

## NIGHT BREAK, COUNTY HOSPITAL

Wilderness witch-man my far off forebear,  
 Mystic motions against ancient moons beneath my lids,  
 Jade-leaf jungle tuned to cabal chants  
 While brother devil-doctors dance with fetish fang and feather:  
 My pulse takes up the secret rhythm,  
 Systole—diastole, an alternating tom-tom,  
 Forgotten incantations, major—minor.  
 We are not strangers, shaman, minus our masks in this breeding dark;  
 Atavistic heart, disrhythmia unchecked,  
 Wild harsh cadence, current beyond blood  
 Quickens with the questions, with unknowns in the shadows,  
 Alien kindred tom-tom, minor—major.  
 How great is the gamut, Aesculapius? Sorcerer, healer, leech,  
 How far through the gauntlet am I?  
 Sharp stone incision, humble herbs and purifying fire  
 Spawned skilled and sterile stainless steel, bottled nostrums,  
 licensed magic!  
 Past shade-brooding forest, far down in the covenant breed,  
 Some conjurer's conscience defied endemic demons,  
 Some holy heathen swore by aboriginal Apollo,  
 Sowed it deeply in the seeds of evolution.  
 The beat has wandered, broken, the tangled cord remains.  
 Skulls and scarabs recede on the walls of waking.  
 Sure shadowless light supports my hands  
 Anointing my sacred scalpel.