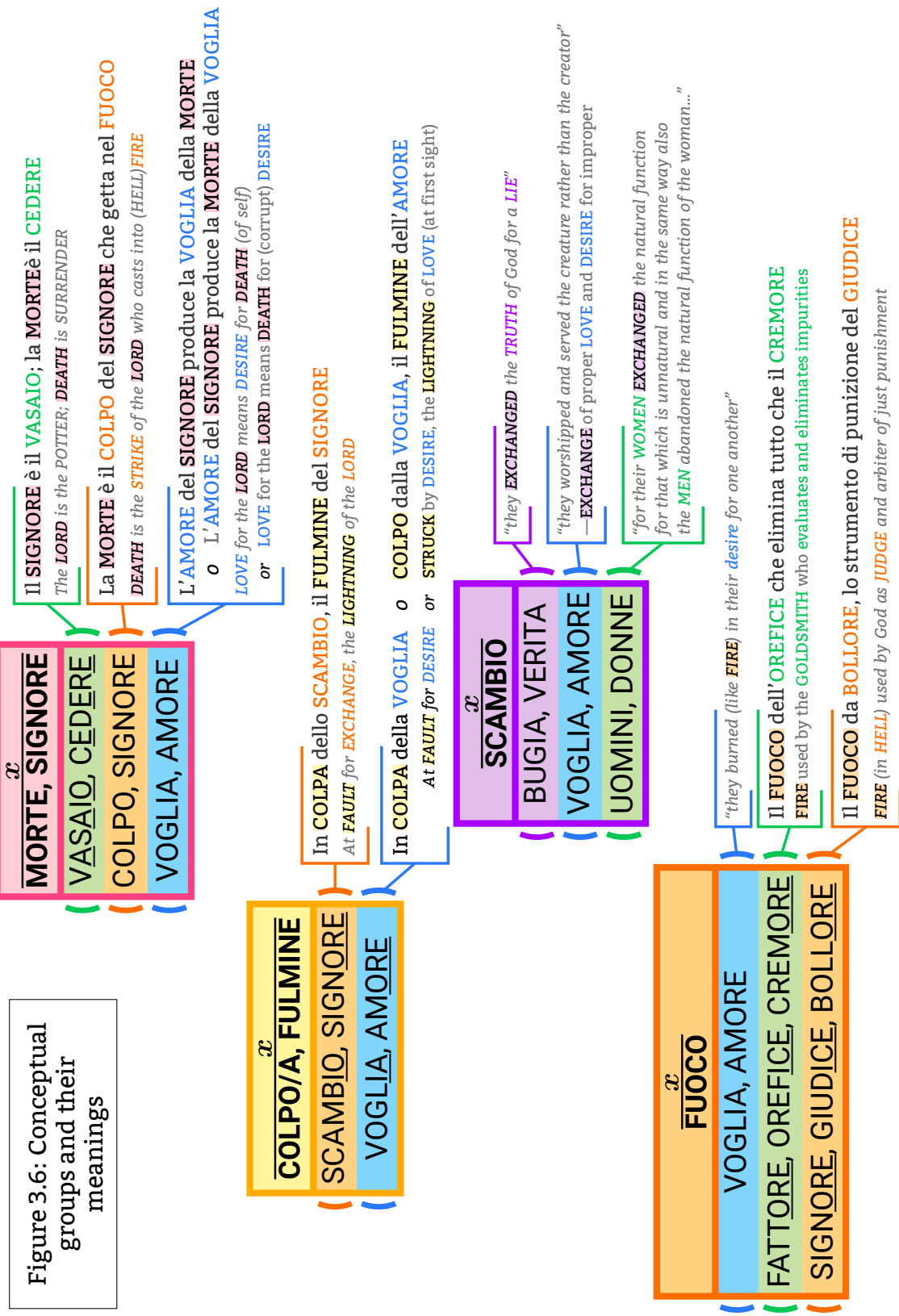


Figure 3.4 – Concept group 4, based on FUOCO

substance that is left after the undesirable parts of it have been burned away) accompany the text that depicts God as a sovereign goldsmith whose evaluation of purity is the law of the land; and the auxiliary chords SIGNORE+GIUDICE+BOLLORE (*Lord+judge+a word for “boil” that appears only in Dante’s *Inferno**).



TEXT

HE HAS LOOSED THE FEARFUL LIGHTNING OF
HIS TERRIBLE SWIFT SWORD;
HIS TRUTH IS MARCHING ON.

¹Rom. 1:18-20 (NASB)

You could have heard my jaw drop
from a million miles away.

As far as I'm aware
I'm now discovering
for the first time ever
that someone could be
so exciting to talk to –
but as far as I'm aware,
in this moment
there is hardly anything else
of which to be aware.

And I can't help but think that I want to know
everything there is to know about her, because she
is so captivating.

My God. Wow.

This is what it means to me to be attracted to a girl.

She tells me about the things she dreams of doing in the future; I dream of a future in which I could dream them alongside her. We take turns telling about our projects, both those recently completed and those still deep in the folds of undetermined possibility; we make inquiries and suggestions and take pleasure in the sense of shared interest.

Each new utterance is like a newly discovered continent, a delightful and enthralling discovery, a destination from which one can reach perhaps an infinite number of other possible destinations each as exciting as the last. This mutual excitement is both the rolling sea beneath us and the wind in our sails as we speed from one uncharted land to the next, scarcely pausing for air amidst the salt-sprayed breeze and the foam-crested exhilaration that propels us on.

I make the foolish yet wise decision to allow myself to momentarily forget that despite its vigor, our vessel cannot outpace its steadily-approaching expiration; I turn a blind eye as it slips my mind that this voyage, which seems to have brought to life something at the very core of my being, is to be nothing more than a mere incidental feature of the landscape of my existence, and not —as it seems— a discovery of a previously-missing component, or the beginnings of a less lonely-flavored stretch of sea.

Nor might it have been in any possible worlds aside from the one I had erected in my imagination like a pop-up tent fortress against despair, a sandcastle at once both solid and frail, both real and imaginary, and in which I had foolishly-yet-wisely taken up residence for as long as possible —temporarily, but as far as I intended to be aware, forever. And yet, despite these efforts to submerge the truth of the situation beyond recognition, the awareness defied my attempts to make it sink beyond the depths of my conscious mind. Such that my small success in refusing it access to the surface seemed almost a mockery: Because somewhere deep down (but not deep down enough), I knew that the tide would eventually change, and turn from buoying up my fantasy to sweeping away my sandcastle.

Indeed, despite the impression that it gave, there was nothing particularly vital about this expedition, and even beyond its point of disembarkment life would go on, or else stop for lack of any sufficiently rousing gale.

And it has. Gone on, I mean.

She remarks with some amusement that I, being for some time engaged in eager and near-frantic locution, have not yet touched my sandwich beyond removing it from the bag. As a solution, she takes it upon herself to speak instead. And I am certainly far from displeased to hear whatever she might generously impart, and quiet myself with joyful anticipation, knowing that whatever she is poised to tell me, regardless of the subject, will by nature of the source tell me more of her.

