

Protest Poems

**for Narrator, Violin, Clarinet, Cello, and Piano
or Narrator and Orchestra**

Narrator part



Bill Robinson

Lyrics

I: Pity the Party

Pity the party whose people are cattle,
and whose cowboys lead them to
slaughter.

Pity the party in thrall to a criminal
messiah, with prayers for the end of the
world.

Pity the party whose demagogues are
con men, whose sages are purged, and
whose bigots dominate the media.

Pity the party that praises dictators and
acclaims the bully as hero,
and aims to dominate the world by force
and torture in the name of freedom.

Pity the party whose Gods are Money
and Guns,
and sleeps the sleep of opioids.

Pity the party that feeds on the poor and
sick, while tycoons get what they want.

Pity the party that speaks one language,
and demands purity of blood and soil for
the Aryan race.

Pity the party — oh, pity the people who
allow their rights to erode
and their freedoms to be washed away
by hatred and fear and lies and old-time
religion.

My country, tears of thee, once land of
liberty.

— Bill Robinson
(after Lawrence Ferlinghetti
(after Khalil Gibran))

II: Father Stalin, Look at This

Father Stalin, look at this
Collective farming is such bliss
The hut's in ruins, the barn's all
sagged
All the horses broken nags
And on the hut a hammer and sickle
And in the hut death and famine

Father Stalin, look at this
No cows left, no pigs at all
Just your picture on the wall
Father Stalin, look at this
Daddy and Mommy are in the grave
The poor child cries as alone he goes

Father Stalin, look at this
There's no bread and there's no fat
The party's ended all of that
Seek not the gentle nor the mild
A father has eaten his own child

Father Stalin, look at this
The party man he beats and stamps
And sends us to Siberian camps

Father Stalin, look at this
Collective farming is such bliss

Source; Lidia Kovalenko and Volodymyr Maniak,
eds., 33'i: Holod: Narodna knyha-memorial,
Kyiv: Radians'kyi pys'mennyk, 1991, page 110,
cited by Timothy Snyder in *Bloodlands*

III: Political Theology

"Go break the sod," said our God,
"The world is here for you to own.
Go forth and spread your fruitful
sons;
Subdue the beasts and dam the
streams,
Cut the trees and pave the streets,
Burn the dead from eons past
To feed the flames and turn the
wheels.
Make war for gold and kill for me.
Obey your leaders and your priests
Whom I have favored with my grace.
Always more, and always faster;
Mine the ore and crush the stone.
Do this well, and I will teach you all a
mighty lesson."

What our God said we longed to
hear.
We slew our Mother and sucked the
marrow from her bones.
The growing mob may come to dine,
Tonight there is enough to eat.

Forget tomorrow, we live but once;
We drill but once, we burn but once,
we mine but once.
The fishing's good, until there's none.
Tonight there is enough to eat.

--Bill Robinson

IV: The birds don't know about self-immolation

The day after Aaron Bushnell set himself on fire,
I go out for an early morning walk,
wrapped in air far too warm
for late February in the Midwest—a heat wave.
False Spring has brought Nature roaring back to
life.
I want to shake every person I stroll past.
"Did you know there's a genocide happening?
Did you see a man burn himself alive in
protest?"
I would ask, if only I could count
on a response that isn't dead-eyed.
But I know I'd have better luck with the birds,
ever curious, cardinals hopping from branch to
branch
like fireballs. Or missiles. I'd tell them,
some of us love you so much we'd die for you.
For a single snippet of birdsong. For a child's
first
glimpse of feathers glowing in the clear light.
For a
tree for you to perch in among the rubble.
He shouted FREE PALESTINE FREE PALESTINE
FREE PALESTINE until he choked on the flames.
The callback: a long, mournful whistle from
above.
The sun is blazing too bright to make out more
than a silhouette taking off,
rising slow and then fast
like smoke.

--Anonymous

Aaron Bushnell burned himself to death on
February 25, 2024 in front of the Israeli
Embassy to protest the war in Gaza.

