

# The Works of Stefan George

Second Edition

Translated by  
Olga Marx and  
Ernst Morwitz

# The Works of Stefan George



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OLGA MARX AND ERNST MORWITZ

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## NOTE

This book contains a complete translation of the seven volumes of verse which constitute the main work of Stefan George. Not included are the juvenilia, early dramatic sketches, and the volume of prose pieces.

The translation, based on the final edition of Stefan George's poems (1927-34), is an attempt to convey the language and rhythm of the original and to facilitate the understanding of the difficult German text. Thus the rendering is, in itself, a synthetic commentary, such as Goethe recommends in the last paragraph of the chapter on translation in his notes to the WEST-OESTLICHER DIVAN.

An analytic commentary to the works of Stefan George is in preparation.

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## ERRATA

- P. 57—The title of the second poem should read: IN THE UNHAPPY  
MANNER OF . . .
- P. 104—Second poem, line 5 “then” should be “them.”
- P. 116—In the third poem the last line of the second stanza should be the  
first of the third.
- P. 120—Line 6 The word “flute” should be “lute.”
- P. 231—Third poem, line 4 “sublest” should be “subtlest.”
- P. 316—Line 5 “the rumour” should be “they rumcur.”



ODES

PILGRIMAGES

ALGABAL

# ODES

## INSCRIPTION

BEFORE THE SPRING, THIS SONG WAS TUNED BETWEEN  
THE WHITE WALL AND THE RIVER EDGED WITH GREEN.  
THIS YEAR I BRING MY DREAM IN GOLD AND BLUE  
TO ALL MY PEOPLE'S SONS, THE YOUNG, THE NEW.

TO  
CARL AUGUST KLEIN  
THE TRUSTED AND TRUE SINCE THE DAYS  
OF OUR YOUTH

BERLIN  
MDCCCXC

## INITIATION

The river calls! Defiant reeds unfurl  
Their slender banners to the languid breeze,  
And check the coaxing ripples as they swirl  
To mossy shores in tender galaxies.

Escape the haste and press, and pause immersed  
In vigorous, primeval scent, unscored  
By thought, let alien odour be dispersed,  
And fix divining eyes upon award.

The cosses move in rhythms. Do you see  
The dark effulgence in the glassy tide?  
The fragile walls of vapour part and flee,  
The elves are singing to their elfin glide.

Already through the boughs' indented frames  
Enchanted fields and starry cities lure,  
The flight of time discards the wonted names,  
Only in image, space and life endure.

This is the hour! Down the goddess gleams,  
Her gauzy veils the colour of the moon,  
Her lids are lowered with the weight of dreams,  
She leans to you and offers you a boon.

Her mouth is trembling closer to your cheeks,  
So pure you seem to her, so ripe for bliss,  
That now she does not shun your hand which seeks  
To turn her lips to yours and to your kiss.

## IN THE PARK

The fountains rise as rubies, fall in pearls,  
Which every lavish jet bestows upon  
A carpet knit of green and silken curls

Where they disperse as soon as they are sown.  
The poet, whom the birds serenely face,  
In wide and shadowed arches dreams alone.

Who saw the dawning of that day of grace  
Intensely knows—in strains of sweetness wound—  
How flesh to flesh is groping for embrace.

The poet also hears the lure of sound,  
And yet today he must not yield to spells,  
Because his speech with spirits, holds him bound.

His hand must goad the pen—though it rebels.

## INVITATION

“Let us leave pavements and grime!”  
How dear your offer sounded!  
“Far, where more light and elate  
Thought and breath seem to chime,  
We shall enjoy the flower  
And resurrection fête.”

Gayly I fled from the rough  
Clatter and tortuous maze.  
Though I knew: Only love,  
Newly from heaven blazed,  
Pledges salvation below  
And undying glow.

Feeling at ease as a child  
You bear me with laughing glance,  
Who closely cling to your side.  
Does not the vista entrance!  
How dawn-shimmers glint and breathe  
Where shining villas wreathe!

Look! To the very peak,  
Where through clefts in the stone  
Little pine-trees leap,  
Orchards tower in ranks,

Flashing waters flow  
Beneath on fragrant banks.

Uphill without stopping we go.  
"Follow!" you mockingly call.  
Here at the summit I pause.  
Downward again to the shore,  
Swiftly! Branches of haws  
Lend us their wings of snow.

Now for a while let us rest.  
Dew on the grass, in haste  
On we go, side by side.—  
You drove my anguish away,  
Though feeling was never at tide  
In hours of jubilant play.

#### AFTERNOON

Smoulder of sunrays guttering downward,  
Down from the cloudless cupola of heaven,  
Smoulder of sunrays in flashing assault.

The limpid southern air in noonday silence,  
Tumult of throngs has died before the palace,  
Died on flagstones glutted with radiance.  
The soundless rampart and desolate terrace,  
The walls in long battalions blindly loom  
Like ovens afire with fuel of victims.  
In the square of the courtyard, flanked by pillars,  
Agile fountains falter in their arts.  
Above the beds where shrubs have drooped and shrivelled,  
Breath of blooms, half-withered, clings in layers.

Smoulder of sunrays guttering downward,  
Down from the cloudless cupola of heaven.

He is lonely. They fall on his shoulders and hair  
Ceaselessly, and he feels them with boundless delight,  
For he fled from the chamber's fragrant coolness,  
Seeking counter-blaze for destroying blazes,  
Until faintness reprieves him. He yields and sinks  
Down-sliding close to a column's base.

Smoulder of sunrays guttering downward.



## ENCOUNTER

Now longer shadows summon milder glows.  
The drooping body on which noon encroached  
Is urging to the lips of fresher flows—  
And then, between the pillars, you approached.

My glances drew me from the path I seek,  
But brief and shy, they only dared to yearn  
On white, on velvet white of brow and cheek.  
Unanswered they were driven to return.

And crazed with magic, mad to clasp, they trailed  
The slender bow sweet limbs in walking curved,  
And wet with longing then, they fell and failed  
Before into your own they boldly swerved.

Oh, that your whim restored you to my sight!  
Let not a newer form obliterate  
The past! It was my task through endless night  
To conjure you devoutly, trait by trait.

In vain! A steady rain of bitter lye  
Mists and obscures what painfully I scored.  
It pales. How was your hair and how your eye?  
It pales and trembles in a dying chord.

## LOVE FEASTS IN NEW TERRAINS

I

The coals are glowing. Let the incense ooze!  
And when the resins hiss and are dispelled  
We cling in clouds where vapours fall and fuse,  
And fervent wish and sweet desire weld.

Light up the sconces! Let the tapers shine!  
The fumes hang heavy as in sacred naves,  
And palm to palm, in silence we divine  
A host of melodies that join to waves.

No tender breath! In choruses like these  
Virginal down would mar the harmonies  
Like curls produced by artifice and lies.

Cast other grains into the brazier, so  
Our senses, caught in silver surge, may know  
The woman, weary, wonderful, and wise.

## II

The sky-blue satin of the tent is traced  
With golden symbols of the moon and stars,  
And on a socle at the edge are placed  
The malachite and alabaster jars.

A triple chain supports the copper globe  
Which dims our shining brows with feeble rays,  
An ample burnous serves us for a robe,  
And let us not forget the myrtle sprays!

The draught will soon beget prophetic tone  
We listen to on mats of plaited hair.  
Before the hospodar—each gesture known—

The boy profoundly bows. As in a spring  
Of magic, I am dawningly aware  
Of early days when I was still a king.

## TRANSFORMATION

On the paths at dusk, when shadows fall,  
Over bridges and heading toward tower and wall,  
When fluttering cadences call,

In a golden chariot, ferried  
On pearl-grey pinions, and carried  
Where scent of the linden beguiles,  
Swing down to earth  
With gentle smiles  
And anodyne breath.

Under the mast of a ship which forges away  
Over the glittering web of water and ray,  
Entranced to be free of the bay,

In a silver chariot, ferried  
On chrysolite mirrors, and carried  
Where surf spun to garlands beguiles,  
Swing down to earth  
With joyful smiles  
And sensuous breath.

Jubilant dyes of the end, and the sun floated under,  
Breakers snatch at the planks and tear them asunder,  
And tempests rumble and thunder.

In an iron chariot, ferried  
On clods of lava, and carried  
Where cinnabar vapour beguiles,  
Swing down to earth  
With savage smiles  
And smouldering breath.

### PARTING

The silver beeches linger hand in hand  
Along the sands where crowding waves careen,  
The yellow furrows verge on pasture-land,  
A villa hides in gardens drenched with green.

Beside the morning-glory arbour, beams  
Around his young and mournful forehead drew.  
Belief in songs to come still fills his dreams,  
His glances journey through the boundless blue.

Beyond, where clouds are shaped to shining peaks,  
And ships advance with tall and carven prows  
Or sleep surrendered to the bay, he seeks  
The shores of wonder his desires rouse.

The eyes he loves are gazing fixed and wet,  
He takes the gift of gods—a little shy,  
A hint of sad adieu, a faint regret—  
Without a thought of fame, without a sigh.

### SERENADE

Too long, too lavishly, your eyes—the blue  
Of turquoise—shine for One. I wait in rue.  
The stones are solaced by your garment's hem,  
I scarcely by a dream.

In days of old the gods were not so cold!  
When from the throng which rapture rendered bold,  
A youth, in flames of holy fervour caught,  
Forsook the sunny earth in adoration,  
They prized the stainless sacrifice he brought,  
And smiled and granted signs of commendation.

Am I beyond the age of offering?  
Has honeyed lust for death annulled my right?

Did I not hear the fanfares soar, and sing  
The shining ode of love's delight?

But if you deigned to let a shimmer sever  
Your lashes—piercing me—then I should frown  
Upon all hope of ecstasy forever,  
Discard my psalter, having sung your grace,  
I should contemn a shadow of renown  
And perish like the moth, without a trace.

## SHORE

Oh, let us leave the meadows of the sea  
Which—though they rear and strain in surly foam—sustain  
Only the wild gulls in their dipping flight,  
And lave the virgin heavens endlessly.  
Too long we wore a mask before the light.

To emerald ponds with marsh and flowered trail,  
Where grass, and vines, and leaves are rocked in tangled sheaves,  
To shrines eternal evening sanctified!  
The swans which from a distant inlet sail  
In secret sheathed, are escort to the bride.

Delight has snatched us from the fallow fjords  
—Where your lips are aglow, exotic petals flow—  
And when like drifts of bloom your body sways,  
Then all the stems begin to surge in chords  
And turn to aloe, tea, and laurel sprays.

## LATE SUMMER

Voices from the terrace fading,  
In the gardens gather sound.  
Under platans' ample shading  
Haughty beauties flounce around,  
Pert in elegant allures,  
On the arm of paramours  
Closer clinging, and with sweet  
Nods they greet.

Oh, the hoops that boast of rich  
Children, agile in their wile,  
Yielded to the airy style!  
Questions idling on the tongue,

With the perfumes that bewitch  
Swept along.

Drums are still and viols thrill.  
Distant hoof-beats, riders amble  
Slowly onward, careless ramble.  
Flippant whispers flutter, rise  
In surprise.

Gay and empty galantries  
Foe to action's turbid seas.  
Languid wisdom. Spas alone  
Strike this tone.

Gondolas are gliding past,  
Gentle rhythm, gentle lure,  
Lap of oars on water cast  
Mingle lightly to a sprightly  
Pompadour.

#### IN RETROSPECT

Once more I guess behind the curtain—scraps of mist the evening  
twines—

Behind the boughs of plane trees, threaded through the grain  
in curious lines,

The realm my scepter yesterday still ruled, but now transformed  
and far,

A Tyrus, pond, and garden-frond in liquid tints of blooms and  
tar.

Here beech-tops on the shore divide the saucy villa from the  
street,

A clearing in the forest hums with flocks of deer on flitting feet.

O ships, parade of haughty swans! Your colours were a gift to  
me!

O you, that like a mother swelled my faith in my own songs, O  
sea!

## ON THE TERRACE

Before the boastful balustrade, the slopes  
Effuse the skyey green of gliding glaze,  
A web of trees and houses lit with hopes.  
The goddess casts her shadow on the vase.

I hurry forward to a flaming wheel,  
A flash: for us a chain of runic light,  
On sudden pinnacles of grace we reel  
And then are buried in abysmal night.

And now the tracks are blotted. I return.  
The goddess casts her shadow on the vase.  
If you were great enough and could discern . . .  
My foolish transport scars me with its blaze.

Oh, triumph! It is you! In sunset flame  
Of glances we exchanged I read my grief.  
A herald of your self you staunchly came,  
And our togetherness was proud and brief.

## ADDRESS

I never shall rejoice in cold esteem,  
When you deny your flesh with regal pride  
To common wenches and their brazen dream.  
You held aloof from them and yet you sighed!

Your hands, indeed, must all in vain be wrung  
For draught of solace from a higher sphere,  
Oh, would that from a mother I were sprung  
So I myself could bring it to you here!

Whether you begged or bade imperiously,  
No double red would pour into my face.  
I should surround you with a silken sea,  
On sumptuous purple yield to your embrace.

But I can only soothe with phantom kiss.  
A child of buoyant cloud and crystal air,  
I cleave through chaos, sing your state of bliss,  
And bear as I divine you also bear.

## PICTURES

### THE INFANTE

With shield and dagger under fallow frieze,  
He stands in a dark oval rimmed with gold,  
A pale and smiling child. His brother-twin  
Was only briefly in this hall where then  
No stranger gaped. The frosty mountain-breeze  
Had proved a playmate who was more than bold.

But he himself will never grieve at all  
That he was kept from growing old and grim  
Like this or that one on the neighbouring wall,  
For blessedness has been conferred on him:

When glass pomegranates to the moon unclose  
He is companioned by a shining elf,  
And often follows—flying and in fall—  
With her the fondly cherished silken ball  
Which, coloured like the olive and the rose,  
Is still agleam upon the oaken shelf.

### FRA ANGELICO

Above the graceful headings of the story  
—Eternal vigil over mortal plight,  
The ruthless sire's message full of glory—  
He worked the wonder of unfailing light.

The gold from holy chalices he took,  
For yellow hair the ripened wheaten stalks,  
The blue from women washing at the brook,  
The pink from children, colouring with chalks.

The Lord in majesty's untarnished rays,  
Beside him gentle singers of his praise  
And victors over Gorgons, friends of Graces,

The bride with calm and childish bosom faces  
Him meekly, yet enchanted with her gift,  
Takes from his hand a crown—the very first!

## THE GARDENS CLOSE

Early evening blurs the lawns, a cold  
Drizzle dims the pond to greys,  
And Dianas and Apollos fold  
Radiant limbs in films of haze.

Faded leaves are whirling toward the tombs,  
Dahlias, gillyflowers, roses,  
Forced into a symphony of fumes  
Yearn for sleep in downy mosses.

Through the gate the burning moons are fled.  
What you hoped for—does it stand?  
Can you still believe in what they said,  
Pilgrim, with your staff in hand?





# PILGRIMAGES

## INSCRIPTION

THEN I JOURNEYED FORTH  
AND BECAME A STRANGER,  
AND I SOUGHT FOR SOME ONE  
TO SHARE MY MOURNFULNESS,  
AND THERE WAS NO ONE.

TO THE POET  
HUGO VON HOFMANNSTHAL  
IN MEMORY  
OF THE DAYS OF EAGER ENCHANTMENT

VIENNA  
MDCCCXCI

## THE RECLUSE GOES FOR...

A lance of light does not deceive him now.  
The winds that with a scourge of twisted hail  
Had driven him away from every trail,  
Are curved caressingly about his brow.

“O cell, from you I often seek release,  
Your wall has never yielded me rewards  
Like glints of red and blue on snowy swards.  
How slumber numbs my senses in your peace.”

And faintly dazed by flecks of changing gold,  
Straight through the shining trees he makes his way,  
And does not know the end will bring dismay.  
He found the valley which he knew of old.

“They bend and sway with glaring crimson bows.  
I dare the leap! But now—to whom to turn?  
They made the long extinguished tinder burn,  
I hate them, yet I blaze to clasp them close.

Why does my gaze explore the distant peak?  
The arching stair, the figures saturate  
With sun? They never falter in their gait.  
To none of these my tongue shall ever speak.

To match my whim (already vengeance neared!)  
I used to fashion stature, mouth, and eye.  
Among the joyful rose my restless cry,  
Is beauty always cheap? I asked and sneered.

But now my anguish hungers for a mien  
Of sorrow, now a brow can strike me blind,  
A lash suffices to besiege my mind,  
An arm entwined with rings of tourmaline.”

Will day decoy him from this mournful site?  
When blooms of frost have melted, will he weave  
The dance with scarlet women, and believe  
In careless revelry and loud delight?

Will he return once more to what he said  
Farewell that day, still yearning for its fill,  
To life with parchments, true and tried, until  
A dream restores him to his lonely bed?

Stop, O mill, your even sweep  
For the heather wants to sleep.  
Ponds await a thawing wind,  
Rimmed with crystal lance on lance,  
And the little trees are lined  
Up like varnished woodwax plants.

On the blind and frozen tide  
White-clad children softly glide  
Homeward from Communion, pray  
Silently to God whom learning  
Set aloof, while some essay  
Pleas to Him who yields to yearning.

Did a whistle shrill below?  
All the candles faintly flow.  
Was it not like voices weeping?  
Dark enchanters cast a spell,  
Draw their brides into their keeping.  
Ring, O bell! Ring out, O bell!

While you listen to whispering flames,  
Close to your knee is my cheek and claims  
Only a breath of your warmth. But the mad

Tides of blood to my temples show  
That where you go I must not go,  
And bliss still leaves me chained and sad.

When in pity you smooth my hair  
I am rewarded, and though I dare  
Disaster, I court your sublimity

Like the devout who, in spite of their dread,  
Daily at Angelus turn their head  
To a Madonna of ebony.

Why do you squander  
Tears on a she?  
Foolish to ponder,  
Wait and see

If in the valley  
Snow has gone,  
South wind will rally  
Blooms on the lawn.

Will you be seeing  
Her unveiled  
Still before fleeing  
June has paled?

Why do you squander  
Tears on a she?  
Foolish to ponder,  
Wait and see!

All youth (or  
So it seems to you)  
Craves to be caught in flame.  
But dawns and twilights flew,  
And I was near you, and you thought me calm.

You speak! I  
Almost start in fright!  
Can I be wound  
In so much zeal and light  
By gay and childish laughter—empty sound!

And later  
(Do not doubt I grieved!)  
Gently your foot still fell,  
Your finger gently weaved,  
I spurned—and only then I praised you well.

O sister,  
You dislike this strain?  
When I depart,  
Never to come again,  
Let this enigma bind us heart to heart.

To ancient lands the vaulted passage calls,  
Tapering shaft,

And light through which the long-drawn strophe falls.  
And there I quaffed  
Sun, when I fled the dragon's dripping claws.

A thorn impaled me at the garden gate.  
Tearose, O yellow bloom,  
Unflawed by white, aglow and saturate,  
Strong and replete with doom.  
Even a drop of dew would mar your state.

Too soon! I hanker after blandishment  
First violets confer.  
To seldom flowers in hothouse frames I bent,  
And then, to float near her,  
I loosen from my kerchief kindred scent.

## VISIONS

I

When from the gondola she mounts the stair,  
She trails her robe along the stones, and suffers  
—Accepting conquest with a haughty air—  
The arm her escort, old and noble, proffers.

A gentle phrase cannot delight her ear,  
In festal halls she sits devoid of feeling.  
The only tale of joy she wants to hear  
Comes from the tawny angels on the ceiling.

The swirls of heavy velvet, first of spoils  
From cargoes never known before, unfold her,  
She revels in the fumes of precious oils  
Which traders from the Indies lately sold her.

Now to a wastrel, lacking rank and name,  
Within her curtained chamber she has spoken:  
“Cry out upon the market place my shame,  
I cower at your feet, abased and broken.”

II

Too long I lean against the gate and gaze  
Through iron fretwork toward the lawn.  
I hear a flute that yearns for far-aways,  
In glossy laurel laughs a faun.

And when I meet you at the garnet tower,  
You never have the grace to slow your tread,  
You do not know my blessing for this hour  
And how I mourn when it has fled.

The pledge I gave myself I now forswear!  
We too are of an ancient stem, and should  
I drop the shawl which hides my breast and hair  
And then atone with early widowhood?

Ah, if he guessed the charms my lips invent:  
—I guess them since my dreams revealed his face—  
The oleanders drowning in their scent,  
And others soft as jessamine's embrace.

Too long I lean against the gate and gaze  
Through iron fretwork toward the lawn.  
I hear a flute that yearns for far-aways,  
In glossy laurel laughs a faun.

#### WARNING

You follow hordes that hail you to a throne  
Of glaring yellow silk and massive gold,  
From which a rain of blood has often rolled  
While fires soared through seas of broken stone.

Now hallow every murder, every lust!  
As mad as surf against the cliffs, your mind  
Exults in icy and destroying gust  
And scorns the quiet well, the quiet wind.

They stammer their allegiance to your shoe,  
The ravished women wail, and one is more  
Distraught and shameless in her fear: Before  
Your lordly eyes she tears her dress in two.

They bring you coral, diamonds, emeralds, pearls,  
As if these were but common trumpery,  
The priestess, whom her virgin mantle furls,  
Cries: "Take me as your slave!" and bends her knee.

And lonely through a savage scene you move,  
Your hair is fouled with offal from the street,  
Your pride impatient to frequent the groove  
Which sordid creatures plotted with their feet.

Is this, indeed, the land for which you warred?  
Oh, disregard the voice that lured and lied!  
And do not say that sorrow was your guide,  
Nor cast aside the raiment of a lord!

The squares are forsaken, and silent the song and the lute.  
In frantic search I sped  
Through palace and church and where dances and tilts are afoot.  
How many tears I shed!  
And still she fled from me!  
Nor is she here, and yet I distinctly recall  
How often these battlements beckoned, how turret and wall  
Gave joyful prophecy.

I fly from the place where I never have tasted of bliss,  
And roam through barren sand.  
And uphill and downhill the thistles leave barbs in my flesh,  
Like serpents the succulent creepers entwine the land.

Here from the height I see  
The mountain-top: an island of pastoral green,  
A single Thuja tree,  
And bushes along the ledge.  
Below—as if primitive masters had painted the scene—  
The meadows and cities are patterned with spire and bridge.  
What new and varied goals!  
The glory of evening melts into ochreous swirls.  
The cup of a saffron surrenders its fragrance and furls,  
And silver manna falls.

Sovereign dream I trusted at heart!  
Oh, that your daughters were mates of my mirth  
Stauncher than those I encountered on earth.

Long I watched them, though I stood apart.

Glittering peacocks that tempt through the night,  
Spending the shudders we crave for delight,  
Larks at dawn with their passionate cry,

Yet majestic as a cloudless sky.



Is the rejoicing in palpable tunes  
Which in my mouth have resounded for moons,  
A new incarnation and core?

Shall I find my true domains once more?

Silence despair!  
Although you long  
—But in vain—to possess,  
Question and bear,  
With conquering song  
Master distress.

And so it was taught.  
He patiently wrought,  
Another year passed.  
By south and by east  
Deluded at last  
He wearily ceased.

An oak overhead,  
He shovelled a grave  
For mantle and stave,  
He felt they were dead.  
For quests I prepare,  
Unburdened by care.

The sluices broke,  
Curbed waters rose higher.  
He fought down a tear  
And murmured: I fear  
On this very oak  
I must shatter my lyre.

Doff your mourning mien and vesture,  
I myself avoid relief,  
But you are so drowned in grief  
That all solace seems a gesture.

Why, when all the rest are keeping  
Trysts of gladness, do you cling  
To your pain? Forever weeping  
With the moon when fountains spring?

Though the storm may lurk and lour  
And repeat a winter strain,  
Many a rose is still in flower,  
Far from ripened is the grain.

Does not faint desire flow  
Out from fingers calm and frosty?  
Sing the quests of long ago,  
Lest the sounding string grow rusty.

My early visions! With the dead you vanished,  
I lack the strength to stay you in your flight.  
From lands, which are my birthright, I am banished,  
So now I taste a splendour tinged with blight.

By rumours of enchantment seized and shaken,  
I see the herons, white and crimson, wheel  
Across the valley's blue expanse and waken  
The nearby lake that sleeps and shines like steel.

There, as in symmetry of chords she paces,  
Her upward pointed finger lifts and takes  
Her shrouding garment by its silken laces,  
Which in the night she wove of willow flakes.

O subtle game: to guess through veils! Desires,  
Spurred by my longing, whispered we were one,  
But half-concealed in vines with bloomy spires,  
Down to the nearby lake she glided on.

#### BLESSING FOR NEW QUESTS

When hope still lured me to a distant zone,  
In sleep that was not sleep, I dreamed a bride,  
And then the very hour I descried  
You as her herald, I became your own.

When I renounced, when peace was almost won,  
When flames of greed for her had slowly died,  
Confess: Was destiny my proper guide,  
Now that once more to mine your eyes are drawn?

I pace the nave and reach the middle throne,  
On golden tripods myrrh and sandal smoke,  
I sing as if an organ buoyed the tone.

For unction let me give my fiery blood.  
And shall I once redeem my pilgrim's cloak?  
Set out again beneath the pilgrim's hood?

Would that on mountain trails, alone  
And far away he bathed in sun,  
And listened long to stream and leaf  
Until they drowned the drone of grief.  
Would he were steeled by stabbing wind  
And then serenely sought his kind.

But in the wake of what curses and malice  
Was he impelled to a marsh, one night,  
Where a resilient stalk seemed to buoy  
Lightly a lily? Flutter of slight  
Wings in the heart of a creamy chalice!  
Angel of evil! Angelic decoy!

The wanderer faltered from the road,  
A mutter from the rushes flowed.  
He errs through elms, a spectral maze,  
There is no balm for his despair,  
The darkness blurs his frantic gaze,  
And storms are tangled in his hair.

The gravel slowly dries in morning rays,  
Too young to mingle blaze with their caress,  
In gardens which their mistress loves on days  
When she is pleased with cool and lack of stress.

Blue-flowered vines are wreathed around the door.  
She strolls through asters, pinks, and mignonette.  
As in the past, will they assert once more:  
"In realms of bloom you are the coronet!"

Her ribbons veer the butterflies aside,  
And in the wind a pair of palm trees quake.  
Almost resentfully she scents the pride  
Of things that only grow for flowering's sake.

## JOURNEYS OF LONG AGO

### I

Through the wood, across the valley,  
On we trudged with serious word,  
Flushed and childish overrated  
Trespasses—our trifling tally—  
Longed to have our doubts abated  
At the shrine where prayers are heard.

Silent hope and higher power  
Eased the burden of our going,  
Oh, and then the sacred towers  
Filled our hearts to overflowing!

And no scorn could make us falter.  
When the evening glimmered mild  
In the tinted panes, we bowed  
Gravely on the flags, and vowed  
Not as yet before the altar  
Of the Mother, but her Child.

### II

The island-garden sleeps. No step, no sound,  
And magic holds the palace dim and mute.  
No priest, or prince, or marquis can be found,  
No guard displays the banner in salute.

A breath of fever from the river fumes,  
A fire falls, a fire mounts and flows,  
On every colour greyish vapour glooms  
And wilts the shrubs and flowers in formal rows.

The stranger is expectant and afraid,  
He hastens up the path between the yews . . .  
No glimmer of a child in blue brocade,  
Or of the impress of his saffian shoes?

### III

Across a plain of snow we sped,  
And parting swiftly lost its sting,  
The whirl of wheels that chugged ahead  
Hurried straight into the spring.

How thoughts revolved abreast of night  
I know, and how we scarcely slept,  
How mists were downed before the light,  
    Gleam of day through windows crept,

Where rush and tiny palm and leaf  
Of sheerest crystal were unfurled  
Among the bracken, moss, and sheaf,  
    Flora of a wonder-world!

What balms on brittle bark  
Of fence and branches ooze?  
Autumnal colours with sheen  
Of lingering sunset fuse:  
Red-gold, a stipple of dark,  
Scarlet and curious green.

Who comes to the unknown soul,  
Alone in its sorrowful maze?  
A child in a flutter of blue—  
Shy rustle of wind, the adieu  
Of roses spending their toll  
Of scent to the last warm rays.

By shimmering hedges and through  
The crackle of withered trails  
And sough of glossy bough,  
Clinging together we go  
Like siblings in fairy-tales,  
And falter in dazzled awe.

### THE CLASP

I planned it as an iron band,  
As something cool and smooth and plain,  
But not a mine in all the land  
Had metal of the wanted grain.

So now it shall be otherwise:  
A rare and lavish cluster tooled  
Of gold as red as flame, and jewelled  
With precious stones in flashing dyes.

# ALGABAL

## INSCRIPTION

### IN MEMORY OF LUDWIG II

WHEN YOUTH TRANSFIGURED EACH OF MY DAYS WITH  
SO MUCH LIGHT,  
I FELT YOU CLOSE AND YEARNED FOR YOU IN SWIFT  
SURPRISE.  
NOW ALGABAL, WHO IS YOUR YOUNGER BROTHER,  
HAILS  
BEYOND THE PALE OF DEATH, O MOCKED AND MAR-  
TYRED KING!

TO THE POET  
ALBERT SAINT-PAUL  
THE FRIEND WITH WHOM I HAVE SHARED UNFORGOT-  
TEN EXPERIENCES AND DELIGHT IN ART

PARIS  
MDCCCXCII

## A REALM BELOW

O halls that boast of such fabulous treasure,  
What lurks at your feet you never will know,  
The curve of the coast gives the master less pleasure  
Than dazzling domains in the waters below:

The mountains and springs of miraculous birth,  
The houses and holdings his phantasies plot  
Far under the tread of the creatures of earth,  
And grottoes which luminous frenzy begot,

With walls where the whiteness of winter still clusters,  
And others of ores in prismatic rays,  
And showers of jewels suffused with the lustres  
Of candles abloom with perpetual blaze.

The rivers that flared through the upper levels  
In hyacinth, ruby, and scarlet, subdued  
Their colours and flow on their downward travels  
Like half-opened roses of velvety hue.

Deprived of their oars, on the wavy green  
Of somnolent harbours, the bevvies of skiffs  
Which dream of venturesome journeys between  
Ominous eddies and coral reefs.

He finds that the world he has formed and transcended  
Is pleasing at times with its newness and might,  
Where, save for his own, no command is attended  
And he is the lord of the wind and the light.

The hall of yellow glitter and of sun!  
On level dome among the stars it reigns,  
And from the fiery crater flashes run:  
Topazes interfused with amber grains.

The flat and unembellished golden tiles  
—Entire towns' and kingdoms' looted store—  
Are polished mirrors ranged in serried files,  
And lion skins are broad upon the floor.

But there is One whose glances never quail  
Before the glaring crown of worlds, and thrice  
A thousand heavy amphorae exhale  
The scent of citron, ambergris, and spice.

The room of pale splendence lay beside,  
Where white of light is fused with white of glow,  
The roof is glass, the mats of milky hide  
Seem cloud above and drift the floor like snow.

The cedar wainscot on the walls is wan.  
Against it thirty peacocks stand in arcs,  
Their breasts as flawless as the down of swans,  
Their dragging tails enriched with icy sparks.

Each thing is graced with colours of its own,  
With tarnished or metallic brilliancy,  
With crystal, diamond, opalescent stone,  
With alabaster and with ivory.

