

Jonathan Alexander

## Daybreak: A Nietzschean Rhapsody

### Abstract

The following verses are composed as mash-ups of some of the earliest translations of Friedrich Nietzsche's *Daybreak*. While not explicitly *queer*, the verses gesture toward a queered appropriation of—or potentiality in—Nietzsche's writing, particularly surrounding his development of the transvaluation of all values. Indeed, such transvaluation seems to me rife with queer potentiality, with a deep questioning of organizing values offered to us as dicta, as law, as the word. What else can our words do? What *queer* work can words and the bodies that voice them accomplish in the enlarging of possibility, of erotic potential, of intimate connection? How can we use the accidents of birth to re-imagine the cycles of our lives? The poetic offers us, I maintain, continued insight into such questions.

↳threnody: for tyler clementi↳

when man assigned a sex to all things

we endured for a long time

our origin in unreason

a disharmony of the spheres

swept over the world,

a false grandeur

in continual fear of wild beasts,

barbarians, gods

our own dreams

we, victims of appearance

the simplest things

the entire solar system

a mere point:

we drew conclusions

we laid down laws

thinking the real world

much smaller than the world

of our imagination

—we now know better

the enormity

of our error:

perplexed sufferers

confused dreamers

the hysterically ecstatic

saw a new transfiguration

a profound insight

the cloak of ethical significance

cast over the world's shoulders:

we must not see or wish the world

to be more disharmonic than it is

↳ **pantoum: on the death of god** ↩

dwelling in the small world of exceptions

a storm of divine anger has burst;

we investigate with such superstitious fear

the sky of the best minds

we latecomers, overcast by a storm of

divine anger, our words coarse

dry, we try with our best minds

a new transfiguration

coming late to the coarse world,

investigating our superstitious, fearing

this new configuration

dwelling in the small world of exceptions

↳ **villanelle: on the eternal recurrence of the queer** ↵

that I at length may believe

though devoured by doubt

thinking of absolutely nothing

but existence itself, pure accidentality

robbed of its innocence, but not a punishment;

that I at length may believe

suppressing all remorse

throwing off the yoke

thinking of absolutely nothing

yet drawing conclusions

and laying down laws;

that I at length may believe

the convulsions and foam of the epileptic

the mask, the speaking-trumpet of some divine being

thinking of absolutely nothing

but the last spark of good sense

not quite quenched by the floods of insanity;

that I at length may believe in myself

thinking of absolutely nothing

## Author Bio

Jonathan Alexander, PhD, is Professor of English and Chancellor's Fellow at the University of California. His books include *Literacy, Sexuality, Pedagogy: Theory and Practice for Composition Studies*, *Digital Youth: Emerging Literacies on the World Wide Web*, *Finding Out: An Introduction to LGBT Studies* (with Deborah Meem & Michelle Gibson), and *Bisexuality and Transgenderism: InterSEXions of the Others* (co-edited with Karen Yescavage), among others. Jonathan has devoted much of his career to promoting literacy education for participation in pluralistic democracies. He has also maintained and cultivated a naive belief in the power of art to transform.

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