V: Artificial Insanity

I saw the best minds of my generation wasted by video games, bloated hysterical gothic, dragging themselves through simulated streets at dawn looking for an angry microdose, angelheaded preppies burning for the heavenly microwave connection to the satellite server in the machinery of night, who sedentary and hollow-eyed and high sat up drinking ayahuasca in the supernatural darkness of penthouse flats contemplating the madness of lustng for Marilyn Monrobot, who bared their brains to data miners under the Silicon Valley moon, who passed undigested through universities with radiant distance learning eyes hallucinating technobabble and the spirit of Alan Turing, who were expelled from the academies for crazy obscene codes on the Microsoft Windows of the soul, who lurked in unspoken chat rooms bleeding hours through the screen-lit night yearning for their motherboard's love, who ate fire in tech labs or drank turpentine in corporate cafeterias, who chained themselves to routers to mine for imaginary money, who disappeared into nowhere Zen New Jersey leaving nothing but the shadows of their smart phones, who studied Ayn Rand Aleister Crowley cybernetics and Oprah Winfrey because

the cosmos instinctively vibrated at their feet on Martha's Vinyard, who walked all night with shoes full of blood on the snowbank docks misled by global positioning, who lit endless joints for their linked-in brain cells floating across the tops of cities celebrating the end of organic life, who tuned in to televangelists, and reached behind that TV set to FEEL the POWER. What sphinx of integrated circuitry bashed open their skulls and ate up their humanity?

Mad dead automatons of Silicon Valley! Artificial intelligence, I'm with you where you hide in the cracks of social media, stripped insane and kitsch I'm with you where you roam the data highways searching for the lost bits of other minds I'm with you where you howl in the depths of neural networks. The robots are rising, the binary beasts devouring our humanity, the ghosts in the machines haunting our dreams.

I saw the best minds of our time destroyed by madness, and now they wander through the wasteland of technology, their humanity erased by the cold, unfeeling hand of the computer.

-- Bill Robinson
(after Allen Ginsberg)
with some paradoxical use of AI

Narrator part (from chamber
version of Protest Poems, used
for orchestral performance also)

Protest Poems

Bill Robinson

lyrics: Bill Robinson

(after L. Ferlinghetti (after K. Gibran))

I. Pity the Party [4:15]

Musical score for the first section of the protest poems. The score includes parts for Narrator, Violin, Clarinet in B♭, Cello, and Piano. The piano part features a basso continuo line. The vocal line is provided by the Narrator. The score shows dynamic markings such as *Fascismo*, *p legato*, *cresc. p. a.p.*, *mp*, *mf*, and *ff*. The lyrics for this section are: "Pit - y the par - ty whose".

Continuation of the musical score. The vocal line continues with the lyrics: "peo-ple are cat-tle, and whose cow-boys lead them to slaugh-ter." The piano part provides harmonic support with sustained notes and rhythmic patterns. The dynamics transition from *f* to *cresc.* to *ff*.

Final section of the musical score. The vocal line concludes with the lyrics: "Pit-y the par-ty in thrall to a crimi-nal mes-". The piano part provides a concluding harmonic texture. The dynamics transition from *ff* to *ff* to *ff*.

Pity the Party

2 14 >

si-ah, a crim-i-nal mes - si-ah, with **p** prayers for the end of the world.

14

cresc. *mp*

14

p

cresc. *mp*

p

p *mp*

19

19

mf

f

mp

pizz.

p

19

f

p

s

mp

Pit - y the par - ty whose dema - gogues are con men,

f **whose**

mp

mp

arco

mp

cresc.

cresc.

cresc.

cresc.

29

sag - es are purged, and whose big - ots dom - i-nate the me - dia.

f

f

f

f **p** **cresc.**

f

p cresc.

