

The Destruction of Cathedrals

I'm weary of visiting cathedrals.
Let me make a pilgrimage to the trembling cathedral of my own spirit

For there, like France at war, I find myself,
"Not standing forth in pride and glory, but on my knees in mourning, amid ruins"

Amid the noise of falling glaze and plaster.
Statues, pinnacles, bell turrets, counterforts; crockets, birds, pillars and arches,

All all in ruins - incalculated.
Cross, candlesticks, reliquaries, masonry, swept away like wisps of straw.

The smiling angel has only half a face,
The chimera which climbs to meet her has been struck by a bullet in her back,

The hands of the caryatid, amputated,
Solomon's cloak is cracked; the Queen of Sheba has lost her robe and crown.

The flames have scaled the steeples - spread over the roofs -
O vos omnes qui transitis per viam, attendite et videte

Everywhere they are licking the lead plates
Disclosing the bare frame "forest" across interlacing balconies

Like a prodigious skeleton of fire
Leaving an immense void - twisted iron, indented clock wheels, broken muted bells

Foolish imposter doors which did not open
Hang in high galleries. Perforated the great roses - intense blues, purples,

Reds so warm and vigorous which burnished
The rays of the midday sun. The gargoyles drip heavy tears. I hear the bells
falling.

Wind is raging among the naves and corpses.

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