And pearls! The clear gifts of a sombre place,  
They roll like fashionings which men beget,  
But on the warmth and smoothness of a face  
Will keep inviolate the cooling wet.

And there the globe of jasper also lay,  
Which he had played with in those early years . . .  
The emperor's hand was stainless on the day  
He held it to his eyes that brimmed with tears.

My garden requires no air and no sun,  
The garden I built for my pondering,  
Its birds are motionless flocks, and none  
Ever has welcomed the advent of spring.

The trunks are of coal and of coal are the shoots,  
The hedges and fields draw a scowling design,  
A never harvested burden of fruits  
Glitters like lava in groves of pine.



The greyish light of a cavern foils  
The guess whether evening is close or dawn,  
And resinous vapours of almond oils  
Hover on beds, and furrows, and lawn.

But when my phantasy conquered my gloom  
I asked, as I pensively made my rounds:  
How can I evoke you in sacred bounds,  
Strange, and large, and sombre bloom?

## DAYS

When ramparts, tipped with copper, seem to swim  
In early rays, and all the gables glow,  
While waves of cool through courts of basalt flow,  
The emperor's doves alight and wait for him.

His robe is blue, of silken Seric twist,  
A foil for sapphires and the Sardian gems  
In hulls of silver, stitched along the hems,  
But not a clasp or jewel on arm and wrist.

He smiled, and his transparent fingers fed  
The grains of millet from a golden bowl,  
Then through the portico a Lydian stole  
And to his master's ankle bowed his head.

Above the roof the startled birds careen.  
"I want to die, for I alarmed my lord!"  
And as he spoke, a heavy dagger gored  
His breast. A patch of crimson stained the green.

The emperor turned in scorn, but just the same,  
Before the afternoon was done, he bade  
Them carve upon the cup from which he had  
His evening draught of wine, the servant's name.

Toward the east the walls are massed  
Where—to honour mighty Zeus—  
Majesty and marvel, vast  
And exotic, strike a truce.

Clad in robes designed to lure,  
Dancers open up the rite,  
Boys, an offering made secure  
In a country limp with light.  
Heap the palm and olive leaves  
For the priest, and scatter silver-  
Dust, and sand, and fragrant sheaves,  
Waxen lilies, and narcissus.

On the threshold pause and rest,  
Where unveiled the image gazes  
Only on a single guest  
Who adores with constant praises.  
He alone shall stammer words,  
Ban his brother from the place  
When the dual god accords  
His eternal sign of grace.

Youthful voices—echo blooms,  
Nards dissolve in scent and err  
Through the heavy shaft of fumes  
To the sweet caress of myrrh.

O mother of my mother, long revered,  
How vexed I am by language that adjures!  
You claim my spirit did not follow yours,  
That actionless in idle air it sheered.

Do you recall how many spears were hurled  
When in the east I struggled for the crown?  
My valour met with censure and renown  
Before I even understood the world.

It is not weakness bids me shun your ways.  
To me your doing spells futility.  
Oh, let me go my fated course, but free  
And undefiled by words of hate or praise.

Do not estrange my brother! For I guessed  
Your secret goal, there was no need to ask.  
You hold him shrewdly to his dulling task  
And scheme to keep him servile and suppressed.

See, I am delicate as apple bloom,  
More peaceful than a new-born lamb, but should  
My spirit once be torn, its iron would  
Touch with its stone and tinder, flashing doom.

I pace the marble stair and half-way down  
I come upon a corpse without a head,  
My brother's precious blood is clotted-red . . . .  
I merely lift my trailing purple gown.

Cups on the ground,  
Brooches undone,  
Women, jades,  
Slim boys pour,  
Sink to the floor.  
Naked are thigh,  
Haunches, and breast,  
Garlands frayed,  
Circle the head.

Perfumes unbound,  
Breathing of rest,  
Bacchus be gone!  
All will die  
When the feast is dead.

Roses caress you,  
Scarlet, glowy,  
Heaped and wanted?  
Wan and snowy  
For your wonder?  
Red as mallow,  
Wilted yellow.  
Shadows quiver,  
Kiss and bless you.

Open the sluices!  
Floodgate looses  
Roses, flaunted,  
Rain and river  
Drowning under.

When envious sleep turns to leave me  
Flung out on my silken sheet,  
No teller of tales shall reprieve me,  
No song that is lulling and sweet,  
Of maidens from Attica's flower,  
Who moons ago chanced to beguile,  
Now draw me into your power,  
Players of flutes from the Nile!

I lay in pavilions celestial,  
I ate of heavenly bread,  
You sang of the flight from terrestrial  
Abodes and the fame of the dead.  
When sleep after long supplication,  
Comes cooling my lids, Oh, beguile  
And slay me in soft iteration,  
Players of flutes from the Nile!

These words were said when living was a loss:  
I want the mob to perish and to groan,  
And let who laughs be nailed upon the cross!  
My rage is turned against myself alone.

For I, the one, comprise the multitude.  
As I am led by destiny, I lead,  
And though my scourges strike them till they bleed,  
They have their gladiators and their food.

When I forgot myself, when clad like them  
I shared unnoticed in their empty round,  
My hate for them, I fear, was not profound,  
I had not gauged the harshness of my stem.

Then out I barred the rabble's hue and cry.  
Without desires, mild and light I dreamed,  
And almost like a sister's image seemed  
The face a mirror showed my searching eye.

I must saddle ashen horses,  
Race across the moors of dread,  
Till the marshes end our courses  
Or the lightning strikes me dead.

Many silent heroes whiten  
In the fallow field, and flares  
Of the firs are all that brighten  
Corpse by corpse with sooty glares.

Red as brick the slender, shallow  
Rivers run as straight as strings,  
Sighs arise from them and hollow  
Winds cavort in gusty rings.

Women's hair is loose and slashes  
Through the pebbles, thickly sweeping,  
Women's weeping cools the gashes,  
Lavish weeping—honest weeping?

Agathon, close to my pillow bowed,  
What your mouth concealed, your lashes said.  
What shall I do to brush away the cloud  
—My brother and my friend—of tears unshed?

When veins abounding in radiance shrink  
From dust and merciless wind, you shall  
Not try to challenge the gods who drink  
Delight from so crushing a spectacle.

This your reward: Only you may guess  
These proud limbs too dread ash and bones.  
We never shall tremble in earthly distress,  
We, who were born for the purple of thrones.

Somnolent peace! But through it I guessed  
Noise of refractory mobs. Do I fear

Ides and their evils the augurs have stressed?  
Foul is the omen of serpents, but hear:

Far from your clutches your ruler will rest  
Even before the insurgents appear.

Music sifted  
Down! A harp? Or horn that gave  
Wings and lifted  
Me, or thrust into a grave?

As if shaken,  
And as though a god ordained,  
Prayers waken  
In me, Syrians, at your strains.

Brittle trebles—regenerate, quicken,  
Brazen flourishes— laughingly squander,  
Shrill arpeggios—sever and sicken,  
Silver clashes—fire and wonder.

Shall I tender  
Thanks, but oust you, Syrian seers,  
Who engender  
Lust to cling in earthly spheres?

## MEMORIES

Days of grandeur when in fancy, worlds awaited my command,  
Luckless day when I departed from the altars of my land.

There with gods I sat in counsel on their most exalted rules,  
Down to earth their children journeyed as my paramours and  
tools.

Be again the boy who wanders through the woods to be alone,  
Stops, afraid of thoughts that face him, of a sudden, as his own,

With your tender, daring pallor, mark of restless, ripening year.  
Oh, that in the flesh, not only as a shadow you were here!

I have lost the days of bloom  
When a tear was sweet. Has death  
Chilled the butterfly to whom  
Kisses clung in every breath?

Who on blade and clover dipped,  
And through gaudy gardens flew,  
And from every blossom sipped  
Hurriedly the scent and hue?

Whom the night allowed a scope  
Which the day did not procure,  
Whom the night allayed with hope  
That the tulip still may lure?

Will the tit's, the skylark's tune  
Bring him back from where he fled?  
Will he praise another June,  
Does he sleep, or is he dead?

Child, elected by the Graces,  
So the world may love and win,  
Wipe away the stinging traces  
Of the years and fancied sin.

Victors, home from battle, bowed  
To your beauty, to their young  
God the sons of mortals vowed  
Homage with adoring tongue.

They give thanks to fate which suffers  
Them to live with the Divine,  
When on jasper tiles he offers  
Gifts before the ivied shrine.

Men lament and women sigh  
At your temple gates in flocks,  
And the scorned devoutly vie  
For your hem to touch their locks.

Lave yourself and doubly fair  
Rise, before your fame lose lustres,  
That once more you may compare  
To the Hermae of the masters.

Against the square I saw her first, among  
The white-clad sisters, stern and beautiful.  
Around her neck and sloping shoulders clung  
Like coronation robes the simple wool.

In the arena, when to mad acclaim  
Of many mouths the victims strewed the ground,  
When those about to die called Caesar's name,  
Her eyes were cold, and tranquil, and profound.

And I recall the wooing wild and swift:  
I snatched the priestess from the sacred fold,  
And every country brought a bridal gift.  
I gave her floods of fragrant oils and gold.

And doubting new delight in store for me,  
I only found a source of greater pain.  
Back to the shrine I ordered her, for she  
—Like all the others—also bore a stain.

And now I shall evoke those hours: Under  
The fig tree lay the children fast asleep  
After their sudden mating, sweet with wonder . . .  
I feared their fathers soon would make them weep.

Ah, well for you I gave the drop of bane  
I carry in my faithful ring, to use  
If once, at fall of night, I should not choose  
To have to face the sight of stars again.

You are reprieved! My coming was benign,  
For no awakening shall abate the rapture  
Which only dreams so perfectly recapture  
As from your features now I can divine.

I can still relive my first distress:  
Tracking alien steps with guilty haste,  
And I crushed my dearest dream for this!

When I conjure up the past and see  
Early years of wildest agony,  
How I beat on tombs: Oh, shelter me!

Now I find you almost swift and slight!  
Gentle awe I grant you as your right,  
Saddest solace, Son of Night.



Have victims gulled me, or an eagle's glide,  
Or can the reader in the clouds have lied?

This virgin bud is never to enjoy  
The bridal nectar which the winds convoy?

But with a flood of balm and spice assail  
The tedious hours in a sultry jail?

And try to quicken life in sluggish veins  
With sap of hemp, and wine in broken rains?

And must I forfeit youth, my love confessed  
—Unheeded—to a pillar's marble breast!

### AUGURY

Once I saw the swallows winging,  
Swallows snow- and silver-white,  
In the wind I saw them clinging,  
Windy weathers, hot and bright.

Saw the jays alight and glimmer,  
Parakeet and colibri  
Through the trees of wonder shimmer  
In the wood of Thusferi.

Saw the ravens flap and slacken,  
Daws of black and sombre grey  
Over adders, near the bracken  
Where the magic forest lay.

Now again I see the winging  
Snow and silver swallows veer,  
In the wind I see them clinging,  
Windy weathers, cold and clear.

THE BOOKS OF ECLOGUES AND  
EULOGIES, OF LEGENDS AND  
LAYS AND OF THE HANGING  
GARDENS

THE NAMES OF THREE POETS SHALL ADORN THESE  
PAGES:

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MUNICH  
MDCCCXCIV

# THE BOOK OF ECLOGUES AND EULOGIES

## ANNIVERSARY

O sister, take the jug of sallow clay  
And come with me, for you did not forget  
What still we cherish in devout renewal.  
Now it is seven summers since they told us  
—While at the spring we talked and drew the water —  
That on the same day our betrothed had died.  
There in the meadow, where a fir is growing  
Beside two poplars, let us fill our jugs  
Of sallow clay with water from the fountain.

## DAY OF RECOGNITION

Struck with amazement, as though we were entering a region  
Frost-bound when last we had seen it, yet now full of flowers,  
We, who felt old and sorrowful, gazed at each other,  
And our reflections were fused in the river below us.  
Each for a moment held back while she probed the other,  
Growing more certain in solemn and saturate silence.  
Sister, from then on I gave you the name of Serena.  
And we confessed the secret long buried within us:  
That from the glimmering pastures, from Swan or Lyre  
Over us, still we await a luminous wonder.

## DAY OF DESTINY

On evenings when the air was mild, we chose  
Our usual path, and bound in close accord  
We talked about our kindred and our stem  
To give each other confidence and hope.  
Now for the first time you have saddened me,  
A bitter grief, my sister, for it seems  
That often westward toward the trellised grapes  
You turn, serene and glad, and hardly hear  
My words. Alas! What if the unknown lurks  
There in the vines to snatch you from our midst!

## SHEPHERD'S DAY

The herds were trotting from their winter quarters.  
Their young attendant, after many months,  
Advanced across the plain the river brightens.  
The meadows, glad to be awakened, hailed  
With sappy green, and fields sang out to him.  
But smiling to himself, he walked the paths  
Of spring and was possessed with new divinings.  
He used his staff to leap across the ford  
And lingered on the farther bank where gold,  
Which lazy waves had washed from sand and stones,  
Delighted him, and fragile shells of many  
Colours and contours presaged happiness.  
The bleating of his lambs no longer held him.  
He roved into the woods to cool ravines  
Where plunging streams are steep between the boulders  
On which the mosses drip, and bared and black  
The roots of beeches branch. Beneath the silence  
And gentle motion of the vaulted tree-tops,  
He closed his eyes and slept. The sun was high  
And scaly silver darted through the waters.  
When he awoke he climbed the peak and reached  
The solemn rite of onward flowing light.  
He prayed and crowned himself with sacred leaves,  
And up to warm and slowly shifting shadows  
Of clouds already dark, he launched his song.

## THE FIELDGOD'S SORROW

Why should the girls who came from under elm trees,  
With wreaths around their heads and in their fingers,  
Oppress my thoughts and crush me? At the edge  
Of thinning woods, beside my quiet house,  
I watched the meadows, green and splashed with colour,  
Climb upward in a gentle slope, and hawthorn  
Scatter the earth with overflow of bloom,  
When flitting by the wayside, they discerned me,  
Began to whisper secrets, and with laughter  
And haste avoided me, although I called them,  
Although my pipe implored with tender music.  
And not until I drank and caught my image  
Down in the shallow well: my matted locks

And furrowed brow, did I discover what  
Their flying words had shrilled to one another,  
What rang and echoed from the rocky wall.  
Now I have lost what zest I had in poisoning  
My fishing-rod above the pond, and wheedling  
My willow-pipe—that proved so ineffective—  
With agile touch. But through the misty greyness  
Of dusk, I shall beset the Lord of Harvests  
With the lament, that he denied me beauty  
When he invested me with deathlessness.

#### DIALOGUE IN THE REEDS

“Oh, why do you rise through the ripples to eavesdrop again on  
my pleasures,  
The moment I waken at noon, when the loveliest songs well with-  
in me,  
When wine-coloured windflowers clasp the twittering gold-  
tinted grasses,  
And circles of delicate glory are ringed through a network of  
bushes?”

“This hour is dear to me also for rowing through wax-petalled  
lotus,  
And rocking myself as in boats on the lily pads, upward and  
downward,  
My body suffused with the radiant rays of empyreal regions.  
But come, I shall show you the charms which I found on the bank  
of the river.”

“We two are so different, and think what the gossip of flowers  
would be if  
The gleam of my arms were confused with your shaggy and  
weather-tanned shoulder!”

“Then find yourself other abodes to disport in, for these are  
the meadows  
Which always—my earliest memories pledge it—belonged to my  
people.”

“And we have been here since beginning of time, we, the fair  
and immortal.”

“This knife—here it is in my hand—which has served me to  
whittle the rind from

The sap-swollen branches and carve them to pipes, I shall plunge  
in my heart  
Clear up to the hilt. With the vanishing sun I shall sink through  
the water.”

“Indeed you shall not! It would vex me if blood in a sinister cur-  
rent  
Should darken the mirror I cherish, the stream with its limpid  
enchantment.”

#### THE LORD OF THE ISLAND

In southern seas—the fishers tell the story—  
Far on an island rich in cinnamon,  
And oil, and jewels that glitter in the gravel,  
There was a bird who, standing in the rushes,  
Could use his beak to pluck the topmost branches  
Of even tallest trees, and when he lifted  
His wings, the colour of the snail of Tyre,  
To low and heavy passage, he resembled  
A darkly drifting cloud. They say by day  
He waited in the wood, but of an evening,  
When he had settled on the shore in flurries  
Of seawind redolent with salt and weed,  
He loosed the sweetness of his voice, and dolphins,  
The friends of song, swam nearer in an ocean  
That brimmed with golden sparks and golden feathers.  
And this had been his life since time began.  
None but the shipwrecked ever saw him, for  
When first the shining sails of men were favoured  
By fortune, and a prow approached the cliffs,  
He slowly climbed the hill and there his glances  
Encompassed all the land he long had cherished,  
And widely spreading his enormous pinions,  
He passed away with muted sounds of anguish.

## EXODUS OF THE FIRSTBORN

The lot is cast and we, who still are children, must  
Already seek a new abode in foreign lands.  
An ivy tendril from the feast still wreathes our hair.  
Our mothers on the threshold gently sighed and kissed  
Us long, and then with tightened lips our fathers went  
With us until we reached the city-bounds, and when  
They left us hung around our neck the tablets carved  
Of spruce, but some of these we are to throw into  
The grave when one of our beloved brothers dies.  
We parted lightly. All of us restrained our tears,  
Since what we do is done to serve our people's good.  
And only once we turned our heads to look behind,  
Then crossed without a twinge into the far-off blue.  
We want to go! A noble goal is set for us.  
We burn to go! The gods keep watch upon our course.

## SECRET SACRIFICE

Appeased and released  
We said our farewells  
To sun-lighted fields,  
To Memnon, the blithe,  
To Mirra, the blonde,  
Who ask us to stay.  
Their joys are not ours!  
The temple resounds,  
We follow the call  
That leads us to serve  
Sublimity, greatness, and beauty.

The grove is our screen  
From the people we hold  
In reticent awe.  
With poppies and milk-  
White stars we have plucked,  
We garland the shrine.  
We bathe by a shore  
Where violets grow,  
We kindle a flame  
In gardens of grace,  
And wait while we falter an anthem.



And when we are fair  
With the freshness of youth,  
The prophet will weld  
Us fast to the bronze  
Of pillars, and lift  
The veil from the god.  
We tremble and gaze  
In torturous grief,  
In luminous strength,  
In fires of bliss,  
And die in perpetual yearning.

## THE FAVOURITES OF THE PEOPLE

### THE WRESTLER

His arm—Oh, admirable and amazing!—  
Rests on his dexter hip. The sunlight plays  
Across his stalwart body and his temples  
Circled with laurel leaves. When he approaches,  
A slowly swelling clamour sweeps the rows  
Along the street whose length is strewn with branches.  
The women teach their children to repeat  
His name with joyful tongue, and lift them higher  
To reach him with their palm fronds. But unsmiling  
He sets his foot as squarely as a lion,  
The glory of his birthplace after many  
A year without renown. He does not notice  
That thousands cheer, he does not even see  
His parents proudly loom among the people.

## THE LYRE PLAYER

How he advanced, with a white fillet twisted  
Around his locks, a sumptuous garment weighing  
His slender shoulders, how he struck his lyre,  
Uncertainly at first with youthful shyness,  
Astonished even the austere and aged.  
And how he kindled cheeks to yearning scarlet,  
How many women flung him strings of jewels  
And priceless clasps, while he, who was still new  
To such ovation, bowed—will be remembered  
Wherever fruit grows on the holy tree.  
The girls are full of endless eager talk,  
And every boy in secret anguish, worships  
The hero of his sleepless, starlit hours.

## ERINNA

They say that when I sing the leaves are shaken,  
That constellations quiver with enchantment,  
And nimble waves delay to hear, that even  
Men make their peace and solace one another.  
Erinna neither knows nor feels it, mute  
And lonely by the sea she stands and thinks:  
This is Eurialus astride a stallion.  
Like this I saw him coming from the banquet.  
How will he be when my new song is sounded?  
How is Eurialus when love accosts him?

## AFTER THE FESTIVAL

You too, Menechtenus, shall take the flowers from  
Your head. Now let us go before the flutes are lulled.  
Though still they offer cups of joy to honour us,  
I see compassion break through many a reeling gaze.  
We two were not elected by the priests to those  
Who are allowed to expiate within the shrine.  
For we alone of all the twelve were not acclaimed  
As beautiful, and none the less the well reveals  
My shoulder and your brow are pure as ivory.  
No longer can we join the shepherds in the field  
And with the ploughers walk the furrows' length no more,  
We who have learned to ply the handicraft of gods!  
Give me your wreath, and I shall fling it far away  
With mine. Along the empty path let us escape  
And lose the trail in thickets dark with destiny.

## THE END OF THE VICTOR

When he had defeated the dragons in poisonous marshes,  
And giants who threatened the highways, when he, whom the  
people  
Revered, had resisted the locks of the women he captured,  
He battled on nebulous peaks with the wing-bearing serpent  
Whose challenge and mockery struck his companions with terror.  
They warned him in vain, and the fight was so long that his  
powers  
Forsook him. The monster escaped, its perilous pinion  
Inflicted a blow, and the wound would never heal over.  
The light in his eyes flickered out, no venture could rouse him.  
He clung to the narrow retreat of his home where he suffered  
His anguish alone, and kept himself carefully hidden  
From carrying mothers, who daydream of beautiful children,  
From heroes-to-be whom the gods lend their favour and friend-  
ship.

## EULOGIES ON SOME YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN OF OUR TIME

### TO DAMON

Oh, may the luminous thought of that winter, my Damon,  
Never grow empty or dim,  
Thought of our house in the northerly hills, where we tasted  
New and secluded delights!  
Statues of marble ennobled it, naked and godlike,  
Which we admired and praised,  
Talking and telling within. Or you read me of battles  
And of desire and dream,  
Read in a low and yet sonorous voice, and the fire  
Purred to the powerless wind.  
Lamia who served us so noiselessly, Lamia who loved us,  
Eagerly offered the cup.  
Always communing with heavenly matters, a something  
Sheathed us like heavenly gleam.  
And since we shunned every hostile intrusion, the quiet  
Flooded our senses with light.  
But in the thaw and the tempest of March—Oh, I wonder  
Why we descended again  
Down to the throngs in the square, to the portico's glory,  
Closer to creatures of earth!

### TO MENIPPA

Menippa, though your eyes—so well aware of how they glow—  
Still lure me as in former days, you did not use the time  
Which never will return, when you could guide me like a child,  
When every word you spoke beset me like a fragrant breath,  
And every flaw in you was but another charm. I hold  
The gesture of that dancer dearer now than yours. The scar  
Upon your chin no longer seems a miracle, and I  
Am not in serious danger at your side, although  
While we were walking on the shore beneath a roof of branches,  
You bade the slave, who paced before us with a torch, withdraw.

## TO MENIPPA

The lambs selected for the rites of gods, must be unblemished.  
You know the rest: that the complacent and the idle scatter  
Before the sharpness of your phrasing, that my wits are whetted  
By none but yours, that once your presence daunted, that I  
likened

Your hair to queenly locks which glisten in a constellation.  
And yet, in dust and drizzle of our days, I see you moving  
No different from the girls you suffer near you, though you scorn  
them,

And to remain aloof from this would trouble and disturb you.  
I grasp your inarticulate reproach, but I shall never  
Accept you as an incarnation of the sacred seeress,  
Nor as the voice of prophecy among the holy branches.

## TO CALLIMACHUS

We, your most faithful companions, gather on the landing.  
Up at the rail of the readied ship, we see you lean,  
Frozen with pain of the parting, torn from those who love you.  
Long have you been one of ours, though of alien blood.  
Are you preparing to barter sunlit skies where happy  
Lore has developed, for misty, cold, and clouded coasts,  
Home of a far-away people, and relearn the customs  
—Simple and crude—which you no longer accept as yours?  
Desolate hours await you, doleful in their passage.  
Guest of the masters who taught us, friend at joyful feasts,  
Who when he sang was commended by fastidious Phyllis,  
Who gave a turn to his phrases equal to our own!  
There at the court of barbarians, will you brook existence,  
Bow to their sinister rulings, tyrant's ruthless nod?  
You who have lived free from bondage! Sad concern besets us.  
Rudder and anchor are moving, O Callimachus!  
Churn of the waters has drowned the sound of farewell blessings,  
Tears—although weeping be foolish—tears we half suppress.

## TO SIDONIA

I had persuaded myself that the poise and the pride of your bearing,  
Joined to the beauty you knew how to heighten, outshone all the younger  
Women, that not only indolent habit had prompted my friends to Offer you homage. But I was aware of your eyes that are steely Blue, of your lips that are contoured with shrewdness, and I was forwarned!  
Once in the twilight we stood face to face (was it chance, or Was it because you were wounded and sought him who never had sought you?)  
Stood in the aclove concealed from the others by Persian embroideries.  
Mocking and chiding I said there were persons who always are cautious,  
Never forgetting their profit and goal in the flux of existence.  
Then with amazement I noted your smile which so rarely is given.  
“Judge,” so you answered, “by something that happened a year ago, when I  
Wanted to leave all my conquests, and triumphs, and riches to share the  
Destinies of young Demotas who wooed me with mute adoration. But he was more circumspect and discouraged my plan with his coolness.  
Many a month did I need to revive from the smart of this blow!”  
While you were speaking, our fingers drew closer, were woven together.  
And from then on we no longer were strange to each other, Sidonia.

## TO PHAON

Before the harvest, when the pointed sunrays  
Softly blurred behind the mountain,  
We walked together by the narrow streams and  
Slender trees which dot your region,  
And vying with each other’s words, recited  
Deathless cantos of our masters,  
Inebriate with sound and lulled in rhythms,  
Stopped, withdrawn in dusk, and stood

Our arms entwined, who yesterday were strangers.  
Over us the feathery clouds retreated,  
And ears of grain, the sheaves of a tomorrow,  
Moved in alternating ripples,  
Still happy in the lavish seed they carried.  
Sometimes we were stung by secret  
Alarm that moments such as now we tasted  
Never would recur hereafter.  
For many years they cast a gentle shadow  
On your ways and mine, O Phaon!

#### TO LUZILLA

Now that in parting I give you my hands, O Luzilla,  
You who are queen of the women in rustical Phlius,  
Where I was banished by fate for a season of leisure,  
Quelling my inner regret with a jest, I recall our  
Arbour entwined with the clusters of purple wisteria,  
Glisten of fruits and the purl of the goblet. Below us  
Echoing tread of the sinewy drivers of cattle,  
Then with her sickle the reaper returned from the harvest,  
Tanned by the sun. And we heard in the distance the lusty  
Calls and replies of the boatmen loading the vessels.  
Friend, with your quiet awareness and strengthening solace,  
Here in a network of useful endeavour, you dulled the  
Edge of my want for the city I love, for the gracious  
Sonorous cadence and wisdom of Attica's discourse.

#### TO ISOCRATES

Speak! And at once we remember the years of our glory,  
When even distant islands challenged us.  
Bravely we battled and drafted the laws for the people,  
Our hand the scale which balanced destinies.  
Hail, O Isocrates, hail to your youth, to your radiance,  
That only burns for action and explores  
Ventures of others and crowns them with wild admiration  
Which even sets aflame a colder heart.  
No one could utter a doubt or bear witness against you,  
So steadfast in your faith, and yet you wound  
Him who adores you—as cruel and guiltless as children  
Who smilingly torment a vanquished foe.

## TO KOTYTTO

Kotytto, flower sweet of scent but harsh in savour,  
When you release your voice in melody, you scatter  
Such joy, such warm and deep contentment, that the faceless  
And compound multitude to whom you have devoted  
All your attention, often stays its breath and kindles.  
But in your converse, even with the tried who praise you,  
Your way is stern and cold. You told me too in warning:  
"I am not moved by gentle gestures and endearing words.  
My spirit is replete with darkness. Flee from me!"  
Yet in the morning wind, I cannot help but listen  
Time and again before your door, and then I feel as if  
I saw the swinging flags of grave and festal pageants,  
And vessels, winged with golden sails, ride out of harbour.

## TO ANTINOUS

Your promise that in cooling green and healing blue  
I should forget the town, was—when you gave it—faint,  
And now has proven false. I see, but do not grasp,  
These many woods spread out before me, all the fields,  
And all the water with its talk that knows and asks.  
My tears still fall, and on I wander to the lakes  
Where new, delicious odours flatter (so you said),  
And shores entice with shadow. Yet I much prefer  
Your burning columns to the freshness of these trees,  
For near them I have known a smile more lovely than  
The melodies of birds, words sweeter than  
The vaunted fragrance of these pines—Antinous!

## TO APOLLONIA

Trust in your fate, though it be grim, Apollonia, today.  
Needed distress whitened your face, but it shows you will soon  
Vanquish your pain, supple and strong. Then no longer shall  
flame  
Leap, nor the storm topple your house, then no more shall we let  
Hand rest in hand, cheek against cheek, lightly foot upon foot.  
Goddess and world, wedded to Tros, like a brother to me,  
Tros you restored once when he grieved over Pirra too much,  
May I be far when you once more straighten, flower, and shine:  
Jewels your eyes, cherries your lips, yellow harvest your hair.



## THE BOOK OF LEGENDS AND LAYS

### VIGIL OF ARMS

The tapers in the chapel flare and sway.  
Before the altar, as the rite decrees,  
The squire keeps his lonely watch. "When grey  
Of coming dawn has brightened into day,  
I shall be hailed with solemn pageantries

And knighted by a blow. Now that the lilt  
And longing of the child have passed, I must  
Devote to eager service spurs and hilt,  
In holy war deliver thrust on thrust.

I must be fit and worthy to assume  
The task, and dedicate this stainless blade  
Before the throne of God, before the tomb  
Which holds a hero, true and undismayed."

It was his sire hewn in stone, the curled  
Design of flowers in slender arc about  
His head, across his breast a flag unfurled,  
His carven fingers folded and devout.

The visor darks his eyes. An angel poised  
Above, his wing uplifted, holds the shield  
Emblazoned with his coat of arms: a sword,  
Its wavy edge within an empty field.

The squire fervently implores the grace  
Of heaven, breaks the narrow bounds of taught  
Recital, in his hands he bows his face,  
All piety! But subtly on his thought  
An earthly figure etched a mortal trace.

There in a garden, next to rosmarin,  
She stood, far less a maiden than a child,  
Her gown was long and stitched with stars, and in  
Her locks the golden flecks were bright and wild.

He shudders, takes her for the tempter's snare,  
And startled by a sight he wants to shun,  
He runs his fingers through his mop of hair,  
And staunchly signs away the Evil One.

The blood leaps to his temples, red and warm,  
The candles harry him with shafts of blaze,  
Then on the Virgin's knees, before his gaze,  
The Saviour of the world holds out his arm.

"A servant in your army, I will do  
Your work, no slighter aim shall ever stir  
My spirit, all my life I vow to you.  
Forgive a weakness which shall not recur!"

And from the altar, decked in white, a swarm  
Of cherubim flew upward. To the wave  
Of holy song a distant organ gave,  
The squire's artlessness, the sire's calm  
Merged to a spacious light and filled the nave.

#### THE DEED

A host of simple flowers threaded through the grass—  
His mind still blank with youth, the squire roamed across

At break of day, close to his father's banquet-hall,  
Then flicked into the well the pebbles from the wall.

