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3 Poems: "Ballad of the Match with Death"; "Set Free at Zero Gravity"; "Transparenzgessellschaft"

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Ballad of the Match With Death

With I.V. running to the brain,
ego tossed in bed;
my arm was wrapped and tied in boards.
"Rest," the doctors said.

And in that rally of the mind
I nodded: half-asleep
I faced my stern opponent, Death,
who rose from bedside seat.

"Time, gentlemen!" the Umpire called.
I wanted to crawl to bed.
I looked up at the towering chair:
"Play!" was all He said.

I heard the patients calling me,
they tried to boost my nerve;
I heard the clapping of the leaves,
prepared to toss my serve.

"Game, Death!" the Umpire called.
My wife began to cry.
"One love!" the Umpire said.
Then Death began to fly.

Death began to fly, my friends,
shoes flashing in the air;
I stood there in my tied-on gown,
feet swollen, cold, and bare.

He flew from side to side and back,
serving ace after ace;
"Advantage Death!" I heard the call.
And then I saw his face.

And then I saw his face, my friends,
And then I saw his face:
his eyes were holes of anti-matter,
his mouth the void of space.

I lobbed, Death leapt, and smashed the ball--
I saw a star explode.
The ball bounced over the universe.

I lost the set 6-0.

"Keep your wrist stiff," the doctors said,
"drive up and through the stroke."
Death hit a return at the speed of light.
My tennis racquet broke!

I had to rebandage my boarded arm--
a thirty second delay.
"Turn your body for the shot,"
I heard the nurses say.

"O.K.," said Death, "let's see what's left."
The score was four to four;
my heart began to fibrillate;
I'd soon be dead on court.

Death then served another ace.
"I protest!" I tried to cry.
But Umpire, linesmen disappeared.
Death looked me in the eye.

I ran up to the bleacher stands:
"that ball was wide!" I shout;
but the crowds in the stadium vanished;
the lights flickered, went out.

Death strode up to the net, and smiled;
he reached to take my hand.
"Another time, my friend," Death said;
"let's play sometime again."

With I.V. running to the brain,
ego tossed in bed;
my arm was wrapped and tied in boards.
"Rest," the doctors said.

Set Free at Zero Gravity

(April 26, 2007)

For Stephen Hawking, Astrophysicist

Strapped to motorized wheel chair, speaking
through electronic straws, but always dreaming
of infinity, black holes through time and space
which he'd travel willingly, his face

never being televised or watched
again, held down by its atomic weight,
new books, sly smiles, never to be written,
body mass pressed to nothingness—

released from the gravity of earth
to experience a weightlessness of girth,
the aether of his former youth, first birth—
plummeting in a cargo bay

floating up in parabolic grace,
a cosmic object now made wholly straight.

Transparenzgesellschaft

Fluorescent lighting
is just like HD only
it's your own body
you're surveilling

In the transparency
you can see
where the combatants
will hunker down

in the face of your skin
popping their heads
before they appear
in the soft light

of the mirror
of social media



Figure 1: Stephen Hawking at zero g.
From: Campbell, *Wikimedia Commons*