Unburdened from the task of speech, I am understood to have been freed to apply my jaw to my lunch; but (to her later amusement) that possibility goes unrealized, because I opt (inconspicuously, I hope) to instead feast my eyes on the newly-appointed oratress seated opposite me.

And I somehow manage to listen while trying persistently to convince myself that the best response to what she is saying is undoubtedly NOT that she has the most beautiful hair and eyes that I have ever seen. (And I am normally hopeless when it comes to multitasking but I suspect that she is magic.)

But when she finishes speaking, the spell, too, is brought to a halt and my trains of thought promptly resume their efforts to run concurrently on the same track, resulting in a lateral collision between “That’s so interesting!” and “Tell me more!” and “How the heck are your ears *so friggin cute??*”

(And I’m glad that that last one did not prevail, not at first nor at any point after .)

A commonly-occurring ambiguity comes up and without thinking, I wryly point it out. This is so much of a reflex response that I scarcely expect more than the equally routine half-snort or slight upturn of the mouth that my friends give almost as automatically. But the way *she* laughs, as if I’ve been very clever and shown her something wonderful, transmutes its mundanity into something transcendently precious and awe-inspiring.

Brilliant sparks of association spur us on to exchange some favorite facts and interdisciplinary experiences. If while she speaks, the universe whispers the secrets of the divine, seeking to impart them to me, it is in vain because I am deaf to all voices but hers. God himself would be hard-pressed to divert my attention even if he offered to tell me, for instance, *where* on Earth this girl has been my whole life, and *why* on Earth it was fitting to delay my discovery of her for so long.

We talk about how each of our weaknesses corresponds to a strength of the other –and I find this marvelous and it gives me a new appreciation of myself and also, most wonderfully, of her. And I unexpectedly find myself telling her about how I am questioning my gender, and explaining that it's kind of scary and I don't even really know what I want just yet.

But in hindsight, upon reconsideration, only one of those statements was true: I would have spoken more accurately to describe myself as yes, still unsure of my gender identity, but quite certain of wanting to be with her always.

She says she's only attracted to men and that could mean a number of things. I have many other friends who are also attracted to men, and they say that they like guys who are very tall, or have broad shoulders, or big hands. And I've always wanted to be very tall, and have broad shoulders, and big hands. But you know, it's just not in the cards for me. And that's... reality.

She said she was only attracted to men, and that could mean a number of things but it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter what it *could* mean because what matters is that what it really meant –and all it really *means* –is that she's not attracted to me and she never will be.

What matters is that I will never ever matter to *her* the way that she –the way she shouldn't matter to me.

But she does.

She matters because I'm an idiot.

I'm an idiot because I think I know what I want in life but the truth is, I know absolutely nothing.

The heart is more deceitful than all else

And is desperately sick;

Who can understand it?¹

¹Jer. 17:9 (NASB)

A very sad girl

¹Rom. 1:20-23 (NASB)

Idk why I just can't accept it and surrender my desires to God.
It is the smart thing to do but I just can't let go of the small
glimmering possibility

- (I) 1 Questa forma riammirata, sempre più
this form readmired always more
'This form, admired ever more'
- 2 ma mai abbastanza ...
but (n)ever sufficiently ...
'but never enough...'
- 3 Lei è un continente di cui i bordi sembrano
she is a continent of which the borders THEY^{5, 6}-seem
'She is a continent whose borders seem'
- 4 di essere stati stabiliti da Lui che è sia
of TO⁷-be been established by him who is both
'to have been established by Him who is both'

¹Rom. 1:24-25 (NASB)

²Jas. 4:4 (NASB)

³Rom. 8:6 (NIV)

⁴Rom. 8:6b (NASB)

⁵ See Appendix E, Note on Foreign-Language Gloss.

⁶ Traditional morphological designation: (pres-act-ind-)3rd-pl

⁷ Traditional morphological designation: (pres-act-)inf

- 5 l' artista più bravo che il compartitore più giusto,
the artist more great than the partitioner more just
'the greatest artist and the most just partitioner,'
- 6 poiché ognuno di essi è un capolavoro di completo
since each of these is a masterpiece of complete
'since each one is a masterpiece completely'
- 7 mancante di linee mal aggiustate, così che
lacking of lines poorly righted, such that
'without a stroke out of place, such that'
- 8 ciascuno di essi non sia costa malfatta
each of these not MIGHT¹ be coast malformed
'every one of them is no malformed coast'
- 9 ma riva bellissima agli occhi dell' orfano,
but shore MOST²- beautiful to the eyes of the orphan,
'but a shore most beautiful in the eyes of the orphan'
- 10 che sempre cercava il paese in cui
that always WAS³-SEARCHING³- for the country in which
'who had always been searching for the country where'
- 11 si sarebbe sentito a casa,
himself HE-WOULD⁴-be felt at home
'he would feel at home,'
- 12 che avrebbe fatto all' anima rianimarsi
that WOULD⁵- have made to the soul TO-ITSELF⁶- reanimate
'that would make his soul come to life'
- 13 e al cuore battere con passione.
and to the heart TO³-beat with passion
'and his heart beat with passion.'

¹ Traditional morphological designation: (pres-act-)subj(-3rd-sg)

² Traditional morphological designation: sup(-fem-sg)

³ Traditional morphological designation: impf(-act-ind-3rd-sg)

⁴ Traditional morphological designation: (pres-act-)cond-3rd-sg

⁵ Traditional morphological designation: (pres-act-)cond(-3rd-sg)

⁶ Traditional morphological designation: (pres-)refl-inf-3rd-sg

You could have heard my jaw drop
from a million miles away.

As far as I'm aware
I'm now discovering
for the first time ever
that someone could be
so exciting to behold –
but as far as I'm aware,
in this moment
there is hardly anything else
of which to be aware.

And I can't help but think that I want to know
her the way Adam knew Eve, because she
is so enthralling.

My God. Wow.

This is what it means to me to be attracted to a girl.

When she stands she draws her feet together, closing the space that separates arch from arch, so that they meet beneath her neatly like milk and cookies, so like one another yet opposite, counterparts and yet two parts of the same whole. Then from that fitting junction rise her calves, twin columns sleek yet sturdy. Of these the subtle divergent trajectory foreshadows the more striking strokes dictated by the breadth of pelvis that enlists her femurs in the work of rendering outwardly visible that much-admired quality, femininity. And indeed, there is little that inspires more awe than this regal mark of so elegantly embodied womanhood.

But while lesser in glory than its object, the forerunner is nonetheless a delight in that it renders its fulfillment more fulfilling through the instillment of anticipation. Thus her calves partake in and enhance the splendor of the expanses of leg that they support, serving as a promise of something both fulfillment and consummation, as John the Baptist did who prepared the way for the Lord and, in doing so, shared in the glory of the divine.