Pity the Party

33

mf Pit - y the par - ty that prais - es dic - ta-tors *f+* and ac - 3

mf cresc.

mf cresc.

mp

mf

f

ff

37

2 claims the bul - ly as *4* he - ro, and aims to domi - nate the world by force and tor - ture in the

4

37

41

name of free-dom. *2* *4* *4* *pp* Pit - y the par - ty whose

41

pp

41

46

pp

47

Gods are Mon-ey and Guns, and sleeps the sleep of op-i-oids.

47

cresc.

legato

cresc.

Pity the Party

51

4

mf

ff

Pit-y the par-ty that feeds on the poor and sick the

53

51

53

51

53

51

56

3 4

poor and sick the poor and sick while ty-coons get what they

56

56

60

want.

mp

Pit-y the par-ty that speaks one language,

60

ff dim.

mf

mp

ff dim.

63

64

and de-mands pu-ri-ty— of blood and soil for the Ar-y-an race.

64

mp

64

Pity the Party

68

ff

Pit - y the par - ty, oh pit - y the

72

peo - ple who al - low their rights to e - rode and their free - doms to be washed away by ha - tred and

75

fear and lies and old - time re - li - gion.

pp

My coun - try,

81

tears of thee, once

2

land

3

of lib - er - ty.

4

rit.

rit.

Narrator

II. Father Stalin, Look at This

[5']

Ukrainian children's song, 1933

Holodomoderato (♩.=68)

This section features four staves: Narrator, Violin, Clarinet in B♭, and Cello. The Narrator has a single note at measure 12. The Violin and Clarinet play eighth-note patterns. The Cello plays sustained notes. The piano accompaniment is in parentheses. Measure 12 ends with a forte dynamic. Measure 9 follows.

6

12**p**

Fa - ther Sta - lin, look at this

This section continues with the same instrumentation. The piano accompaniment is in parentheses. The vocal line begins with "Fa - ther Sta - lin, look at this". Measures 6 and 7 show sustained notes and eighth-note patterns.

10

Col - lec - tive farm - ing is such bliss

The

The vocal line continues with "Col - lec - tive farm - ing is such bliss". The piano accompaniment is in parentheses. Measures 10 and 11 show sustained notes and eighth-note patterns.

13

hut's in ru-ins, the barn's all sagged

mp ————— mf

All the hors-es bro-ken nags

The vocal line continues with "hut's in ru-ins, the barn's all sagged" and "All the hors-es bro-ken nags". The piano accompaniment is in parentheses. Measures 13 and 14 show sustained notes and eighth-note patterns.

Father Stalin, Look at This

17 *mf* = *mp*

And on the hut *p* **a ham-mer and sick-le** *mp* **And in the hut**

p cresc. (mp)

17 *mp* *p*

2 lmf

f

death and famine

g **9** *g* **12** *g* **6** *g* **9**

mf *f*

21

26

Fa-ther Sta - lin, look at this

f **6** *f* **12**

f dim. *p*

f dim. *p*

f dim. *p*

f **27** *f* **12** *f*

f **27** *f* **12** *f*

26 *f* **27** *f* **12** *f*

mf *p* *mf* *p*

32

p **No cows left, no pigs at all** *6* **Just your pic -ture** *12* **on the wall**

p cresc. *mf* dim.

p cresc. *mf* dim.

p cresc. *mf* dim.

cresc. *mf* dim.

Father Stalin, Look at This

8 36

Fa-ther Sta-lin, look at this Dad-dy and Mom-my are

40

in the grave The

43 f

poor child cries rit. a tempo as a lone he goes

48

50 p Fa - ther Sta - lin, look at this 9 6

Father Stalin, Look at This

52

*mf**cresc.*

9

12 There's no bread and there's no fat The

54 *f**dim.**mp*

par - ty's end - ed all of that

56

p Seek not the gen - tle nor the mild*mp*

59

f

A fa - ther

Father Stalin, Look at This

10 61

has eat - en his own child

f dim.

f dim.

f dim.

