I

He had been falling in the abyss some four thousand years.
Never had he yet managed to grasp a peak,
Nor lift even once his towering forehead.
He sank deeper in the dark and the mist, aghast,
Alone, and behind him, in the eternal nights,
His wing feathers fell more slowly still.

He fell dumbfounded, grim, and silent,
Sad, his mouth open and his feet towards the heavens,
The horror of the chasm imprinted on his livid face.

He cried: “Death!” his fists stretched out in the empty dark.
Later this word was man and was named Cain.²

He was falling. A rock struck his hand quite suddenly;
He held on to it, as a dead man holds on to his tomb,
And stopped. Someone, from on high, cried out to him: “Fall!
The suns will go out around you, accursed!”

The voice was lost in the immensity of horror.
And pale, he looked toward the eternal dawn.
The suns were far off, but shone still.
Satan raised his head and spoke, his arms in the air:
“You lie!” This word was later the soul of Judas.³

II

Like the gods of bronze erect upon their pilasters,
He waited a thousand years, eyes fixed upon the stars.
The suns were far off, but were still shining.
The thunder then rumbled in the skies unhearing, cold.
Satan laughed, and spat towards the thunder.
Filled by the visionary shadow, the immensity
Shivered. This spitting out was later Barabbas.⁴
A passing breath made him fall lower still.

The fall of the damned one began once again.—Terrible,
Somber, and pierced with holes luminous as a sieve,
Trembled, and in the night the great fallen one,
Naked, sinister, and pulled by the weight of his crime,
Fell, and his head wedging the abyss apart.

Lower! Lower, and still lower! Everything presently
Fled from him; no obstacle to seize in passing,
No mountain, no crumbling rock, no stone,
Nothing, shadow! And from fright he closed his eyes.
And when they opened, three suns only
Shone, and shadow had eaten away the firmament.
Victor Hugo’s *Et nox facta est* (*And There Was Night*) part of the unfinished epic poem: *The End of Satan*

All the other suns had perished.

**III**

A rock

Emerged from blackest mist like some arm approaching.

He grasped it, and his feet touched summits.

Then the dreadful being called Never

Dreamed. His forehead sank between his guilty hands.

The three suns, far off, like three great eyes,

Watched him, and he watched them not.

Space resembled our earthly plains,

At evening, when the horizon sinking, retreating,

Blackens under the white eyes of the ghostly twilight.

Long rays entwined the feet of the great exile.

Behind him his shadow filled the infinite.

The peaks of chaos mingled in themselves.

In an instant he felt some horrendous growth of wings;

He felt himself become a monster, and that the angel in him

Was dying, and the rebel then knew regret.

He felt his shoulder, so bright before,

Quiver in the hideous cold of membraned wing,

And folding his arms with his head lifted high,

This bandit, as if grown greater through affront,

Alone in these depths that only ruin inhabits,

Looked steadily at the shadow’s cave.

The noiseless darkness grew in the nothingness.

Obscure opacity closed off the gaping sky;

And making beyond the last promontory

A triple crack in the black pane,

The three suns mingled their three lights.

You would have thought them three wheels of a chariot of fire,

Broken after some battle in the high firmament.

Like prows, the mountains from the mist emerged.

“So,” cried Satan, “so be it! I can see!

He shall have the blue sky, the black sky is mine.

Does he think I will come weeping to his door?

I hate him. Three suns suffice. What do I care?

I hate the day, the blueness, fragrance and the light.”

Suddenly he shivered; there remained only one.

**IV**

The abyss was fading. Nothing kept its shape.

Darkness seemed to swell its giant wave.

Something nameless and submerged, something
Victor Hugo’s *Et nox facta est* (And There Was Night) part of the unfinished epic poem: *The End of Satan*

That is no longer, takes its leave, falls silent;  
Wait for me! I’m running! Don’t go out yet!  

And no one could have said, in this deep horror,  
Don’t leave me alone!”

If this frightful remnant of a mystery or a world,  
Thus the monster

Like the vague mist where the dream takes flight,  
Crossed the first lakes of the dead immensity,

Was called shipwreck or was called night;  
Former chaos, emptied and already stagnant,

And the archangel felt himself become a phantom.  
And into the lugubrious depths he plunged.

He shouted: “Hell!” This word later made Sodom.  
Now the star was only a spark.

And the voice repeated slowly on his forehead:  
He went down further in universal shadow,

“Accursed! All about you the stars will go dark.”  
Sank further, cast himself wallowing in the night,

And already the sun was only a star.  
Climbed the filthy mountains, their damp gleaming front,

V  
Whose base is unsteady in the cesspool deeps,

And all disappeared slowly under a veil.  
And trembling stared before him.

Then the archangel quaked; Satan learned to shiver.  
The spark

Toward the star trembling livid on the horizon  
Was only a red dot in the depth of the dark abyss.

He hurled himself, leaping from peak to peak.  
VI

Then, although with horror at the wings of a beast,  
As between two battlements the archer leans

Although it was the clothing of emprisonment,  
On the wall, when twilight has reached his keep,

Like a bird going from bush to bush,  
Wild he leaned from the mountain top,

Horrendous he took his flight from mount to mount,  
And upon the star, hoping to arouse its flame,

And this convict began running in his cell.  
He started to blow as upon some ember.