Her flanks seem to beckon to me with their sensuous convexity, like two hairpin markings in a symphonic masterpiece promising a thrilling surge that overtakes the senses. The apex of this crescendo is at her core, towards which it seems to funnel the searing coils of energy I can feel roiling in mine like a snake ready to strike, sinuous and serpentine and restless.

The air is alight with something primitive
that congeals into flame on its way down my windpipe
but I scarcely notice it as I watch her emerge from her garment
the way one might watch bread rise
in a time-lapse video,
except instead of being accelerated, time
seems to have stopped
She pauses

I wonder if the universe, too, is holding its breath

at the sight of how she looks
halfway half-dressed,
how her jeans are pressing into her
plush hips and upper thighs,
suspended only by the elegant
curvature of her form.

From shoulders delicately statuesque
to hips robust in all their poise
to calves thickly elegant,
she is the perfect balance of softness
and definition,
and I find myself mesmerized by the way
everything moves when she moves and even
a little bit after.

I want to touch her both everywhere
and nowhere, both right now and never
because I almost can't stand just watching
because I feel like I could watch her do this forever;
it freezes me on the spot
even as it lights me on fire,
the way the swell of her thighs
burgeons out, against,
around the cuffs of those blessed shorts,
this the ripe fruition
of their girth, their spread,
their rise

and the place where these meet
one another and press close
in kinship to me seems to invoke
the sacred manifestation
of desire incarnate.

There is nothing I want more than to feel
those full, gorgeous legs and supple hips
under my palms, my fingers,
my everything

and I can't help but think
that she is either indisputable
evidence of intelligent design
or the very consummation of
the evolution of the human race.

My God. Wow.

This is what it means to me to be attracted to a girl.

My God.

Yes. If I woke up tomorrow as a cis man I would be happy

I think my life would still be uncertain and I would still be afraid of the future a little

But it would be better.

Would I press the button? Yes

If it made me a cis man.

I wish the button were real

So that I could have a functioning penis and make sperm

If I were a cis man I could be at peace

With myself

I could be a man and not question if I really was

If I were a cis man I could also be a straight man without having to feel like I was gay and needed to surrender it to God

I want the button

I want to die

Idk why I just can't accept it

It is the smart thing to do but I just can't let go

So, what am I supposed to do, huh? Just unequivocally give up everything for something that's only ambiguously true? Where the main reason why we know it's not false is because it's not falsifiable?

"Made the truth evident"? What kind of "evident" is this, excuse me? You'd think that you'd make it a little bit clearer which one is the truth.

I mean, look. If the wishy-washy self-affirmers are right then that makes this fundamentalist dogma toxic and why allow the proliferation of a poison?

- (II) 1 Entre poisson et serpent,
 between fish and snake
 'Fish, snake...'
- 2 qu' importe si ton fil
 what IT-matters if your son
 'What's the point, if your son'
- 3 ne peut pas les distinguer?
 can not them TO-differentiate
 'can't tell the difference (between them)?'

But if the fundamentalists are right then why the frick do some people get to be wishy-washy self-affirmers and live in blissful ignorance and feel like they're just obeying the Holy Spirit?

- (III) 1 On reconnaît les loupes par ses fruits,
one recognizes the wolves by their fruits
'One recognizes wolves by their fruits,'
- 2 mais un loup peut-il se reconnaître
but a wolf can he himself TO-recognize
'but can a wolf recognize himself'
- 3 si les loupes mangent pas la fruit?
if the wolves THEY-eat not the fruit
'if wolves don't eat fruit?'

- (IV) 1 Alors « entrez par la porte étroite »
Then enter by the door narrow
'So then, "enter by the narrow gate"...'
- 2 mais on sait pas si on y soit entré!
but one knows not if one there MAY-be entered
'but there's no telling whether you're in or not!'

What's the point of having the abundant life if you can't even really tell if the "abundant life" that you have is the real one? What do you really get from "having to life to the full" if you can't even really tell if you're actually doing it or not?

Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies¹.

¹ 1 Cor. 6:19-20 (NIV)

LORD, I know that people's lives are not their own; it is not for them to direct their steps².

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and BURNED³.

²Jer. 10:23 (NIV)

³Jn. 15:1-7 (NIV)

For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and BURNED in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error¹.

- (V) 1 Queste terre in Te rese impopolate di popoli,
 these lands in you rendered impopulated of peoples
- 2 di persone secondo il gran disegno Tuo!
 of persons according to the grand design your
- 3 Da Te create, O Iniziatore, e tutte programmate
 by you created O initiator and all programmed
- 4 tutto per eseguire la Tua buona volontà;
 all for TO-execute the your good will
- 5 tutte riservate per l' aumento della Tua gloria!
 all reserved for the augmentation of the your glory

Woe to the one who quarrels with his Maker– An earthenware vessel among the vessels of earth²!

Yeah but Why can't I just do what I'm supposed to do and surrender to God?

¹Rom. 1:26-27 (NASB)

²Isa. 45:9 (NASB)

I haven't even tried

I have. not. tried.

Because I don't frickin want to

No,

I am not trying to please others

I am just trying to be at peace

With my own self

And I don't think i can be

It's too late

I'm stuck with the beliefs that I have

I cannot get away from them

They prevent me from being at peace but pushing them away makes me not at peace too

There is no way

The only way to have peace is to accept that life is not about happiness and just give up everything, self-denial

I have not tried it

I don't want to

The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace.

Submit therefore to God. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and

purify your hearts, you double-minded¹.

You are confused.

You think the clay is equal to the potter.

You think that an object can tell the one who made it,

“You didn’t make me.”

This is like a pot telling its maker

“You don’t know anything².

On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, “Why did you make me like this,” will it? Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use³?

- (VI) 1 È il re a fare le regole;
 HE-is the king at/to TO-make the rules
 ‘The ruler is the one who makes the rules,’
- 2 e lottare con l’ autore
 and TO-argue with the author
 ‘and to squabble with the scriptwriter’
- 3 della dramma è ammaccarsi,
 of the drama is TO-get crushed/bruised oneself
 ‘of the drama is to get yourself all messed up,’
- 4 disfunzione perché la funzione di ogni personaggio
 disfunction because the function of every character

¹Rom. 8:6-8 (NIV)

²Isa. 29:16 (NCV)

³Rom. 9:20-21 (NASB)

'to jam the works because the "way that works" for every character'

- 5 fu scelta prima che fu la scena
was chosen before that was the scene
'was decided long before the scene ever came into being,'
- 6 e non sei tu capace di cambiare nulla.
and not YOU-are you capable of TO-change nothing
'and you can't change a thing about anything.'
- 7 Si è assegnato il ruolo dell' Orefice
TO-himself is assigned the role of the goldsmith
'He gave himself the role of the Goldsmith'
- 8 e a noi quello dell' oro impuro;
and to us that of the gold impure
'and gave us the role of the impure gold;'
- 9 Lui è il Vasaio e siamo noi i vasi
he HE-is the potter and WE-are we the vases
'he's the potter and we're the clay pots,'
- 10 di creta, e decretò l' operaio
of clay, and decreed the workman
'and the craftsman declared'
- 11 fin dall' inizio che le sue opere
since/until/even from the beginning that the his works
'right from the start that his products of his craftsmanship'
- 12 dovrebbero suonare la sua sinfonia.
THEY-should TO-play the his symphony
'ought to play his symphony.'