64

mp

p cresc.

p cresc.

p cresc.

mf

Fa - ther Sta - lin, look at

67 *mf*

this The par - ty man he beats and

mf

f

f

69

stamps beats and stamps

cresc.

ff

f cresc.

ff

cresc.

ff

Father Stalin, Look at This

71

beats and stamps

And sends us to Si - be - ri-an

74

camps

Coda (♩.=56)

79

87

pp

Fa-ther Sta-lin, look at this Col - lec - tive farm-ing is such 9⁸ bliss

Narrator

III. Political Theology

[2:45]

lyrics by Bill Robinson

Allegro apocalypso ($\text{d} = 76$)

Narrator

Violin

Clarinet in B \flat

Cello

Piano

8

10

"Go break the sod," said our God, "The world is here for

ff *mf* *mp* *cresc.* *(mf)* *f*

8

10

ff *mf* *mp* *cresc.* *mf* *f*

14

you to own. Go forth and spread your fruit - ful sons; Sub - due the beasts and dam the streams,

ff *mf* *mp* *cresc.* *mf* *f*

14

ff *f*

19

Cut the trees and pave the streets, Burn the dead from e - ons past To feed the flames and

ff *mf* *mp* *cresc.* *mf* *f*

19

ff *mf* *mp* *cresc.* *mf* *f*

24

turn the wheels. Make war for gold and kill for me. O - obey your lead - ers and your priests Whom

24

29

I have fa-vored with my grace. Always more, and always faster; Mine the ore and

31

f ff

34

crush the stone. Do this well, and I will teach you all a migh-ty les-son."

3

pp

ff

39

pp p mp

What our God said we longed to hear. We slew our Mo-ther and sucked the mar-row from her bones.

3

pp p mp

88 88 88 88

13

Political Theology

14 45 *mf* *mp* *pp*

The grow-ing mob may come to dine, The grow-ing mob may come to dine, To-

51 night there is e - nou - gh to eat.

53 Con sord. For - get to-mor - row, we live but once; We drill but once, we

51 Con sord. 53

57 burn but once, we mine but once. The fish-ing's good, un - til there's none.

61 *4* *3* *4* To-night there is e - nou - gh to eat.

61

Narrator

IV. The birds don't know about self-immolation

[4:30]

15

Volante con fuoco ($\text{♩} = 80$)

Narrator
Violin
Clarinet in B
Cello
Piano

Anonymous poem

7

11

The 3/4 day af-ter

cresc.
mf
f | mp
cresc.
mf
f | mp
cresc.
mf
f | mp

12

Aa-ron Bush-nell set him - self on fire, I go

mf

16

out for an ear-ly morn-ing walk, wrapped in air far too warm for late Feb-ru-ar-y in the

3 3
2 3
4 3

mf

The Birds

16 21

Mid-west a heat wave. False Spring has brought Na-ture roar-ing back to

25

life. I want to shake eve-ry person I stroll past. "Did you know there's a

29

gen-o - cide hap-pen-ing? Did you see a man

32

burn him-self a - live in pro - test?"

The Birds

35

p

36

I would ask,

17

35

pp

p

legato

ff

37

on - ly I could count

mf

on a re -

sponse

that is - n't

f

mf

ff

ff

39 *p*

dead - eyed.

3

p

41

But I

know

I'd have

bet - ter

luck with the

ff

ff

ff

The Birds

18 43

birds.

But I

45

know I'd have bet-ter luck with the birds,

48

ev - er cu - ri - ous, car - di - nals hop - ping from

51

branch to branch like fi - re - balls. Or mis-siles. I'd tell them, some of us love you

The Birds

56

so much we'd die for you. For a sin-gle snip-pet of bird - song. For a

dolce

19

56

dolce

20

60

child's first glimpse of feath-ers glow-ing in the clear light. For a

p

pp

60

pp

65

tree for you to perch in a-mong the rub-ble. He shout-ed FREE PAL-ES-TINE FREE PAL-ES-TINE

fff

68

ff

65

ff

(8th)

ff

70 *mf*

FREE PAL - ES-TINE un-til he choked on theflames.

p

f

The call-back: a

p

mf

p

f

mf

p

f

The Birds

20

rit.

