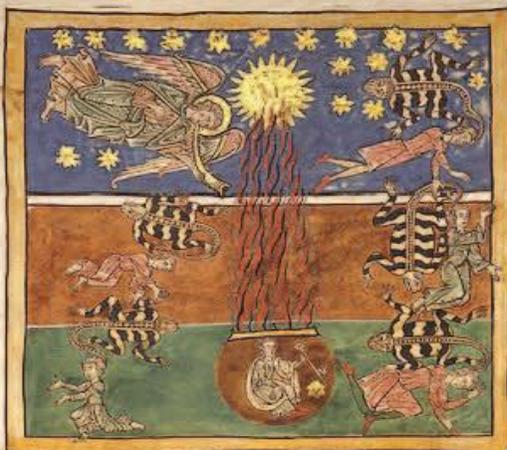


# What Shivering Monks Comprehend



**I**teme cogitamus in uoluntate huiusmodi.  
**Q**uod quibus angelis tunc exierit et  
quod scilicet de eodem corde exierit  
et. Et na stella corpus est multum  
evidentum p peccata sic p se dicitur  
b. hancur stelle caligine a. S. esse  
quippe huiusmodi caligine rem chent.  
quendo et huiusmodi qui magis iam uirtu  
tibus splendent adhuc de obscuri  
tate calpe. aliquo remonens sustinet.  
S. se namq. no nulli qui ante humanos  
oculos uelut magnus opibus inuocant.

sed quia nec ipsa opa a mundo accide  
no procedunt. capam in ocatius cog  
tationibus noctis huiusmodi obscuri  
tatem. a. una sepe ea que mundo oca  
de no facit etiam opa amant. que  
boni intentione no facit. Et p hoc  
magis occidit ope p qd illuminari po  
tuerant. Quia q. hoc postulare pmit  
tat quanto et m. bona ope odis in  
extimo miram mundat. S. uat. recte.  
b. hancur stelle caligine a. uol. con  
tin eos qui ante humanos oculos quasi

The MDR Poetry  
Generator

# **What Shivering Monks Comprehend**

**THE MDR Poetry Generator**

**Locofu Chaps  
Chicago, 2017**

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Cover Image: Leaf from a Beatus Manuscript: “at the Clarion of the Fifth Angel's Trumpet, a Star Falls from the Sky; the Bottomless Pit is Opened with a Key; Emerging from the Smoke, Locusts Come Upon the Earth and Torment the Deathless”. Ca 1180. Spanish. Tempera, gold, and ink on parchment. The Metropolitan Museum of Art: The Cloisters Collection, Rogers and Harris Brisbane Dick Funds and Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 1991.

Page 10: “Angel Applicant” by Paul Klee. Gouache, ink, and graphite on paper mounted on cardboard. The Metropolitan Museum of Art: The Berggruen Klee Collection, 1984.

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Locofo Chaps is dedicated to publishing  
politically-oriented poetry.

Chicago, USA, 2017

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## **Author's Note**

*From* The Murder, Death and Resurrection  
(MDR) Poetry Generator:

The MDR Poetry Generator can generate poems totaling a number that has 3,011 digits. This estimate can be derived through the equation  $1146! - 1146$ , a number that roughly rounds to  $1.129300103 \text{ E}+3010$  [that is, 1.129300103 times 10 to the 3,010th power]—a 3,011-digit number!

“What Shivering Monks Comprehend” is the 135<sup>th</sup> poem generated by The MDR Poetry Generator.

Even the machine protests...

Sincerely,

<https://eileenrtabios.com/projects/the-mdr-poetry-generator/>

## What Shivering Monks Comprehend

I forgot the radiance of darkness.

I forgot moving on knees toward the altar. I forgot the altar's fat white candles with flames scented by the blood of fallen priests, virgins, poets, crones, sons, daughters, bastards, politicians, rebels, mothers...

I forgot a strand of hair hearkening a welt.

I forgot the chilled monks illuminating manuscripts with silver and gold and rarely seeing finished results—we cannot know if they felt compensated from anticipating a new generation would sacrifice to continue their works. I forgot their fingers insufficiently warmed by skinned mittens. I forgot their eyes abused by the feebleness of their lamps. I forgot the stone walls that defined the limits of their experience as if words were sufficient.

I forgot that an orphan's rant for attachment speaks to desire for desire's own sake. I forgot that not knowing what one wants does not obviate the *wanting*.

I forgot the religion of beginning a world through a human orphaned by paradise.

I forgot the difficulty of ethics: how to rationalize when what is good does not give an advantage in

a world recognized as an alley. (“Can you stop running if the monster does not stop chasing?”)

I forgot a father’s fist against a mother’s cheek integrates the malignant into myocardium.

I forgot shaking the wrist of the elder with no hands.

I forgot the mother who still had the drill in her head while the baby in her lap slowly imploded into the corpse of a bird.

I forgot Leonardo Da Vinci dissecting criminals who died with hard-ons to demonstrate the penis is not inflated by the retention of wind.

I forgot how you saw a tree and *felt* a rope.