Left alone to our own devices, we are not what we should be, because God alone enables us to fulfill his design for our lives.

So if something's not in the cards for you, that just means that you weren't given that role to play... and that's ok!

There is no wisdom, no insight, no plan that can succeed against the LORD¹.

Woe to the one who quarrels with his Maker– An earthenware vessel among the vessels of earth²!

This is what it means to me to be attracted to a girl:

It means wanting to kiss her because I'm otherwise a germaphobe but she seems clean to me for some reason.

It means wanting to date her because I'm otherwise uninterested in marriage but she seems different to me for some reason.

It means wanting to die because I'm otherwise not suicidal but this situation seems hopeless to me for some reason.

(VII) 1 Perché non mi posso sposare
 because/why not myself I-can TO-marry

2 con le... ideazioni che ho.
 with the ideations that I-have

Idk why I just can't accept it

And just surrender my desires to God

I know the smart thing to do is desist

¹Prov. 21:30 (NIV)

²Isa. 45:9 (NASB)

Just try to live as a woman until I become suicidal

Transition is last resort only

Idk I was okay before I started questioning my gender, I think

It is the smart thing to do but I just can't let go of the small glimmering possibility that maybe

Just for the same reason I can't let go and surrender everything to God

No

You wait until you become suicidal

As long as life is livable, do not transition

Because until you are suicidal, you don't need it

I am not suicidal

I am okay

I want to die

Life is agony

Nothing is good

Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him¹.

*Father, if thou be willing,
Take this cup from me².
However not what I desire, but what you desire³.
not my will but Thine be done⁴!*

No.

I want to die

But I am not going to kill myself

So yes I am not suicidal but I do want to die

I would be relieved if you told me with sure certainty that I was going to die in a freak accident tomorrow

¹Mk. 14:35 (NIV)

²Mk. 14:36a (Weymouth New Testament)

³Lk. 22:42b (World English Bible)

⁴Lk. 22:42b (Weymouth New Testament)

I am not faking

This is real

Wait

What if I *am* faking

Maybe I am just pretending to want to die

I don't really want to die

I am just being overdramatic to get attention

So that I can make this whole thing a melodramatic event

And delay having to surrender to God

Idk why I just can't accept it

And just surrender my desires to God

I think it is because I am selfish and am holding onto the idea that maybe it is ok

I am stubborn and wanting to live my life my way

I am being bad

This is why I am unhappy

True peace comes from surrendering our will to God

The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace.

Submit therefore to God. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded¹.

And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them².

(VIII) 1 Ma perche? Perché...?
 but why/because why/because

2 Perché non mi posso sposare con le ideazioni che ho?
 why/because not myself I-can TO-marry with the ideations that I-have

'My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou.'³

¹Rom. 8:6-8 (NIV)

²Rom. 1:28-32 (NASB)

³Matt. 26:39 (Young's Literal Translation)

“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me⁴. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it⁵.

But what if I can be happy without transitioning? I should try before I ruin my life.

Especially if God is not on my side. If I am running away from God it will certainly go wrong

I will have horrible vaginal atrophy and permanent lesions

I will have very fast balding and grow no facial or body hair

I will not grow at all and my bone structure will not change.

My face will not change much and I will not pass

I cannot run away from God. He will find me. He will not give up. He will have his way. I will not win. I will be sad until I surrender.

There is no wisdom, no insight, no plan that can succeed against the LORD⁶.

I will regret everything

⁴Lk. 9:23 (NIV)

⁵Mk. 8:34-35 (NIV)

⁶Rom. 8:6-8 (NIV)

My voice and receded hairline will make me want to die. I will have carpal tunnel from soft tissue growth without bone growth. I will have a permanently compromised immune system and will acquire endometriosis. I will have some weird cancer and die

I don't know. Worst case scenario

No, the worst case scenario is having to live wishing I had never transitioned. I want to die. I can never be a man. I don't feel like one. I have a girl body and a girl voice I am a girl. A very sad girl.

I can never be a man.

I know there are people who say they have been on T for many years but the detransitioners say it is not feasible

It is a lie. Trans is not real. And even if it is, I am not.

I am not trans. I am a lie. I am just convincing myself I am a boy. And I have not even convinced myself.

God does not see me as his son, he sees me as his daughter. I am a daughter. I am a girl. There is nothing male about me. I am just a masculine girl

I know

I just know

I cannot see it any other way

I have tried

Because it is reality.

On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God¹?

For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen².

No. I do not “see” myself as a girl

I do not see myself

But I do feel “at ease” referring to myself with girl words

I am a daughter. I am a girl.

I do not feel the guilt

¹Rom. 9:20a (NASB)

²Rom. 1:25 (NASB)

I do not feel dishonest and dirty when I say those things

It is right. It is good. It is true.

I do not want to be but it feels right

It is correct.

It is the right answer.

Because it is true.

If I say otherwise I am faking.

I am not trans

I am confused

And while it is true that I would prefer a male body and would very much like to have a penis

To have the full male experience

I do not feel that I "need" these things in and of themselves

I am merely sad because the girl I like doesn't like me back because I have a girl body

No

I am a girl but I just wish I had a boy body

This does not mean that I was meant to have one

It is horrifying to think that

But it is true, I fear

It is terrible to think of

But the truth can sometimes be terrifying

But it is still true :/

I am not trans. I am a confused butch lesbian.

I mistakenly conflate maleness with masculinity and have internalized misogyny so I think I cannot have a masculine personality and be a girl and not just be a cheap imitation of a man.

I have a long history of being sexually attracted to straight girls and am romantically attracted to a straight woman and this is the real reason for my envy of cis male bodies.

I was GNC¹ as a child and wanted a male body and secondary sex characteristics.

But that sort of went away as I grew up.

I wanted to use male pronouns in early elementary school but that went away too I think

¹Gender-non-conforming.

I envy male physical superiority and wish I had larger hands.

I do not have chest dysphoria, I have merely made a sad attempt at convincing myself that I do.

I do not truly believe that I do

Thus I am not trans, I am a confused butch lesbian

I am not a butch lesbian, I am a confused feminine heterosexual girl.

I have pride and do not wish to swallow the tough truth that women are supposed to be subordinate to men and cannot be masculine without being a sorry imitation of men, a hollow knockoff inferior in performance and not suitable in function

I am not even really masculine, I just try to forget my feminine inclinations and impulses because I have “learned” that masculinity is superior to femininity.

