

Flutters of Blood Music: The Dance of the Piper and the Requiem's Glance

"This is about a certain end. Let us then hasten to begin by the end".
- 'Bearing Loss: Derrida as a Child', Jean Birnbaum, introduction to *Learning to Live Finally: The Last Interview*, Jacques Derrida

This is the Piper's requiem; a requiem both by and for the Piper. Within this symphony of blood-red spatters, inky black nights and shadowy movements, it is the skeletal fingers of the piper poised on his pipe that draw one into the rich rhythms and suspended movements of a visual requiem.

The Piper plays a song of death, the enticing tune that draws the children and the rats to their doom. Out of his pipe plays a song that precedes and leads to death; a fatal herald that becomes mirrored in a requiem that is to follow in temporal symmetry. This apocalyptic requiem is the Piper's tune, a grim reaper's summons, and the tone of the trump of doom that serves as the primary theme for each painting.

This is the Piper's requiem, this other requiem played *by* the Piper that anticipates rather than follows. But these paintings are also a requiem *for* the Piper, a play of movement and tensions that in its rhythms mirrors that primary song of death that the Piper plays. This movement, by virtue of being a requiem, necessarily follows the act of death, and while doing so also echoes that other Piper song of initial enticement and temptation that leads to damnation. While the Charon Piper, death itself, sounds his heralding trump and plays his requiem of summons and anticipation, the rhythm of the rats jigs to the golden Dies Irae and the lugubrious adagios bleed their bubonic blues.

This 'true' requiem of the paintings is being played for the Piper; it is a reflection on death, on the skeletal inkiness and the spectral shadow of the deadly minstrel that, in these diptychs, still haunts the canvas on its pipe. Suspended thus in his enticing song of death that engulfs and consumes the souls of those who follow him, the figure of the Piper simultaneously also finds *itself* consumed by the spatter of rats that overwhelm and devour him as, in the 'Charon Piper' series, he seems to shatter into starry constellations against the blind night.

These rhythmic series of paintings that shape themselves into a requiem thus take as their subject the anticipating song of death which finds itself suspended in the space of the post-death, the post-mortem. The song that leads and draws souls into following it toward impending doom, is in temporal symmetry again followed by a visual song of mourning and remembrance that refers back to it.

The suspended movements of heralding and following, anticipating and referring back, culminate in the stilled glance of the 'Scarlet Summons' where the shadowy, bloody

figure of the beckoning Piper pauses and furtively glances back at the child who follows him. This glance lingers in a space between two requiems, it pauses, caught in a quiver of stilled movement. The Piper's requiem, at once consuming and consumed, followed and following, glances back in summons and simultaneously also glances back at what has passed.

Hovering thus in the paused movement between the flight and theft of the dark dance and the echoes of a requiem that glances back, the paintings play their own tune of death that weaves through the frustrated darkness of the doom's diptychs, the jolly jigs of the trump's summons, the sneaking devilish inkiness of the minstrel, the apocalyptic silent adagios of the lugubrious gondolier and the twinkling lights of a Charon Piper written in the stars. Through this symphony of arrested movements, the bloody quill of a post-Piper pauses, dips its stylus again into the ink, and pens one last flutter of blood music.

Marija Grech