



**FUTURIST**

**Synthesis:**

**Energy & Fear**

**Shawn P. Wilbur**



# Final Synthesis

**(Energy and Fear)**

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**T**hey come upon us at dusk.

Twilight and the last books are heaped upon the fire. Heat to warm old bones. Acrid smoke to tickle memories. We sit – we, old ones now, but once so young. We sit around the fire. Old war birds, made lean and light by time, by speed. Brittle now, but still. . .

Look! Mine, still, the eagle eye. And see this beak! These bones! Made to cut the wind, to be cut by her. My love, the wind. My only love.

Look! At twilight, we old war birds burn the last of it! Here in this rainy country. Here where engines roar! We burn our books, the last books.

“And what have we to do with these, in any case?”

“Let the fire take them!”

“And if we should be next upon the pyre?”

“Then let the fire take us too! Let us hurl ourselves upon it as once we hurled ourselves into the infinite!”

For surely they shall do it, if we should fail. Those who are to come. Surely they shall fall upon us, cast us into the heart of the flames. Those who are to come. The young. The new ones, coming from every quarter, as once we came. I imagine they burn with their own light.

“They come! They come!” Burning. . .

The dreams are insistent, and we share them. Dreams of falling. Again and again. Until it is hard to say which is more real, the falling or this other life. This rainy twilight and this sound of engines. This time of waiting for the new ones, of waiting for wings to sprout from stubborn shoulder blades. We are light and lean, old war birds that we are, but we only fly with other engines. No engines of our own. So glorious to fly. Harmonious the engine and guns, and so sweet the danger. Still we wait for wings, for engines of our own. For those we know must follow. For flight, for our turn upon the fire. Already some are laid upon the fire. I imagine that they fly without wings, without wind. With engines all their own. I dream that I am falling.

At dusk, they come upon us. They cast long shadows. Or perhaps the sun goes out. We feign indifference, stir the coals a bit. We imagine the faces of angels, the voices of engines. We wait on their loving fury. In our dreams, we fall.

There was a moment when we stood at the edge, when we looked out. Behind us time and space, now dead. (Yes, dead. We ourselves fancied we had brought first news.) Ahead? Only the infinite, impossible, absurd. Only men with wings. Lightning war. Only everything. Glorious speed. There was a moment when we stood upon the brink, when we threw more than caution to the wind. There, on the last promontory of the centuries. . . Unless it was a dream. We fall in our dreams.

It becomes hard to say. . . Everything. We have become light and lean. Racing through this twilight, firelight. Cradled in the knifelike arms of the wind (my love), these words are torn, are cut, are pared away. Will we be light without them? Will we burn with our own light, or will the wings then sprout from these so-stubborn shoulders? I let them go, onto the fire, into the wind. Everything must go to fuel the fire. And if these bones, like kindling, are as kindling destined. . ? So be it. We will take our place. There, at the heart of the blaze, I imagine, I burn with the light of all that passes, passes on. I dream of burning. Of burning wings.

Silence wraps itself around us. Even the fire is hushed. We wait. we take our time in turning. We are war hawks, after all, even now. We have been waiting. But we will turn, so now we will look them in their burning eyes. (I see them already. I see them.) Soon now, we will turn to face what is to come. Our fate. And fears, perhaps, if fears still cling to

these spare shells. And do we fear? We, lovers of danger, do we fear?  
One thing, perhaps, but not our time upon the fire. Not the love and  
hate that mingles – that must mingle – in their eyes.

Falling. The dream becomes a nightmare.  
And then it becomes another.

The first fear. No recognition. Eyes like searchlight beacons look  
beyond, looks through us. We have been mistaken. We have been  
found out. No recognition. We are not the ones they seek. Suddenly old.  
Are these tears? Who now will help me to the flames? And they pass on.  
I shatter in the wake of their indifference, their casual thunder.

The second fear. No recognition. Who are these soft creatures, these  
pale angels? What is this gossamer? We require steel! Mistaken once  
again, and these are Venetian angels. Faugh! We drive them from our  
midst. Wake, when we wake, soiled with tears.

But there are other dreams. Other nightmares.  
– a light, so bright, where once there was a city  
– human shapes, now only shadows  
– the smell of burning books, of burning bodies  
– a little man, a poor painter, grown bolder, far bolder than we  
– the sorry vaudeville of a war on pasta, when all around another war  
– black darkness and confusion  
– the dwindling, and the war-dead  
– dreams gone astray

And one dream, mine alone, of murky water. Across my face. I am  
drowning, and all is lost even as it begins. Dirty, oily water, full of  
sludge. Sweet and foul. Maternal ditch, I called you. Now I call again.  
Let me be born! Let it be born! Let us go on, to fight our fight! To match  
our work, our work of minds and fists against the calumny of those who  
cannot see the future! I fear I will not wake this time. Or that I am awake.  
And all that other - storming the infinite! That all that other was a dream.

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No!  
10,000 NOs!  
I defy this nightmare! It is, it was, it will be. . .  
It must be. Must. . .

By the fire, uncertain angels at our back. We will turn, soon, to face  
the future. The future. At our backs? Overtaking us? Something here,

uncalculated. And now it is too late for calculation. Soon, now, we will turn and throw ourselves into the future once again. Into the absurd, impossible. How bright the fire seems. How frenzied my mind. Now! It is now, and we meet them! I imagine eyes brighter than searchlights! Voices to drown all the engines with a whisper! Faces, bright with love, with hate! Gabriel and Lucifer, but cast in burnished steel. Oh damn this lack of vision! Why should I dream of angels, and of falls? Can't this frippery be excised from an old warrior? Enough of angels! And enough. . . .!

What vision shall we wait on?

Enough of "Long live Futurism!" and "Viva Italie!"? Was that too provincial plagiarism? What is there new under this new sun?

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Faugh! Enough of dreams! I turn, I fall!  
100,000 times! I turn!

And

- the sun, perhaps, goes out
- the oh-so-much-brighter-than-searchlight-beacons
- the light of a thousand stars
- and engines of their own
- from stubborn shoulder blades
- from all quarters of the globe
- from beyond
- with love that sears
- with hatred fiercer than
- cold, burnished steel
- gossamer flesh and feather
- bones light and lean
- treads heavy as
- the future
- wings wide and light as
- the future

- *heavy, light, with the death, the light of*
- *cells merging, dividing*
- *with flesh, with engines, with*
- *the infinite, the absurd, impossible, with*
- *the future*
- *?*

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