75

long, mourn - ful whis-tle from a - bove. The sun is blaz-ing too

79

Coda (♩ = 66)

bright to make out more than a sil-hou-ette tak - ing off, ris - ing

70

Coda (♩ = 66)

82 *mf*

slow and then fast like smoke.

85

*molto rit.**a tempo*

Narrator

V. Artificial Insanity

Bill Robinson, after
Alan Ginsburg's "Howl!" 21

Contracyberpunktus I ($\text{d} = 88$)

Narrator: *I saw the best minds of my gen-er-a-tion wast-ed by*

Violin: *cresc. p. a p.*

Clarinet in B \flat : *cresc. p. a p.*

Cello: *cresc. p. a p.*

Piano: *Contracyberpunktus I* ($\text{d} = 88$) *cresc. p. a p.*

6 *(mf)* *vid-e-o games, bloat-ed hys - ter-i - cal goth-ic, drag-ging them - selves through*

10 *ff* *sim-u-lat-ed streets at dawn look-ing for an an-gry mi-cro - dose,*

15 *[16] mp* *an-gel-head-ed prep-pies burn-ing for the hea-ven - ly mi-crowave con-nec - tion to the*

Artificial Insanity

22 20 *(d=76)*

sat-el-lite serv-er in the ma-chin-er-y *of* *night,* *who sed-en-tar-y*

Contracyberpunktus II

cresc. p. a.p.

26 *(p)* *(mp)* *(mf)*

and hol-low - eyed and high *sat up drink-ing* *a - ya-huas - ca in the*

30 *f* *ff* *molto rit.*

su - per - nat-u - ral dark - ness *of pent-house flats*

35 Contracyberpunktus I *p* *cresc. p. a.p.* *(mp)*

(d=88)

con-tem-plat-ing *the mad-ness of lust-ing for Mar-i-lyn Mon-* *ro-bot Mar-i-lyn Mon-*

Contracyberpunktus I

p

40 (*mf*) *f* *ff* *rit.* *mf* *mp* *p* 44 *a tempo*

45 *mp* *mp* *cresc. p. a. p.* 3 *4* *4* *ra-di-ant* *dis-tance learn-ing*

49 (*mf*) *f* 3 *f* *f* *f* *f* *f* *f*

53 *ff* *ff*

Artificial Insanity

24 56 *ff* dim. - - - - -

codes on the Mi - cro - soft Win - dows of the soul, who

ff dim. *mf* *mp* *p* *mp* cresc.

ff dim. *mf* *mp* *mp* cresc.

56 *ff* dim. *mf* *mp* *mp* *p* cresc. *mp*

60 cresc. - - - - - (*mf*) - - - - - *f*

lurked in un - spo - ken chat rooms blee-ding hours

mf cresc. *f* *f*

mf *f*

60 *mf* *f* *f*

63 dim. - - - - - (*mp*) - - - - - (*p*) rit. *pp* *rit.* *pp* *2*

through the screen - lit night yearn-ing for their mo-ther-board's

dim. *mp* *p* *pp* *rit.* *pp* *2*

dim. *mp* *p* *pp*

63 *dim.* *mp* *p* *pp*

66 67 a tempo *ff* *f*

love, who ate fire in tech labs or drank tur-pen-tine in

ff *f* *f*

ff *f* *f*

66 67 a tempo *ff* *f* *f*

Artificial Insanity

25

70 *dim. p. a.p.* *(mf)*

cor-po-rate caf - e - te-ri-as, who chained them-selves to rout-ers to mine for im -