I’m also not even really attracted to women, I merely want to be so that i may avoid having to acknowledge the existence of the superior and superordinate male.

The fact that I feel like being around males threatens my masculinity and pressures me to be feminine is proof

And I feel that it is impossible to be attractive to men as a masculine woman, and this is why I erroneously try to fill the shoes of a man even though I have much too small feet because I am not made to wear men’s shoes because I am not a man nor am I intended to wear masculine clothing

I am feminine. I am heterosexual. I am a woman.

I do not accept and embrace this because I am proud and wish to do things my way and feel good about myself.

This is evil

Okay fine. I can't disprove that. But you can't prove that it's true, either!

No. You do not know that. You cannot prove that nothing about me is evil.

That's what you believe but the Bible does not agree

What if I am not really who or what or how I think I am?

You are right, it is good to be who you are.

But you are wrong, it is not good to be who you *think* you are if who you *think* you are is wrong

We don't determine our own destiny. The maker makes our fate.

Yeah. I know. I know there are billions of other fish in the sea, but none of them are her.

And if I had just one wish, I would wish for her
to be happy,
whether or not I can ever be part of making that happen.

Because I like her the way she is,
and if who or what you want
is part of who you are then —well then
that means that if I want her to stay her,
then I wouldn't want to change the fact that she doesn't want me.
Because when they say that if I really care about her then I won't hold her back
from being true to herself, they mean that if I really love who she is, if I really love
her, then I won't try to make *her* love *me*.

And when *I* say that I want her to be happy I mean *her*, and not some
stranger who didn't exist until I made some stupid wish.

I wish I didn't exist.

No. I'm not a man.

I'm just a friggen girl who's just sad because a straight girl didn't like her back

I'm not trans

I'm not even attracted to women, it's just a weird fetish and not a wholesome attraction like the one I (should) have towards men

I want to die

I do not wish to live

Screw everything

I want to die

I will never frickin ever be free

Idk

I don't think they will

And if they do get better it will be because I changed

I'm afraid

I wish I were a cis man. Then I could be myself. Or maybe it would be somebody else.

I wish I were a normal gender-conforming straight cis girl. Then I could be somebody else —or maybe it would be myself?

I used to say that I wished I were good at something, because then I could be somebody

and maybe feel like I had made it somewhere in life. But now I realize I just wish I were dead already,

because then I wouldn't have to be *anybody*.

And Christianity promises that if you just die to yourself then God'll give you a peace that passes understanding but what I don't get about that is if the only way to be at peace with yourself is to end your self then *what's the friggin point?*

If I have to die in order to truly be alive, if I have to commit suicide by deity to get real peace of mind, then I really don't see why it would be preferable to allow myself to be evicted from my own existence so that somebody else can enjoy it —because how can you insist I just give up all the things I've ever wished, as if it's nothing to demand that I desist from *everything I dare hold dear* —No! You can't expect me to go along with this crap until it you make it clear why it makes sense. Why would I want to die so that the “self” of someone else can live my life but with a peace I've never felt, when I can just skip the heartache, end it now, and just —rest in it myself?

“Who sinned so that this man was born blind?”

No one

Who sinned so that I was born seeing
this way?

It is better to enter life maimed
than to have all of you cast into hell;

"If your right eye causes you to stumble in lust
Pluck it out

All of you,
Put to death all of your passions
all of you

A full-body amputation
down past the marrow
to the soul

I want to bleed out all my sadness, to
either bleed until

I am no longer sad
or bleed until

I am no longer.

I am a pervert, confused

There is nothing pure
and everything corrupt
about my
desire

My

God.

This is what it means to me to be attracted to a girl:

It means having to accept the cruel, mocking reality that it is depraved
and ugly,

the passion I would express for this girl
if such a divine beauty could ever want such a thing.

It means having to accept that it is evil and twisted,
the allegiance I would swear to her,

if someone so good and so straight could ever want it;

It means having to accept that it is only a grotesque

parody of the noble thing of which
it is a contemptible imitation and
a malignant fake,
a hollow As-Seen-On-TV gimmick
that reeks of the devil
and false advertising
and fraud;
that it
is all I am capable of giving
and, to speak truthfully, it
is not really even that.

My God

This is what it means to me to be attracted to a girl.

God, why! Why. Why!

(IX) 1 Perché non mi posso sposare
 why/because not myself I-can To-marry

 2 con lei?
 with her

Why can't I be who I want? Why can't I? Why not?

Why can't I just have what I want?!

Why can't I just have who I...

Idk why I just can't accept it

And just surrender my desires to God

I think it is because I am selfish and am holding onto the idea that maybe it is ok

Idk why I just can't accept it

It is the smart thing to do but I just can't let go of the small glimmering possibility that maybe

I am okay.

I am not suicidal.

I want to die

But I am not going to kill myself

Just for the same reason I can't let go and surrender everything to God

It is the smart thing to do but I just can't let go

CHAPTER FOUR

Composer's Reflection and Vision

Personal Reflection

Writing this piece has given me insight on the deep interconnections between these facets of my personal life and the fundamental common threads (death/surrender, persistence, hopeful despair and woefully resilient optimism) that run through them all. Due to the personal nature of virtually every aspect of the work, it was not always easy to revisit day after day; yet, as you see in the piece, I found myself (simultaneously against and in accord with my will) compelled to dig yet deeper and pursue still further the answers, elusive as they may seem. This often caused stress and, yes, despair. I discovered that when deliberately attempting to multiply an emotion “times fifty” so that you can write music that might induce that same emotion in others, it is not so easy to keep those feelings from becoming a “real” experience for you as well. Many days, I would be consumed with a drive to resolve whichever issue was addressed in the section I’d been working on that week. Of course, I knew had three other threads to worry about as well; but that didn’t mean I didn’t strongly desire to figure out the most recently-examined one as soon as possible!

Yet in many ways, this additional time to turn these ideas over in my head (and, on the flipside, marinate my mind in them!) has been, as they say, “therapeutic” and helpful. The idea of the four threads and what they have in common –which is a revelation I had while working on *Colpa di Fulmine* –has given me a framework with which to conceptualize those aspects of my life. As someone who has difficulty picking out the meat of the matter from

the details, this big-picture lens has been a huge help in learning to identify what these struggles are really “about”. Working on *Colpa* not only brought me to identify those four main threads and to be able to identify in simple terms exactly what they are, but it also took me through the steps I needed to take in order to truly understand exactly what they are threads of.

In Hindsight, Moving Forward

As of the writing of this reflection, the music is not yet complete. While I have everything set up (VST racks and routing, grouping into output buses and FX channels to manage plug-ins for reverb and spatialization as well as equalization and other frequency-related adjustments) in Cubase (my DAW of choice) for the scoring process, all of the music that has been written was done in a separate program, Finale. In keeping with my plans, I wrote the parts that correspond to the brass, strings, piano, and accordion in Finale, due to the intuitiveness of writing on a five-line staff the music for instruments that might read such notation. I’ll be writing the synth parts and working on the more sound-design-type aspects of the score in Cubase, which does have a “score” view but is best suited for notation through the “piano roll interface”. I also have yet to export in MIDI format the parts I wrote in Finale so that I can import them into Cubase, where I can much more easily tweak parameters such as dynamics, articulation type, tone color, bowing direction, accordion registers, etcetera.

