

# Quintet in a Minor Key Near the End of Time

*by Gary Hardaway*

## **Gravity as Destiny**

The one thing I believe in is collapse.  
Abandoned buildings collapse. Civilizations

collapse. Financial bubbles collapse.  
Stars and galaxies collapse. Falling

is something that comes quite naturally  
to puffed up things. Like the soufflé

in the oven you planned to serve  
to hurrahs at your dinner party.

The bones curve inward as you age. The vigor  
goes out of you. Get used to it. Embrace it. It is your destiny.

## **Subsistence Culture**

Hunt and gather. Hunt and gather.  
Keep the numbers small and close.  
Don't defile the land with tractors  
and Roundup. Don't defile the air  
with burnt offerings of coal and oil.  
Defy the impulse to grow beyond  
your means and the means of the  
place where you lie at night.  
Subsist. Never exploit for goals

abstract and meaningless when  
the meaning is the smile of faces  
gathered in a meal around the fire.

### **Contingencies**

There is no understanding  
only a striving against odds  
to understand. Despite

whatever faith you have,  
understanding is provisional,  
contingent upon attention

and the strength of knowing  
how little can be known  
by two selective eyes, two

imperfect ears, and nerve ends  
that still feel the missing limb.  
Flavors and odors confuse

and fail with a head-cold  
or fever. Trust nothing  
but trial and error and a

blind faith in perseverance.  
Trudge on, citizen. Surely  
knowledge you can trust

for the ever diminishing  
span of your life  
will show itself.

## **Clanging on the Bars of the Cage**

Will language ever stretch  
to let us see and know

particle and wave  
in simultaneity?

Will we always stick ourselves  
in either this or that

rather than this, that,  
and the other?

The cage of pattern is strong.  
Fluidity evades me once again.

## **Sunday Service**

How like sermons certain poems are  
but empty of the pointed sticks  
of sanctimony. They focus instead

on the wonder and terror of the world  
in words stolen from the ordinary  
for the work of awe and trembling.

How they all beat the small drum  
of the word within the world  
compelled to speak its way into being.