Perhaps he saw himself in blood and glory laved!  
When midday came, and still no emerald token waved

—The sign of hope—upon his neighbour's battlement,  
To pledge him Melusina's love and her consent,

He trembled and then wept defiantly and long  
Through mournful hours while the sun was full and strong.

But in the twilight, starved for death and wounds, he sped  
On to the forest, pulsing with the beat of dread.

He did not heed the kindly words which bade him stay,  
With tameless, boyish steps he darted on his way.

And when his hand, armed with the naked sword, had thrust  
The monster spitting venom'd flame, into the dust,

He strode along the path, which torches blazed for him,  
His eyes, serene and clear, intent on heaven's rim.

## FRAUENLOB

In the town of ancient ridges and gabled shrines,  
Of spirals curled over rafters and doors,  
Of stained-glass windows and towers which touch the stars,  
Of hollow passages and blurred heraldic signs,  
By the fountains when dusk fell and morning dawned,  
To the bubble of laughter and water's silvery sound—  
A life full of stubborn dolour,  
The whole of life a martyr's sombre story,  
I was the prophet of your grandeur,  
I was the singer of your glory.

Children marching in white parades,  
Ribbons blowing, tapers, pennants,  
Frocks aswirl in rainbow shades,  
Sheaths for young and tuneful tenants,  
Pale-cheeked girls who crave the Holy Bread,  
Patrician daughters, titled, arrogant,  
Who under sacred portals tread  
In sumptuous fabrics of the Orient—  
For you, my ladies, who lord it with unmoved heart,  
Who grace the halls where festive boards are spread,  
I ran the gamut of my art.

But who of you has ever deigned to offer  
The cup, the wreath of oaken leaves to me,  
And say she thought that I might well aspire  
To don her weightless yoke obediently?  
Were tears or gentle penance ever proffered  
In answer to the wailing of my lyre?  
I feel the foot of Death—and scarcely suffer!

Mournful bells! Behind a coffin virgins and brides pace slowly,  
Swathed in dark attire. Only  
Delicate hands, noble and tender,  
Shall carry him to the chapel, vault, and crypt, and pave  
A way of kingly splendour  
For the the dead herald of their loveliness.  
Maidens and mothers weep in the stress  
Of common widowhood, and pour the choicest wines,  
Flowers, and precious stones,  
With awe into the grave.

## AUBADE

“The dawn is still asleep in secret night,  
And still your hall  
(A sheltering wall)  
Allows us limitless delight.  
So why your stifled weeping?  
Why your wounded glance?”  
“The flight of hours is sweeping  
My joy into mischance!”

“Take comfort from my vow:  
You always shall be chaste for me,  
And I will gaze and greet  
You as I would an angel, bow  
Devoutly at your feet.  
Beloved and holy all of you shall be,  
Each part of you  
The refuge I adored  
With lids that downward drew  
As one receives the Lord.

And whether morning or a distant quest  
Drive me away, upon my breast  
I keep the silken kerchief with your name.  
It brings me strength and fame  
As prayers do before  
The joust and combat start.”  
“My tears shall not dismay you any more  
Save when the watchman’s bugle bids us part!”

## IN THE UNHAPPY MEMORY OF . . .

Loose from this letter softly the thread,  
Receive with grace who came in my stead,  
Fancy he speaks for one who is dead.

When first I met you, this was your request:  
“There is a dragon man has never chafed!”  
I swiftly galloped to his cliffy lair  
And stabbed him after battling breast to breast,  
But that encounter singed my hair—  
You only laughed!

“The Corsair’s turban should be mine!” you said  
In jest, and blindly and beguiled,  
I rode to sea with din and fight ahead,  
And lost my arm, the left, for this conceit.  
I laid the turban at your feet,  
You gave it as a plaything to a child.

You saw how for your sake I was bereaved  
Of joy, and blood, and thew,  
Though I was threatened, you were never grieved,  
You barely thanked me when, through frost and fire,  
Your glory grew,  
And you were deaf to my desire.

Now from a wound nothing allays  
I suffer, but to the last I shall phrase,  
Beautiful lady, words in your praise.

#### KNIGHT ERRANTS

By evil glances they are harried,  
Maligning throngs beset their way,  
Some say an eagle came and carried  
Them after birth, from worlds of fay.

They pass their years in quests, as though  
From land to land they hoped to see  
The country tilled with golden ploughs,  
The home of their felicity.

They head for bouts of strength and leave  
Their blood on coasts of ashen shale,  
Their dexter hand they gladly give  
To shield a woman, proud and pale.

In times of bitter need they save,  
When angels come with darts of bane  
To drive the guilty to the grave—  
They suffer for another’s gain.

When gusts of praise like incense leap,  
And crowds exalt them with their psalms,  
Hosannas and the palms which heap  
The road, are false and passing balms.

But late, one evening, they draw near  
The castle where the worn are blessed  
With holy light, with tranquil cheer  
That pledges them eternal rest.

To songs they turn their earthly marches,  
In waves of festal sound they share  
Transfiguration under arches  
Imperishably new and fair.

#### THE COMRADE IN ARMS

I

It was where deer frequent the pool  
That after ventures grim with threat  
We slowed our pace at last, to cool  
Our foreheads from the battle's sweat.

And now my brother is asleep  
—Today the clash of swords was keen—  
And I am proud that I may keep  
The rest of such a heart serene.

He leaned against his shield, I took  
His head upon my knees, his cheek  
Had something of a tender look,  
His bearded lip was stern and bleak.

In gloomy woods where evil coils,  
From many a bond he succoured me,  
When nettles caught me in their toils,  
With flashing fist he hewed me free.

When I was lured by siren sounds,  
Forgot his counsel to desist,  
And mounted to forbidden bounds,  
He held me firmly by the wrist.

He never wavers or delays,  
The wicked know his rage is swift,  
The poor, who kneel upon his ways,  
Receive his fortune as a gift.

He never will permit me other  
Than straightest course before the Lord.  
Of wax and iron is my brother,  
And I am glad to be his ward.

## II

Yet he was trapped by crafty foes, with few  
And faithful men against a horde he vied,  
He fell, but by the grace of heaven knew  
The victory was his, before he died.

And to his burial even princes came,  
The eulogies of friends, the muffled lilt  
Of prayers and the drone of trumpets built  
An arch to witness bright and early fame.

Now he is dead, where shall I turn? What hand  
Will keep the hounds of ruthless life at bay?  
Without his greatness I shall die. Oh, may  
It not be too inglorious an end!

### A KNIGHT GROWING FORGETFUL

Muted clangour! Do I hear  
Horses being saddled? Spears  
Whirring? From the turrets low  
Cries and tears?

Only doors that creak below.

Guests who laugh and jest? Dispatch  
Of the men who come and go  
Under eaves with leafy thatch?  
Merry watch?

Tender strings? A singing sigh  
Under fingers slim and slow?  
Has a Golden Age slipped by,  
Fair and shy?

Only doors that creak below.

## THE RECLUSE

The elders nodded by the window-sill,  
The flower-season of the vines had just  
Begun, when back from lands of miracle  
My son returned and leaned upon my breast.

I let him tell the tale of his despair  
In earthly travels, all his wounded pride,  
I should so much have liked to have him share  
The ease and sheltered calmness at my side.

But Destiny denied me her consent,  
Rich was my ransom, yet her hand was sealed.  
One dawn that promised early fame, he went . . .  
I watched his shield move through a distant field.

## THE IMAGE

I sang as the guild of our worthy sires had taught,  
And passed by implacable pillars and tombs of stone,  
But at vespers, behind the smoke of the kilns, I caught  
The freshness of twilight wavering slowly down.

When solacing shadows invaded the colours spun  
By day, when the chimes had died, and the meadows slept,  
I knelt in my sheltering cell, released and alone,  
Before the celestial image and pleaded and wept.

My eloquent eyes were lifted, my hands were twined,  
The velvet psalter had never a prayer like this  
That flowed from my spirit without beginning or end,  
I opened my arms and dared the imploring kiss.

I waited and dreamed—abetted by miracle tales—  
Of visible guerdon which always belied my belief,  
In futile rebellion and hope I more wildly assailed  
The guiltless image of glory, and greatness, and grief.

And if at last it leaned above my bed,  
Or drew the symbols of grace and salvation, I doubt  
My arm would have power to clasp, for the hour is sped,  
The fiery love on my lips has burned itself out.



## STRAINS OF A WANDERING GLEEMAN

Words elude and words deceive,  
Only song can seize the soul,  
And if mine has missed its goal,  
Though the fault be grave—forgive!

Like a village child who walks  
In the meadow, let me sing,  
I shall leave the halls of kings,  
Fabled realms where giants stalk.

Mock me for my gentle smart!  
Once, I know I shall confess  
That I dreamed you, and caress  
You since then within my heart.

From the buds the dewdrops ooze  
Slow, and full, and clear.  
Sparks of light and laughter fuse.

But the tears I cannot rein?  
Yesterday I did not know  
What today is my despair:  
That my last delight would go,  
Should I never taste again  
Rising sun and spring of year.

Shall I offer sheaves of bloom  
So your innocence may waver?  
Shall I cherish as my favour  
Colours which you choose to wear?  
On my lute before your room  
Humbly play a pleading air?

Is not all this very plain?  
Shall I wander on in pain?  
Shall I say it? Shall I dare?

Is it much to plead  
Once and silently,  
After bitter need  
Now to kneel to you?

Clasp your fingertips,  
Only this of you,  
Graze them with my lips  
Awed and silently?

Do you call it much  
If stern and silently  
You endure my touch  
And let me stay with you?

When I mourn, I think  
This and only this:  
That you are at my side  
And listen as I sing.

Then I hear a tone,  
Almost words you spoke,  
Long they echo on,  
And I feel less forlorn.

See, my child, I leave,  
For not even my  
Voice shall tell you why  
Men must toil and grieve.

I am caged in gloom,  
See, my child, I leave,  
Fearing to bereave  
Cheeks of early bloom.

I should make you wise,  
I should wake your sighs,  
That is why I grieve.  
See, my child, I leave.

What a morning, what a day!  
Breath of sun on brook and tree  
Tunes your ear more swiftly to  
Melting promise, melting plea  
Which I shyly hid away.

No more silent and afraid  
Should I be, if now we both  
Walked the lanes that never fade.  
I should tell you of my oath,  
Of the praise which is your due.

Have you never felt before  
What is throbbing at your core?  
Wait a day and still a day.  
They will show  
If you go  
To a smile or to a sigh.  
Ah, you know you will not die  
If again you must delay.  
Wait a day and still a day.  
They will show  
If you go  
To a smile or to a sigh.

A lord's child leaned from the sill  
To the spring so green and so gold,  
Followed the skylark's trill  
With glances blithe and bold.

A fiddler! O fiddler, play!  
And sing me your favourite strain!  
The child listened well to his lay  
And trembled with sadness and pain.

Why should he have sung such airs?  
I tossed him the ring from my hand.  
Knaveish smith full of snares!  
Bowed in his bondage I stand.

No spring will make me gay.  
How pale is every bloom!  
I will dream today,  
Weep in the loneliest room.

#### DITTIES OF A DWARF

I

The smallest birds are singing,  
The smallest flowers springing,  
And their bells are ringing.

Where pale-blue heather grows,  
The smallest yeanlings go,  
Their fleece is silk and snow.

The smallest children shout,  
Take hands and turn about.  
May the dwarf peep out?

II

I leave my kingly post  
To see your children wind  
The dance. Among their kind  
Will any be my host?

I, who am veiled and shy,  
I have a crown and throne,  
I am a fairy's son,  
The king of trolls am I.

III

You will be rich and royal,  
Many splendours, treasure troves shall be your spoil.

You will have spear and sword,  
Favour of the fair shall be your long reward.

You will lack wage and name,  
Only song shall yield you love and fame.

## AWAKENING OF THE BRIDE:

An anthem from the tower  
When dawn is faint and frail,  
Exalts the saints, and stories  
The coming day of glories  
With moving weight and power  
Of horns in the chorale.

Am I still dreaming? No!  
There at the gate—a voice!  
For seven nights I waited.  
A herald is below  
From him whom I am fated  
To love and make my choice.

Lily of the field,  
Mary, whom roses screen,  
Let your joy imbue me  
And again renew me  
On the day of grace which crowns you queen.

Virgin, wreathed in rays,  
Maid of maidens mild,  
Let your goodness hover  
Over those who cover  
Artlessly your shrine with moss and sprays.

Lady, guiding true,  
What if undefiled,  
Fervently I render  
Witness to your splendour,  
Will you give what long I begged of you?

## THE BOOK OF THE HANGING GARDENS

Now we shall fly into the land again  
Which as a child you called your own.  
You touch the ruby in your palfrey's rein,  
Your cheek against his mane, and on a night  
Of summer heat—all hint of peril gone —  
You will alight.

When through the greyness a clear  
Scarlet suddenly showed,  
Fragrance of spices flowed,  
Land of my people was near,  
Tribal dwelling and site.  
Tremors of pride and delight  
Freshened my soul to the core  
When the first stems with their solemn  
Palm fronds in opulent column,  
Bent down to greet me once more.

The roads your strength has carved out, reveal  
The coveted, the utmost pales.  
But vaults that spill with booty: flags and steel,  
Bewilder you with ringing tales  
Of smoking shafts with battered grooves,  
Of swords besmeared with crimson dye,  
Of mantles torn by trampling hooves,  
And frenzied arms flung upward to the sky.  
And deeper voices quiver through:  
Forget, while we resound,  
The majesty conferred on you.  
Rejoice and kiss the ground  
Where rains of rose and gold  
Atone for langour, lust, and sin,  
This ground: the only hold  
Where the sweet seed can grow to green.

The palaces reared of crystallic and nigricant stone,  
The billowy tents where the bounties of heaven unfold  
Are lit from above, and a wedge of the wavering flume  
Enhances the flesh like marble with dim blue veins,  
The bodies like berries that ripen to succulent gold,  
And those as deep-red as blood and as pale-red as bloom.

Since I have determined to leave them behind me and fling  
My soul to the glory of triumph, elated and pure,  
Can I banish the grief which once more has imperilled my days,  
By summoning wines with their heady aroma and sting?  
The beat of my armoured battalions at dawn—will it lure  
My limbs from the bed where I drowse under basil sprays?

When first the noble city owned defeat,  
The walls no longer checked the cavalry,  
The river swept the corpses out to sea,  
The last of the defenders strewed the street,

And vengeful conquerors were dulled with plunder,  
An ample light from dark horizons sped,  
It dwelt consolingly upon the dead  
And touched the sad and ruined town to wonder.

It clung with double splendours where the crowd  
Scattered before the victor, as he rode  
Into a temple, unappalled and proud,  
And swung his dripping blade against the god.

#### A CHILD'S KINGDOM

You were already chosen when you sifted  
Your father's soil in search of precious stones  
To grace the crown through which you felt uplifted  
In majesty, and to enhance your throne.

In level lands, remote from men, you founded  
Your state among the leaves, a secret pale!  
And in its dusk you heard a voice which sounded  
Exotic pomp and deeds on distant trail.

Companions whom your very glance had fired,  
Were given gold and castles as their due,  
They trusted what you were, what you aspired,  
And thought it would be sweet to die for you.

The nights your ecstasy grew full and fuller  
Were when your subjects circled you and kneeled  
To listen in the halls of boughs, and colour  
And suns, to marvels only you revealed.

Above your head the banner, white and wide!  
A tier of bronze wove azure tracery  
Of fumes about your cheek that burned with pride,  
Your forehead, stern and radiant as the sky.

Bridle your phantasies, golden  
And crimson in stain.  
Lower your lashes  
Under the lilacs  
And dream in the langours  
Of midday again.

Birds grow silent in gardens  
On buds and boughs.  
With circlets and swirls,  
Metallic blue whorls,  
Their tails in curls,  
They rock and drowse.

Distant drums of silver  
And tin resound.  
But no one sings,  
No answering ring,  
No lyre-string  
Encumbers the mind.

Glint of the pointed pagoda  
In shrubbery furled,  
With extricate fusion  
And lacy inclusion,  
Dispels the illusion  
Of being and world.



My macaws are white and crowned with  
Saffron-yellow comb.  
In the closure where they home  
They are perched on slender rings,  
Without call, without song,  
Slumber long,  
Never do they spread their wings.  
In their dreams my white macaws  
Journey where the date tree grows.

### PREPARATIONS

Your maiden body with its virgin charms  
Shall be immersed—on nights the moon is new—  
In milk and wine, but when it grew  
From half to full, in fragrant oils and balms.  
A palace, jewels, slaves shall be your due,  
And priests who lay their hands on you and say  
A blessing in your presence every day,

To make you worthy of a regal throne,  
To kneel in virtue, mute,  
Awaiting the unshown,  
So that—as rich and ripe as mellow fruit  
Yet tender as a bud—the stern  
Lord of the feast may see you and discern  
That you are fit to be his own.

But you exult in trying hour on hour  
Magic herbs of purer power,  
Guard your spirit close in lonely stages,  
Raptures of expectance for its wages,  
Till the curtain flow  
From the paramount of ages  
Whom—perhaps—your flesh will never know.

## EVENING OF PEACE

The regions withered by the sun that poured  
In stinging torrents, slowly are restored,

And clouds of black and lurid yellow fall  
Upon the rigid pole, the naked wall.

The gardens stifle in a fragrant bath,  
The shadows grow and seem to clutch the path.

The brittle voices drop asleep and blur,  
The high are muted to a toneless whirl.

The clamour of the end, the clash of hosts,  
The glories of the banquet fade to ghosts.

And only seldom, dulled in mist, a sound  
Of worlds in bondage rises from the ground.

Sheltered by the lavish foliage, where  
Filmy flakes from starry flowers snow,  
Gentle voices tell of their despair,  
Tawny throats of fabled creatures flare  
Jets the marble basins catch and throw  
Down as little streams that fret and glide.  
Through a screen of branches candles stare,  
Milky shapes divide the moving tide.

In this Eden, halls and gayly-  
Painted tiles take turns with frailly-  
Flowered field and leafy valley.  
Slender storks on forage stipple  
Ponds the fishes streak with glamour,  
Rows of birds in glistening dun  
From the crooked ridges clamour,  
And the golden rushes ripple . . .  
But I dream of one alone!

A novice I was drawn into your sway,  
No awe—before I saw you—lit my face,  
No passion that could force me to obey.  
Elect me to the ranks that do your will,  
Regard my young and folded hands with grace,  
In merciful forbearance, spare who still  
Must falter on so new and strange a way.

Now that my lips are motionless and burn,  
The path my feet have taken me is plain:  
To other lords' magnificent domain.  
Perhaps I still could bring myself to turn,  
But through the spacious grating I divine  
The eyes to which I knelt so long in vain.  
They seem to question me or make a sign.

Tell me on what path today  
She will come and wander by,  
So that from my chest I may  
Take the sheerest silks and choose  
Sprigs of violet and rose,  
That I lean my cheek to lie  
Underfoot for her repose.

Now there is no deed I do not spurn!  
To imagine talk between us two,  
And to let my senses conjure you,  
To receive and serve, to have and yearn,  
For nothing else, for this alone I burn,  
And weep because the visions which assail  
In exultant darkness, always pale  
When the clear and cold of dawn return.

I am throttled by my hopes and fears,  
Every word is lengthened into sighs.  
So tempestuously my longings rise  
That I slight the thought of sleep and rest,  
That my couch is drenched with tears.  
I reject the hint of happiness,  
Beg my friends to leave me comfortless.

If I do not touch your body now,  
Then the fibre of my soul will snap  
Like a bow-string overstrait.  
Mourning is the colour dear to me  
Who, since I am yours, know agony.  
Slake and cool my hot and fevered brow.  
Tell me: Must I suffer such mishap,  
I, who tremble at your gate?

Our delights are stern and spare.  
What availed so brief a kiss?  
Like a drop of rain was this  
On a plain which, parched and bare,  
Drinks but cannot quench its pain,  
Cannot taste a second bliss,  
And is cracked with heat again.

Beside the lovely flower-bed I lean,  
Where haws with black and crimson thorn are hedged  
Around tall cups with dappled spurs, and fledged  
With velvet wings the bracken arches. Green  
As water, flaky clusters curl their tips,  
And in the middle bells! The grain of snow!  
The liquid fragrance clinging to their lips  
Is sweet as fruit from paradisaean bough.

When behind the flowered gate our own  
Breath at longed-for last, was all that stirred,  
Did we feel that fancied ecstasy?  
I remember how when softly one  
Touched the other, we began to sway  
Like the fragile reeds—without a word.  
Tears rose in our eyes and had their way.  
Very long like this you stayed with me.

When flung on heavy mats in holy rest,  
Our tender hands around our temples curve,  
And awe abates the burning of our limbs,  
Then do not fear the formless shadows pressed  
Against the wall in high and nether swerve,  
The guards who can divide us at a nod,  
The sand that traps the town in glaring rims  
And is athirst to suck our tepid blood.

Against a silver willow on the shore  
You leaned, and with your fan you framed your hair,  
The pointed slats in flashes seemed to flare,  
As if in play you twirled the gems you wore.  
And in a boat the leafen arches hide,  
I wait. In vain I coaxed you down to me,  
I see the willows bending lower, see  
The scattered blossoms drifting with the tide.

Hush your tale  
Of the leaves  
Wind unweaves,  
Quince that lies  
Ripe and bled,  
And the tread  
Of the vandals,  
Fall of year,  
Of the brightning

Dragonflies  
In the lightning,  
Of the candles  
That in frail  
Glimmers veer.

Blithe in arbours dim with dusk we moved,  
Lit pavilions, garden-bed, and lane,  
She with smiles and I with whispers roved,  
Now she leaves and will not come again.  
Broken are the slender blooms and drab,  
Drab and broken is the water's glass,  
And I stumble in the withered grass,  
Palmy fronds with pointed fingers stab.  
Brittle foliage sibilant and massed,  
Loosed by unseen hands to flight and fall,  
Drives against our Eden's ghostly wall.  
The night is close and overcast.

The shallow appetite for fame is reined,  
Since now there is a treasure I must cherish  
Which, after losing many things, I gained.  
It makes the greed for other glories perish.

The hands which summoned subjects to their duty,  
Forget to use the force in their employ,  
Because to you, surrendered to your beauty,  
I raise them in a reel of pagan joy.

The mouth which spoke prophetic words, resigns  
Its office charged with sanctity  
And bends to kiss a foot that far outshines  
The carpet white as milk and ivory.

While in my dreams I rode to victories  
And savoured sequences of words,  
My country was beset with enemies,  
They conquered half my kingdom with their swords.

And yet my craving for revenge is lost!  
My last imperial act of all  
Was when they caught the traitors from the coast  
And led them to my scarlet judgment hall.

Then I could fix my eyes unflinchingly  
Upon the prostrate who had dared withhold  
Their tribute, and at every nod from me  
A head from smooth and slender body rolled.

I bow to mourn my beautiful domain.  
Only this shall ease my fate:  
The bird, who unconcerned for fields of ravaged grain,  
For wall and gable, glowing like a grate,  
Sings in the grove of myrtles, dark and wet,  
Unremittingly his sweet regret.

I flung my circlet, which no longer shone,  
Aside. It clanged, and surfeited I turned to flee  
The hall to which the treasure of the Orient flows,  
The courts where fountains fall in silken strands,  
The pillared walls of bronze and lazuli,  
My very throne,  
And travelled far to serve a pasha who commands  
A realm like Shiraz, slumbering in mists of rose.

For many weeks I nourished his content  
With songs of praise I chanted faithfully,  
With wreaths of eulogies I corded.  
In awe and reverence my head was bent  
To him who silenced every mutiny,  
And over many foreign foemen lorded.

After his greatest conquest home he rode  
One evening through the throngs which surged around.  
I had prepared a dagger for his heart:  
The candle's death shall mark his own! And yet  
When up the stair in pride and majesty he strode,  
And I had mixed the festal draught, regret  
Assailed me strangely, and I stole apart  
With ashen cheeks, without a sound.

The cymbals and the kettledrums combine  
To jar the streets and palaces with thunder,  
The soldiers take their pay in love and wine,  
With looted splendours they array  
The girls whose lips are smouldering and gay  
In gardens where the yellow torches wander.

The slave moves on. A bush which grows before  
The gate and opens blossoms bright and broad,  
Recalls what can be lost and gained.  
But he no longer trusts in fraud,  
He reaches for a twig of sycamore  
And leaves the region where his soul was stained.

The slave moves on—he knows his part is played—  
On to the stream where mortals drink release  
From torment, where their fervours drown in peace.  
Now he can face the waters unafraid.

Where before the final lap  
Gorgeous trains and riders stop,  
Ramparts beckon from afar,  
Travelers quench their thirst, the women  
Offer him the water-jar,  
Welcome him whom no one knows  
For the former prince. No venom  
Gnaws his soul, he thanks the giver  
With a smile, but shyly goes,  
For he feels his kingship dim.  
Every contact makes him quiver  
And the light bewilders him.

He lay alone upon a ledge of stone.  
How distant were his lands and all the proffer  
Of mercy and command, as in a coffer  
Buried in sand, the gold and gems he owned.  
And deep into his hands he bowed his head.  
But through the silence sighing whispers sped.



The wayside grasses, sad and trodden down,  
The dialogue of cedar trees and alders,  
The plashing drops that tumbled from the boulders  
Divined the grief—so strange to men—of one  
Who lost his kingly heritage.

And then he heard the river surge and pledge:

#### VOICES IN THE RIVER

Timorous creatures, adoring, deploring,  
Here in our realm is the refuge you craved.  
Here is rejoicing and here is restoring,  
Softly in sound and caress you are laved.

Limbs turned to shell in a palace of surges,  
Coralline lips in a resonant chain,  
Tresses entangled in ledges and verges  
Drift, and are caught in the current again.

Lanterns aglow like a violet ember,  
Pillars afloat on a pivoting base,  
Waters awakened to langorous timbre  
Rock into rest, meditation, and grace.

But if reflection and melody cloy you  
—Anodyne joys in perpetual swing—  
Touch of a kiss shall deliver and buoy you  
Hither and thither as ripple and ring.

# THE YEAR OF THE SOUL

TO ANNA MARIA OTTILIE  
SHELTER AND SOLACE  
ON MANY OF MY PATHS

MDCCCXCVII

AFTER THE HARVEST.  
JOURNEY THROUGH SNOW.  
TRIUMPH OF SUMMER.

AFTER THE HARVEST

Come to the park they say is dead, and you  
Will see the glint of smiling shores beyond,  
Pure clouds with rifts of unexpected blue  
Diffuse a light on patterned path and pond.

Take the grey tinge of boxwood and the charm  
Of burning-yellow birch. The wind is warm.  
Late roses still have traces of their hue,  
So kiss, and gather them, and wreath them too.

Do not forget the asters—last of all—  
And not the scarlet on the twists of vine,  
And what is left of living green, combine  
To shape a weightless image of the fall.

O urges from the years of youth which sweep  
Me on in quest of her beneath these boughs,  
Before you I must bend denying brows,  
In lands of light my love is chained in sleep.

But if you sent her back, who in the flame  
Of summer and the whirl of Cupids would  
Have shyly borne me company, I should  
Acknowledge her this time with glad acclaim.

In wooden vats the ripened grapes ferment,  
But I shall heap before her lavishly  
What precious shoots and seeds are left to me  
Of all the lovely yield the season lent.

Oh, hail and thanks to you who eased my stress,  
Who lulled the constant clamour in my veins  
With the expectance, dear, of your caress,  
In weeks the glow of dying summer stains.

You came, and closer each to each we clung,  
I shall devise a gentle word for you,  
And praise you on our sunny paths as though  
You were the very one for whom I long.

Up to the gate and back again we wander  
Between the beeches with their gold and gloom,  
And glancing through the bars, we pause to ponder  
The almond tree beyond, in second bloom.

We search for benches where there is no shade  
And alien voices never fret. In dreams  
Your arm in mine and mine in yours is laid,  
And we are bathed in long and mellow beams,  
And feel beholden when the sunflakes glisten  
Around us from the leaves alive with sound,  
And only lift our heads to look and listen  
When fruit, too rich with ripeness, taps the ground.

Around the pond where runnels bring  
Their silent waters, let us stroll,  
You calmly try to plumb my soul,  
A wind ensnares us, soft as spring.

The leaves that yellow on the mould,  
Diffuse an odour new and frail,  
Echoing me, you subtly told  
What pleased me in this picture-tale.

But do you know of wordless sighs  
And bliss on a sublimer stage?  
Down from the bridge, with shaded eyes  
You watch the swans in slow cortège.

Beside the long and even hedge we lean.  
Led by a Sister, rows of children pace,  
Their voices rise in praise of heaven's grace  
In earthly accents, steadfast and serene.

We, who are bathed in evening's latest rays,  
Are frightened by your words, for you recall  
That we were happy only when a wall  
Like this was still enough to block our gaze.

Above the spring, niched in the wall, you bent  
To cup the cool and dabble in the spray,  
And yet it seems your fingers draw away  
From the two lion heads with some constraint.

You wear a ring whose jewelled lustre dies.  
I try to slip it off, but you invade  
My very spirit with your misty eyes  
In answer to the plea I could not hide.

Now do not lag in reaching for the boon  
Of parting pomp, before the turn of tide,  
The clouds are grey, they swiftly mass and glide,  
Perhaps the fog will be upon us soon.

A faint and fluted note from tattered tree  
Tells you that goodness, ultimate and wise,  
Will dip the land—before it feels the vise  
Of freezing storms—in damask lambency.

The wasps with scales of golden-green are gone  
From blooms that close their chalices. We row  
Our boat around an archipelago  
Of matted leaves in shades of bronze and fawn.

Today let us avoid the garden, for  
As sometimes—unexplained and sudden—this  
Elusive scent and lilting breath once more  
Imbues us with a long forgotten bliss,

So that confronts us with reminding ghosts,  
And grief that makes us tired and afraid.  
Here from the window you can see how hosts  
Of wind attacked the tree, how much is dead!

And from the gate whose iron lilies rust,  
Birds light on lawns asleep in leafen stoles,  
And others on the posts, in bitter frost,  
Are sipping rain from empty flower-bowls.

I wrote it down: No more can I conceal  
What, as a thought, no longer I can shun,  
What I restrain, what you will never feel:  
Our pilgrimage to joy is far from done!

And you, beside a tall and withered stalk,  
Undo my note. I stand apart and guess . . .  
The sheet, which slipped from you, was white as chalk,  
The loudest colour in the fallow grass.

Here in the spacious square of yellow stone  
With fountains in the middle, though the day  
Is gone, you still would like to talk and stay,  
For brighter stars, you think, have never shone.

But keep from the basaltine bowl, it calls  
For sepulture of faded bough and blade,  
The wind is cooler where the moonlight falls  
Than over there, where spruces throw their shade.

To spare you, I have let you guess askew  
The reason why my sorrow is so deep.  
I feel, when time has parted me from you,  
You will not even haunt me in my sleep.

But when the snow has made the park a tomb,  
Faint comfort, I believe, may still be told  
By lovely residues: a note, a bloom,  
In winter stillness, bottomless and cold.

## JOURNEY THROUGH SNOW

The stones, which jutted in my road, have all  
Been spirited away and softly shrined  
In banks of snow. To distant skies it swells,  
The flakes are weaving at a ghostly pall,

And when they touch my lashes with the wind,  
They seem to flicker as when weeping wells.  
I look to stars, for no one guides my quest,  
They leave me lonely in the spectral night.