He ran, he flew, he shouted: “Star of gold! Brother!”  
And anguish caused his fierce nostrils to swell.
Victor Hugo’s  *Et nox facta est* (And There Was Night) part of the unfinished epic poem: *The End of Satan*

The breath rushing from his chest
Is now upon earth and called hurricane.
With his breath a great noise stirred the shadow, an ocean
No being dwells in and no fires illumine.
The mountains found nearby took their flight,
The monstrous chaos full of fright arose
And began to shriek: Jehovah Jehovah!
The infinite opened, rent apart like a cloth,
But nothing moved in the lugubrious star;
And the damned one, crying: “Don’t go out yet! I’ll go on!
I’ll get there!” resumed again his desperate flight.
And the glaciers mingled with the nights resembling them
Turned on their backs like frightened beasts,
And the black tornadoes and the hideous chasms
Bent in terror, while above them,
Flying toward the star like some arrow to the goal,
There passed, wild and haggard, this terrible supplicant.
And ever since it has seen this frightening flight,
This bitter abyss, aghast like a fleeing man
Retains forever the horror and the craze,
So monstrous was it to see, in the shadow immense,
Opening his atrocious wing far from the heavens,
This bat flying from his eternal prison!

VII

He flew for ten thousand years.
For ten thousand years,
Stretching forth his livid neck and his frenzied hands,
He flew without finding a peak on which to rest.
The star seemed sometimes to fade and to go out,
And the horror of the tomb caused the angel to shiver;
Then a pale brightness, vague, strange, uncertain,
Reappeared: and in joy, he cried: “Onward!”
Around him hovered the north wind birds.
He was flying. The infinite never ceases to start again.
His flight circled immense in that sea.
The night watched his horrible talons fleeing,
As a cloud feels its whirlwinds fall,
He felt his strength crumble in the chasm.
The winter murmured: tremble! And the shadow said: suffer!
Finally he perceived a black peak far off
Which a fearsome reflection in the shadow inflamed.
Satan, like a swimmer in his effort supreme,
Stretched out his wing, with claws and bald, and specter-pale,

Panting, broken, tired, and smoking with sweat,

He sank down on the edge of the abrupt descent.  

VIII

There was the sun dying in the abyss.

The star, in the deepest fog had no air to revive it,

Grew cold, dim, and was slowly destroyed.

Its sinister round was seen in the night;

And in this somber silence its fiery ulcers were seen

Subsiding under a leprous of dark.

Coal of a world put out! torch blown out by God!

Its crevices still showed a trace of fire,

As if the soul could be seen through holes in the skull.

At the center there quivered and flickered a flame

Now and then licking the outermost edge,

And from each crater flashes came

Shivering like flaming swords,

And fading noiselessly as dreams.

The star was almost black. The archangel was tired

Beyond voice or breath, a pity to see.

And the star in death throes under his savage glance,
Victor Hugo's *Et nox facta est* (*And There Was Night*) part of the unfinished epic poem: *The End of Satan*

Beat with his wing, opened his hands and then shivered
And cried: “Despair! see it growing pale!”
The archangel understood, as does the mast in its sinking,
That he was the drowned man of the shadows' flood;
He furled once more his wing with its granite nails,
And wrung his hands. And the star went out.

IX

Now, near the skies, at chasm’s edge where nothing changes,
One feather escaped from the archangel’s wing
Remained and quivered, pure and white.
The angel on whose forehead the dazzling dawn is born
Saw and grasped it, observing the sublime sky:
“Lord, must it too fall into the abyss?”
God turned about, absorbed in being and in Life,
And said “Do not discard what has not fallen.”

* * *

Black caves of the past, porches of time passed
With no date and no radiance, somber, unmeasured,
Cycles previous to man, chaos, heavens,
World terrible and rich in prodigious beings,
Oh fearful fog where the preadamites

Appeared, standing in limitless shadow.
Who could fathom you, oh chasms, oh unknown times.
The thinker barefoot like the poor,
Through respect for the One unseen, the sage,
Digs in the depths of origin and age,
Fathoms and seeks beyond the colossi, further
Than the facts witnessed by the present sky,
Reaches with pale visage suspected things,
And finds, lifting the darkness of years
And the layers of days, worlds, voids,
Gigantic centuries dead beneath giants of centuries.
And thus the wise man dreams in the deep of the night
His face illumined by glints of the abyss.

---the Latin title of the poem suggests the biblical “And there was light” (Genesis 1:3)

1. He—Satan, formerly the rebellious Archangel Lucifer, thrown out of Heaven by God (Revelation 12:7-9 and Isaiah 14:12)
2. Cain—the first murderer, son of Adam and brother of Abel, the victim (Genesis 4:1-15)
3. Judas—Judas Iscariot, the apostle who betrayed Jesus (Matthew 26:47-50, 27:3-5)
4. Barabbas—the condemned criminal who was freed instead of Jesus (Mark 15: 6-15)
5. Sodom—biblical city, with Gomorrah a symbol of corruption and decadence. Both were destroyed by God (Genesis 18:20-19:28)
7. abrupt descent—literally, escarpment, the steep wall before a fortification or cliff
8. specter Nothing—Satan
9. In the second part of *The End of Satan*, “Satan’s Feather,” the feather is brought to life by a divine glance and becomes the female spirit Liberty. She wins God’s permission to plunge into Hell in an attempt to redeem her father (Part III), and in Part IV, the repentant Archangel is released and recreated as Lucifer.
10. colossi—giants of preadamic time