

Sonnet Scroll

Passacaglia and Fugue

By Jean L. Kreiling

after the Passacaglia and Fugue in C minor for organ, BWV 582, by J. S. Bach

passacaglia: an instrumental composition consisting of variations on a bass line

A fifteen-note-long mantra for the fingers—
a line that rises, falls, reaches *amen*,
then starts again, even as *amen* lingers—
asserts a steadfast vow, again, again.
Each time it's made new: layered like censed air,
then decorated boldly as stained glass,
then dancing like a hymn-blown candle's flare,
then sanctified—not in a solemn mass,
but in a fugue whose woven veins compound
the pulsing mantra's irrefutable
humanity. The fifteen notes resound
like faith—a comfort, yet inscrutable:
familiar as a routine inhalation,
unknowable as each breath's revelation.