

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 lusting
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 Songs

Bill Robinson

lyrics: Bill Robinson
(after L. Ferlinghetti (after K. Gibran))

I. Pity the Party [4:15]

Narrator **mf**
Pit - y the par - ty whose

Violino *Fascismo* ($\text{♩} = 76$)
p *cresc. p. a. p.* *mp* *mf*

Clarinete in B \flat
p *mp* *mf*

Cello
p *mp* *cresc. p. a. p.* *mf*

Piano
Fascismo ($\text{♩} = 76$)
p *legno* *cresc. p. a. p.* *mp* *mf*

5 **f**
peo-ple are cat-tle, and whose cow-boys lead them to slaugh-ter.

cresc. **ff**

9 **ff**
Pit-y the par-ty in thrall to a crimi-nal_ mes -

Pity the Party

2 ¹⁴ *p*
si - ah, a crimi - nal mes - si - ah, with prayers for the end of the world.

19

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

29

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

Pity the Party

33

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

37

claims the bul - ly as he - ro, and aims to dom - i - nate the world by force and tor - ture in the

41

name of free - dom. Pit - y the par - ty whose

47

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

Pity the Party

4 51

Musical score for measures 51-55. The vocal line begins with a forte (*ff*) dynamic. The lyrics are: "Pit-y the par-ty that feeds on the poor and sick the". The score includes piano accompaniment for the right and left hands, with various dynamics such as *mf* and *f*. The time signature changes from 2/4 to 4/4 and back to 3/4.

56

Musical score for measures 56-59. The vocal line continues with the lyrics: "poor and sick the poor and sick while ty-coons get what they". The score includes piano accompaniment for the right and left hands, with various dynamics such as *mf* and *f*. The time signature changes from 3/4 to 4/4 and back to 3/4.

60

Musical score for measures 60-63. The vocal line begins with the word "want." followed by the lyrics: "Pit-y the par-ty that speaks one language,". The score includes piano accompaniment for the right and left hands, with various dynamics such as *mf*, *mp*, and *dim.*. The time signature is 3/4.

64

Musical score for measures 64-67. The vocal line continues with the lyrics: "and de-mands pu-ri-ty — of blood and soil for the Ar-y-an race." The score includes piano accompaniment for the right and left hands, with various dynamics such as *mf* and *mp*. The time signature is 3/4.

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 land of lib - er - ty. —

Holodomoderato (♩=68)

Narrator **12/8**

Violin *pp* *p*

Clarinet in B♭ *pp* *p*

Cello *p*

Piano *p*

6 **12/8** *p*

Fa - ther Sta - lin, look at this

10

Col - lec - tive farm - ing is such bliss The

13 *mp* *mf*

hut's in ru-ins, the barn's all sagged All the hors-es bro-ken nags

Father Stalin, Look at This

17 *mf* \rightarrow *mp* *p* *mp*

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

21 *mf* *f*

death and fam-ine

8 12 6 8

26 27 *f*

Fa-ther Sta-lin, look at this

6 12

32 *p*

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

6 12

Father Stalin, Look at This

8 36

Musical score for measures 8-36. The vocal line begins with the lyrics "Fa-ther Sta-lin, look at this" and "Dad-dy and Mom-my are". The piano accompaniment includes dynamics such as *pp* and *p*. The score is written for voice and piano.

40

Musical score for measures 40-42. The vocal line continues with the lyrics "in the grave" and "The". The piano accompaniment includes dynamics such as *p*, *cresc.*, and *mf*. The score is written for voice and piano.

43

Musical score for measures 43-50. The vocal line includes the lyrics "poor child cries" and "as a lone he goes". The piano accompaniment includes dynamics such as *f*, *rit.*, and *a tempo*. The score is written for voice and piano.

48

Musical score for measures 48-50. The vocal line begins with the lyrics "Fa-ther Sta-lin, look at this". The piano accompaniment includes dynamics such as *f*, *dim.*, *mp*, and *p*. The score is written for voice and piano.

Father Stalin, Look at This

52

mf *cresc.*

9

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

54

f *dim.*

mp

par - ty's end - ed all of that

56

p

mp

Seek not the gen - tle nor the mild

59

f

A fa - ther

Father Stalin, Look at This

10 61

has eat - en his own child

12/8

f dim.

61

Detailed description: This block contains the musical score for measures 61 to 63. It features a vocal line with lyrics and piano accompaniment. The piano part includes a grand staff with treble and bass clefs. Dynamics include *f* and *dim.*. A rehearsal mark '61' is present at the start of the piano part.

64

66 *mp* Fa - ther Sta - lin, look at

12/8

p cresc. *mp* *mf*

64

Detailed description: This block contains the musical score for measures 64 to 66. It features a vocal line with lyrics and piano accompaniment. The piano part includes a grand staff with treble and bass clefs. Dynamics include *p*, *cresc.*, *mp*, and *mf*. A rehearsal mark '66' is present above the vocal line, and '64' is present at the start of the piano part.

67

mf this *f* The par - ty man he beats and

12/8

mf *f*

67

Detailed description: This block contains the musical score for measures 67 to 68. It features a vocal line with lyrics and piano accompaniment. The piano part includes a grand staff with treble and bass clefs. Dynamics include *mf* and *f*. A rehearsal mark '67' is present at the start of the piano part.