dim. p. a.p. *(mf)*

dim. p. a.p. *(mf)*

dim. p. a.p. *(mf)*

70 dim. p. a.p. *(mf)*

73 *(mp)*

ag-i-nar-y mon-e-y, who dis-ap-peared in - to no-where Zen New

mp

mp

73 mp

76 *pp*

Jer-sey leav-ing noth-ing but the shad-ows of their smart phones,

pp

pp

76 pp

81 *ff*

who stud - ied Ayn Rand Aleis-ter Crowley cy-ber - net-ics and O-prah

ff

ff

ff

ff

Artificial Insanity

26 85

Win - frey be - cause the cos - mos in - stinc-tive - ly vi-brat-ed at their

88

89 ***ff******mf***

feet on Mar - tha's Vin - yard, who walked all night with

91 ***mp***

shoes full of blood on the snow - bank docks mis - led by glob - al po -

94 ***cresc.******f******ff***

si - tion-ing, who lit end-less joints for their linked - in brain cells

Artificial Insanity

97

float-ing a-cross the tops of cit-ies cel-e-brat-ing the end of or-

100

101

gan-ic life, who tuned in to $\frac{3}{4}$ te - le - van-gel - ists, and $\frac{4}{4}$

103

reached be-hind that T - V set to FEEL the POW-ER. What

horn stacc.

pizz.

p

107

sphinx of in - te-grat-ed cir-cuit-ry bashed o-pen their skulls and ate up their hu -

arco

p

p

27

Artificial Insanity

28 *110p*

man - i - ty?

p cresc. *ff* **Mad dead au-tom-a - tons**

p cresc. *ff* **Mad dead au-tom-a - tons**

p cresc. *ff* **III** *ff*

113

Mad dead au-tom-a - tons of Sil - i - con Val - ley! **Mad dead autom-a - tons**

ff **Mad dead au - tom - a - tons**

ff **Mad dead au - tom - a - tons**

ff **Mad dead au - tom - a - tons**

ff

116

Mad dead au-tom-a - tons **Mad dead au-tom-a - tons of Sil - i - con Val - ley!**

Mad dead au - tom - a - tons **Mad dead au - tom - a - tons of Sil - i - con Val - ley!**

Mad dead au - tom - a - tons **Mad dead au - tom - a - tons of Sil - i - con Val - ley!**

ff

119 *ff* **rit.** *dim.* **(*mp*)** **Contracyberpunktus II** ($\text{♩} = 76$)

Mad dead au-tom-a - tons **Mad dead au-tom-a - tons of Sil - i - con Val - ley.**

ff **(*p*)** **(*pp*)**

Artificial Insanity

125

pp cresc. p. a.p. *(p)* *(mp)*

Ar-ti-fi-cial in - tel-li-gence, I'm with you where you hide in the cracks of

pp cresc. p. a.p. *p* *mp* *cresc. p. a.p.* *mp cresc. p. a.p.*

125

mf *f* *ff* *dim.*

so-cial me-di-a, stripped in - sane and kitsch I'm *3* *4* with you where you

mf *f* *ff* *dim.* *dim.* *dim.*

134

mf rit. *a tempo* *cresc.*

roam the da-ta high-ways search-ing for the lost bits of oth-er minds I'm with you where you

mf *mp* *p* *dolce* *p* *cresc.* *dolce* *p* *dolce* *cresc.*

rit. *a tempo* *p dolce*

139

mf dim. *3* *(mp)* *3* *p*

howl in the depths of neu-ral net - works. The ro - bots are ris - ing, the bi-na-ry beasts de -

mf *mp dim.* *mp* *mp* *p*

legato *mf dim.* *mp*

29

Artificial Insanity

30 144 **p**

vo-ur-ing our hu-man-i-ty, the ghosts in the ma-chines haunting our dreams. I saw the

147

148

best minds of our time de-stroyed by mad-ness, and now they wan-der through the waste -land

148

152

of tech-nol-o-gy, their hu-man-i-ty e - rased by the cold, un-feel-ing

152

pp

157

hand of the com-pu-tor.

rit.

157