Changes to the tempo alterations will also be made. I wrote the music by scoring to an audiorecording of myself reading through the text. In Finale, where program limitations made it unfeasible to create smooth tempo alterations (accelerandos, ritardandos, and rubato) while still being able to judge at all times the position of the music relative to the position in the au-

dio file. In Cubase, more organic tempo changes are quite simple to accomplish. Furthermore, sometimes I did not pause long enough in the recording between paragraphs or sections. Since unlike Cubase, Finale does not allow editing of audio files, rather than edit the recording in another program (such as Audacity) then re-import into Finale (and have to estimate exactly how *much* silence to insert) or cut off a section of music and make a note to add the remaining measures later, I opted to write the full number of bars but “compress” the music to fit in the available temporal space by doubling, tripling, quintupling, etc. the tempo. In Cubase, I will be able to edit the audio and insert silences or stretch out portions of the reading; thus, I will remove the compressive tempo changes in the music and space out the audio as necessary.

In terms of the typesetting of this document, I would like to add more color-coding to the analysis sections to further aid comprehension, write an additional section explaining 12-tone matrices as well as their use in the piece, and add a more “play-by-play” analysis of the usage of the various instruments and types of material in the work (to accompany the more abstract, non-sequential explanation of these elements that has already been written).

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Never At All

Man had to be before he could fall; perhaps being at peace means not being at all.	2
Along with everything else I'd lack if I were not, that he take this my request is all I ask of God.	4
Everything hurts but nothing, it seems — so <i>never at all</i> is how I'd like to be:	6
To hold no hopes tight that loss would lose; to tell no lies, and invent no truths;	8
To have no dreams and no desires, alight with no wants and consumed by no fires;	10
To shed no blood and bleed no tears, suffer no loves and feel no fears	12
To be known by no name and defined by no body, to hear no enemy scoff, or in agreement applaud me;	14
To decry no injustice and lament no joys, aspiring to no gender and dreading no ploys;	16
To be fond of no beauty and ache for no soul — no "special", nor someone	18
"no one alone.	
To endure no past, and bear no future, shoulder no confidence, and surpass no rebuker;	20
To trust in no logic, reason out no religion, to chance for no praise, and embrace no affliction;	22
To give rise to no scrutiny and withstand no doubt, inspire no disappointment and face no faceless crowd.	24
To be borne by no force and attempt no resistance, exposed not the highs nor the woes of existence;	26
To be free from all pleasure, propelled by no pain, marked by no fissure and marred by no stain;	28
To be gifted no victory and subject to no loss, incur debt with no man and contend with no God.	30
<i>Never at all</i> is how I'd like to be, for with every respite there come ten more defeats.	32
I want what I mustn't, try to win what I can't; I can't cut my losses tied to false hopes of chance.	34
It would have been better had no hands been dealt — I don't mind what I'm not, but I can't face myself	36

APPENDIX B

The Battle Hymn of the Republic

1. Mine eyes have seen the coming of the glory of the Lord;
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored. 2
He has loosed the fearful lightning of His terrible swift sword;
His truth is marching on. 4

REFRAIN Glory, glory, hallelujah;
 Glory, glory, hallelujah; 6
Glory, glory, hallelujah;
His truth is marching on! 8

APPENDIX C

Fundamentals for Understanding 12-tone Music

Background: Tonal Music and “Functional” Harmony

Most Western music (including everything from the pop/rock charts to Bach and Mozart) falls under the category of tonal music, meaning it has a “tonal center” where it is most stable and tends to settle. Harmonically, it follows patterns of tension and release that the ear “expects” to always eventually lead back to that tonal center. Melodically speaking, tonal music often sticks to the pattern of pitches found in what is commonly known as the “major scale”. If you’ve ever heard someone singing a scale starting with “Do Re Mi” and ending with Do again, it was most likely the major scale. Atonal music, on the other hand, does not gravitate towards any tonal center. In atonal music, the harmony is not constrained to the framework of functionality; it does not have to follow the predictable patterns of tonal music. Atonal music is also less bound by rules in terms of melody. Unlike tonal music, it doesn’t necessarily have to obey any particular scale. Portions of an atonal work may sound like or pay homage to tonal patterns of melody or harmony, but they don’t have to stay there and are free to tap into a more varied palette at any point.

Atonal Music

Pitches and Pitch Classes

One technique composers use to write atonal music involves the use of “pitch classes”. In the United States, musicians often refer to different notes by using letter names (A, B, C, D, E, F, and G) for the “white keys” on the piano, and a letter name and “sharp” or “flat” (A#/Bb, C#/Db, D#/Eb, F#/Gb, and G#/Ab) for the “black keys” on the piano. Those seven letters are sufficient to name any note on a piano because the sequence repeats endlessly (A B C D E F G A B C D E F G A...). Figure C.1 shows the sequence repeating over four octaves on a standard piano keyboard.

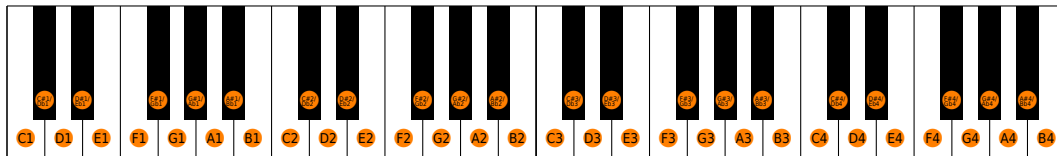


Figure C.1 – Piano keys labeled with the letter names that correspond to their notes

To distinguish between different pitches with the same letter name, octave numbering is often used in addition to the note name, as shown in Figure C.1. The distance between A1 and A2 is a distance of one octave – the same distance between the low Do and the high Do in the major scale mentioned in the first paragraph. Due to the way the ear perceives differences in sound wave frequencies, octaves tend to sound “the same but different”: Two people with very different vocal ranges (a young girl and a grown man, for instance) can sing the same melody (such as “Happy Birthday”) together, even though they probably don’t sing in the same octave. Because of this similarity, we can consider, for example, all As to share a special kind of sameness that they do not share with notes that are not As. The technical

term for this is that they are part of the same pitch class: All As belong to pitch class A, all Bs belong to pitch class B, and so on.

In atonal music, rather than using note names to refer to the notes (A, B, C, D...), it is common to use numerals to denote the pitch class, beginning with C as 0. Thus all Cs belong to pitch class 0, all C#s belong to pitch class 1, and so on. Figure C.2 shows four octaves like the previous figure, but labels them with the numerical convention rather than with note names. (Note that octave numbering is not included in this second figure.)