69

stamps *ff* beats and stamps

12/8

f cresc. *ff*

69

Detailed description: This block contains the musical score for measures 69 to 70. It features a vocal line with lyrics and piano accompaniment. The piano part includes a grand staff with treble and bass clefs. Dynamics include *f*, *cresc.*, and *ff*. A rehearsal mark '69' is present at the start of the piano part.

Father Stalin, Look at This

71

11

beats and stamps

And sends us to Si - be - ri - an

74

Coda (♩=56)

camps

79

87

pp

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

Allegro apocalypso (♩ = 76)

Narrator

Violin

Clarinet in B \flat

Cello

Piano

8

10

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

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

14

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

19

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

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

Musical score for measures 24-28, featuring a vocal line and piano accompaniment.

31

I have fa-vored with my grace. Al-ways more, and al-ways fas-ter; Mine the ore and

Musical score for measures 29-33, featuring a vocal line and piano accompaniment. Dynamic markings include *f* and *ff*.

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

Musical score for measures 34-38, featuring a vocal line and piano accompaniment. Time signature changes from 4/4 to 3/4. Dynamic markings include *pp* and *ff*.

39

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

Musical score for measures 39-43, featuring a vocal line and piano accompaniment. Dynamic markings include *pp*, *p*, and *mp*.

Political Theology

14 45 *mf* *mp* *pp*

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

45 *mf* *mp* *pp*

51 53

night there is e - nough to eat. For - get to-mor-row, we live but once; We drill but once, we

Con sord.

51 53

57

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

57

61

To-night there is e - nough to eat.

61

Volante con fuoco (♩ = 80)

Narrator **4/4** Anonymous poem

Violin

Clarinet in B \flat

Cello

Piano

7 11

mp
The day af-ter

cresc. *mf* *f* *mp*

12 *mf*

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

mf

The Birds

16 21

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

cresc.

25

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

ff

29

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

ff

32

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

pp

The Birds

35

p 36 17

I would ask, if

37

on - ly I could count on a re - sponse that is - n't

mf *f*

39 *p*

dead - eyed.

p

41

But I know I'd have bet - ter luck with the

birds. *ff* But I

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

48 *mf* ev-er cu-ri-ous, *p* 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

60

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

65

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

70

FREE PAL - ES-TINE un-til he choked on the flames. The call-back: a

The Birds

20 75

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

rit.

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

p *mp+*

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

Coda (♩ = 66)

82 *mf* slow and then fast like smoke.

mf+ *f* *mp* *p*

85 *molto rit.* *a tempo*

pp *pp* *pp* *pp* *pp* *pp*

molto rit. *a tempo*

Narrator

V. Artificial Insanity

[7:30]

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

Contracyberpunktus I (♩ = 88)

mp *cresc. p. a p.*

Narrator **4/4** : I saw the best minds of my **3/4** gen-er-a-tion **4/4** wast-ed by

Violino *mp* *cresc. p. a p.*

Clarinete in B♭ *p* *mp* *cresc. p. a p.*

Cello *p* *mp* *cresc. p. a p.*

Piano *p* *mp* *cresc. p. a p.*

6 *(mf)* *f*

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 connec-tion to the

22 20 Artificial Insanity *rit.* $(\text{♩} = 76)$ *pp* *cresc. p. a p.*
Contracyberpunktus II

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

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)*

$(\text{♩} = 88)$ con-tem-plat-ing the mad-ness of lust-ing for Mar-i-lyn Mon-ro-bot Mar-i-lyn Mon-

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

40 *(mf)* *f* *ff* *rit. mf* *mp₃* *a tempo p* 44

ro-bot, who bared their brains to da-ta min-ers un-der the Sil-i-con Val-ley moon,

45 *mp* *mp+cresc. p. a p.*

who passed un-di-gest-ed through u-ni-ver-si-ties with ra-di-ant dis-tance learn-ing

49 *(mf)* *f*

eyes hal-lu-ci-nat-ing tech-no-bab-ble and the spir-it of Al-an Tur-ing,

53 *ff*

who were ex-pelled from the a-cad-e-mies for cra-zy ob-scene

Artificial Insanity

24 56 *ff dim.*

59

mp

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

60 *cresc.*

(mf)

f

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

63 *dim.*

(mp)

(p)

rit.

pp

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

66

67 *a tempo*

ff

f

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

Artificial Insanity

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 -

73 *(mp)* *(p)*

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

76 *pp*

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

81 *ff*

who stud - ied Ayn Rand A-leis-ter Crow-ley cy-ber - net-ics and O-prah

26 85

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

88 feet on Mar - tha's **89** *ff* Vin - yard, *mf* 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

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

gan-ic life, who tuned in to te - le - van-gel - ists, and

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

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

28 *110p*

man - i - ty? *ff* Mad dead au-tom-a - tons Mad dead au-tom-a - tons

111

113

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

113

116

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

116

119 *ff*

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

dim. *(mp)* *(p)* *pp*

119 *rit.* *(mp)* *(p)* *pp*

♩ = 76 Contracyberpunktus II

Artificial Insanity

125

pp cresc. p. a p.

(p)

(mp)

29

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

130 *(mf)*

f

ff

133 *dim.*

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

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

139

mf

dim.

(mp)

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

Artificial Insanity

30 144 *p*

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

144 147

148

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

148 151

152

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

pp

152 155

157

hand of the com-puter.

rit.

157 160