I forgot how you saw a mule and *felt* the incredible sadness only gods should feel because (1) they are omniscient, and (2) they might be seduced into mercy.

I forgot darkness was the key, not the lock.

I forgot the paintings that made you think of what lives outside the frame. Like a woman who so loved a man she ate his testicles between quaffs of sweet jerez.

I forgot the bodies of Kali warriors memorizing *halad* so that deadly positions surface more quickly and efficiently during hours of battle.

I forgot Abu Ghraib.

I forgot wings curled beneath black leather.

I forgot the blades whose edges tangoed on my palms to carve lifelines.

I forgot looking at a decaying world through slitted eyes.

I forgot the brutality of cracked skies captured by ancient warriors with “lightning marks” as long grooves along the wooden shafts of their arrows.

*I forgot how, when they heard the Singer, they heard the whips over his ancestors as they were cast out of India.*

*I forgot how, when they heard the Singer, they heard a man jailed for stealing a bunch of grapes, then the ugly grunts of his starving children.*

*I forgot how, when they heard the Singer, they heard a shivering woman in ripped clothes as soldiers did what they did to her and her still virgin daughters and sons.*

*I forgot how, when they heard the Singer, they heard the stars, then the wolves, fall into bleak silence.*

*I forgot how, when they heard the male Singer, they heard his cante come from him like a rusty nail pulled from an old board. La voz afilla—*

*sandpaper voice. Good Gitano voice. Muy rajo,  
very rough.*

*I forgot the Singer learned knives are sharp from  
being cut.*

*I forgot the Singer learned fires are hot from being  
burned.*

*I forgot I learned to stamp my heels to sound a  
machine gun blast. I forgot I didn't need a man to  
bring me fire so I can forge a song.*

*I forgot I composed this song that would turn you  
into ice, so you will know with my next note what  
it means to shatter into tiny pieces the universe  
will ignore.*

I forgot the fate of clay pigeons.

I forgot you losing all Alleluias.

I forgot baby priests turning away to cast profiles  
forsworn to Donatello.

I forgot a god aspiring to decay.

I forgot fear is a loss.

I forgot drinking from ancient goblets whose  
cracked rims snagged lips into a bleeding  
burning. I forgot my skin was ruin.

I forgot to be an angel is to be alone in a  
smudged gown, fingers poking through holes  
burnt by epistemology.

I forgot the turnkey to a void.

I forgot when aura became scant.

I forgot the Ilokano sea witnessing eighty virgin  
men dangling from trees—they had wanted to  
protect me.

I forgot greeting mornings as an exposed nerve.

I forgot the night was unanimous.



*"Angel Applicant" by Paul Klee*

## A POETICS

**Excerpts from John-Bloomberg Rissman's Interview of Eileen R. Tabios, *THE ARDUITY OF POETRY*(October 2014), reprinted on Leaf Press' *LITTER Magazine* (January 2017):**

...if we go back to, say, the human switch from hunter-gathering to agricultural-based lifestyles, we will see how certain lifestyles bring out or reward or encourage certain values over others. To live by agriculture (which means re-engineering plants and animals for human consumption) you fundamentally change the human-nature relationship from one of reciprocity (you care for the land and it cares for you) to one of use and exploitation. War, slavery, etc.—these things are ancient. Indeed, if we go back even longer to the hunter-gatherer stage, we'll still see elements, I believe, of man's self-oriented nature (and maybe that's just part of creatures who have to be concerned with survival).

...

Entonces, we come to today where much of the wealthy and powerful have incentives not to change their practices in that necessary changes would require diluting their power. A way to facilitate change is education, assuming they have the moral compass to abide by what they learn about unsustainable and unfair practices.

But while it can be a convincing argument that taking care of the planet generally benefits them, they're also being asked to forego short-term gratification for long-term benefits. It is difficult to improve our record when the system is so structured towards shorter-term priorities (e.g., for politicians, winning elections and employing the voters, and for financiers, hitting profit returns that are often calculated annually). Even as there is progress in disseminating more information about racism, misogyny, climate change et al, it is taking a long time for progress to occur because of the underlying power structure. (By the way, I focus on the wealthy because they own more assets and thus behavioral change on their part would have a larger impact; but the change in better behavior needs to occur for everyone.)

...

I am quite pessimistic about the human race winning its race against time. I feel that sooner or later the human race will have to undergo a massive transition to reboot itself from what's down the road we're traveling. Perhaps many of the historical horrors you note—like Germany during WWII—are just smaller manifestations of the inevitable cataclysm awaiting the human race absent a global shift to the kind of culture based on not taking more than what we can replace. The hope is that before that transition which may not be survivable, there would be sufficient education and moral fortitude to make the tough decisions that will improve our future.

But despite the many positive developments on the individual / grass roots / micro level, the trajectory continues to be dire. Systemic change isn't happening quickly enough. I think the human race is on a suicide path. I've wondered if possibly the only solution would be if technology advances quickly enough for space travel to occur and humans find empty planets where more Earthlings can go to survive. Assuming such planets exist, of course. And if the culture they bring with them has progressed beyond the current ownership-based culture (man's innate nature may continue to be self-oriented but culture can develop to control such).

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