I wish that I could slowly sink to rest,  
Unconscious of myself in drifts of white.  
But if the tempest whirled me to the edge,  
The gusts of death decoyed into their keep,

Once more for door and shelter I should make.  
Perhaps that hidden there beyond the ledge  
Of mountains, lies a hope of youth, asleep.  
A first and tender breath—and it's awake!

I feel as if a glance had slit the dark.  
So shyly you elected me to go  
With you, your voice and gesture moved me so,  
That I forgot our path was steep and stark.

You praised the grandeur of the silent earth  
In silver leaves and frosty rays, unsown  
With infelicities and strident mirth.  
We christened her the pale, the chaste, the lone,

And to her strength and majesty averred:  
The sounds which floated through the stainless air,  
The shapes which filled the skies, were lordlier  
Than any night in May had yet conferred.

We took the usual path with joy and fear  
Time and again in late and moonlit hours,  
As though we wandered, wet with dripping flowers,  
Into enchanted woods of yester-year.



You led me to the valley spells enchain  
With languid perfumes and a naked light,  
And showed me from afar where tombs incite  
A dreary love to grow in frosts of pain.

I may not kneel and thank you who were lent  
The spirit of the fields which nurtured us,  
And when I try to ease your wistfulness,  
You draw away in token of dissent.

And is it still your cruel plan to keep  
Your sorrow—kin to mine—in secrecy,  
And only walk abroad with it and me  
Along the river glazed with shining sleep?

That evening, when the candles had been lit  
For you, I said a benediction and  
Gave you a diamond, the most exquisite  
Of all my gifts, placed on a velvet band.

But you know nothing of the solemn rite  
Of burnished candelabra, tier on tier,  
Of vessels breathing clouds of stainless white  
To warm the temple, sombre and austere,

Of niches brimming with their angel throngs  
Reflected in the lustre's prised glass,  
Of ardent prayers told with faltering tongues,  
Of darkness sighing with a faint: Alas!

And nothing of desires that awake  
Upon the festive altar's lower rows.  
Uncertain, cold, and dubious, you take  
The jewel born of glitter, tears, and glows.

I taught you to discern the winning peace  
Within these walls, the quiet rays which fall  
From lamp and hearth, the croon in nook and niche,  
You have the same and vague amaze for all.

I cannot fan your pallor into flame,  
And in the room beside I kneel and break  
My silent thoughts with doubt I cannot tame:  
Will you awaken—ever? Oh, awake!

But when I venture to approach the door,  
You still are lost in dreams, your eye upon  
The emptiness of space, just as before.  
Your shadow blots the carpet's same festoon.

And there is nothing now to stem the plea  
I never practiced and I know is vain:  
O Mother—great and sad—concede to me  
That solace spring within this soul again!

Your beauty while you mourn, my loyalty  
Compel me to remain and cherish you.  
That I may share your grief more perfectly  
I try devoutly to be mournful too.

With tender words I never shall be met.  
Up to the latest hour that holds us twined,  
I must accept with stoical regret  
The bitter destiny of winter's find.

The flower in its pot of fallow clay  
Against my window, sheltered from the frost,  
Sags on its stalk as though it died away  
And ill repays the loving care it cost.

To free my mind from memories of bloom  
And lavish destinies it had before,  
I take a whetted blade and cut the stem  
Of the pale flower with the ailing core.

Why shall I keep what only serves to pain!  
I long to have it vanish from my sight . . .  
And now I lift my empty eyes again,  
And empty hands into the empty night.

Your magic broke when veils of azure blew  
From green of graves and certainty of grace.  
Now let me—gone so soon—a little space,  
As to the heart of sorrow, pray to you.

To rapid parting you must needs agree,  
For riven is the water's frozen rind,  
Perhaps a bud will be tomorrow's find!  
I cannot take you into spring with me.

Where the sunrays swiftly slash  
Palls of death on naked land,  
Waters in the furrows stand,  
In the sodden mires flash

And to rivers run united,  
I have lighted pyres for you  
And for memories of too  
Brittle joys which now are blighted.

And I leave the blazing shrines  
For my boat, and take an oar,  
There a brother on the shore  
Spreads his flag and gayly signs.

Thawing wind is swept in powered  
Gusts across the fallow plain,  
With the withered souls the lane  
Shall again be overflowed.

## TRIUMPH OF SUMMER

The air, astir as though with coming things,  
The sullen clouds which screen a fiery core,  
The surging sound of homeward-pointed wings  
Apprize me of adventure still in store

With you, who firmed my faith these many years,  
Who were my sun where silent leaves attest  
The alternating flux of hopes and fears.  
For can delight—I ask—be manifest

To us, if such a night of stars and spells,  
In gardens fresh with green, does not betray it,  
If hosts of blooms with divers-coloured bells,  
If burning winds do not convey it?

Ignore the poppies red as blood, the blue  
Corollas, and the bright and brittle grain,  
Remote from all reflection wander through  
The wood and take each twisted path again.

The lettered birches shall not slow your pace,  
Forget the fingers which have carven these,  
Now learn that other names can fill with grace,  
And turn your steps to younger, fresher trees.

Discard the sorrows and the wounds of old,  
The gash of creepers, mouldering and spined,  
The fronds of withered seasons! Light and bold,  
Set foot on them and leave them far behind!

You want to found a realm of sun with me,  
Where we shall strive to joy and joy alone,  
Where it will hallow grass, and bush, and tree  
Before our vigours vanish with its own.

Oh, that so sweet a life could satisfy,  
That here, as grateful guests, we came to house!  
Your words and songs compel regrets to fly  
In quick obedience to the highest boughs.

You sing of humming fields, the gentle song  
One hears before a door at dusk, you show  
Us how to suffer like the plain and strong  
Whose smile conceals the tear which lurks below

The birds have fled from bitter sloes, the leap  
Of wind and rain disbands the butterflies,  
They glitter forth again in clearing skies,  
And who has ever seen a flower weep?

A golden mullein nodding in the grass,  
The silver tufts along the meadow's hem  
Remember us and wonder if a less  
Ungracious star has sent us back to them.

The branches touch our heads. May they eclipse  
The gap which fear sustains between us two,  
And let no idle query cool the lips  
Which to a mated mouth have made their vow.

And let us guard against the dooms that brew  
When flaming life of one the other laves,  
And gaze together into summer blue  
Which blithely beckons from the shining waves.

Have you his lovely image still in mind,  
Who boldly snatched a rose from the ravine,  
Forgot the passing day in such a find,  
And thieved the nectar from a columbine?

Who when a flash of wings had driven him  
Too far afield, turned back into the park,  
Who mused and rested at the water's rim  
And listened to the deep and secret dark?

The swan forsook the waterfall to sail  
Around the island, built of moss and stone,  
And laid a slender neck into the frail  
And childish hand which smoothed his down.

When we are haunted by a past dismay,  
And fear is rampant in our golden land,  
"Feel no alarm at what recurs," you say  
With confidence, "while we are hand in hand."

If only from my care you do not rove  
Before the sharp effulgence dies away,  
And placable and grave, the evening grove  
Again affords you refuge in its grey."

It seemed as if another sky unfurled  
When we had broken off the dream of old,  
And smiling life permitted us to hold  
The only thing we wanted in this world.

And all at once the meaning of our days  
Was: tensely to entreat the crowning hour  
That knits us close together and devours  
Phantasmal shapes and forces with its blaze.

Learn how to lavish even priceless gains!  
Like plants consumed with long and searing drought,  
So you, who live in regions of delight,  
Shall cool your thirsty limbs in slender rains.

Know, while you take the loveliest that grows,  
While sweet and sultry stars begin to burn,  
While blaze and darkness ravish you in turn,  
That you have had what fulness fate allows.

And nurse no foolish qualms because you woo  
An image still a figment of your heart,  
And always are impelled to keep apart  
The kiss a dream accords you and the true.

When cool and early morning blows the wet  
Down from the leaves of oak against our cheeks,  
Beneath our feet the pointed gravel creaks  
And pricks remembrance, ready to abate.

Your very voice sounds violent to you  
When in the kindred pulse which presses near,  
You recognize the quicker thud of fear . . .  
And passionless embrace dispels the dew.

These trees be praised, this earth of many hues!  
They taught us how to touch a rapture doled  
In passing, one that left its residues  
Like bloom of ripened fruit within our hold.

The pennant flies! There is no stop nor stay!  
The tears will brim from hours of farewell,  
And doubting a return, you go away  
Immersed in mournfulness you cannot quell.

But I shall listen through the dusk, if there  
The last call of a bird will tell me of  
The sleep which yields a wakening fresh and fair  
In flowered field—the satin sleep of love.

## SUPERSCRPTIONS AND DEDICATIONS

Friends, I cannot yet beget  
Songs as I would have my songs,  
Only shyly have I set  
Rhymes like these in fleeting throngs,

To be proffered, to be told  
Under silent roofs or green  
Vines, to ease the winter's cold,  
Make the fallow spring serene.

These are what I won from peace  
After years of savage strife,  
And from youth's abundant bliss  
Salvage over into life.

I locked myself in dreams and shunned the crowd,  
With frantic hands I groped for wider space,  
Alone and pure avowed to star and cloud  
The first encounter with my young dismays.

Erect and free, on rings of gold I wound  
The flowers lavish life had given me.  
For the ephebe, whom timeless splendour crowned,  
Affliction ebbed to solemn melody.

To valleys of the gods, to bright Maeanders,  
To lands where great and fervent codes obtain,  
And to the south I let my spirit wander  
To gain the halo born of martyr's pain.

And if I end the silent interim  
Today and sing, it only is that we  
May glory in the hour day grows dim,  
And my grave sister may confess to me:

"If I am still to live, I cannot do  
Without the draught your chiming cup provides,  
And in my darkneses, the lights that flow  
Like beacons from your wounds, shall be my guides."



The word of seers is not for common sharing.  
In curious kingdoms, earnest and alone,  
When first his wishes roused him with their daring,  
He summoned things with names that were his own.

And some were vast with clamorous commands,  
Or hesitant like faltering desires,  
And others leapt like brooks in April lands,  
Or like Pactoli dyed in ruby fires.

Their melody and magic were his slaking.  
They were—when in abandonment he flung  
Himself into a dream, all else forsaking—  
The temple's lyre-strings and holy tongue.

They were his choice when he had turned away  
From mild, maternal tutelage and, burning  
With ecstasy of nightingales and May,  
Pored over fabled worlds of early yearning,

And when he prayed to him who let him waken,  
In doubt and fear the pledge might be withdrawn,  
And pleaded that the image which had taken  
Shape in his spirit, grow into the sun.

When from gilded bars like a bird I flew,  
Fortune followed me on eager feet,  
From the wall the women threw  
Roses on the street.

By the shores of wonder, halls with marble domes,  
Tents of deities, where shudders brew,  
Far from thronging guests I roamed,  
And my songs were few.

Years went by, the funnels of my country cast  
Smoke into the clouds, I only long  
For a twilit dream, and rest,  
And oblivion.

VERSES FOR THE GUESTS IN T . . .

I

A sinister fairy shall sing  
Of shadows and death, while you  
Are nursed at your mother's breast.  
She brings you a christening gift:  
Eyes that are veiled and strange,  
Where muses discover a refuge.

Your glances will disparage  
The games of callow comrades,  
Austere and majestic thoughts  
Shall guard and warn you away from  
The work that debases.

When those who call you brother  
Complain of their pain, confide your  
Grief to the winds of dark.  
The breast of the child shall bleed  
Under his nail's armed thrust.

Do not forget: You must  
Put to death your youth and freshness,  
For only when their grave  
Is wet with tears untold, it will beget  
Under the matchless miracle of green,  
The matchless beauty of roses.

II

You learned that only the house of want knows dejection,  
But portals and pillars will show you a deeper dejection,  
That only who dares the untried feels the bounds that are fated,  
I teach that fulfilment brings with it the worst that is fated  
For him who mourns through the day with an exquisite jewel,  
Whose fingers listlessly play with the luminous jewel,  
For him who is born to the folds of imperial purple,  
And bows his pale and pensive face on the purple.

Though in the castle's dark and clanging hall  
The many lyres hanging on the wall  
Resound with fiercer joy and fuller fame,  
Why is it that this first still holds the same  
Delight and tremors for me, late and soon,  
And that the chaste beginnings of its croon,  
Awakened at a touch, still free the flow  
Of tears today no less than long ago?

The traveller pauses midway on his road,  
And after looking back on what he traversed,  
Probes forward into clouds with timid doubt.  
The hills and valleys he has crossed are worlds!  
Behind him so much joy and stress! Can there  
Be more to come? Shall he lie down to slumber  
As if this were the journey's end, or venture  
To brighter peaks, to jubilate more loudly,  
Or moan more hopelessly in wilder chasms?  
Was all this nothing but a morning's walk?

## RECOLLECTIONS OF EVENINGS OF INNER COMPANIONSHIP

### FLOWERS

In March we put the seeds into the earth,  
While still we suffered in the angry vise  
Of pain to which the yester-year gave birth,  
And in the final bout of sun and ice.

We fetched them water from the glassy well  
And tried to raise them, bound to slender stays,  
We knew that in the light their buds would swell,  
And in the love and brightness of our gaze.

We kept them fresh with eager industry  
And—leaned together—looked with questioning fear  
Into the clouds, and waited patiently  
To see a leaf unfold, a shoot appear.

We gathered them in gardens and above  
The nearby terraces where grape vines grew.  
Enchanted by the golden night we roved  
And held them in our hands as children do.

#### RETURN

The port against the purple west!  
With precious cargo I return,  
The white flag ripples from the mast,  
How many a boat we left astern!

The ancient shores and roofs are new,  
The ancient bells are new to me,  
And winds persuade me gently through  
The presage of a joy to be.

A rosy face, a word which broke  
Through moving crests of jasper tide:  
"So long you lived with foreign folk,  
And yet our love has never died.

You sailed at dawn, but just as though  
A single day you had been far  
From them, the naiads welcome you,  
The jetties and the evening star."

#### ABDUCTION

Come with me, beloved child,  
To the woods which few have sung,  
By no other gift beguiled  
Than my song upon your tongue.

If we bathe in silken blue  
Where horizons film and gleam,  
Then our limbs will shine and seem  
Even clearer than the dew.

Frail and airy, to and fro,  
Silver threads are spun to veils,  
In the grass the linen pales  
Delicate as stars and snow.

Under leafen boughs and over  
Waves we float with gentle singing,  
Locked in happiness and flinging  
White dianthus, flakes of clover.

## RIPENING

A lavish sound, a throb of triumph swung  
Across the grain in furrows late and lush,  
The sparing words had not been spoken long  
When poignant feeling wound us in its hush.

Where purple flames and perfect yellow merge,  
Beside the trellis hung with fruit they slid,  
They mounted to the vineyard's jewelled verge,  
Where heavy clusters swell for crimson need.

I dared not cling to you, nor you to me  
When slanted rays were loosed upon our brow,  
Nor yet affirm in clumsy phrase what we  
Received with mute delight, what bound us now,

And what in us, when day had quenched its fires,  
Climbed to the clouds of lavender and rose,  
What more than any dream and all desires  
Shed slender glory through the evening glows.

## WHITE SONG

For her I shall devise a dream of white:  
A fancied castle, dipped in muted rays  
And bordered with translucent blossom-sprays—  
I see two children limned in early light.

Each carries flowers in a narrow sheaf  
Glinted like aspens any breath can rouse,  
And in it, higher than their tender brows,  
A swinging flag: a silver cockle leaf.

They move, they wander slowly toward the lake  
And sway on spacious marble steps, until  
The lifted wings of nearing herons shake  
The fragile burden in their arms, and chill

Petals of nards in spiral gusts exhale  
Sweet vapours, where they merge, and float, and rise  
To higher space. They grow more faint and pale  
And are dissolved in pure and downy skies.

## VIGILS

### I

Your forehead clouded by the two tufts  
Of your parted hair (they are blond and soft),  
Your forehead shows me the sorrow of youth.

Your lips (they are silent) seem to tell  
The story of souls condemned to hell.  
A maddening mirror (your eyes), do not play with its spell.

When you smile (at last you have fallen asleep),  
Your mouth is sad, you seem to weep,  
And your head bends a little—your grief so deep!

### II

I did not heed you and I went my road  
In months of mist and greyness, when the goad  
To ask, the urge to quest abate.

Who, in the months of mist and grey, will be  
Beside the sombre gate because of me?  
I think of you: Beside the sombre gate

Because of me you were, for me, though wall  
And pillar creaked in silent fall  
Of frost, and no one else was out so late.

### III

What two middlenights, when he  
Who himself was grief-impaled,  
Met her anguish vengefully!

Ah, his eyes were never veiled,  
He withheld his clemency!  
Each could see the other's wound

Throb and well through thickly furred  
Dark, but in aloneness found  
Neither tear nor word.

### IV

The deepest lap of dreams, and then awaking,  
And to an ever-present image bowed  
I leaned my mouth above the lips that paled:

“The great compassionate shall be your slaking,  
Only in thanks accept one who is vowed  
To you!” But they I touched, so burningly  
Responded more than even dream allowed,  
That—though I shook with doubt—my senses failed.  
O minutes slowed in bliss and ecstasy!

V

When such a tempest rages through the trees,  
Is this not more than threat of yearning from  
A violet glance, a blond and frolic bloom?

When cliffs are lashed by such a clash of seas,  
Is this not more than that you skirt the shore  
Alone, entreating heaven’s ashen core,

That pale and shy as never yet, I find  
You very like the girl, unheeded, blind,  
Who calls along the road in deafening wind?

PERMIT ME THIS GAME: YOUR SILHOUETTES  
NIMBLY CUT TO DECORATE MY HALLS OF  
MEMORY

Shall lips which anguish sealed between the thaw  
Of April and autumnal rime, now cede  
Their sorrow to the child and take their cue  
From what? Oh, do not stop me, for I plead!

You stand upon the shore, the sail is caught  
In savage winds. The ship may run aground!  
So wait until you shape a gentle thought  
To tell the stranger whom your wisdom found.

You who enhance a joy you never tasted,  
Who staunch a grief which you can scarcely fathom,  
And—though the signs be foul—foretell the fair,  
In realms of kindness lavish and resourceful,  
You have the right to boast: So many lives  
Which, when the ship was shattered, drifted shoreward,  
Abandoned by their gods and their companions,  
Girl that I am, I helped them to renascence.

Hours of evening we spent with you passed so agreeably,  
Lighting the lamp was forgotten—but not to your profit!  
Was it delusion that drove you to utter the phrases  
Chosen so crudely I may neither listen nor answer?  
Should you be helpless to rein such impulsive expression,  
Go from me, lest my amazement and sorrow compel you.  
Keep the derision you feel for your failure in wooing,  
Keep your contemptuous laugh from your care-ridden spirit.

So often, when the season shifts, I greet  
You in the pause when night is still reluctant,  
And spread before you sprays in faded colours,  
Which you perhaps disdain, and then I leave.  
This time the only comfort I can offer  
Is that I shall return some harvest evening,  
My hands transfigured by a lovely sadness,  
And bring a token which may please you more.

W.L.

One of the few, the rare, who feel the fortunes  
Of banished sovereigns, their exalted sorrow  
And unrecorded death! Because you are—  
If just for this—we bring our thanks. Your grandeur  
Confirms us in the claim we make on grandeur.  
With regal nod you take or cast aside,  
You standard of our steps which sometimes falter,  
And lodestar over every noble quest.



P.G.

In daily life, where one is like the other,  
And hardly ever says what stirs within him,  
Some meetings, none the less, gave rise to tremors,  
And some farewells to tears we tried to stifle.  
Those days on which you gave yourself and parted  
The curtain of your wisdom were unrivalled,  
Those evenings when—though nothing happened—glances  
And words were proffered that remain forever.

M.L.

Like our transfigured horizons, brother in pride,  
Like ripening harvest, your luminous yellow is spread.  
Your lilac and wistful green are the tenuous foil  
For hours unshapen, bent on laborious courses,  
For sighs from dungeons: they bring no ease and are endless.  
Your saturate blue is flung around wishless immortals,  
And in your violet dark with an alloy of crimson,  
Lurks our most deadly desire, brother in pain.

H.H.

Finder of soaring songs and brilliant parleys  
Adroitly turned, the lapse of time and parting  
Permit me to engrave upon my tablet  
Of memory, the former foe. Do likewise!  
For on the rungs of ecstasy and motion  
We both are netherbound: I shall not savour  
Such glad acclaim of youth again, and never  
Again will strophes strike your ear like thunder.

K.W.

O happy we! Only the prophets may  
Hold forth in such a voice, but on your course,  
From laurelled cup it sounded day by day,  
And yet I feel the ferment of remorse.

Though I respect your ways, I may not share  
The smiles and pleasures—which are right for you!  
I must return on seas of dull despair  
Into my wonder-laden years of rue.

E.R.

It often seems as if the fairest charm,  
The highest exultation were obtained  
In early days of youth, and that we warm  
The barren span of life with what remained,  
And then again that ecstasy untold  
Escaped and haunts us—rarely though—by night,  
And that on ruins of our young delight  
We wander unremembering, proud, and cold.

A.H.

You, gentle seer, who muse so helplessly  
And sadly over dreams which never flowered,  
Give us your hand, and we shall show you furrows  
Where harvests of redemption can be sown.

With offerings of our blood and tears we gladly  
Would tend them, miracles which still are hidden.  
And you will clasp us, smiling and elated,  
When they unfold before your startled eyes.

A.V.

You guess the contours of our bright dominions,  
The many-coloured meadows topped with vineyards,  
The westwind trailing through a row of poplars,  
And soft as flutes of love, the streams of Tibur?  
But here you lift your golden head: “Do you  
Know dancing of the mist on endless moors?  
On grassy dunes the organ-boom of storms?  
And all the tumult of tremendous seas?”

R.P.

Of what avail is wisdom on the verge of madness  
That crows and overwhelms us with its glare and glitter,  
But does not know when it becomes a weight and trespass?  
How restlessly, O palest one among our brothers,  
You err the mournful length and breadth of your possessions!  
When will you weary of the conquest of new regions  
And learn at last to plant and tend with care and pleasure  
What grows, and blooms, and ripens in a threefold garden?

C.S.

We cherish you, and yet you are a riddle  
Which tortures us. You smile: "Accept—as I—  
That gulfs dividing us are fathomless,  
And bow before their secret, even happy  
You cannot plumb then." And imbued with sadness  
We try to bridge them with our love, and follow  
The life you lead, and do not feel afraid.  
Your face is radiant with the look of victors.

A.S.

And was there really ever such a circle? Torches  
Lit up the pallor of our faces, vapours mounted  
From braziers for the godlike youth, and words you uttered  
Uplifted us to loud vermilion worlds of frenzy,  
So that for days we were bewildered, and our senses  
Reeled as if poisoned by too lush a banquet,  
So that our brows still burned with roses, and we suffered  
For spying at the wealth behind the screen of heaven.

L.K.

And yet our home will always be the light  
To which our winding paths at last will lead us.  
Although you count yourself among the giants  
And stubborn forces of the barren lowland,  
Does not my clasp at every meeting tell you,  
And that I often seek you out, how much  
You rouse in me and are my own? You shun me  
And so betray how I took root in you!

## MOURNFUL DANCES

The harvest moon's unbridled flames have wasted  
To shadow, but they burn within us yet,  
And we, who were apart so briefly, tasted  
Near the familiar stream a new regret.

You never challenged it before, and I  
Cannot today provide you with a reason  
Why storms and winter days are sadder, why  
The air is gladder in the April season.

You run your fingers through your hair in anger  
Because I find that your concern has paled.  
I almost grieve, for now I weep no longer,  
As once when far from Lilia, the child.

The walls are tapestried with velvet bloom  
—A fashion grown from some ancestral mood—  
Your arm in mine, we come into the room  
And tell each other death is good.

Upon the pane the frozen tendrils lace  
And take us far from our accustomed earth,  
Let us remain a while before the hearth,  
The flames that fuse in tremulous embrace.

“And are you sure the muses never will  
Again accost the one they loved?” “And you—  
Does the abundant light within you fail  
And leave you in the darkness? Tell me true!”

The hours of August still wind you  
In scents of the mild garden air,  
Ivy and speedwell still bind you  
A wreath for your wind-tangled hair.

Like gold is the wavering wheat, though  
Perhaps less exultant and full,  
Late-blooming roses still greet, though  
The sheen of their colours grew dull.

Then let us conceal what defied us  
And turn to felicity, for  
The one thing which is not denied us  
Is walking together once more.

Give me one more song  
In chiming stanzas of a happier day,  
You know it too: My peace is torn,  
And now my hand delays.

Where shadowed spirits yearn  
A rare and splendid vision rears,  
But lost the memory that burned  
In colours blithe and clear.

Where ailing spirits call  
The sound assuages bitter stings,  
The voice is sonorous and palled,  
And yet it cannot sing.

The song the beggar dully sings  
Is like my praise which beckons you in vain,  
Is like a brook that bubbles far from springs  
And which your lips—although they thirst—disdain.

The song the sightless girl repeats  
Is like a dream I did not understand,  
Is like my gaze that half retreats,  
To which your glances scruple to respond.

The song the children chant aloud  
Is soulless like the words which come from you,  
Is like a bridge to those more cowed  
Emotions which are all you still avow.

Three songs are what the village fool has learned,  
And these he drones incessantly, the first  
A breath from graves of elders who returned  
Their souls to God before they breathed their last.

The other pure and consecrate, as though  
It were the song of sisters while they span,  
And serving girls who in an endless row  
Have walked the evening lanes since time began.

The third is menacing: An ancient sword  
In sky-blue scabbard, vengefulness and sin,  
With sorrow bred at birth in kith and kin,  
And over many a roof an evil star.

Region of mordant desires  
Where you are wrecked on the strand!  
Fly from your sunlighted shires,  
Follow the ruthless command.

Put all your strength in your rowing,  
Unimperilled by fear  
Slowly your boat will be flowing  
On with the wane of the year.

Traverse without trepidations  
Glaciers where riddles arise,  
And on the grave constellations  
Fasten your questioning gaze.

The drowsy pasture woke and lured. She turned  
Through clustering violets to the gate, her gown  
As yearly picked to please a groom, and yearned  
For him until the reapers' work was done.

Only a lark which carolled in the grove  
Saw that her anguish and confusion grew,  
And how on drifting days of summer's drove  
She mused and wasted by the hedge of yew.

All that recalls her slender loveliness  
Is—under strings of pearls—a silken lock  
A faithful friend keeps in her treasure-chest,  
And simple grass around a marble block.

Since now the grains within the glass are few,  
Go after him: the wanderer drenched in dew,  
Who swiftly vanished in the burning winds,  
The child of stars, with flowers as his friends.

Who once, before the wheat was gathered, laid  
His head into his mournful hands and, swayed  
By no one knows what early curse, divined  
That now the final day of youth had dawned.

Who callous to the coaxing of the sun,  
Light as a butterfly above the foam,  
While he was beautiful, without lament  
That very day beyond our circles went.

Night of lurking dooms!  
Palls of sombre velvet mute  
Footfalls in the room  
Where Love defends his suit.

Your wish has made him die.  
Now toward the bier you gaze  
Where pale and still he lies  
Beset with candle rays.

The candles burn to ends,  
You blindly leave the walls  
Where Love was done to death,  
And weeping fills the halls.

No longer do we blanch and stare  
Like ancient lovers in despair.  
Excess of dolour was our share,  
We gently wince and softly bear.

How unafraid they were, how free,  
Although they voiced their agony!  
Our lot was long adversity,  
And yet we suffer silently.

They used the axe, they used the blade,  
But we refuse to fight and raid.  
The peace we crave cannot be paid  
With weal and woe which they displayed.

I know you come to me like one  
Who, tuned to sighs, is not at ease  
When lyre-strings resound among  
The columns where the merry feast.

The window filters autumn scent,  
Here few and gentle steps are heard,  
The hopeless find a new content,  
And timid pleas a clement word.

On coming, hands are lightly pressed,  
On going from this silent clime  
A kiss, and to adorn the guest  
A simple gift: a tender rhyme.

This burden and this grief: to ban  
What once I called my own,  
In vain with reaching arms to span  
What now—a wraith—is flown.

This torpor without cure or stay,  
This idle no and none,  
This groundless rising up at bay,  
This course which must be run.

The weighing sorrows which oppress  
An anguish that has grown  
Resigned, the ache of emptiness,  
This: with myself alone!



Foolish hope: until the utmost day  
To rejoice in what must pass away.  
Southward to the sea the birds have sped,  
Blooms await the snow with drooping head.

Limp the stems your languid fingers wreath,  
They are all the season will bequeath.  
Wish cannot evoke them on our ways,  
Others will unfold in other Mays.

Courage! Drop my arm, and let us go  
From the park before the sun is low  
And the mountain mists begin to weave.  
Come, before the winter bids us leave!

Only your subtle ear  
Discerns what sings within,  
What quivers shy and thin  
And grows more faint and far.

Only your valiant phrase  
Distils a balm from what  
Was given as our lot,  
And grants a peace that stays.

Only your fervent thought  
Dissolves the pain so well  
Which once at dusk befell  
The light our morning brought.

No road too long, too steep for me,  
My friend, if I can only be  
With you, no gulf that threatens doom,  
And penance calls from every tomb.

So wistfully we go our way  
Through joyless fields of cinder-grey,  
Across the withered thorn and gorse,  
But free from anger and remorse.

My eyes are wet, I only look  
For one whose hand will gladly pluck  
The strings attuned and manifold,  
One who will take our harp of gold.

The tempest tears across the endless fallows  
And, filled with fair divinings, makes the rounds,  
The earth is stifled for revenge, and hollows  
Between the mountains echo broken sounds.

Those who are terribly distant seem to fret,  
But from the tranquil firs a warning flows:  
Did I not have your promise that regret  
Should not disturb the dead in their repose!

I pass the wintry shrine we never harry  
With idle pleas and tears, and all I pray  
Of you, so soon to see them, is to carry  
My greeting to the rays of youth and May.

By singing led that softly fled,  
Along the shore how light your tread!  
I see the hills where vapour twines,  
The crumpled leaves, the thistle spines.

Your dreaming eyes already shift  
To find a land of fresher gift,  
Because your fancy flutters on  
Into a rich and safer dawn.

And still I ask: When on the verge  
The yellow cowslips gently surge  
And green with reeds the waters swing—  
Who'll come to help me start the spring?

In weightless vessels flee  
From reeling worlds of light,  
That lessened poignancy  
Of tears requite your flight.

What cataracts of blond  
Cerulean visions churn,  
And gluttoned joys beyond  
Mere rapture bud and burn!

Sweet shudders shall not arch  
Your life for new distress,  
So saturate this March  
With silent wistfulness.

Lingering hours on the stream,  
As if in wrath the waters scream,  
And freshened by the rainy winds  
The light now flickers and now blinds.

Astrand we loitered hand in hand,  
She saw the grain which grew in sand.  
She came, and stooped, and picked a spray,  
And found a tune to fit the day.

Serene and bright her strain began  
As of a goal which we had won.  
Then sadness crept into the song  
Of lost delight—how long! How long!

The hill where we are roaming lies in shadow,  
While that beyond is all enmeshed in light,  
The moon within its green and tender meadow  
Is still a little cloud, adrift and white.