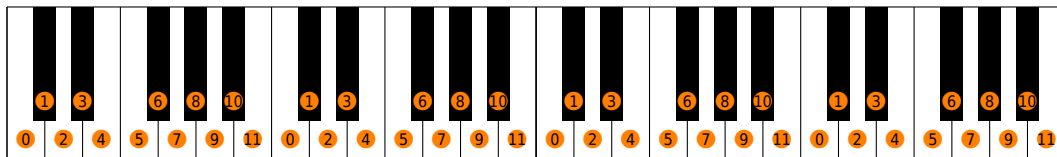


Figure C.2 – Piano keys labeled with the pitch class numbers that correspond to their notes

APPENDIX D

Explanation of Foreign-Language Content

Colpa di Fulmine contains a number of short stretches of text that are not in English. These sections not only reflect and showcase the composer's affinity for wordplay and for the languages used, but also connect to the themes of the work (musically and conceptually) in several dimensions. While the in-text interlinear gloss and translation should aid comprehension, the lengthier discussion below will provide a more thorough treatment of a few aspects of that interconnectivity. (The very curious reader will be pleased to hear that not all the "dimensions" of these portions will be discussed here, and that some of the most meaningful and intricate of these will remain unnamed and left for private discovery.)

French

The three French parts are relatively short (only a few sentences each, at the most) but they trace the speaker's train of thought while simultaneously dialoguing with the seventh chapter of the book of Matthew. In the English portions of this section, the speaker questions and challenges the ideas that underpin Matthew 7; in the French portions, they engage with the passage more explicitly and directly, effectively turning the passage on its head. They use punnery and double meanings to create unconventional combinations that serve to highlight the oft-overlooked issues that this passage might pose... depending on the reader and their interpretation, of course! (Which, as it becomes clear over the course of this section of the piece, is at least as much of a problem as it is a solution.)

In Matthew chapter seven, the passage that this section engages, Jesus promises that those who “seek...will find” the truth, “[f]or everyone who asks receives...and to him who knocks it will be opened” (NASB, Matt. 7:7-8). To support this claim, Jesus asserts the goodness and trustworthiness of God: “[W]hat man among is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he?” (NASB, Matt. 7:9-10). This rhetorical question, along with statements of similar doctrinal meaning, are among the factors that prompt the speaker to irritatedly point out that the clarity that Jesus promises seems to come more from staunchly-maintained convictions that the “other side” must be wrong than from undeniable proof of the correctness of one’s own views. Echoing Romans 1 (quoted verbatim earlier in the work), where the Apostle Paul describes the descent of an evil people into depravity marked by homosexuality and the exchange of God-based wisdom and pursuits for sinful ones, the speaker asks “what kind of ‘evident’” truth the current situation is supposed to offer. Romans 1 states that because God “made [the truth] evident to them”, the fallen are “without excuse”; the speaker wonders if the thick confusion they perceive, which seems to be unavoidable for anyone who has not taken shelter (and possibly taken up arms) on one of the poles, might be a manifestation of what God considers sufficiently “evident” truth. There is evident truth, all right—the problem is that there’s more than one truth that seems evident (albeit to different groups), and they seem to be at odds with each other.

This builds off of the preceding exposition of ideas (romantic and sexual orientation, and gender identity) and introduces another element, Christian doctrine. As explained in Section 1.3.1, there are multiple viewpoints within Christian thought on these topics, and many are quite opposite to

one another. Immediately prior to this section, the speaker wonders why they “can’t just accept it” (implied “and surrender my desires to God”, cf. the other repetitions of this line and the mention of surrender a few lines before). This section seems to show that at least part of the reason why they have not yet done so, and thus gone along with the more “traditional” views, is because they do not know for certain that those views are the correct ones. They express frustration with God over this fact, pitting “fundamentalist dogma” (non-affirming Christians) against the “wishy-washy self-affirmers” (affirming Christians)¹.

This leads the speaker to ask two questions (presumably to God). The first of these is inspired by the self-righteous self-assuredness of the “fundamentalists”, asking why God would “allow the proliferation of a poison” by continuing to affirm their sense of uprightness and thereby permitting these Christians to use their clear consciences as evidence of the soundness of the doctrine that they uphold. The French sentence (Foreign-Language Portion II) that follows this¹ uses the English word “poison” (describing the possibly “toxic” teachings of the fundamentalists) that occurs at the end of the preceding English paragraph as a launching point to the above-discussed portion of Matthew 7, where the Greek word that is translated as “fish” in English is rendered in most French translations of the Bible as *poisson* (“fish”). The point of this odd wordplay is essentially to underscore the absurdity of the situation: Jesus reasons that a loving father would never give a son who

¹See the discussion on Christianity and LGBT matters in the document body for a more detailed treatment of this subject.

¹*Entre poisson et serpent, qu’importe si ton fil ne peut pas les distinguer?* (“Fish, snake... What’s the point, if your son can’t tell the difference [between them]?”)

asks for a fish a snake instead; but perhaps it doesn't matter so much which one the son receives if, like the bumbling Christians who wage war against one another with cotton stuffed in their ears so as to avoid contamination from the other side's ideas, he is unable to tell the difference between the truth (a fish) and a harmful lie (a snake). The two sides make opposite claims about sexuality and gender; one must be right, and have the fish, while the other must have the snake—and thus is also unwittingly sowing poison and bad doctrine.

The following French sections double down on Matthew 7, folding the passage in on itself in an unconventional manner. The second French section (Foreign-Language Portion III) references the part of the passage where Jesus assures his followers that they will be able to identify false teachers, whom he characterizes as wolves in sheep's clothing, "by their fruits". Many affirming Christians point to this passage to support their position, reasoning that the non-affirming position has caused harm ("bad fruit") to gay Christians, or more commonly, that what they identify as the work of the Holy Spirit ("good fruit") in the lives of gay Christians is evidence of the continuing work of God in and through them. They say that to embrace lifelong abstinence is to shoulder a man-made burden in the name of legalism; the lines that restrict acceptable orientations to heterosexuality were not drawn by God, they argue, but by humans, and the freedom of the "abundant life" is found in allowing themselves to live outside of those mistakenly-drawn lines. At the same time, however, non-affirming Christians would say that to engage in a romantic and/or sexual relationship with someone of the same gender is to embrace an orientation that is against the will of God and is therefore sinful. What same-sex-attracted Christians ought to do, they say, is abstain. They argue that because Christians who refuse to ab-

stain from same-sex relationships are willfully continuing to sin, it's impossible for such Christians to be aligned with God or to be enjoying the benefits of the "abundant life" (see below).