The roads into the infinite are paling,  
The wanderers halt, delayed by whispered sighs,  
Is it a hidden stream from mountains trailing?  
Is it a bird that twitters hushabies?

Two moths which flew abroad before their hour,  
Are playing at pursuit from leaf to leaf,  
And path and field distil from bush and flower  
The scent of evening for a muted grief.

Forests aflame on the mountain side,  
Clustering tendrils in cinnabar pride!  
Glistening grapes which your fingers enshrine  
Soon will be barrelled and ripen to wine.

Long before sunrays had rounded the sheath  
Homeward you came with sprig and wreath,  
And you are happy with autumn's reward,  
You, who inherit the summer's hoard.

He was not fated to savour the fruits  
Who did not cherish the buds and the shoots.  
If you ask, he will tell you: "They  
Took my only joy away."

The sultry dusk, the pale and sober morrow  
Are change eternal in her dismal faring,  
A sternly charted course decrees the bearing  
Of one so shy and all in tears and sorrow.

At stately gates she lingers and beseeches,  
But there is none to vouch for her or second,  
And not a single hand is raised, which reaches  
As flesh of her own flesh, and beckons.

So now a clamour and a tumult drive her,  
Now turning with their evil prey she wavers,  
And just as long ago, today she quavers  
The spell that will release and shrive her.

Though heavy vapours hang from bush and tree,  
Your further journey shall not be delayed,  
Speak to the pallid spectres unafraid,  
And they will move, and touch you tenderly.

When wayside grooves and grasses turn to stone,  
The hoarfrost bends the branches, try to hear  
The anguish in the winter winds that veer  
To withered solitudes and swell their moan.

Then you will lift your tired head and flout  
The thought of slipping from the precipice,  
Although the faintly lighted goal and this  
One lonely star above you flicker out.

Since much is wan and torn, and sinks and crumbles,  
The song is dead in floods of mist and dreaming  
Until in gusts the brittle foliage tumbles—  
The wound that once was wild, again is streaming.

But then from dripping clouds a sunbeam flashes,  
And water straggles black across the ashen  
Terrains, through frost a seldom thunder crashes.  
And yet the song construes the grave procession

As clangour pouring from sepulchral glitter,  
As torches high among the bended shoulders,  
And asks if in the dross of what is bitter  
The clear, eternal spark of joy still smoulders.

The storm aroused the heath  
To sullen task. Through gloom  
Of noon a hoot of doom,  
Sung by the bird of death.

The arc of hills ignores  
The hours' empty flow,  
And branches fumble low  
For blades on barren shores.

The shaft of darkness jails  
The dismal land again,  
A voice of night and pain  
Is like a cry that fails.

Perhaps your vision is clouded  
By branches which fall and ride.  
Are waters driven and crowded  
Against the tide?

You reach them and they rise higher  
Submissive to alien trance,  
Frantic haste of desire  
Follows their dithering dance.

Take care and stop pursuing  
A game that costs so dear!  
Are your companions not wooing  
The ways of yester-year?

You reached the hearth, but dwindled  
To cinders was the glow,  
The moon was all that kindled  
The earth with deathly hue.

Your listless fingers crumble  
The ashes. If you strain,  
And grope in them, and fumble,  
Will light return again?

See, how the moon consoles you  
With soothing gait,  
Leave the hearth—she tells you—  
It has gotten late.

The lamp within the vault  
Has live and timeless beams,  
And how its ruby gleams  
On shivering basalt!

The rounded window flings  
A blaze that overflows,  
Below the monstrance glows  
With globes in golden rings,

And with a snowy lamb.  
And do the timeless beams,  
And do the jewelled gleams  
Burn with an inner flame?

The hunt has passed, you slow  
Your steps with idle bow.  
Blood under firs, the air  
Is taut with sound—from where?

This is no hound, no call  
Of those who flee and fall.  
You listen, crouched upon  
The earth—shall you go on?

But hush! It comes more clear,  
And you who rove and peer,  
Divine a summons borne  
On echoes of the horn.

The airs of evening blew  
A less austere delight,  
Take it and keep it too,  
Or else another might!

But as if shackled and wan  
The soul sings threnodies,  
She feels a joy draw on,  
She craves, yet cannot seize.

The airs of evening blew  
Her signs of saving grace:  
The saddest hour I face,  
You know it now—you too!

Will you persist in looking for the deep  
And early colours on a barren shore,  
In ashen deserts wait for fruit, and reap  
The grain of summers that will come no more?

It is enough if filmed with cloud you find  
The muted sheen of fulness you have known,  
And through the sluggish air, the freeing wind  
Blows us caresses from another zone.

And see! The hours of the past which beat  
In us like burning wounds have paled and fled,  
But all the things we thought were flowers meet  
Beside the well that now is dead.

THE TAPESTRY OF LIFE AND  
THE SONGS OF DREAM AND  
DEATH WITH A PRELUDE



## PRELUDE

### I

When pale with zeal, I searched for hidden store,  
For strophes weighed with grief, and things that flow  
In drowsy and uncertain round, I saw  
A naked angel standing in the door.

He brought the spirit which was buried in  
Itself a wealth of precious blooms, his hand  
Was like the flowering almond, and a band  
Of roses, roses clustered at his chin.

He did not wear a heavy crown and when  
He spoke his voice was almost like my own:  
"Dispatched to you by radiant Life I come,  
An envoy!" So he said, and smiled, and then

He dropped his sheaves of lilies and mimosas,  
But when I stooped to gather them, he too  
Was kneeling. In delight I bathed my brow,  
And cheeks, and mouth in newly-opened roses.

### II

"Give me the solemn breath that never failed,  
Give me the fire again that makes us young,  
On which the wings of childhood rose among  
The fumes our earliest offerings exhaled.

I will not breathe save in your fragrant air,  
Enclose me wholly in your shrine, accord  
A single crumb from your abundant board!  
I plead today from chasms of despair."

And he: "The reckless words which meet my ear  
Spell flocks of wishes, tangled and at feud,  
The ready granting of a multitude  
Of boons is not my charge. What I confer

Is given freely, never under stress."  
But then against his knee I bent my arm,  
And all the tongues of wakened longing stormed:  
"I will not let you go except you bless!"

### III

My life was cut by inauspicious trails,  
And many voices sounded harsh and shrill,  
But now a blessed spirit holds the scales,  
Now I am governed by the angel's will.

Though still too often on a dismal coast  
The soul forgets and weeps, a quick command  
Rings from the crier at the mooring-post:  
"Up with the sails and on to fairer lands!"

When new disaster strikes and slants the keel,  
When madness threatens from the left, the grave  
Looms on the right, he swiftly grips the wheel,  
The angry forces fawn upon his wave.

Imperiously he calms the warring tides,  
The clouds give way to flawless blue once more.  
Soon on a quiet sea the fleet will glide  
To tranquil islands, to the promised shore.

### IV

Too long have I been thirsting for your bliss,  
Henceforth no lord shall harness me like this.  
Too lonely was his service and too grey  
When you appeared upon my mournful way.

Let him return my freedom and reclaim  
The fronds of palm, the solemn diadem,  
A pledge of dawn with flowers still unguessed—  
So I have you! My forehead on your breast.

Then he, the banner-bearer, crossed the glow  
Of autumn and with lifted finger drew  
Me back into his spell, his tones like those  
That once in songs of fabled sirens closed

Around the soul, and with a long and sad  
Look in his eyes—like that the Master had,  
When standing at the Sea of Galilee  
He asked the twelve: "Is all your love for me?"

## V

No longer will you praise the gorgeous quests  
On treacherous and sullen seas, and where  
Abysses climb to crags abrupt and bare,  
And eagles float around the jagged crests.

In these unbroken meadows learn to feel  
The breath that tempers frosty April days,  
And know the wind that parts the sultry haze.  
Hear what their childish voices have to tell.

You find the secret of eternal runes  
In hills with clearly contoured rise and fall,  
Not only in the lure of street and wall.  
How weak is now the Wonder of Lagoons,

Is great and ruined Rome, the world-wooded dream,  
Compared to vines and tang of oaken grove,  
To those that guard your people's treasure-trove:  
Your waters, green with life, O surging Stream!

## VI

Recall the terrors which, since you became  
My own, were blotted from your memory,  
For only I accord the cup of flame  
Which shall enrapture you until you die.

You thanked me then as for the boon of boons,  
That in my peace you were no longer faced  
With savage heat of parching summer moons  
Which drove you—homeless—out into the waste.

When you disdained my dizzy peak and cried:  
"Allot an instant dedicate to choice,  
And I deny the altar and the creed!"  
The night was strident with your tortured voice.

The victim reared before the hearth, like sheaves  
Of weightless straw the purple flared and ran  
Along the columns to the architrave,  
And all the temple burned, and shook, and shone.

## VII

Now I am your friend, and guard, and guide,  
So you may no longer share the feuds  
Even of the wise. My peaks provide  
Views of valleys and their multitudes.

Sturdy feet in endless come and go,  
Cry of busy toilers: "Delve in things,  
Profit from their use and you shall know  
Joys on earth like those which heaven brings."

There, in swirls of incense, solemn throngs  
Follow an ascetic on a white  
Horse, and passion smoulders through their songs:  
"Long the world shall have the cross for light!"

Only few have chosen silent ways,  
Proudly distant from the active drove,  
And the words their banners flaunt are these:  
"Hellas, our eternal love!"

## VIII

"You never cite convention or disgrace!"  
"You, my disciples, of untainted blood  
Are quick to recognize and choose the good,  
And even from afar I set your pace.

I love you when, secure in your intent,  
You gauge the realms of noon and call a verse  
Of old a dear tradition, innocent  
Of self-reproach, or penitence, or curse.

And you who lived in narrow clan you chose,  
And loved, rejecting respite or restraint,  
For destiny small hatred or complaint,  
But feeding long revenge against your foes.

And at the deeds which never should have won  
Reward or blame, those deeds you vaunt before  
Your peers, but which the populace abhor,  
I only shrugged and smiled: 'O son, my son!' "

## IX

Ask not what word shall win the most applause,  
Nor at the feast what song the wreath. Today  
The yester-storm which swept the meagre grass  
Is sacred westwind in the laurel spray.

Now it was warp of green in crystal lanes  
Unflawed and brilliant in a burnished dawn,  
Now fluid agate traced with darker veins,  
And then like rubies darting frantic suns.

What as a drizzle, warm and gentle, drew  
Along the withered walk which all forsake,  
And only as a drop of fragrant dew  
Fell from the flower to the hollow lake,

Grew into streams that tunnel through the lock  
Of mountains, and in deepest midnights fling  
The sudden jet that stabs the heart of rock,  
And throbs and gushes as a crimson spring.

## X

If you are prisoned in those hopeless tracts  
Where deeds of both the wan and vital pale  
Unsung, then—as the body without fail  
To all delight—my word exhorts to acts.

The lucid answer rises with my sun  
When you demand: "What wind shall drive my ship?  
Since every well is full, where shall I dip?  
Where seize since all the fibres intertwine?"

And if you suffer from your sires' fear  
That you may lose direction in the drift  
Of all-too many shapes that glint and shift,  
If you are crushed by countless worlds in air,

Then come to where we work in unison,  
Where through my sacred grove a paeon rings:  
"Though tens of thousands be the forms of things,  
You shall give voice to one alone: my own."

## XI

You doubt you can evoke the glory of  
The gods, unless the flash you cannot bid  
Lights up your brooding brow—you child that sobs  
For laughing hours all-too swiftly sped.

On every word the rabble stamps its stain,  
The mouths of fools make subtle accents coarse.  
You mourn: "O voice of tempests, voice of shrines,  
Will you again arouse us with your force?"

The weary worker bowed his head and hand,  
The stuff grew brittle, cumbersome, and cold,  
Then through the chink a glint, a silver band  
Broke suddenly, undreamed, into the hold!

How buoyant what but just was grave and dull!  
Alight and purified what clung in dust!  
A first and bridal lifting of the veil,  
Now the Eternal says: "I call—you must!"

## XII

We, who as princes choose and cast aside  
And lift the world from ancient hinges, shall  
We seek forever, sick and sorely tried,  
And think we miss the best that can befall?

We, who are love's most faithful priests, must quest  
For it with hidden grief and hollow eyes  
Wide with fanatic flame, and when at last  
We seize what is our own, revere, and prize,

And barely taste, again it flickers from  
Our avid senses, colourless and wry,  
And all our gods seem only shades and foam!  
"I know your heart would bleed, that you would die,

If I had not the spell that can abate:  
Since all the forms you worshipped and forwent  
Through you are valid and through you are great,  
Do not lament too much what you have lent."

### XIII

The years like fairy-tales, when on a strand  
Of filmy cloud and sunlight you were led,  
My wards, to white and slender trails and had  
Sheaved grapes, and wheat, and lilies in your hand,

Gave you a love that never died. And when  
The branches beckoned with fantastic twists,  
The dark and snaring thickets lured, and mists  
Beguiled above the ooze of quaggy fen,

You felt reluctance as before the storm  
Of masses interlocked in press and pace,  
The false design of bodies that are base,  
The overplus of limbs on monstrous form.

The love for light remained from early days,  
For gentle fields and hills, and narrow pines,  
Clean colours and uncomplicated lines,  
And whispers from the spicy garden-sprays.

### XIV

You left your house above and took the road  
Which wound below, and many a friend was near,  
And there you tried to found your own abode  
And gazed as though you saw another sphere.

Your summits will no longer be your screen,  
But in a robe unsullied as before  
Upon your neighbour's arm you now will lean,  
And yet you are a guest from alien shore

To all the many whom you wished to shun.  
Their clasp could never hold you, and to fight  
Their battles in their ranks were idly done.  
For them your patterns are too recondite.

But sometimes pure and seldom fires shine  
From them and show their nearness does not stain.  
Then say: "I take your brother-hands in mine,  
Allied in strong community of pain."

## XV

Back to the vanished years your spirit leant  
And failed to grasp what starry fathoms ran  
Between you and the worlds of other men.  
How every head was bowed in wonderment

When you contrived the temples for the Fleece,  
More radiant than our pale, terrestrial beam!  
And golden was the dye of every dream,  
And all in the enchanted port was peace.

A fruity summer led you onward by  
Accustomed paths on stony hills, the slope  
Smiled to the wanderer, kindling him to hope,  
And faces gave him greeting, hushed and shy.

These are the meadows: velvet threaded through  
With flowers, the ready harvest, full and lithe,  
The song of reapers as they whet the scythe—  
The earth from which you hail is calling you.

## XVI

Your goal shall be the shore, the market-place,  
The supple sinews of the strong and slim,  
The people's song and say, their shout and press,  
And in the stream the glide of naked limb.

The struggle waged by man with man, and brute,  
And soil will take new shape and colour: poise  
In every gesture, and in dance, and gait,  
The ring of singing girls, the games of boys.

But in a room with friends, by night you find  
The rarest treasures, soon a silence reigns,  
And then a glance is born, a trembling sound,  
And revelation pulses through your veins.

The regnant word ascends, the magic seal,  
A star in furrows of which no one knows,  
The word of new delight and new ordeal,  
A shaft that stabs the soul, and throbs, and glows.



## XVII

Now he may speak as from another star,  
Who in the darkness set new fires burning,  
Who found release from lifeless days of yearning,  
Refrained from deeds until his hand was sure,

Restored the withered world with new delights,  
And through his office pointed to his brothers  
The field of true renown beyond all others,  
And in new dances fostered secret rites.

No king will ever equal him in fame,  
To whom the sybils with devout elation  
And noble boys are bound in dedication,  
The future lords whom nations will acclaim.

The gods alone receive such incense wreathing  
Aloft, as he from holy youth who chime  
His praise and far beyond his rungs will climb,  
Much of his breath infused into their breathing.

## XVIII

Some day they will examine your ravines  
For echoes of your voice. "Is this the haunt,"  
So one may say, "of vows, and tears, and moans?  
How paltry!" And another dare to taunt:

"Are these the crests of hills so greatly praised,  
Which gladdened with a glimpse of fabled lands?  
Are these the waves which threatened where they grazed?  
So shallow that our fingers touch the sand!"

And one will turn from you in sullen gloom:  
"All that he gave us was surprise and awe,  
How far away those passions and their bloom,  
How could their fruits accord us any joy!"

But here the masters comfort and assist:  
The gods' most flawless servant, the Hellene,  
The sombre lord of souls on isles of mist,  
Valclusa's recluse and the Florentine.

## XIX

To whom but you is she to turn her gaze,  
The soul afire you were first to show  
The heights and happiness which fails to flow  
From gaudy days like these. You deign to rouse,

And she approaches the eternal gate,  
The longed-for rays in jubilant accord,  
Floats down the hall to the immortals' board,  
Salvation peals! A shaft of perfect light!

She finds herself in uninvaded zones,  
She crosses chasms as an eagle soars,  
Directs the galaxies of lesser stars,  
And rushes forward to paternal suns.

Now you must curb her wanton haste, you lean  
From sills of cloud and cover her who is  
Shaken with tremors and replete with bliss,  
True spirit, with the heavy wings of dream.

## XX

At every turn of tide she feels her thirst  
For holy fare grow wilder than at first,  
And as if, banished from the fragrant shore,  
She sank in seas of sorrow more and more.

Forsaken by the guides which led her on,  
The shining torch of Venus and the Swan,  
For her the fiery god has only drouth,  
She flutters like a singed and dazzled moth.

Then she recalls how many times she thought  
The day an end, a flame that peters out,  
A tomb engulfed in mists malign and low,  
And yet the morning never failed to show

The valley swimming in a haze of blue,  
Where mellow chimes, and secret strains, and through  
The boughs of May her own reflection sang:  
"Now look! And you will see you still are young."

## XXI

As long as drifts of sunset lit the hill  
It was not hard to find the way, and still  
I heard familiar calls along my trail,  
Now it is grey and all the voices fail.

Now there is none who for a little scope  
Of kindred going rouses me to hope,  
Whose even slightest solace I desire.  
No wanderer walks in darkness so entire.

And when the cricket's chirp, the final tone,  
Falls silent, even memories are gone.  
The woods are cold, the vapours close around  
The path and drain the dregs of light and sound.

From dark terrains, where sleep has conquered, wheel  
The chill and mist of graves, and yet I feel  
Your breath that fans the spark to flaming flags,  
Your great and watchful love that never lags.

## XXII

"And must I always thirst and wait? The sun  
Still mounting—threat of terror on my way!"  
"Your want and torment would be far from done  
If 'Come and take' I said to you today.

You thrive in struggles meet for you and know  
That from my mouth upon your bleeding weals  
A balm of tenderness will always flow,  
But you will never find a spell that heals."

"And those who reverently touch my knee,  
Who lay upon my breast a youthful cheek,  
Those who were guided by a sign from me?"  
"Disciples love but are afraid and weak."

"So to the end I must contend alone  
And never rest in faithful arms? Reply!"  
"You stir me to compassion, for no one  
Indeed remains with you—save you and I."

### XXIII

We are the selfsame children who in awe  
Of your imperial tread, but undismayed,  
Are ready when the battle-trumpets blow  
From open reaches where your flag is spread.

We journey at our stern commander's side,  
He probes among his men to choose and bar,  
No loving friend, nor kisses of a bride,  
Nor tears can make us faithless to our star.

And in his glances joyfully we read  
What in prophetic dreams he knows will come,  
If honours or oblivion be decreed  
By his uplifted or his downward thumb.

He gives in fief what bliss we are allowed,  
What scope and fame. He beckons, and we vie  
To serve his greater glory, strong and proud  
To go into the darkness and to die.

### XXIV

We who through many years composed and spoke  
Our odes in praise of magic life, we must  
Be just as glad and ready to evoke  
The dim divinings of the dark and dust . . .

The pillowed head still mutely acquiesced  
And dwelt on former honour, gain, and bout,  
The flowers of our childhood stirred without,  
And rocked and called to long and slumbrous rest.

And then the last and lovely image strayed  
And slowly vanished into singing wind,  
All had withdrawn and gone was every friend,  
But he who never faltered, watched and stayed.

Delaying anguish in its sullen spate  
With numbing wine shed from his aspergill,  
And easing tortured glances of farewell,  
The angel at the bed stood tall and straight.

# THE TAPESTRY OF LIFE

## THE TAPESTRY

Here men are oddly meshed with beasts and plants  
Which silken fringes frame to harmonies,  
Cerulean crescents in arrested dance  
Are scored and trimmed with silver galaxies.

The arabesque is crossed with barren lines,  
The single parts are tangled and at strife,  
And the enigma of the snared remains  
Until, one night, the fabric leaps to life.

The patterned boughs begin to stir and veer,  
The creatures locked in arc and square come out  
Before the knotted tassels, limned and clear,  
And bring the answer that dissolves your doubt.

It is not at your beck, is not for each  
Accustomed day, and not what guilds could share,  
And never for the many, nor through speech  
It comes incarnate rarely to the rare.

## PRIMEVAL LANDSCAPE

From brooding pines an eagle upward swept  
Into the blue, and toward the clearing stepped  
Two wolves. They lapped the shallow pool and swung  
To stark attention, marshalling their young.

And then across the glossy needles whipped  
A flock of hinds, and drank, and shyly slipped  
Back to the dusk of woods, but one remained  
Alone among the reeds to wait his end.

Here the lush grass had never felt the blade,  
But hands had been at work, for stems were laid  
And further on a plough had ridged the sod,  
Where in the fertile odour of the clod

And happy in the white and stinging sun  
With fields and gains their novel toil had won,  
Arch-father delved, arch-mother milked,  
Shaping the fate of all this human ilk.

### THE FRIEND OF THE FIELDS

You see him walk the furrows through the gleaming  
Of dawn, the shiny sickle in his grip,  
And reach into the wheat to weigh its teeming.  
He tests a yellow kernel with his lip.

Then on between the vines you watch him steady  
The wayward shoot with bast on sturdy prop,  
He feels the grapes, too green and still unready,  
And prunes a spray grown overlong with sap.

To find if it will stand against the welter  
Of wind, he shakes a sapling, probes the cloud,  
He binds his favourite to a shaft for shelter  
And smiles on one which firstling fruits have bowed.

He draws the water with a gourd and pours,  
He often stoops to pull the quickening grasses,  
Beneath his foot the region spills with flowers  
And ripens to a harvest where he passes.

### THUNDERSTORM

On every path the vagrant flickers pale and wane,  
A sudden thunder flails the full and upright grain.  
The midnight storm attacks the wall of massy boughs  
And crashes through the lairs where boars and vultures house.

The ruthless king has spurred from cloudy castle-hold  
And hunts with great cortège, his charger geared with gold,  
The faithless queen who joins the wind's unbridled race,  
Delivered up to any wanton saviour's grace.

Often he thinks he has her in his dour fists,  
But she, with whispered laughter, lithely from him twists  
Until he seizes her. She struggles in his grasp  
Athwart between his horse's neck and girdle's clasp.

She grinds her glistening teeth and sobs in caged despair,  
In tameless rage she shakes her mane of loosened hair.  
Around her naked limbs the slanting torrents fall,  
Composed her icy bosom faces coming thrall.

#### THE STRANGER

She came alone from far away,  
They shunned her house in cold dismay.  
She told the palm, and baked, and stewed,  
By moonlight walked without a snood.

Bedecked with gauds she often lay  
Against her sill on holy day.  
And sweet and bitter was her smile.  
To spouse and brother bane and guile.

The morrow-year, when in the dusk  
She roved for rue and golden-cups,  
Some said the swamp had sucked her down,  
But others swore, before the town

She disappeared midway, and had  
As only pledge bequeathed the lad  
As pale as linen, black as night,  
Whom she had born in Feverel light.

#### LAMBS

When days are done with memory-laden shadows  
In half-forgotten beauty's faded frame,  
Waves of white lambs draw slowly through the meadows  
From the broad clearing to the darkened stream.

Lambs of the mournful moon, the lusty sun,  
You hardly guess or covet unknown treasures,  
Lambs that are shallow and a little vain,  
Proud of the golden bells which grace your wethers.

Ageing to us, in your own judgment young!  
Lambs of a happiness which now seems hollow,  
Lambs that have gravely trod and lightly sprung  
With feelings which we now can scarcely follow.

You probe, but from a ledge you never shied!  
Lambs of the carefully encircled meres,  
Lambs of a faithfulness too old, but tried,  
Lambs of beyonds that hold no fears!

### QUEEN OF HEARTS

Out of the church the frightened sexton ran  
By nooks and corners of the crooked lane,  
And pious parish ladies heard his cries  
That upward now the Image turned her eyes,  
And that her lips were parted—almost spoke!  
Repenting their most recent sins, they flock  
And fling themselves to earth before the shrine,  
Even the righteous shudder at the sign.

At fall of night they billow through the door  
In grave alarm, but she in white attire  
Who was the first to come and answers to  
The name of Queen of Hearts, the fair, the true,

She, only she had grasped the miracle,  
Her fervent pleas had broken through the veil.  
She paces with her head a trifle bent  
In azure trance and marvelous lament.

### THE MASK

In lighted halls the silken puppets flutter.  
One used her paint to hide her passions and,  
While maudlin couples weave their whirl around her,  
Discovers that Ash Wednesday is at hand.

She steals to the deserted park, the narrow  
Embankment, gives the masque a parting glance,  
And bends above the ice with freezing marrow.  
A crash, the silent cold—and still they dance!

None of the handsome lords and ladies noted  
Her down below, in weeds and pebbles wound,  
But when they roved the paths in spring, a muted  
And gurgling sound came often from the pond.



They must have heard that curious murmur rising,  
The light of heart in eras far from grave,  
But found it hardly more than just surprising,  
And merely took it for a whim of wave.

### IMPRECATION

Is there a path behind the willow logs  
Where the grasses crouch when the tempest passes?  
Does not this river wind to the poisonous bogs,  
Green with will-o'-the-wisps in erratic flashes?

Serpents uncoil, and the flicker and flame of a tongue  
Dart from a gullet which threatens and brands with corruption.  
Rider, vow your life to avenge a wrong,  
Hate him and hate until you achieve his destruction!

Only the dead will cure you of wild desire,  
Calm the anger in your smouldering cry,  
Cool the cheek which he has fanned to fire.  
Call until you see him drifting by:

Lips that are too white to sneer, and fingers  
All too slack to deal another blow,  
In his breast a shining dagger lingers,  
Through the vaults of bridges let him go.

### THE DOER

I sit at the window I slighted so long. Now unfold  
Your wings, as so often before, and scatter my way  
With blessings, O twilight, I always have yearned for, now hold  
Me close while I yield to the solace and peace of today.

Tomorrow, when slant falls the light, it will all come true  
What haunts me in hours that shackle and stretch on the rack,  
Then rising like shadows behind me are those who pursue  
And mobs ever ready to stone will be hot on my track.

Who never has measured his brother for gauging a blow,  
How simple his life must be! And who never knew  
The hemlock that deadens, how thinly his thinking must flow!  
If only you guessed how I mock at the best among you!

For even my friends will say on the morrow: "Here ends  
A life in which promise and glory ennobled the way."  
How gently I swing in the somnolent dream of the land,  
How drowned I am in peace of parting day!

### BROTHERS IN SORROW

You wander through greyness, are time growing dim,  
Companioned by none but a beckoning beam.  
United and speechless, for all has been said,  
You bear with an anguish you cannot evade.

Who gives himself wholly—how slight is his prize!  
Young foreheads desire a sky beyond skies.  
You wander through greyness, are time growing dim,  
Companioned by none but a beckoning beam.

And sometimes when touches more fervent reward  
And move you, when words are in tender accord,  
When eloquent silence has woven its spells,  
It seems as if hope, though reluctantly, wells.

With tremulous fingers you try to arrest  
The evening and conjure it close to your breast,  
Though just for an hour! But those who have gone  
With you on this journey—they dream of the dawn!

### THE DISCIPLE

I do not crave the pleasures you have storied,  
I pulse with love that binds me to my lord,  
You only know the lavish, I the gloried,  
I live for glories of my lord.

More than in any work of your pursuing,  
I am adroit in labours of my lord,  
My lord is gracious, valid is my doing,  
I only serve my gracious lord.

I know the journey leads where many rangers  
Died in the lands of darkness, but my lord  
Is wise, and at his side I challenge dangers,  
I trust the wisdom of my lord.

And even if he left me poor and wageless,  
My wage is in the glances of my lord.  
There may be richer, but my lord is matchless!  
I shall not leave my matchless lord.

#### THE ELECT

They loudly acclaim your fairer rebirth,  
A halo transforms the child of the dusk.  
What seldom is won was early your fate,  
The masters upheld your praises in song.

What courts and exalts you modestly took,  
Your forehead was bent, but proudly you felt  
What things will submit if treated with awe,  
And thus you prefer to journey through life

With glances that probed, with love as your drive,  
Your untainted hands reached forward to seize.  
You trusted and mused with malice toward none:  
The statelier urge of the kinglier beast.

What crowns you today, will weigh him with thorns  
Who squandered himself, who let the leaf wilt.  
But while you revere you cannot be false,  
You keep both yourself, O youth, and the wreath.

#### THE OUTCAST

Your passions roused too soon, you toyed and tampered  
With everything: with beauty, love, and fame,  
And magnitude, and when in life you met them  
They seemed insipid and their tints had dulled.

You pried too tensely on the road, the market,  
Lest there be shades of moods you might have missed.  
Your soul, which slipped into the soul of others  
So greedily, was left unsown and waste.

You gathered seldom colours, shards, and sounds  
And cast them to the blind, bewildered throng  
That brimmed with praise, until you felt elated,  
But wept in secret. Sorrow saps your strength!

Before the pure your gaze is shamed and shifting,  
As though they saw through you. Unworthy of  
Yourself you came adorned and yet unhallowed,  
Without a wreath to the great feast of life.

#### PILGRIMS TO ROME

Be glad you never lost your kinship for  
This gracious land, your fathers' paradise,  
Which broke their misty, northern dreams, and more  
Than of their native soil, they sang its praise.

There scents, and sorcery of marble limbs,  
And painted frieze evoke a lordly goal,  
There you will lose the flower of your stem,  
So fair a mistress chains your drunken soul

Forever, though for evil, as she hurled  
Your sires into bonds who loathed the lean  
Trust in the throne: The Wonder of the World  
And the imperial poet Conradin.

Your longing follows the enchanted glide  
Of silver galleons through eternity,  
And swept with joy, you lash your rope beside  
A kingly palace on the bluest sea.

#### MONASTERY

Flee from the noisy throng with few companions  
And build your order domes of peace among  
The quiet hills—your dream when you were young—  
Before your strength is sapped by icy venoms.

The gentle chimes of even hours lull,  
Your labours in the virgin earth are praises,  
The day of toil revolves in seven phases  
For you and those I gave you, chaste in soul.

They clasp but do not crave. They are united  
As friends who never fret and never fear,  
The evening drains a word, a kiss, a tear,  
And this the faith to which the pairs are plighted:

To keep delight and grief alike restrained,  
To lift their glances up to azure beauty,  
Divine renouncing, consecrated duty  
As once a monk of Fiesole ordained.

### SYMBOLS

This is your destiny : brief spans of lithe  
And brilliant bloom, and then the brawling welter  
That shuns the day—the vipers breed and writhe!  
And tender shoots depend on secret shelter.

So find the cool enchantment which is sealed  
In early masters, learn to shield your breast  
With virgin spells your own Madonnas yield,  
With him who forced your beauty to its crest,

Holbein, the paramount! When thunder sallies,  
Look to the gloried from the Main and Rhine,  
And though the sterile worm destroy your valleys,  
A grove will flank the uninfested shrine.

Accept the age-old rules which govern pain:  
Time and again the light that was, will teem.  
With swelling sails the spirits always strain  
Back to the land of legend and of dream.

### JEAN PAUL

When we who scorn our country, always itching  
To roam, are in the thrall of fairer sod,  
You call us back, tormenting and bewitching,  
Alive with passions that betray the god.

In you alone we fuse, no sage has fired  
Our grey domains like you, from sea to moor,  
You sing the radiant south which you desired.  
You like our people, vast and yet unsure,

Hide steel and tinder in a murky vapour  
Imbued with blaze that glistens wild and mild,  
In woods of magic you uphold the taper  
And in our fields you are both lord and child.

You stir the languid mind with starry leaven  
And spread the couch where frenzy ebbs away,  
A golden harp of choirs tuned in heaven,  
Flute from "the hills of bloom, the slopes of May."

#### STATUES: THE TWO FIRST

The landscape taught you how to build your house:  
No higher than the nearby tree allows!  
Here virgins consecrate their locks to you,  
And sons unite in fervent covenant.

In lucent harmony you see them all  
Prepared for your profound and buoyant fête,  
They glory in the flesh and its desires  
And walk through spring in pride and happiness . . .

Your towers vanish in a mound of vapour,  
The winged spirit fled the heavy furrow,  
The body must be crushed and strive to heaven,  
The stubborn stone to tracery of roses.

When your ascetic, much too pointed fingers  
Are clasped, your eyes intent on far horizons  
Divine that knees will bend in solemn rapture,  
That all will sob and tremble at the marvel.

#### STATUES: THE THIRD

How fair I thought you, Lady, sheathed in veils,  
And how enchanting that, through every grief  
Of day, you still awakened the belief  
That far from halls and heights an Eden hails.

How often when the sluggish blood grew wan,  
A single flash from you could rouse the worn,  
The ailing, the disheartened, the forlorn.  
What is the force that beckons on and on?

"O child, you never knew: What made you press  
Ahead like this was only want and rue,  
They dyed the distant hills more blue for you,  
And stress I often healed with new distress.

Since you have grown impatient, come and cleave  
The veils—they will not serve you any more.  
Now see what many years you cherished for  
The dew of diamonds shimmering through the weave!"

#### STATUES: THE FOURTH

When firm and grave she comes to us today  
With ruthless eyes, we do not shirk her call,  
For now we niche her in the marble hall,  
And bend before her noble will and pray.

We, who were comrades, used to loathe her rule,  
Do you remember? You, the Morning Spark,  
You Branch from Alien Stem, you Kiss of Dark!  
Whenever with her glances, fixed and cool,

She found the bay where in and out we wound,  
We gathered up as many glittering gauds  
As arms, indulged with pleasure, could surround  
And turned our rudder from the haunted swords.

With pennant, song, and laugh, with wife and son,  
In brimming boats we sailed the sunny wave  
Where for ourselves and everything we have  
The nearest of the happy islands shone.

#### STATUES: THE FIFTH

For only I lead even you, the wise,  
From charted courses. When I lift my eyes  
Your structures pale and crumble, you pursue  
Me everywhere as foolish children do,

Forget your work, your rights, and your desire,  
Strange to yourselves and wholly in my hire,  
Without demur accept the wounds I deal.  
A holy madness forces you to kneel.

When I contrive the cruelest laws: that none  
Shall know the sweetness of my lips who won  
A favour such as I accord, you thrust  
All doubt from you and only bear and trust.

I change your narrow firmament to proud  
Horizons rimmed with clouds of flame and blood,  
Where calls from chasms sound like feeble cries,  
And curse of death like singing of schalmeys.

## STATUES: THE SIXTH

When in my hands I weigh the clay-coloured jars,  
Through the remains of the weatherworn crust I see  
Bodies of heroes who seem to dance in wars,  
Bathers at play in a passion of glee.

On the angels, aglitter with torturous glaze,  
I discover a throbbing vein and a stretching bone,  
Hot with the fevers which maddened their makers, I raise  
Impious lips to the sculpture and sully the stone.

Anguish and yearning are wakened by sonorous names:  
Sumptuous marquis and marshal in ruby and gold,  
Heads which study me down from their mouldering frames,  
Fusing the silver of dark and the carmine of folds.

And I ponder how beings who long are dust,  
Yielded themselves to the snare of these locks and this gaze.  
How were the kisses that flamed from this mouth to which lust  
Senselessly circles upward like smoke without blaze!

## THE VEIL: THE SEVENTH

I swung it so: and those who work the loam  
And taste the fruit, were dazed and paused—a mist  
Of distant glow, and swiftly in the east  
A city soared with ramparts, tent, and dome.

Once it was swirled like this: and houses caught  
In hopeless rows, were nacre in the husk  
Of rain, the world was dimmed to silver dusk,  
The peak of day, and yet a moon of thought.

It folds and falls: Like shepherds on a new-  
Made earth are these, and girls advance like those  
Who brought the goddess gifts in long agos—  
A shadow under myrtles are these two.

It spreads: and through the gate you know so well,  
They go by tens like children of the sun  
Who found a joy that lasts, though lightly won . . .  
Your longing changes as I cast my veil.



# THE SONGS OF DREAM AND DEATH

## AZURE HOUR

TO REINHOLD AND SABINE LEPSIUS

Behind the trellissed arbour  
This azure hour ebbs and greys,  
It showed us happy harbours  
And made amends for paler days.

Serene, and great, and vivid,  
With flocks of roving clouds it flies,  
A fire, vast and livid,  
And tells its bounty as it dies.

Oh, that they stayed, we ponder,  
To this one hour dedicate,  
Though even now the wonder  
Of darkness vaults a richer fête,

As measures, deep and ringing,  
That moved us to delight and pain,  
In newer Edens clinging,  
Still touch and conjure as they wane.

## HOUSE ON THE DUNES

TO ALBERT AND KITTY VERWEY

Could there be another roof that wholly  
Cloaked in peace and free, and proud, and ample,  
Often called the sad and numb  
Guest from far away and charmed him?

There you like to probe in what my spirit  
Meets your own, in what it always differs,  
Musing when at dusk the soft  
Shadows tremble over Holland.

Through the reeds caressing phrases flutter  
To the beat of surf, but stronger voices  
Always lurk, and when their sound  
Soars in freshening ocean-wind

Sorrow cannot chain him. Ships, a whistle!  
Lust and strife of towns! Was not the sungod's  
Son astray in clouds and crushed  
In a frenzied hunt for rapture!

A BOY WHO SANG TO ME OF AUTUMN AND EVENING  
TO CYRIL MEIR SCOTT

I

Those who have lived in dreams see, when they wake,  
A glimmer of the glory they abandoned  
For earth and agony, and weep in silence  
Filling the hours with their memories

Of purple shores where children, that have wings  
Of gold, move on their weightless feet and beckon  
To tired souls who just escaped their prison  
And—still bewildered—turn their vacant eyes

To lands of wonder drenched in dazzling light.  
You try to shun the truth, O fellow captives!  
For you the shadow of a smile still lingers,  
Although you both are forced to walk the rut

And languish in the musty air again.  
One flying glance which sparks behind your grating,  
Revives the hope in your oppressive desert.  
What pale and sudden beam has kissed your hair?

II

Now you have broken with the god you longed for  
In former days, he looms with vengeful temples:  
"You called the priceless law I gave, a yoke  
And left my house, too arrogant to bow.

Is not your present service more debasing?  
Does it not weigh the hands you wring in pleading  
More than the links of rhythm which you broke?  
Do you not cry for grace, and wake, and weep?"

As once we knelt in want and supplication  
Before the Saviour's bleeding feet, we prostrate  
Ourselves in homage to a different god  
And are uplifted by the trance and tremor

We felt before, but tinged with other passions,  
More exigent and less resigned, when muted  
The rays fall through the dusk of prayer and tint  
The panes of our cathedral gold and wine.

### III

I waited through the summer, now I tremble  
To see the scarlet banners blow, confronting  
The merry reapers with the thought of graveyards,  
Of fruit ungarnered which the storm will scatter.

Now I have lost my careless faith and hasten  
To use what time is left and pluck a little  
Of what remained, to garland leaves and flowers,  
Half-withered wonders in my mournful hand.

With reverence and awe this timid hand  
Holds out to you these gifts I took at random,  
So small a sign of all my dreams of splendour,  
Yet lit with unaccustomed tears, the merest

Suggestion of the jewel I wished to capture  
For you from fortune, just as what I utter  
In low and broken tones is but a fraction  
Of the whole tale of flaming love and hatred.

### SADNESS IN JULY

TO ERNEST DOWSON

Summery flowers lavish their scent, but you,  
Morning-glories in bitter breath of grain,  
Have led me to the weathered paling far from  
The gorgeous gardens and their sesame.

Out of the past you summon dreams: the child  
At rest on virgin earth in furrows of rye  
In harvest glows beside the naked reapers,  
The gleaming sickles and the empty jug.

Drowsily rocked the wasps in the song of noon  
And in the shadow of ears, a tenuous screen,  
His forehead, flushed with heat, was spattered  
With poppy petals, sprawling drops of blood.

Nothing I ever owned can be filched by time.  
Thirsting as then, I lie in the thirst-stricken field.  
My listless lips can barely breathe: How tired  
I am of bloom, of wanton bloom! How tired!

## CAMPAGNA

TO LUDWIG VON HOFMAN

Enscenced above, we saw the evening meadows,  
The wreckage of a world in burning shadows.  
We walk the stern and empty plain and sense  
A breath from then and now that makes us wince.

For was our mourning less before the gloried  
Fragments of columns, fabled wealth, the storied  
Street of the tombs? And what are kings unbowed  
To us since then, and nations great and proud?

We feel in parting that this noble furrow  
Forbids the sorrowful to sow or burrow.  
There in the clouds the Ageless Gate is limned!  
A veil, with cinnabar and violet rimmed,

Floats over morbid green of fields and hedges.  
Frascati pales against the mountain edges.  
Once more this hill shall lock you in its spell  
And yield the bloom of death, the asphodel.

## SOUTHERN BAY

TO LUDWIG VON HOFMAN

Along green cliffs seraphic gardens pour  
Their flowers which blend into the rippled blue,  
And early wisps of glowing wind undo  
The metal hardness clenched around his core.

The mountains touch the lilac sky with tongue  
Of flame, the sapphire cave is dim and tranced,  
Beyond, to shining space the ships advance . . .  
And kissed with ecstasy which made him young,

He quickened to the play of swinging loins,  
And sighed, and said, and sang a single name.  
A potent breath within the magic frame,  
Like wine and honey, sea and temple groins,

Transported him to tranquil realms of dream  
Where lulled by cypress trees, in song he lost  
The urge to ruthless work and lands of frost,  
Slowly unloosed on gulfs of crimson gleam.

## WINTER SOLSTICE

TO CLEMENS FRANCKENSTEIN

Does the sun or moon effuse this flare  
On Byzantium's lifeless roads? A glare  
Flashes eerie flame which spills  
Into halls and over hills,

Paints a world of pleasures that elate  
You, the orphaned wanderers at the gate.  
And you yield yourselves, and weep, and cling  
Lip to lip in hush and wondering.

What a bloom the barren seasons hold!  
Even at a bier, or small and cold  
Here on earth, you never shall forget,  
Nor shall this grow dim for you or set.

Fearlessly you face the gulfs of night  
With your eyes where action is alight.  
In farewell they vision and foretell:  
Such a ray can never pale!

## THE BROTHERS

TO LEOPOLD ANDRIAN

In wayward youth when we could not discern  
And praised and blamed with undivided powers,  
Our love was for the land which many spurn:  
This ailing Austria of yours, of ours.

Like you we showed the simpler, gladder souls  
That death in beauty is the crown of all,  
Until we felt we had more vivid goals  
And listened to a more insistent call.

We saw the varied stores of earth emerge,  
And wishes caught us in a freshening flood,  
As friends we tried to wrest you to our urge  
With what you too still had of growth and bud.

For brothers, far too fervent faith we gave  
To you, to savour as a sound, a sight  
Your grace, enhanced by yearning toward the grave,  
Your downfall sheathed in iridescent light.

## THE FIELDS

TO CARL AUGUST KLEIN

Salient curve of the silver sky  
Arches the endless expanse of your somnolent fields.  
Can you unriddle the fate which their furrows conceal,  
All that we two for years passed by?

Under the willows dripping with new  
Catkins, the children are listening entranced to the sound  
Of a flute, and buoyant and careless they caper and bound  
Into a dusk of vermilion and blue.

Shining baubles weary the crone, and her gaze  
Turns to the gentler resplendence of Thuja trees,  
Only the care she bestows upon graves gives her ease,  
Dimly she croons of a region of rays.

And those who slipped from the snares of delight,  
But who still feed on terrestrial wishes as we—  
Sorrowful friend, do you seek them in symbols and flee  
Our procession through the night?

## JOURNEY'S END

TO RICHARD PERLS

We paced the temple slabs while you deplored  
The rot of ailing worlds, and I avowed  
Contention and its promise of reward  
And leaned against a pillar, young and proud.

You were amazed that, though I roved so long,  
I still believed in what remains the same,  
And in the dusk of Flanders, overhung  
With mist, devotion fused with fleshly flame.

Then to the Awful Mothers and the vast  
Titanic forces you went on alone,  
I hated every dim and futile quest . . .  
But now, aghast to learn that you are gone,

In dreams I wander where you loved to cling:  
To the pagoda's green and ghostly gloom  
Of not attempting, seeking anything—  
So you, a victor, haunt me from your tomb.

## SPRING IN THE GARDEN

Shimmers of green-golden leaf  
Break through a thicket of gloom,  
Daggers of delicate broom  
Cradled in shadowy grief.

In the near gardens almonds are fragrant,  
There I saw eyes full of dream and glow,  
Oh, in those gardens let me go vagrant,  
Dip my hands in blossomy flow.

Butterflies drowsily cling,  
Bushes clipped into cones,  
Birds from more radiant zones,  
Rhythms more lavishly ring.

Feathery fountains sparkle their spray,  
More iridescent than drops of a stream,  
Will they delight me, light me today,  
Shall I adore you, sweet eyes of dream?

## MORNING TREMOR

Can such a grief be moulded,  
And breath and brightness such as this?  
A morning be unfolded  
That brings us new and sudden bliss?

The paths the soul had pondered  
Took shape and wound through wood and field,  
Uncertain perfumes wandered  
And then cascaded swift and wild.

Blurred as by tears, the glimmer  
Of tree and house which welcome us,  
A candid, festal shimmer,  
The cherry bough that hangs across,

A current and a glitter  
Torment and ravish, weigh and free,  
A medley sweet and bitter,  
A singing without melody.

## THE PULSING

This pulsing tells us what was banished,  
What rose instead of former fill,  
Instead of joy that waved and vanished,  
Now time and path are blank and chill.

In bonds of sleep we err and circle,  
How every word is loud and shrill  
Which like the last about us quivers!  
How every stone is weighed with ill

Because our self was what we imaged  
So long! How stifling wall and sill,  
The home of things which once were cherished!  
And though we fought to steel our will

—For steadfast purpose scorns and questions  
The trifling goals our greeds distil—  
We never could subdue this pulsing  
Which only grief can slowly still.



## LAUGHING HEARTS

Hearts full of laughter, you for whom joy emerges  
As a girl that floats from the clouds and scatters  
Gifts, the only beguilements which rouse your desires,  
Feeding your hope which grows greater from fête to fête,

You who have woven the loveliest beams of sunlight  
Into a cheek as fragile in texture as roses,  
Bearing hours of gloom as a passing penance,  
Pleading with grace and dispelling sombre reflection,

Hearts full of gambols, which I seek out and admire,  
Swiftly effacing myself so your bliss may be boundless,  
You, the unburdened, who move me and silence longing,  
Whom I adore to your own almost smiling amazement,

You who entwine me in turns of gregarious dances,  
Never aware that my mask is what renders me like you,  
Hearts full of frolic, you who in friendship embrace me,  
Oh, how remote from you all is my heart and its pulsing!

## TIDES

First she was deluged, ached with floods of light.  
She slurred the gifts which homage brought, and in  
The stubborn pride of youth that will not speak  
She often missed her share of happiness.

She grew, she fared abroad, and then she wooed  
What soon escaped. With burning want her glance  
Beset the living who denied their love,  
The dead whom she had not yet learned to love.

And once, when grief was all she had, it seemed  
A hollow, worthless thing. She looked, and probed,  
And shivered like a child who cannot see  
But whom the coolness tells that dusk has come.

And now her early pain returns and rends.  
She is the same, yet every fibre knows  
That much has gone, but change can never change  
What rouses her and what she still pursues.

## DAY SONG

### I

This, my day, was your dawn:  
Full of promise, and out  
Of the valleys of childhood  
Rang jubilant shouts.

You were circled with glory,  
And wreathed, and sublime,  
Then you dipped glossy locks  
Into lilac and thyme.

They throng and commend  
You in trembling pursuit,  
Like silver with emeralds  
And foam after fruit.

They follow with joy  
Whom your smile summoned on.  
O my day, so unflawed,  
Yet so swiftly withdrawn!

### II

Still dazzled by rapture, my  
gaze toward him yearned,  
To one who had conjured with  
love he was turned.

My praises on pinions  
across to him swung,  
Till westerly heaven  
around him was flung.

And whom shall I woo with  
a statelier call,  
Since none is his peer and he  
only is all!

So sadly I wandered and  
zealously bent  
To chasms for probing their  
sombre intent.

### III

By a shore where waters sigh low,  
Where the popple tree fair swings,  
Dwells a bird whose queries try so,  
Who in foliage and in air clings.

And the bird tunes a sing-sound:  
Meadow-sweet and alder bloom fled,  
Each is close within a ring bound . . .  
And the peaks before you loom red.

He leaves memory as dreamhold  
Who to happier ones his way takes,  
From his fingers trickles dreamgold  
Which he scatters when the day breaks.

Lift your head which in pain bends,  
From the depths perhaps a face glows,  
And then wait until my strain ends,  
And then stay until the blaze goes!

### NIGHT SONG

#### I

I forsook  
Dusk and calm,  
Come and leave  
Is my fate,

Storm and fall  
That destroy,  
Gloss and May  
That delight.

What I did  
And endured,  
What I thought,  
What I am,

Like a flame  
Turned to smoke,  
Like a song  
Torn in wind.

## II

I was stirred by the flight  
Of the splendours of dark,  
Of the sheaves full of light,  
Of the sighs to the stars,

By the women who serve  
And who guide us as well,  
While they circle and swerve,  
And their hair flings a spell,

By the youths who accord  
Me their burning applause,  
I commended their word,  
And my lips touched their brows.

Through you only, and late  
Have I learned, noble friends,  
What is destined to fade  
And what shines without end.

## III

Be wine in the bud,  
Be fruit that decoys,  
Undaunted and wooed,  
But shun what annoys,

What rots and what ails,  
The hurried and loud.  
Revealed to the rare  
And veiled from the crowd,

Be avid for awe,  
It fills, never wrings.  
Make beauty your law,  
It warms, never stings.

Then dream-still on hills  
You alter your ray,  
In gold-throated trills  
Your life ebbs away.

## DEATH AND DREAM

Glow and fame, so our world turns to day,  
Like the great we subdue cliff and bay,  
And the mind, still unchained, bold and young,  
Strides the plain, rides the sea far outflung.

Shimmer dawns on the road, visions range,  
Bliss and pain seethe in wild interchange.  
He who bade, broods and weeps, bowing down:  
"You my joy, you my star, you my crown!"

Now the dream, pride of prides, sunward flings,  
And its force quells the god who gave wings.  
Then a voice thrusts us low, makes us fall,  
We so poor faced with death, we so small.

All this whirls, tears and pounds, flames and flies,  
Until late in the night-vaulted skies  
They are joined to a bright jewelled beam:  
Fame and glow, pain and bliss, death and dream.

# THE SEVENTH RING

## POEMS OF OUR TIMES

### A POEM OF MY TIMES

You people of my time, you thought you knew,  
You judged and called me to account—and blundered!  
When in your savage greed for life you clamoured  
And swarmed with clumsy feet and brutal fingers,  
I seemed a prince inebriate with perfumes  
Who—swayed in langours—scanned his even measures  
In fragile charm or cool and poised aloofness,  
And wan with glories that are not of earth.

You never guessed my youth was filled with hardship,  
And anguish dogged me when I stormed the height.  
You never guessed my dreams of blood and danger.  
“He too shall be my friend!” With this the rebel  
Attacked the foe’s domain with torch and dagger,  
Longing for deeds—but not for deeds alone!  
Though shrewd, you did not see the smile, the shudder,  
Were blind to what was sleeping thinly veiled.

Then to the magic hill the piper beckoned  
With amorous and coaxing tones. He showed you  
So strange a treasure you began to scorn  
A world you had so recently extolled.  
Now that some few attempt Arcadian murmurs  
And vapid flourishes, he grips the trumpet,  
His spurs torment the flesh that sagged and rotted,  
He clashes on again and heads the charge.

When dotards leer and drool that this is manhood,  
You sigh: “Such majesty and so debased!  
The song of sunlit clouds deformed to screams!”  
You see a change, but I have done as always,  
And he who blows fanfares today and hurls  
A jet of fluid fire, knows: Tomorrow  
The sum of grandeur, force, and grace may spring  
From the untroubled fluting of a boy.

## DANTE AND THE POEM OF HIS TIMES

When tremblingly I sank beside the gate,  
My eyes upon the fairest, when I pondered  
Through bitter nights, consumed with fire, and felt  
The care and pity of my friend, when only  
Her favour and my song to her spelled life,  
I roused the scorn of those who never question  
Why we—on earth so transiently—should love,  
And sigh, and plan as though we lived forever.

Then I became a man who burned with shame  
That evil leaders sacked the realm, the city,  
And where the cause was just, I flung my fortunes  
And words into the scales and fought corrupters.  
My pay was theft and exile, and I wander  
A beggar, year by year, to alien doorways,  
By order of the mad who soon will turn  
To nameless dust, while I shall be immortal.

And when my dim and often stranded course,  
My sorrow for our self-begotten anguish,  
My anger for the lax, and base, and wicked  
Was hammered out in metal, many noted  
The ruthless message, once their fears had ebbed.  
And though not one deep in his heart was wounded  
By fang and flame, from Adige to Tiber  
They hailed the man who had no peace, no haven.

But when I fled the world and heard the choirs  
Of angels, saw the precincts of the blessed,  
And sang of this, they said my lyre sounded  
A childish or a senile note. You dunces,  
I took an ember from my hearth and blew,  
And hell was fashioned, but I needed torrents  
Of blaze to light the highest love to glory  
And to exalt the sun and all the stars.



## GOETHE ANNIVERSARY

Through misty fields at summer's end we made  
Our way and reached his city in the first  
Faint dawn. The massive walls, the flimsy platforms  
Were still unstained by throngs and day and seemed  
Transmuted to a pure, unearthly grandeur.  
We stood before his silent house, we lifted  
Our reverent gaze and left. Today, when many  
Will shout their praise, our greeting shall be mute.

A little while and hallowed rooms will seethe  
With those who do not trust until they handle.  
The glaring colours flicker in the alleys,  
The merry-makers sport. They like to drape  
Themselves in draping heroes, and attempt  
To use him as an emblem for their factions.  
They listen only to the loudest voice  
And do not see the height the spirit longs for.

What do you know of all the dreams and songs  
That rouse your awe! The child already suffered.  
He roamed the ramparts, stared into the well.  
Unrest and pain in youth and pain in manhood,  
His sadness veiled in smiles. If now he came  
To life, more beautiful than ever, who would  
There be to pay him homage? None would take him  
For what he was: a king who passed you by.

You claim him as your own, and thank, and cheer,  
You who, indeed, are filled with all his urges,  
Only on lower levels, like a beast's.  
Today the nation's mongrels do the barking.  
But you will never guess how many secrets  
He who has long been dust, still guards from you,  
And that in him, the radiant, even now  
Much that you think will always last, has paled.

## NIETZSCHE

Low yellow clouds and frosty storms are drifting  
Across the hill, half harbingers of autumn,  
Half early spring's. Was this the wall which circled  
The Thunderer who was unmatched among  
Surrounding thousands made of dust and smoke?  
He launched his last, his duller flashes here  
Upon a lifeless town and shallow foothills  
And left a long night for the longest night.

Do not disturb the jog below. A stab  
Is nothing to medusae, shears to weeds!  
The rule of fervent silence shall continue  
Until the brutes who soil him with their praise  
And fatten further on the reek of rotting  
Which helped to strangle him, at last are stifled.  
But you shall live in glory through the ages,  
With crowned and bleeding brows like other leaders.

You, the most luckless, fought to set us free.  
What destiny oppressed you that you never  
Could feast your eyes upon the promised land,  
Created gods, but only to dethrone them?  
Dissatisfied with rest or what was done,  
You wrecked the treasure dearest to your spirit,  
So you might yearn for it with new desire  
And cry aloud in aching loneliness.

He came too late who might have pleaded with you:  
There is no way across the icy summits  
And haunts of ghostly birds! Now you must learn  
To stay within the circle drawn by love.  
And when his voice, austere and full of torment,  
Rings like a paean into azure night  
Across the surf, we mourn: It should have chanted,  
This first new soul, it never should have spoken.

## BOECKLIN

Let trumpets mark the entrances and exits  
Of the romantic fraud, the paunchy trader!  
But you are spared the praise that soils. From silent  
Throngs of your followers, from friends and strangers,  
You journey toward the sun, lured by the calmness  
Of steadfast Tuscan pines and by the Flower  
Of Cities, and beyond beside Liguria's  
Candescent mountains, the maternal sea.

When vain and ugly haste began, when limbs  
Were cramped so only one might thrive, when some  
Took filth for gold and others stormed the heavens,  
You fled the everyday of brazen revels:  
"They ceased to prize the only thing that lifts  
From scum and offal. I shall take this jewel,  
Unflawed and many-hued, to alien regions,  
Until they see again and want it back."

Your world is realer than that servile world!  
You shaped a realm of warm unhampered bodies,  
With clear delights, with hot and sweet desires.  
From silver air and slender boughs, from meadows  
In bloom, from waves of magic green and midnight  
Of caves, you conjured up the age-old tremors  
And, in the frame of laurel-leaf and olive,  
A promised land in mists of timeless legend.

You staked the bounds of grief, the surge was gentled.  
You forced lament to pour from golden lyres,  
And over wilderness, and plague, and ruin  
Vaulted the deepest blue of patient hope.  
Because of you we stand with lifted foreheads  
Instead of weeping through a barren darkness,  
And only you—O warder, thanks!—protected  
The sacred fire through an age of ice.

## PORTA NIGRA

INGENIO ALF . . . SCOLARI

Why did I have to waken in your era,  
I who have known the pomp of Treves when she  
Still shared the fame of Rome, her sister city,  
When eyes lit up and widened as they followed  
The trains of clanging legions, in the stadium  
The Franks with yellow hair who fought with lions,  
The tubas at the palace and the god  
Augustus, purple in his golden chariot.

Here the Mosella flowed by gracious villas.  
The sounds of revel when the grapes were gathered!  
The girls who bore the jars—what curves of teeming!  
I scarcely know this rubble, mist is gnawing  
At what remains of ramparts once imperial.  
The sacred images—defiled! In cases!  
These miserable houses of barbarians!  
Only my cherished gate is still intact.

In sombre crape of years, but full of pride,  
It flings derision from a hundred windows  
Down at your shabby shelters—wreck the stones  
That mock impermanence—down at your people,  
Your princes, priests, and servants, all of them  
Inflated masks with empty eyes, your women  
Whom even slaves would find too cheap a bargain!  
What is the worth of everything you honour

Now you have lost what is most priceless: blood!  
Though shades, we breathe more deeply. You, the living,  
Are only ghosts, laughs Manlius, the boy.  
He would refuse to rule you with a scepter,  
Who earned his wages by so base a calling  
You shrink from naming it: "I waited, salved  
With Persian scents, beside this gate, by night,  
And sold myself to hirelings of the Caesars."

## FRANKISH LANDS

This was the dismal crossroads which I faced:  
There, from the chasm, tongues of wicked fire,  
Here regions which I shunned, where loathing festered  
In me for everything they praised and practiced.  
I mocked their gods, they taunted mine. O boastful,  
Impoverished folk, where are your poets? None  
Is here, for one lives out his days in exile,  
The other's frantic head is touched with frost.

Then magic called me from the west—so rang  
The sire's tribute to his ever lavish  
Young land, whose glory thrilled, whose travail moved him  
To tears though he was distant, to the Mother  
Of aliens, of the fugitive, and hated.  
The sound of rivers gave the heir a welcome  
When in the early light the witching valleys  
Of Meuse and Marne were spread in sweet abundance.

And in the town of merry grace, in gardens  
Of wistful charm, at night near gleaming spires,  
Enchanted arches, youth was all about me  
Exhilarated with the things I cherish.  
There bard and hero kept alive the secret:  
Villiers who thought himself the peer of kings,  
Verlaine in fall and shrift devout and childlike,  
And—bleeding for his concept—Mallarmé.

Though dream and distance give us strength and nurture,  
The air we breathe comes only from the living.  
And so to friends still working there, and others  
I saw entombed, I give my thanks. How often,  
And even after I had gained a foothold,  
When in my dreary land I strove, still doubtful  
Of victory, this was the verse that braced me:  
"RETURNEZ FRANC EN FRANCE DULCE TERRE."

## LEO XIII

Today, when brazen idlers flaunt the purple  
With loutish hubbub and the mien of brokers,  
Our spirit, agitated by the presence  
Of majesty and avid to revere,  
Turns to the grave, paternal brow that wears  
The triple crown, to him, the true anointed,  
The hundred-year-old shadow of a life  
Well-lived, who gazes from his sacred stronghold.

When he has ministered to all, his vineyard  
Gladdens his leisure hours. White and tranquil,  
His fingers curve around the heavy clusters.  
His fare is bread, and wine, and weightless mallows,  
And in his sleepless nights he is not racked  
By stale ambition, for he fashions verses  
To praise the world's delight, Our Blessed Lady,  
And her omnipotent and radiant Child:

“Come, Holy Boy, and keep the brittle world  
From crashing to destruction, Sole Redeemer!  
A gentler age shall bloom beneath your sign  
And rise untouched from all these desecrations.  
May joys of long desired peace return,  
May love bind each to each and make them brothers.”  
So says the poet, and the prophet knows:  
New love alone begets a new salvation.

When vested in the symbols of his office,  
Uplifted on the baldachin, a pattern  
Of lordly splendour and divine dominion,  
Half-veiled in incense and the gleam of tapers,  
He spreads his blessing over the entire  
Terrestrial globe, we kneel and bow: believers  
Melted into the thousand-headed masses  
That moved by mystery, grow beautiful.

## THE GRAVES IN SPEYER

Our fingers twitch when, in the ravaged choir,  
We see the graves which have been desecrated.  
Our tears of anger must redeem these precincts,  
And with our blood the blood of long ago  
Must now be called and conjured, lest it vanish,  
Lest those to come confront a plundered temple,  
And lifeless stones, and furrows drained of substance.  
The spell is cast, the train of lords appears.