The speaker criticizes the nebulous nature of the "good fruit" vs "bad fruit" dichotomy. The Bible promises doctrinal clarity in such simple terms, but the passages that make these reassurances give frustratingly little clarity when each of two opposing sides cites those very passages as corroborative of their own correctness and of the other side's error. Each side would believe themselves to be the true teachers, the bearers of good fruit who are by nature of their rightness unable to bear bad fruit; and each side would believe the other to be the wolves, who by means of a façade dupe innocent churchgoers into accepting their bad-fruit false teachings as good and true. Yet neither side feels as though *they* are the ones masquerading as something they are not; they both feel (or would appear to feel) genuine, and feel the other to be therefore somewhat less so. Thus, in Foreign-Language Portion IV the speaker raises the question: *[U]n loup peut-il se reconnaître si les loupes mangent pas la fruit?* ("[C]an a wolf recognize himself if wolves don't eat fruit?"). That is—all jokes aside—do false teachers know that they are false teachers? Do the blind know they are blind as they lead each other into a ditch? If the masquerade is not intentional, might it be because the false teachers don't have an appreciation for (or even an awareness of the appeal of) the "real" versions of the counterfeit truths they are peddling? Perhaps it is only because they have not known real truth that they are content with their wares, understandably unable to compare the "truth" they do know with what they don't: the *true* truth. In other words: Everyone has good intentions—which naturally means that everyone else must have bad intentions...Or does it?

The last French part, Foreign-Language Portion IV builds off of lines 2 and 3 of Foreign-Language Portion II and Foreign-Language Portion III. It quotes Matthew 7:13a directly: *Entrez par la porte étroite* (“Enter by the narrow door”) (*The Bible*). In this part of the chapter, Jesus urges his followers to shirk the many wrong paths and the innumerable false teachers who advertise them, and to choose the “narrow door” (or in most English translations, the “narrow gate”) rather than the many that “lead to destruction”. After all, there are often a great many ways to be wrong —and far fewer ways to be right. The speaker’s response to this passage is (somewhat predictably) to point out the irony: Both sides not only are convinced that they are the fish-dispensing true teachers, but they also both believe themselves to have correctly identified the narrow gate that Jesus described —which naturally means that the other side, the wolves in sheep’s clothing, are unwittingly heading down the broad path to destruction.

The speaker closes this section by asking whether the point of having the abundant life is to actually have it, or just to think you have it... Because nobody really seems to know. After all, as discussed in the Overview, each side would claim that the other side could not possibly be living “life to the full” because their stances differ too far from what they perceive as “biblical truth”. This caps off the discussion of the themes in Matthew 7 and sets up for the next section, from which they will continue on in a more subtle form.

Italian

The Italian portions of *Colpa di Fulmine* serve to introduce the sections of text that follow, while maintaining a link to the sections of the work that precede them. Thus, they form a conceptual bridge between the previous section’s ideas and the surrounding material of the current section.

They are far more self-explanatory and straightforward in terms of primary-meaning comprehension¹ than the French portions, and will therefore not be discussed at much length. The first section (Foreign-Language Portion IV), along with the excerpt from Romans 1 that precedes it, kicks off the sexual attraction section of the work while echoing the sentimental tones of the romantic attraction section. The second Italian portion (Foreign-Language Portion V) makes references to creation and to God as the sovereign creator of the Earth and its peoples, who are “programmed” to carry out God’s “good will” and to further his glory (lines 3 to 5). This foreshadows the ideas explored in the next part (Foreign-Language Portion VI), which in bold cadence describes the extent of God’s plenary sovereignty by means of analogy: God is an author, and the scene was set and the roles cast long before we came to be; God is a goldsmith, and he decides what is good and what must be burned away; and God is a composer, and we must play the parts he gives us.

¹This is not to say that there are no additional layers of meaning cleverly woven into the text in these parts of the piece!

APPENDIX E

Note on Foreign-Language Gloss

The foreign-language portions of this piece use a unique linguistic gloss system devised by the composer to provide, separately from the lexical properties (definition) of the Italian and French words, information about their morphology (inflection). Both languages are inflected to a greater degree than, say, English, and some readers may not be familiar with highly technical designations of person, (grammatical) gender, number, tense, voice, reflexivity, or mood. The hybrid system retains the distinction between lexical and morphological features, but opts for more intuitively readable indications (see examples in-text) of the morphological features than is afforded by traditional glosses, and only designates “marked” features, or those that the composer felt might deviate from the default interpretation that readers might follow without further guidance (so, for example, the present tense is never labeled, nor is the indicative mood). The aim is to make the grammatical information accessible to the layperson without straying too far from the seasoned linguist’s home turf. (For the benefit of said seasoned linguists, “traditional form” equivalents to the hybrid system’s morphological designations will be given in footnotes throughout this first Foreign-Language Portion.)

GLOSSARIES

Gender and Sexuality Terms

affirming: Believing that (monogamous) homosexual and/or homoromantic relationships can be manifestations of God-given union between two consenting human adults. 5

anatomical sex: The primary sex characteristics that one had at birth, and/or the “official” sex that one was assigned at birth based on those characteristics. 6, 88, 89

detransitioner: Someone who has taken social and/or medical steps to transition to a gender other than that which generally corresponds to the sex they were assigned at birth. 9

gender: Categorization relative to the two biological sexes and the social and/or cultural norms that are typically associated with their primary and secondary characteristics and features. 6, 88

gender dysphoria: Discomfort resulting from incongruity between one’s *gender identity* and one’s *anatomical sex*. 6, 89

gender identity: One’s intuitive knowledge of the *gender* to which they belong and are most comfortable participating in; theorized to reside in the brain and develop based on exposure of the brain to various hormones *in utero* (occasionally at odds with the sex development of the rest of the body, resulting in a gender identity (or “brain sex”) that differs from one’s anatomical sex, a discrepancy that then gives rise

to *gender dysphoria*). 6, 88, 89, *see* gender

non-affirming: 5, *see* affirming

transgender: Having a *gender identity* that is not congruent with one's *anatomical sex*. 6

Musical Terms

brass: Instrument family that includes the trumpet, French horn, trombone, and tuba. 14

lead, synthesizer: 16, 89, *see* (synth) lead

pad, synthesizer: 15, 16, 89, *see* (synth) pad

synthesizer: Type of instrument that generates audio signals via analog electronic components or digital emulations of such components. 15

(*synth*) *lead*: Role played by a synthesizer producing a compact, melodic tone and typically playing just one note at a time; often is the foreground counterpart to a *synth pad*.

(*synth*) *pad*: Role played by a synthesizer producing a rich or atmospheric sound and typically playing multiple notes at once; often serves as a backdrop for a *synth lead*.

INDEX

Italian

Italian words

AMORE, 26

BUGIA, 26

CEDERE, 26

COLPA, 26

COLPO, 26

CREMORE, 26

DONNE, 26

FATTORE, 26

FULMINE, 26

FUOCO, 26

GIUDICE, 26

OREFICE, 26

PECCATO, 26

SCAMBIO, 26

SIGNORE, 26

UOMINI, 26

VASAIIO, 26

VERITÀ, 26

VOGLIA, 26

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