The sanctum's builders, stern imperial foreheads,  
Supreme in penance, firm in failure: Henry  
The Third, the strongest ruler, follows Conrad.  
In Roman toils, with his insurgent son,  
The Fourth of changing fortunes: caught—escaped!  
But haughtily he silences who taunts him  
With ash and sackcloth: "Other places brought  
You infamy far greater than Canossa!"

Rudolf, the founder, rises with his kindred.  
He sees the glorious rulers of his line  
To the last knight, the noble Maximilian.  
He sees the shameful wounds which still are bleeding  
From broils of monks, revolt, the scourge of strangers.  
He sees the thousand-year-old scepter broken,  
And now the bolts of lightning on the relics  
Of those for whom we sound our constant grief.

Then, summoned by his Staufan ancestress  
From regions of the south, a splendid guest,  
A people's god: the greatest of the Fredericks  
Approaches arm in arm with golden Enzo.  
His gaze unites the plans of Ottos, Carls,  
With his own boundless dreams of the Levant,  
Wisdom of Cabalists and Rome's decorum,  
Banquets of Akragas and Selinus.

## PENTE FIGADIA

TO CLEMENS KILLED APRIL 29, 1897

When Turkish bullets struck him in the fight  
Beside the olives of Epirus, only  
We were in tears at this too early wilting  
Of flower-laden spring. Fate had protected  
Her favourite from the sharpest pain, from battering  
On bounds and emptiness before the end.  
A sweet dejection hung about his parting  
From earth still unexplored, from hidden fortunes.

He lay and knew that there was no returning.  
His fever painted the Aegean islands,  
The peaks of Attica with greater magic  
Than what he really would have seen. In surges  
Of Pindar's song of songs he heard the praise  
Of heroes mounting in accord with verse  
Which he devised. And then they shot the wounded  
Who could not walk. They shot him through the heart.

A gracious light was shed around his birth.  
He could have had applause and fame but effort,  
Except toward fervent deeds, seemed vain to him.  
In gratitude for endless joys which Hellas  
Confers, he helped her late and languid children  
In war, and now our sons whose vapid pleasures  
Have blunted them to suit their future office,  
Are still admonished by his wounds, his laurels.

We prize him, jubilant that those who perish  
To guard the word, the image, who are brimming  
With god, are still begot by icy earth.  
And when their names are called, a current pulses  
Within our veins like noble wine and gives  
The pledge of other days when we shall waken  
As if renewed and, loosed from bondage, feel  
The lure of dark beyonds, of daring quests.



## THE SISTERS

SOPHIE OF ALENÇON            ELISABETH OF AUSTRIA

Whoever saw their queenliness which flouted  
The very pose of cheap equality  
And guarded ancient grandeur, grace, and judgment,  
Was moved by majesty and felt the breath  
Of matchless pain and power that detested  
The base. They calmly went their noble courses  
And wore the glory of their hair more proudly  
Than others wear the flash of tainted crowns.

The younger, having mourned a barren bridal  
With one whose radiance madness had not lessened,  
Made the three sacred fleurs-de-lis her emblem  
And lived serene in love and smiles for others.  
A ball for charity brought her fulfilment  
Of fate. They tried to save her in the tumult  
Of screams, in acrid smoke, but she decreed:  
"The guests come first!" and fell in gusts of fire.

The other quickened tears, at first with kindness  
And youth, and then with kindness and despair.  
The clamour of the people left her mute.  
Untouched by day's concerns, she bore the riddle  
Of hidden likeness and the far-blown shimmers  
Of worlds just lit with dawn, until her torment  
Drove her to sea, to land, and back to sea  
Again, and to the blade which took her life.

But was not this alarming, avid fury  
The gentle ordinance of stars? Both suffered  
From bitter fear of age and slow corruption,  
And both were swiftly freed before their winter,  
While life still wreathed around them all its fulness  
And lent them charm. Or did this give them beauty,  
That by a secret spell they were prevented  
From breaking with a time-worn prophecy?

## CARL AUGUST

Do you recall, my friend, in that first year  
Of storm, how by the trellis where the clusters  
Hung bluish-black, you flung yourself defiant  
And naked to the grinding hail? How often  
We dared the dark and rose from dreary pallets  
—Unstained—to greet the dawn? And how, whenever  
We felt a tender glance, our blood was swifter  
Until a sacred word called us to work?

Child of your native soil, with generous urge  
And yielding depths, you were the only one  
Essential to a circle graced by many.  
You had the blind allegiance men have lost,  
That serves and does not ask for goals and profits,  
That leaves in silence when it doubts its value,  
Disdains rewards and thanks, and disappears  
Into obscurity without renown.

Then duty—or you thought it duty—caught  
Your youth and forced it into galling harness.  
When everyone was harvesting the choicest  
Fruits in his garden, you were chained to toil.  
Your sacrifice was boundless and it thrust you  
Deep into martyrdom. When all evaded  
Their inner shackles, you foresaw your downfall  
And yet accorded honoured ties their due.

From rack and ruin you shall tell your critics:  
“What matter if one more in thousands flaunts  
His paltry talents! If he stores his cargoes  
In solid lofts, or speaks in pompous phrases,  
While that which feeds us all: the pith, decays!  
What of my little life that tides and cracks  
Against the cliffs, if dauntless in the storm  
Our people’s faithfulness is kept unbroken!”

## THE DEAD CITY

The port they have completed drains the country  
Of all its wealth. It rings the spacious bay,  
A moon of bright and jagged walls, processions  
Of streets where with the same display of greed  
The rabble trades by day and feasts by night.  
Only contempt and pity climb the crag  
Up to the mother-town. It lies impoverished  
With blackened stones, forgotten by the years.

The lonely fortress lives, and dreams, and sees  
How strong its tower looms in deathless suns,  
How silence guards its shrine, and those who dwell  
In alleys overgrown with grass, have bodies  
That flower through the torn and faded cloth.  
It does not grieve, it knows the day will come  
When up the mountain from the splendid castles  
A train of suppliant's will drag its way :

"A barren pain is blighting us, we sicken  
In surfeit and unless you help, we die!  
Give us the stainless waters of your summit,  
The clean, thin air! We are content to lodge  
In stables, yards, the arch of any gate.  
Here, take these gems, such as you never dreamed of,  
More precious than a hundred cargoes! Circlets  
And clasps of greater value than a kingdom!"

But stern the answer: "We cannot be bought!  
The goods you cherish most are dust and shards.  
Those seven who once came, at whom our children  
Once smiled, they shall be saved, but all the others  
Are doomed. Your crime is in your very numbers.  
Leave with your trinkets which will only madden  
Our youth to loathing. See, their naked feet  
Thrust them across the ledge into the sea!"

## A POEM OF MY TIMES

I am your conscience, I the voice pervading  
Your malcontent that curses and condemns:  
“The base alone still rule, the great have perished,  
Belief is washed away and love has withered.  
How can we flee the foulness of the earth?”  
Let torches show you where the era’s ruin  
Consumes us, where you shape it with the passions  
Of your own senses, with your ravelled heart.

You turned away from grandeur and from beauty  
Because it was your purpose to deny them,  
And wrecked their images—the new, the ancient.  
Beyond the body and the soil you lifted  
Your house of smoke, and dust, and fog. The spires,  
The walls, and arches rose and grew gigantic,  
But clouds which floated higher could have presaged  
The final downfall long before it came.

You fled to caves: “There is no day,” you clamoured,  
“And only he who kills the flesh will see  
The rune unriddled, he shall be immortal!”  
Like seekers after gold, who pale and fevered  
Were bowed on crucibles with ore and fluxes  
—And just outside were many sunlit courses—  
So you concocted souls from filth and poison  
And spilled the residue of healthy saps.

I saw the Pharaohs gazing through millenia,  
Their eyes of stone conversant with our visions,  
And heavy with our tears. They knew as we  
That deserts shift with gardens, frost with blaze,  
Night comes for sun, atonement for delight.  
And though despair and dark engulf us, one thing  
That always was (none knows it) is eternal,  
And youth and flowers laugh and songs resound.

# PAGEANT

## THE COMBAT

Out of my cavern I rage,  
Sated with sun and with blood,  
Lurk in the flowering field,  
Watch for the lovely-locked god,  
Who with his jubilant step,  
Who with a song on his lips,  
Mocks at my life in a tomb.

Now he shall reel from the wrath  
Born in the lap of the dark,  
Reel from the clutch of my fist,  
Throttling the rose of his flesh.  
See how he walks! Like a child!  
Down with the cudgel, a mere  
Grip shall destroy whom I hate.

Look to yourself, for a light  
Strikes from his eyes like a bolt.  
Deep in the dimness of caves,  
Fight in smouldering glows,  
I was the victor of hosts!  
Coward, lower your lids,  
Show me the strength of your arm!

Ah, he wields light for his sword.  
Whom he touches, he fells,  
Sets the heel of his foot  
Hard on my labouring breast,  
Smiles and sings as he stands.  
Sated with sun and with blood,  
Robbed of my glory I die.

## THE LEADERS

### THE FIRST

Upon a garish float I saw a crowd  
Half naked in their gold and finery,  
Who sat, and sprawled, and talked, and laughed aloud.

And in the road stood One, naked from head  
To foot, until they reached and passed him by,  
And then, afraid to lose them, on he sped

With shouts, and circled to outstrip the train,  
And all along the course the people veered  
Toward him, and linked their hands to form a chain,  
And sang, and leaped around the float, and pressed  
Forward, then doubled on their tracks, and neared  
Again in wild delight and tameless zest.

## THE SECOND

The courts are humming: Here a builder goes  
Around the beams with callipers and rule,  
Another crowns the roof with blooms and bows.

Some drive their horses forward with a shout,  
And others load their wares. They look about  
And yet their eyes are lusterless and dead.

There on the green a feast is on, they sing,  
And many women raise their voices too,  
But song and laughter have a hollow ring.

And One goes by and tosses back his hair.  
He stops to pray into the evening air,  
And youth is still a wreath around his head.

## THE PRINCE AND THE LOVER

### THE PRINCE

You live: for this  
Alone we come with thanks!

They who in spirit build transcendent worlds,  
Who stride through lands and forge them into realms,  
They can indeed elect, but not create you,  
The bearer of the crown's intrinsic splendour,  
Who grew in mansions vast with veneration,  
Through which you paced in golden pomp, with mercy  
And pride, from early childhood seeing, thinking  
Not as the rest, nor touching what they touch.  
The strongest and the wisest kneel to you,

And you enchant and rule them with your smile.  
They feel the grace which only you can give,  
For which your sire moulded you, your slender  
Anointed hands from which salvation pours  
On whom they rest, the radiance of your glances  
That change the people's burden to delight.

#### THE LOVER

“These eyes are filled with faith and dreams, with longing  
To find the image thought begot.  
A Sunday sadness dwells within these eyes.”

Who could regret the sacrifice, the fruit  
And beasts, because they brought no help to man  
And fumed upon the altar in the rite?  
The window frames a glad and eager crowd  
Dispersing with a muffled sound, and westward  
The purple greys. I give the southwind dreams  
For the serene and happy who avow me.  
But those who pass below, exclaim: “Now come  
The days of work when you will drive your brothers  
To battle. You will have to build your cities  
And store a heritage for lusty scions,  
For every mortal learns the greed for harvests.”  
I grieve, but I am grateful for what is.  
I spent my breath upon the whirling feast  
To garment you with sweetness and to bless.  
I streamed my body's blood into the dusk  
For you, beloved, O all of you beloved!

#### MANUEL AND MENES

I saw that one of greater worth than I  
Had risen through a change in destiny . . .  
Manuel II, 2

#### MENES

After the night when you appeared to us  
A flash of lightning lit my path: the stretch  
Which lies behind and that which winds beyond.  
The grace that makes the boldest hope come true,

The blessing of the olive branch, the scepter  
Which I was fighting for, were yours by birth.  
I told my comrades to await your day  
And lay aside their weapons. My defiance  
And doubt, my planning and impassioned fervour,  
Dangerous quests in seasons without rest,  
My leadership which promised early harvests,  
All this was nothing when you gave your oath.  
And when renouncing almost numbed my spirit,  
I looked at you and I was whole and strong.  
A wisdom overwhelmed me, sweet and sad:  
Each age that passes on but does not die  
Links with the next, and so my deed with yours.  
I quickly left the friends who pressed my arm  
To warn me. You are now in power! Command!

#### MANUEL

You have surpassed me through this final triumph  
Which you have won, so you must share my work.  
You found a guide, but I have found a warder.  
We knew each other by the sign. Come closer!  
The thief of crowns obeys his greedy hand,  
The true heir his vocation. I, the lord,  
And you, the aide, are equally ordained!

#### ALGABAL AND THE LYDIAN

The even scales of the tremendous balance

#### ALGABAL

The loot of legions does not move me, nor  
The freights of fortune riding through my gates.  
At every breath we draw, the dreaded foe  
Comes nearer step by step, he blots the gleam,  
He murks the cup. No spell can stop his course.

But there are times when, at the garden's edge,  
I want to kill the day, so slow to sink  
Into the sea, or lying on my couch,  
I wait and count, and painfully attempt  
To hasten empty hours to their end.



## THE LYDIAN

You, my companions, boast of supple bodies,  
And practice them in morning games without me,  
Or from your low estate proclaim the midnights  
When vibrant with your lust, you shook and shuddered  
Until you thought that only gods could match you.

The only truth I know is frenzied greed for  
The unattainable the moon has tossed me.  
No sorrow cows and clings like this desire!  
Day has no charm for me. O final rapture:  
When my cool blood will quench the conflagration.

## KING AND HARPER

### HARPER

You drew your cloak across your face and then  
I saw it was a tear which you were hiding  
And, lord, a gesture of distaste for me.  
Today you have not spoken to your servant,  
And yet you cannot frown on him you ordered  
To stay beside you, ready with his music.  
Have thankless mobs, perhaps, rebelled again?  
Or the proud priests defied you? I have guessed it:  
The jealous god has grudged you victory!

### KING

You spied on my disgrace, so you shall listen  
To what you ought not: More than foes you speak of,  
The foes I shall defeat, he who professes  
To love me, will destroy me: you yourself!  
Now you must bear a lot which none can alter.  
You whom I hate and yet cannot dispense with,  
Who does not know he poisons me, your fingers  
Toy with my sword and shield, still red and slimed  
With terrible saps—so you may catch the echo.  
You cast the arms I chose to deal destruction  
Into the water, stirring it to circles.

Your careless hand despoils my field, my orchard,  
The labours of an endless, scalding summer,  
To cool your sated palate with the fruit.  
My nights of fevered torment only serve you  
To scatter them in whispers and in tunes.  
You split the holy musings which consume me  
To coloured bubbles, to an airy nothing.  
And your nefarious pastime melts my great  
And kingly sorrow to an idle song.

### SUMMER SOLSTICE

Torpor weighs on us in the hall of candles,  
    In the smoke of the braziers.  
Rigid ivory our moveless bodies,  
    Laved in smoulder and shadow  
Of the long-drawn banquet, in adornment  
    Which the curves of the arches,  
Floor, and panel lavish, fluting conjures,  
    And aroma of wine.  
Then a nightwind bursts through all the windows,  
    And our torches are darkened,  
Shudders tingle through our hair with sweetness,  
    We abandon the goblets,  
Drag across the flags and over highways  
    Garlands withered and loosened,  
Break through city gates into the hamlets  
    With our echoing dances,  
See the field astir in orange sunrise  
    With the crowd of the reapers,  
Shepherds, planters—naked rush to counter  
    Their luxuriant vigour,  
Fix our eyes, remote and glazed with visions,  
    On the eyes of the earthbound  
Creatures, shy and unaware, who slowly  
    Turn to flame in our fires.  
Candid limbs are clinging close and twisted  
    Round the sinewy brown ones,  
Firm as vines about the mother branches.  
    They are swirled, they are tangled  
With the dewy clods, the trampled grasses,

And the dust of the seeding.  
Cries of lust and terror ring through thickets,  
Of the hunters and hunted.  
Shaken fingers for the locks still fumble.  
Some athirst past endurance,  
Hot with chase and flight and splashed with juices  
From the fruit over-ripened,  
Drink from callous lips the blood and spittle,  
In the fume of the grain sheaves,  
Others lean and kiss the kindred flowers  
On the breast of the chosen.

### WITCHES' DANCE

We laugh at your elations  
You mismade generations.  
Your blue and bleary sight  
Sees only lying day,  
But ours, filmed with night,  
Can spy the secret stay.

You only know the pelt!  
We find a thousand terms  
For clash of clouds and flurries,  
For hosts in bay and belt,  
For thousand sombre germs  
Which darkness shrouds and buries.

We dance with twisted shoulder,  
We feel at ease and fair  
With swollen gut and limb.  
We savour stench and moulder.  
In whirling waves of blare  
We hear a measured hymn.

We feed the slot with must,  
The colour of the foam:  
They float from earthen verges,  
They fly from starry surges,  
From east and west they home,  
The forms of flesh and dust.

We shake our sieve until  
The portions which you own  
Of all the treasures spill.  
But left within the chalice  
Is something made of stone  
And like a creature's phallus.

No force will make you see,  
You wander blind and blank.  
We feast on mired bank,  
In carrion pits of slaughter.  
The glint of poisoned water  
Shows us all truths that be.

### TEMPLARS

Once, in a Golden Age, we merged with all,  
For aeons now the crowd has shunned our call.  
We are the Rose: the young and fervent heart,  
The Cross: to suffer proudly is our art.

On unknown courses, silent and austere,  
We turn the sombre spool, we turn the spear.  
Through coward years our flaming weapon rings,  
We scourge the people and we challenge kings.

We do not join the customs and the bout  
Of those who look askance at us, and doubt,  
And fear because their hatred never felled  
What with our savage love we caught and held.

Whatever loot our swords and slings have gained  
Pours negligently from our spendthrift hand,  
And though our law is pitiless and wild,  
We fall upon our knees before a child.

We veil the flashing glance, the loosened lock  
Which once betrayed the lord in beggar's smock,  
Shyly from forward swarms who on our shade  
—When we are gone—confer their accolade.

We nursed at alien breast, and so our sons  
Shall never be the children of our loins,  
They never will be weak, dilute, or old,  
For unborn fires quicken in their mould.

And only one of ours can complete  
The needed change or do the iron feat  
To which they summon us when chaos reigns,  
Only to stone and curse us for our pains.

And when in wrath the Mighty Mother scorns  
To lean and couple at the lower bourns,  
Some world-night when her pulses scarcely stir,  
Then only one who always strove with her,

Ignored her wishes and denied her will,  
Can crush her hand and grip her hair until  
Submissively she plies her work afresh:  
Turns flesh to god, embodies god in flesh.

#### THE GUARDIANS OF THE FORECOURT

At first I had you reared in poor terrains,  
Buried in sorrow, searching full of fevers,  
That yearning might be flooded through your veins  
And make of children prophets and believers.

But then I lent you for a little time  
A sunny land where grapes and roses cluster,  
To show you heaven and the most sublime  
In rows of earthly mornings lapped in lustre.

And so you grew in pride and solitude  
That—waiting—never stoops to grosser pleasure,  
I fanned your inner flame until you viewed  
The stainless image and eternal measure.

And so you cast the fullest light upon  
The brow you crowned with bay and vine, the glory  
Of rain-wet rye along a road, the dawn  
Of magic, bright across the ancient valley.

You bring atonement to the gaping ground  
Which avarice and malice gashed and looted,  
You make it green again, you make it sound.  
On virgin heath the naked dance is footed.

You dauntless swimmers peer through every shell,  
You find the rarest fruit in every furrow,  
Your wakeful spirits seize the shining spell  
Unfailingly and store it for tomorrow.

You bear the mark! And whether you are set  
In dingy walls or silks and silver portals,  
You shall remember—though the rest forget—  
That once you were descended from immortals.

### THE ANTICHRIST

“He strides from the mountain, he stands near the pines,  
We saw it: He changes the water to wines,  
His voice can evoke the departed!”

If only you heard how I laugh through the dark!  
My hour has come, now the quarry is snared,  
Now fish fill the nets with their swarming.

The mob is afoot, both the foolish and wise,  
They crash through the cornfields and tear up the trees,  
Make way for the train of the Risen!

The sky has no marvels I cannot confer,  
A hairsbreadth amiss, but you do not discern  
The hoax, for your senses are blunted.

Instead of the laboured and rare, I extol  
The facile: from clay I make something like gold,  
Like perfumes, and resins, and spices.

And what the great prophet eschewed I have taught:  
The art without clearing or sowing or toil  
To live on the stores of the furrow.

The lord-over-vermin extends his domains,  
No treasure escapes him, his joys never wane.  
And down with the rest, with the rebels!

You cheer, you are charmed by demoniac ruse,  
Exhaust the old honeys, and only when doom  
Approaches you feel you are beggared

And hang out your tongues, but the bucket is dry.  
You flounder like cows when the barn is afire—  
And grimly the trumpet is sounded!

## HERO'S CHILDHOOD

Scornful of his sister's play  
And his friend's, he leaps abysses,  
Climbs through stony wildernesses,  
Out for nests of birds of prey.

Bare but for his girded thighs,  
Firm he stands, his head erect  
To the wind, his arrow flies  
At the creature he has tracked.

Over barren space his clear  
Artless song resounds, the ringing  
Of his Pan-pipes marks the swinging  
Rhythm of his tawny hair.

In his dreams he fights and kills  
Monsters, straddles kingly steeds,  
And at home—though rarely—spills  
With the tale of daring deeds.

From his bath in icy tides,  
From his sleep in sunny heather,  
He is burned as brown as hides,  
But his eyes are cloudless azure.

Men who mock at him and jeer,  
Men who shrug their shoulders now,  
Once before his tents shall bow  
Low in reverence and fear,

Reel and tremble at his grandeur  
When he rides through his domain,  
Rich in weapons, pawns, and plunder—  
Kneel unbidden. They will stain

Beards and brows with ash and soot,  
Crouch before his gaze that brands,  
Sue for grace his ruthless hands,  
Lick the dust which crusts his foot.

## THE OATH

“Come and close around me, you shall be  
    Linked and bound to my decree:  
You, escaped from prisons, ashen grey,  
    You who foundered on your way,  
You whose dagger for himself was ground,  
    You I caught before you drowned,  
Precious harvest scattered through the land,  
    Savage forces fate restrained!”

“We were bonded by the strongest seal  
    When our arms were pierced with steel,  
Quickened by the same candescent flood  
    When one drank the other’s blood.  
Since we follow you, our fortune flowers!”  
    “From your oath I draw my powers.”  
“Through your breath we kindle and unfold.”  
    “Through your marrow I am bold.”

“Only you can point the goal in store,  
    It is etched into your ore.  
We whose fists are hard and trained to fight  
    Carry out your every rite.  
You who guide us in our stress, command,  
    Though we may not understand.  
Plough across our flesh and none will try  
    To rebel or reason why.”

“Even now I see through shrouded skies  
    The fulfilment and the prize.  
To their trenches our opponents pour,  
    For my sons are crying: ‘War!’  
Earth will help the hands of those who trust,  
    Heaven grinds its foes to dust.  
Walls are nothing, hosts cannot prevail,  
    For my sons are crying: ‘Hail!’ ”



## THE COMING

Now is the day!  
Waken what lay  
Sheltered, heaving, and quaking.  
Decades of dark  
Earth remained stark,  
Drank unseen without slaking.

Pitiless threat,  
Agonized sweat,  
Madness helplessly crying,  
Anguish and thirst  
Branded and cursed,  
Futile pleas of the dying.

Furrow is split,  
Cover is slit,  
Sunward the seedlings burrow.  
You who were thrust  
Out of the dust,  
You are the lords of tomorrow.

Armies of light  
Ride from the night,  
Clash and the air is aquiver.  
Chant of revenge,  
Plunder and singe,  
Saviours, destroy and deliver!

So you divide  
Land from the tide,  
Wastes are quickened with showers.  
Heroes afire,  
Heroes' desire  
Shape the spring and its flowers.

## TIDES

When touched by the breath of my anguish  
You float in the swirl of my dreams,  
I fumble, and famish, and languish.  
When day slowly darkens, it seems  
As if a harsh lover were pressing  
The supple young tree in embrace,  
Or fingers grown cooler, caressing  
A downy and luminous face.

But when the deep shadows draw nearer,  
And thought has you gently in sway,  
The glitter and sound become clearer,  
And visions descend on our way :  
The night shakes her locks, and a flurry  
Of stars are released into flight,  
We follow and cling in the scurry  
Of flakes and their haloes of light.

From figment and fancy I bounded  
So high that the earth left me free,  
But yours was a sorrow you sounded  
For others, for you, and for me.  
And now you have learned to desire  
This soul in its pallor and drouth,  
My mouth with its fervour and fire  
Is quenched in the bloom of your mouth.

Today our words shall dwell  
    on only starry phases,  
I hunger to exult  
    but wan and dazed I stand :  
The son of wisdom threads  
    the Veda's cryptic mazes  
And frees the blind from night  
    by laying on his hand.  
Unconscious of his poise  
    a child of Eden raises  
A gem more rich and strange  
    than any emperor's land.

Star that shall govern this year!  
Now in the season of budding and storm  
Tell me of temperate summers to come,  
Garland with flowers the yellowing ears,  
So that the days full of tumult and fears  
Calm to the smiling of light, that a still  
Wisdom preserve me from perilous ill  
Haunting my wanderings, clogged and obscure.  
Make my shadowy wishes sure,  
Solve my enigmas with soothing replies.

Prodigal nights when your forehead lay  
Bowed on my knees, when faltering tones  
Breaking from dull subterranean zones,  
Fused into song. You followed the play  
Proffered by forces at feud and at bay:  
Grace I was granted at destiny's hands,  
Sorrow I suffered in far-away lands—  
Followed, while dawn-clouds deepened and glistened,  
Just as beautiful Dunyazad listened  
Long to her sister, twining her tales.

#### LOOKING BACK

My thoughts which dwell on you and only you, have changed  
The room, and town, and silvered lane. I go  
Completely filled with you and from myself estranged,  
In magic nights across the purple snow.

The pledge of hot horizons over harvest lands,  
The pledge of summer—was it all borne out?  
So does the wanderer, home from years of roaming stand,  
Grip his own arm, and tremble with a doubt.

For one who waits, his slumber spins a witching net,  
And gentle love supplants his ecstasy.  
To be apart from you is sweet despair and yet  
The harbinger of pleasures still to be.

You yielded wondering, and willingly sank down,  
And moaned beneath the overflow of bliss,  
You rose: Around your limbs a stainless glory shone,  
You were bewildered by the breathless kiss.

And then an hour came—they rested in embrace,  
Their lips still burning from a wilder hold,  
And to the room, through which the stars serenely gazed,  
A dawn had come, suffused with rose and gold.

## SONG AND RESPONSE

### SONG

I tremble, for today, beneath our joy I find  
Much that was strange in you and still remains,  
As though you took for spray and gusts of passing wind  
What brims my heart and circles in my veins.

Can you not hold the fires that offer you their blaze?  
Release me from the clamour of my fears.  
Was it, perhaps, my glance, caught in your lifeless gaze?  
Was it my breath that shook your voice with tears?

### RESPONSE

A dying and submissive murmur tells  
You of a soul which here lies drowned  
And, muffled by the weeds, a sougning wells  
Up from the depths with listless sound.

Perhaps a firefly with whirring glow,  
Or else a flower, smooth and slight,  
Will lure you who—uncertain where to go—  
Would like to rest, dismayed by night.

Perhaps these sparks that flicker up and die,  
And melodies with mournful toll  
May touch and hinder you from passing by  
The prison of a sunken soul.

The ways on which we meet are full of pain,  
As though they led into the fields of death.  
The air is grey, but spends a fertile breath  
Of new unfolding through the slender rain.  
In meagre files the faded hedges stand

And draw together where the light is bleached,  
As if their countless rigid fingers reached  
And groped to cling each to the other's hand.  
The birds are few, their plaintive call is low  
And lost among the leafless oaks, but one  
Alive and secret thing is closely spun  
Around the sombre boughs: green mistletoe.  
That days ago through wet and chilling haze  
A brief, seductive shaft of brightness fell  
Upon the ground, the pallid grasses tell,  
The first young blades and, under withered sprays,  
The dark anemones in mourning clusters.  
Furred with their silver down they bend and still  
Hide in the clouded purple of their bells  
A golden diadem and inner lustres,  
And are like souls that in the dawning lull  
Of half-awakened wishes and the sting  
Of lurking doom in winds of early spring,  
Are still afraid to open fair and full.

You say that cliff and wall are gay with early green,  
But what I see is only dross and doom.  
The tranquil meadows sound the knell of death for me,  
You float your song on cataracts of bloom.

Those who would not remain, although they wept to part,  
Surround me while you stand with smiling gaze.  
Let us return, for scalding noon forbids my heart  
To word a sorrow fanned to sudden blaze.

I can no longer bleed in silence: You deceived  
Yourself for your survival, for my fall.  
I still am thankful for the moments I believed  
That you were beautiful and I enthralled.

Farewell! You shall not see my eyes when, dazed and drawn,  
They close, my lashes wet with pain and rue,  
And when beyond the plane where life is wholly gone,  
The sun pours glossy gold through leaden blue.

Dreary Soul—you questioned me—are you in mourning?

Is this your thanks for all our great delight?

Timid Soul—I said to you—swiftly to mourning

Delight has changed and stricken me with blight.

Pallid Soul—you questioned me—and has our fire

Gone out for you? How matchlessly it burned!

Sightless Soul—I said to you—I brim with fire,

My sorrow's sum is only want that burns.

Ruthless Soul—you questioned me—can more be proffered

Than youth accords? All that I had I gave,

And can a heart beat with a nobler offer

Than: Take my blood so you may live and thrive!

Frothy Soul—I said to you—what is your loving

Compared to mine for you? The merest shred!

Secret Soul—you said to me—you hold my loving

Though now through you my shining dream is dead.

## THE MIRROR

I stumble on at every journey's end

Down to a shore where nothing blooms, and take

My thoughts, and dreams, and wishes there to bend

And gaze at their reflection in the lake,

So they may know themselves at last. But they

Discerned an image always dim and wan.

"Those are not we," they said in musing tone,

And then they wept and slowly went away.

But all at once through bitterness and dread,

Through shadow, and decay, and old despairs,

I felt Delight encompass me with splendour.

Inebriate within his arms I swayed,

I snatched the star which glittered on his head,

I leaned against his feet and was allayed.

At last and utterly, in savage flares

I flamed, and utter was my self-surrender.

Come blithely to the lake, my dream, my thought!  
How low above the mirror you are bowed.  
You still have doubts? Is not your likeness caught?  
Perhaps the dancing clouds of autumn move  
The glass, or withered tendrils draw a groove?  
How anxious one against the next you crowd!  
You do not weep, but as at every close  
You sigh: "Those are not we—we are not those!"

You pile your shallow panniers with largesse  
You took from me and revel in your prize.  
You do not know the names which I devise  
For you in scores, the kisses that caress  
You secretly, too young a squire who  
Confuses victories with jousts and from  
So brief a feast so blithely goes. To some  
I say "enough," but "thirst for more" to you!  
And this our sole concern: that for conferred  
Felicity, we store the fruit and grain  
So that not we but others have the gain!  
And lovely light and charted trails grow blurred.

### GIVING THANKS

The summer field is parched with evil fire,  
And walking on a bank of trodden clover  
I saw my head in waters thick with mire  
Which wrath of distant thunders shot with red.  
When nights are frantic, days are full of dread,  
The cherished gardens seem a stifling stall,  
A poison like untimely snow films over  
The trees, a lark ascends with hopeless call.  
Then through the land you wander, light of foot,  
And it unfolds in colours you have laid,  
You bid us strip the boughs of shining fruit,  
You rout the twilight where the shadows grow.  
Did I not weave for you, your tranquil glow,  
This crown in thanks, then who would know that far  
More radiant than with sun the days you rayed  
For me, and nights more bright than any star!

## CLOSE

Although the colours of the earth no longer  
Are rich when sun has set, but dimmed with dust,  
And each into a different region must  
Go with his sorrow and confess: I hunger!

And though the inner urge to you is growing  
More faint, I feel that I must turn your way,  
That I am yours, that you possess my day,  
And boughs of spring still weave around our going.

Another odour comes from silver-stripen  
And brittle leaves than flaxen grass, but all  
My memories of stream, and slope, and wall  
Evoke one only wish: Be glad and ripen!

And when a whisper lures that after burning  
The fallow aftermath, on alien site  
I may be free to find a new delight,  
I feel as though a kindred blood were yearning.

The road was long, so now let me recapture  
Our common faring and these bonds that fold  
Us close in secret and compelling hold,  
And all my former anguish and your rapture.

The field of loosened earth is sick and craving  
When after barren cold it feels the thrust  
Of plough and prong, the touch of milder air,  
And heaves in storms that shake the drowsy year.  
Now this shall be my draught, my fertile laving:  
The trembling freshness of your naked breast,  
The fragrance of your softly tangled hair,  
The moisture of your mouth, your breath, your tear.

There were no shards and no destruction,  
There was no chasm and no pall,  
There was no yearning, no seduction,  
A single hour gave us all.



A host of blossoms welled and rippled  
In crimson light of sorcery,  
And spring's primeval clamour stippled  
The birds' untrammelled melodies.

There was a deluge with no holding,  
A madness which no arm could stay,  
A new and fragrant space unfolding,  
A reel of senses fused in joy.

The joust that never notes the wounding flick  
Until veiled eyes hide in a lap and weep,  
That probes until it touches to the quick,  
Now in the dream grew deep.

The savage kiss that suffers while it brands,  
That craves a draught withheld, and dies in wild  
Relentless terror of the vacant end,  
Now in the dream grew mild.

Parting at night that leaves a bitter sting  
When silently I look at you and treat  
You like a stranger, though I writhe within,  
Now in the dream grew sweet.

What are these walls, in darkness strangely massed,  
The paths which hedge us close with twisting verge?  
I feel how shapes or ghosts around us surge,  
Sprung from the spark of an impetuous past.

They torture me, a stifling ring is drawn!

You conjured them within a sultry shrine  
Through all those summer days of glaring heat,  
And let them linger in a vague retreat  
With aftermath of showered myrrh and wine.

They hover through the wind of early dawn.

Perhaps they floated over bed and bough  
And did not quite dissolve until I came,  
So that their breath might kindle me to flame,  
While he they followed finds them nothing now  
But shades that haunt because their soul is gone.

The year had not yet rounded since the day  
We read our hearts, when pointed grains of frost  
Fell to the earth from yellow clouds. Then must  
What seeds we sow be watered with dismay?

For tender feuds, for ardours swift and bold,  
For all the joy which swept us to the skies,  
For all the need we mourned, for all our sighs  
A single circuit of the earth was doled.

The grapes that only just were clear, and full,  
And heavy on the vines, are plucked and spent:  
The clusters trodden to the vapid hull  
And brews the months of darkness will ferment.

Must this delight like all the sheaves grow fallow,  
Like blade and bush deprived of grace by grace,  
And fly irrevocably with the swallow,  
Dissolve in summer haze without a trace?

Now let me call across the meadows tided  
With snow—your image very far and faint—  
How first my pastime, then my balm, you guided  
My year without your knowledge or intent.

You came when jewelled blooms were full and glowing,  
And when they mowed the field we met once more,  
I always took the path which through the blowing  
And reddening harvest drew me to your door.

So tender was your word that I commended  
Myself to you when leaves grew brown and dry,  
And when you left, a broken call ascended  
From the deserted valley like a sigh.

And so the shimmer of two eyes has granted  
The last reward of every come and go,  
Your gentle song was what the seasons chanted,  
And all befell because you tuned it so.

### FLAMES

“What do you do that up and up we range  
In tempests more and more remote and strange?

When we have barely calmed to glistening rest,  
Another mouth fans us to wilder crest,

Which ridges polished bars with slanted swirls,  
Transfixes scorching drops to fickle pearls,

Until we seethe, and overflow, and pour  
Our strength on steel and earth and are no more.”

“The distant breath which often touched you, bears  
The same and secret stuffs which feed your flares,”

The Lord of Torches says, “and when you quite  
Destroy yourselves, you burn with fullest light.”

### WAVES

At first, you waves, are split on bluish pebbles  
Where in the hollow wood the pathway trebles.

As brooks you ripple through the sunlit land  
And spatter tears against the grassy strand.

Into a boundless tide the current hurries  
You on with thunderstorms and pelting flurries.

On myrtle cliffs you wildly rise at bay,  
On barren sand dissolve in foaming spray.

Your waters harbour bodies nacre-tinted,  
You carry cargoes, splendid and unstinted,

Until the gusts drive you to empty pales.  
You crash on rock and reef with moans and wails.

Now you are scourged through hidden depths, forgetting  
That there is any dawn or any setting,  
That there is urge or aim, and wind or lee . . .  
A shoreless river winding through the sea.

### ENCOMIUM

You are my lord! When on my path you loom  
In many changing shapes and yet familiar  
And beautiful, I bend my neck before you.  
Now you have neither garments, wings, nor weapons,  
All that adorns you is the clustered wreath  
Around your hair. You touch: a fragrant draught  
Of frenzy sways the mind which feels your breath,  
And every fibre quivers from your blow.  
Who called you "the assuager" in the past,  
Had never fancied that your slender finger,  
Your rosy heel could deal such devastation.  
I fling my body back in patient pain,  
Yes, even when you come with your battalions  
Of beasts that brand their mark with pointed talons  
And mangle with their fangs, extorting wordless  
Laments and sighs of anguish. As you breathe  
The scent of mellow fruit and sappy green,  
So they the fetid odour of the jungle.  
The wet and dust they reek do not repel us.  
Nothing that weaves around you can be foul!  
You cleanse the taint, you heal the gash, and banish  
The trace of tears with sweetness you exhale.  
In threat or thrall, if only we are steadfast,  
Each day shall end in triumph as our service  
To you: the homage dauntlessly renewed,  
A smile surrendered to the starlit blue.

# MAXIMIN

## ADVENT I

To some you are a child,  
To some a friend, to me  
The god whom I divined  
And tremblingly adore.

You came at last when sick  
With waiting, weary of  
My prayers, I began  
To lose myself in night.

I knew you by the beam  
Which flowed into my dark,  
The step to which the seed  
Replied with sudden bloom.

## ADVENT II

As a sad people once  
Cried for a saviour, flung  
Their windows wide, and made  
His bed and set his board,

But maddened by delay  
Began to blame and jeer,  
So I renounced. Three times  
I was deceived: the child

Who failed to find his dream,  
The youth who yearned and cracked,  
The man who passed his prime  
And sacrificed his hope.

## ADVENT III

Now spring is here again,  
You bless the air, the path,  
And us on whom you gaze . . .  
So take my faltered thanks.

The Maker breathed a soul  
Through everything in space,  
Before our clumsy mind  
Asked him to speak and act.

Where such eyes are alight,  
The withered branches bud,  
The stark earth tunes her beat  
To so unstained a heart.

#### RESPONSES: THE MIRACLE

Do you still invade forbidden  
Spheres with tangled hair and pray  
That you may approach the Hidden?  
See him in his earthly day,  
Dust through which a flame is ridden!

More than for the rest, his splendid  
Light is flung about your brow,  
That the one, whom he commended,  
Go and wreath your shrine and bow  
To the dream you bore and tended.

With his hand he curved the streaming  
Clouds of sunset into halls  
Vaulted with a gentle gleaming.  
Now the miracle befalls:  
Dream is blended into dreaming.

#### RESPONSES: INTRODUCTION

Though you have left the hills and wandered far  
Through valleys dark and wasted,  
You are elect just as you are  
To see the promised pales,  
This is the well you tasted,  
Now take the open trails!  
The yellow wheat is framed in purple fields,  
The altar, twined with roses, yields  
A buoyant flame beneath the trees, a sheen  
Throbs in the air, and day by day

The anthems of the angel sound.  
His mouth shall burn you clean,  
You are on holy ground,  
Kneel down and pray!

#### RESPONSES: THE MISTAKING

Through day and darkness, at the mountain where  
The Lord had risen, the disciple mourned:  
“So you have left your faithful to their sorrow,  
Forgetting earth in your transfiguration?  
And I shall never hear your voice and never  
Lean down and kiss your feet again, your garment?  
I begged a sign, but you did not reply!”  
And then a stranger came: “My brother, speak!  
Such torment is ablaze upon your cheek  
That it will sear me if I do not quench it.”  
“Leave me to a despair you cannot solace,  
I seek my Lord who has forsaken me.”  
The stranger vanished. The disciple fell  
Upon his knees and cried aloud, for by  
A glory clinging in that place, he knew  
That crushed and blind with pain he had not noticed  
It was the Lord himself who came and went.

#### SORROW I

“Oh, wait for this message to reach you:  
The day without you is profane,  
I hunger for you and beseech you,  
To die in your stead were a gain!

If one is decreed by the Powers  
To cross the dark verge, it is I!  
The night flings me down in the flowers,  
Respond to my agonized cry!”

“Let me float away into heaven,  
Arise from the ground and be whole,  
Remain on the earth to extol  
And witness the grace that was given.”

## SORROW II

The forest shivers.  
In vain it clothed itself in leaves of spring,  
The field your foot made consecrate is numb  
And cold without the sun you bring.  
The fragile blades on hilly pastures quiver,  
For now you never come.

What use are buds which you do not awake,  
The many sprays your fingers do not wind,  
And what the wealth of blooms you do not bind,  
Whom shall the fruit, you have not tasted, slake?

The sound of saplings cracking,  
Stem after stem—what now will fall?  
The early green is growing worn,  
The grass, so lately sprung, already shorn,  
No bird sings, only frosty winds are clacking  
And then the axes call.

## SORROW III

Dull is the air, deserted are my days,  
What adequate observance can I render?  
When shall I flame your light through all our days?  
I who am only glad when I surrender  
To graves the pomp and ruin of my days,  
Devote myself to mournfulness and render  
Songless and lifeless all my dragging days.  
Accept this dirge which dust and darkness render,  
Accept the offering of my empty days.

## ON THE LIFE AND DEATH OF MAXIMIN: THE FIRST

Your eyes were dim with distant dreams, you failed  
To guard and tend the holy fief and knew  
That everywhere the glow of life had paled.  
Now lift your head, for joy has come to you!

New miracles of spring have put to flight  
The year you suffered slow and icy gloom,  
With hands like April buds, with locks of light,  
A god appeared and stepped into your room.



Unite in happiness, no more alloyed  
With cravings for an age of vanished bliss,  
You too have heard the summons of a god,  
It was a god who granted you his kiss.

You also were elect, so do not mourn  
For all the days which unfulfilment sheathed.  
Praise to your city where a god was born,  
Praise to your time in which a god has breathed!

### THE SECOND: PILGRIMAGE

Why does the stranger, moved with awe, draw near  
The walls and tracks, unending and forlorn,  
Through busy come and go of court and stair?  
Here one who shaped our destiny was born!

Where houses frame the square, and grasses wedge  
Their way between the paving stones, where trite  
And stunted flowers skirt the shaven hedge,  
Your glances first were lifted to the light.

How dusty is the air, the noisy road,  
The roll of wheels, the ceaseless tread and trot!  
As Mary, Anna's daughter, bore her load,  
Here you, your mother—and they saw it not.

But once in spring a grey and silver dew  
Fell from the sky and flashed on every stem,  
The stunted flowers nodded silver blue,  
And all the children thought they smiled at them.

This house, so like the rest, is journey's end.  
We bare our heads within an empty hall  
Which sent you earthward. Did three kings not bend  
Down to a star which led them to a stall?

### THE THIRD

You watch over us  
                  in your unattainable glory,  
For now you are one  
                  with the word which we heard from above.  
In all that we do  
                  we solicit consent at your portals,

The smile of a king  
    is more dear to his subjects than gold.  
And when in the evening  
    our memory dwells on your story,  
Our arms try to reach you,  
    we tremble with longing and love,  
Our lips grow impassioned  
    as if you were still among mortals,  
As if you were with us,  
    O Light, and still caught in our mould.

#### THE FOURTH

Choirs of heaven were tuned to enthrall you  
Seeking to slip from the snare of our praise,  
So that, O Changed One, it might not appal you,  
And you reprov'd us and fled from our maze.

You, to the peace of the seventh elected,  
Were so remote from our day, yet we knew  
—Taught by a sign—that you had not rejected  
Earth and the feeling we cherish for you.

When for the journey to stars you enlisted,  
You were impaled by a beam from below,  
And while the light of your glances was misted,  
Muted with sadness your voice seemed to flow:

“Spring, you enchant me this year beyond measure,  
Budding of boughs! Could I see it again!  
See once again, and with you whom I treasure,  
Loveliest blooms of a sunny terrain!”

#### THE FIFTH: UPLIFT

You call on us who weep in dark and anguish:  
    Fling all the portals wide!  
Let sallow tapers gutter down and languish,  
    Set mourning rites aside!

What strength and light you gave to cast reflection  
    Upon your brief sojourn,  
Let each effuse to work your resurrection,  
    Your luminous return,

Embodied in our marrow, our desires  
And their incessant plea,  
In all the beauty which still feeds our fires  
And fills our memory.

Throughout the days which left us cold and jaded,  
You were the burning thorn,  
You gave us roses which have never faded,  
You went when spring was born.

We must accept your radiant incarnation  
Which spurs us to intone  
Your praise in song, to seek the liberation  
From shades that drift and moan,

For you and for ourselves, to curb the sorrow  
That rides us to our doom,  
And scatter blooms, today, tomorrow  
Until we hide your tomb.

#### THE SIXTH

You harbinger of joy have guided  
Me from a sullen winter to  
An island where enchantment tided,  
Where fragrant trees and flowers grew.

You shared the secret of your spacious  
And hidden realm with only one,  
You loved your warder, and the gracious  
Gift of your youth was his alone.

And in the grove the sacral spender  
Revived the ardent haste of him  
Who offered firstling fruits—a splendour  
Once clear to me, now far and dim.

With fiery verve the Helper speeded  
His bolt upon the arid rod,  
And all the flames which had seceded,  
United to be one with God.

From heights I saw where I had quested  
In vain, I was reborn and knew  
The distant land which you invested  
With meaning when the clouds withdrew.

Our temple-halls were pure and gloried,  
You raised your lids, and all the stained  
Fled to their sties, ashamed and sordid,  
And none were left but the ordained.

The earth resounds your name in paeans,  
Our hearts and minds grow whole and wise,  
And from the timeless dark of aeons  
I now compel your star to rise.

### PRAYER I

Call of holy trumpets drove  
Through the day on which I drifted,  
And my mouth and hands were lifted  
In a prayer for your love.

Purer victim never came  
To your shrine with greater gladness,  
Less ensnared in haste and madness  
I shall never seek your flame.

You have quickened me to burn,  
I abide by your decision,  
Free me from this dusty prison,  
See I sorrow, see I yearn!

Loose at last, and lull to rest,  
Hear my wooing, hear my sighing,  
Vouchsafe me the bliss of dying  
If thereby I serve you best.

Do not doubt me or appraise,  
I am yours, so take and keep me,  
Fuse me with yourself and sweep me  
Through your white and inmost blaze!

### PRAYER II

If our office is to cower  
To your tempest and to lie  
Crushed in dust before your power,  
You, the ruthless Lord-on-High,

Why the summers when we darted  
Free and naked, and you seemed  
Neighbour to the faithful-hearted  
Frenzied by the dream he dreamed?

Why permit the heady wonder  
When our pride and vigours grew,  
When we seethed with all your thunder,  
Fancied we were close to you?

Snatch us from our lowly station!  
Suddenly to stars we sail,  
Kindred to your incarnation  
In a cloud, a wave, a gale?

### PRAYER III

How grateful am I, sun, for all I see  
When first I cross the threshold and attune  
To warmth and light with which you garment me.  
How glad the morning and how clear the noon!

A gentle wind is in my hair, my blood  
Is sweet with garden fragrance, and I lay  
A loving hand on many a crimson bud  
And cool my cheek against a snowy spray.

O afternoon, with threat, and dream, and flame,  
With plans the demigods and magi laid,  
You gave me worlds to play a kingly game  
While all around my boat the waters played.

And then the dusk for which I always yearn,  
When I am kindled by the holy rite  
That conjures what I loved until return  
Of tranquil sleep submerges my delight.

### INCARNATION

Now that you are strong and high,  
What you prophesied was done:  
You have changed our pact, and I  
Am the child of my own son.

At my board you have your share  
In a bridal secrecy,  
Drink from wells that freshen me,  
Walk the path on which I fare.

In my blood you are reborn,  
Not a wraith or afterglow,  
Clinging in your love I know  
Sacred union dawn by dawn.

Yours the gloss, and grain, and hue  
Of my spirit, and the blaze  
Of my every fibre rays  
Distant fires caught from you.

With your ichor you have stilled  
My desire crouched to take.  
With a breath that never slacks,  
With your essence I am filled,

So that tears and ecstasy,  
Laden cloud and light combine  
To a fused and living sign:  
Dream begot by you and me.

#### VISIT

Sun is aslant on your small  
Garden and gently edges  
Into your house among hedges,  
Down through a gap in the wall.

Flutter of birds on the lawn,  
Tips of bushes are blowing,  
People coming and going  
Now that the heat is gone.

Pick up the bucket and shed  
Water on gravel and clover,  
Spray it on ramblers and over  
Gilliblooms, golden and red.

Cut back the ivy, too wild  
There on the slope, by the settle,  
Scatter a carpet of petals.  
All shall be fragrant and mild

When at the falling of night  
He as a pilgrim passes  
Once more, perhaps, through places  
Touched by terrestrial light,  
Parts the branches, asway  
Over the path, with holy  
Breath, descends to your lowly  
Ground and elects to stay.

#### TRANSPORT

Air from another planet floats around me,  
And darkness steals the faces from my sight  
Which only just, with friendly eyes, had found me.

The trees and paths I loved are turning greyer  
So that I hardly know them, and the light  
Which comes from you, beloved shade, purveyor

Of pain, is fused with deeper incandescence  
And fills with fervour when the savage phase  
Of strife and struggle drifts into quiescence.

I melt in sound, I flow and circle, serving  
The mighty breath without a wish, in praise  
Beyond all utterance, and thanks unswerving.

I shiver in a tempest of elation,  
My frenzy like a woman's when she screams  
Crouched in the dust in throes of supplication.

And then I see how gauzy vapour masses  
And thins in flawless space imbued with beams  
Which only strike the farthest mountain passes.

As smooth and white as whey the ground is shifted.  
Across enormous chasms, high and higher,  
I feel how over last of clouds uplifted

To seas of crystal radiance I am swung:  
Only a flicker of the holy fire,  
Only an echo of the holy tongue.

# DARKNESS OF DREAM

## ENTRANCE

Vista of pageants, this is adieu,  
Forest of ivory shafts, unfold!  
Foliage and fruit of carnelian and gold  
Cling to the branches high in the blue.

And from a hollow of marble, water  
Wells and spills in a blossomy rain  
Over the rim, as if grain after grain  
Slowly fell on a luminous platter.

Coolness and wonder curve to a ring,  
Dawn in the treetops! Creatures who dwell  
Here are surrounded by silence and spell.  
Wings of dream, whisper! Harp of dream, sing!

## ORIGINS

Hail to this laughing array:  
Regent of sumptuous treasure,  
Guardian of gifts without measure,  
Ruling with godlike sway,  
Circlets you carry and psalters.  
Later to none will it seem  
That all the stars once were captured  
By one spirit enraptured,  
As in a childhood dream.

Hail, O meadow, blessed with sun  
Where, while sacred grapes were pressed,  
Came—when wilds and beasts were gone—  
Pan and Hebe, blossom-dressed.  
Rugged hunter, shaggy hound  
Fled from limbs of marble shimmer,  
Halls by Rome's proportions bound.  
We were still allowed a glimmer!  
And beneath the piercing tines  
Breath of legions upward rolled,  
Of their boys and concubines.



Here their clay, their brass, their gold!  
See the host which mounts the ridge,  
Cohorts tread in rhythms regal,  
For the Caesar-scion's eagle  
Open every gate and bridge.

The Church then reared her head above these stones, and she  
Grew stern and scourged the flesh she found too bare and free.  
But she was heir to pomp, aflash in death-like sleeping,  
And gave the standard set for height and depths in keeping  
To minds that in Hosannahs wheeled above the clouds  
And on the slabs of tombs in self-abasement bowed.

But near the stream in a palace of reed  
On by the tide of our lust we were swirled,  
Singing an anthem which no one could read,  
We were the masters and lords of the world.  
Sweet and inciting as Attica's chorus  
Over the mountains and islands flung:  
CO BESOSO PASOJE PTOROS  
CO ES ON HAMA PASOJE BOAÑ.

#### LANDSCAPE I

Across the year's untrammelled glory flows  
The listless spirit which had lost its way  
At noon within a forest, where dismay  
Drips from autumnal saffron, rust, and rose.

And leaf by leaf is loosed, a lighter patch  
On sombre smoothness of a languid pool  
Where even now a boy whose eyes are cool,  
The ruthless spouse of darkness, keeps his watch.

And through the vague and soundless solitudes,  
From bough to bough the evening flings its glaze  
And turns the sultry yellow into blaze.  
Then brooding mist envelops brooding woods.

The climbing nightshade weaves in fragile sprays  
Around a wall of naked crimson thorn,  
The forward thrusting hands are tired and torn . . .  
If only sleep would come into the maze!

But timid flickers break through tangled gloom,  
And from the dusk another brightness sifts,  
Across the jutting crag a meadow drifts  
Far off . . . Among the massed violas loom

The rows of slender lances, tree on tree,  
A silver glamour fills the vaulted blue,  
A fragrant wind diffuses warmth and dew,  
And blossoms fall upon an open sea.

## LANDSCAPE II

Love, does October live for you again,  
Our joy in roaming through the sombre maze  
Of firs with shafts of green metallic stain,  
Through cinnabar of foliage turned to blaze?

As silent guests we visited this tree  
And that. I went alone, and so did you,  
In loving feud, each listening secretly  
To boughs which sang a dream not yet come true.

At first the leap and laughter of a stream  
In sunken cleft still served us as a guide,  
Which softer sped with more of twilight gleam  
Until, no longer heard, its weeping died.

And by our wandering we were so beguiled  
That we forgot the hour, forgot the trail,  
But then—out picking berries late—a child  
Pointed the path through underbrush and shale.

On crumbling ridges, hung with leaves, we passed  
And step by step we felt and forced our way,  
And then behind the thinning sprays at last  
The distant roofs, the open valley lay.

We flung our arms around a mossy bole  
And left the tree which marked the forest's close,  
Then on through meadows to a gracious goal,  
And land and air were washed in golden glows.

### LANDSCAPE III

This is the half-way house, and moonbeams seep  
In through the pane. From distant firns they flake,  
Pale with the dawning day. I am awake  
And bend above you who are still asleep.

Through meadows fanning out, and up the peak,  
On granite range, my happiness was you:  
The magic in your eyes of gentian blue,  
The downy texture of your shimmering cheek.

On winding trails which runnels once had hewn,  
We toiled, and on our mountain sticks we bore,  
And your untainted breath refreshed me more  
Than cooling fountains on a sultry noon.

When morning calls you in a sougning tone  
You will return to fields of fruit and rye,  
The walls are shadowed with a mute goodbye.  
From here to sterner heights I go alone.

In narrow clefts of ice that never moves,  
And past the snow which piles the bed of rocks,  
I reach the menacing, gigantic blocks  
Where frozen water stands in sullen grooves.

The cembras dwindle, and the wind is lord!  
The climb through rubble grows more rough and waste,  
Where every track is ruthlessly effaced  
Harps of the chasm sound their chord.

### NIGHT

Gone are the trivia of noon.

Drawn by the wood and the bracken,  
Have we so quickly forgotten?  
Darkness ensconced us, a sound  
Murmured by sorcery bound

Us who are vowed to a swoon.

Trees are the rungs leading straight  
Up to a luminous gate,  
Lure into trackless illusion,  
Drive into dazzling confusion.

Does the earth shake for the clasped?

Your breath in me! Is it this  
Air from the precincts of bliss,  
That has entangled our bodies,  
Woven together by shadows,

Welded in perilous grasp?

Listen! A whisper awakes!  
Sacred the water which breaks  
Out of a flower-spun gully.  
Unprompted cadences sally,

Cut through the thicket, and stream

Summons to living delights,  
Call us, whom darkest of rites  
Took as gratuitous prey,  
Us, who are ready to sway

Into an ocean of dream.

#### THE ENCHANTED GARDEN

Kingly the solitude, garden, in which you lie,  
Seldom you open your gates to a passerby,  
Refuge of silences, curtained in thickets of sprays,  
Gravel so rarely disturbed on your sun-flooded ways,  
Murmuring fountains which buds on a trellis enlace,  
Vases of granite uplifted in burdenless grace.  
None but the sweet-singing birds in your foliage crowd,  
Glassed in the slumbering lake is impalpable cloud.  
And the reflections of palaces fringing the side  
Flicker like fiery wisps in the cool of the tide.

One, the abode of the princess: Her chamber gleams  
Sea-green and silver. She lives in her sorrowful dreams,  
Weighed with her chaplet of pearls and her frozen brocade,  
She has no friend whom she trusts, who could offer her aid.  
Wistfully weeping she chooses a gem from her sheaf,

Radiance suffuses her features in spite of her grief.  
Flower whose fragrance is wasted, yet never grows less,  
Sensitive heart full of love which it cannot express.  
Time and again when the sun has set in the trees,  
Evils of day have been softened to reveries,  
Low on her flute she devises a dirge, and the proud  
Planets are stricken with wonder and flame through a shroud.

Scarlet and golden, across the lake, is the hall  
Housing the prince and the sorrow he buries from all.  
Heavy the crown on his forehead, translucent and white,  
Irk some to him is his retinue's ease and delight.  
Young and yet old, he stretches his arms to the blue,  
Sighs on the terrace and mingles his tears with the dew,  
Quite unaware that his regal vocation and rank  
Check the advances of those who are friendly and frank.  
None whom the chill of his majesty does not astound,  
Who does not lower his lashes and bow to the ground,  
Faced with a visage so laden with beauty and drouth.  
Bitter and sweet is the smile which has contoured his mouth.

Wide are the doors of the palaces once in the year,  
Barriers fall, the magnificent deign to appear.  
Only the reverent, only the chosen may gaze,  
Those who are versed in the secret which flowers can phrase,  
Practised in gratitude told with a faltering tongue,  
Charm and aloofness of all that is fervent and young.  
He shall be far who has plotted in rumbling ravine,  
Lived in the swamp and the pasture of venomous green,  
Henchman of ice-blooded spectres and sinister spies,  
Who, like the beast, is unmoved by the wind from the skies.

Then from the portals the festal procession ascends,  
And on the terrace the prince meets the princess and bends  
Low to her nod. They advance, and their hands interlace,  
Their steps alone do not shatter the spell of the place.  
Rapture immerses the circle which kneels at the sight,  
Long was the time it was shorn of its dearest delight:  
Kissing the tips of an opaline finger, the hems,  
Touching the sandals encrusted with luminous gems.  
Many the prayers which mutely and tearfully mount,

But the procession has solemnly turned at the fount.  
Once more the sovereigns graciously look upon these  
Gathered in homage, and then through an arch in the trees,  
Trailing their glittering robes they are gone, and the slow  
Evening transfigures the garden to amaranth glow.

## ROSES

In waves of white and fire-coloured blossoms  
On bushes scattered over hill and hollow,  
You were entangled, sang, and clung, and buried  
Yourself in fragrance. You were deluged in  
A cataract of roses, and they drifted  
A changeful joy upon your mouth at noon,  
And while you slept, the sprays and garlands sheathed you:  
Surges of roses!

Why did you loiter until dusk? You stumbled  
Through walls of brambles where you lost your self.  
Blindly you kissed the thorns and felt their sting,  
And now you crouch, your forehead bowed and bleeding  
And, stirred by night, a plethora of blooms  
Is swirling down. Then let their crimson petals  
Fall over your disgrace! Now learn the graveness  
And grief of roses!

## VOICES OF THE CLOUD CHILDREN

We of a filmier heaven  
Secretly haunt your domains,  
You of a lustier leaven,  
Tied to your meadows and lanes.

We who are weightless and swift  
Know it were best to refrain,  
Yet we are driven to drift  
Toward you again and again.

You who with ruthless and bold  
Fingers dishevel our wreath,  
Claim we are mocking and cold,  
Clamour with faltering breath.

You who are sturdy as steel  
Crush our defense, and we must  
Calmly accept what you deal,  
Though we are downed by your thrust.

Oh, let us love you and throng  
Closer with undulant grace,  
Though we can never belong  
Wholly, nor match your embrace.

We a more delicate breed  
Lean to you: Bridle your passion!  
Your year and this year forbid  
Fuller and sweeter possession.

#### RITES

To the grove where shadows thread,  
Where our fathers' spirits passed,  
Where the trail was overgrassed  
And the pilgrims, seized with dread,

Walked in bonds to symbolize  
Thralldom, where they slashed their own  
Flesh with swords before a throne  
Hidden from all human eyes,

Where in white and floating frock  
Stood the priest, his cudgel stained  
With the scarlet drops which drained  
Slowly from the rough-hewn rock,

Now our hosts are headed there!  
Naked save for golden, wide  
Breastplates, two by two they stride,  
Wreaths of leaves around their hair.

No more strangled victims! Now  
Jets of purple wine are thrown,  
Hiss against the burning bough,  
Gush and trickle from the stone.

And instead of wild acclaim  
For the gash, we dance and throng  
To the beat of solemn song,  
Through the purifying flame.

In the echoing and high  
Vaults of ashes, odours sift  
And between the foliage drift  
Cobalt shreds of cloudless sky.

### CONCEPTION

When you showed me leagues of wonder,  
Gave my eyes the strength to see,  
I was conjured by your thunder,

Helpless in the storm that ferried  
Down to black immensity,  
Then to craggy summits carried

One reborn to other glory.  
And it seemed to me as though  
—Clear and solved—your secret story

For an instant permeated  
Me, your grace had set aglow  
And your greatness devastated.

As if cliff and ground were quaking  
And submerged, as if the thought  
Of that hour were awaking

When you dazzled, when you held me,  
And I yielded wholly, caught  
In a frenzy that compelled me.

Every heart-beat shall be idle  
Save when you arouse my blood,  
Fashion me to fit your bridle!

Lock in clouds that cling and glisten,  
Take me for your vessel! Flood  
All of me! I lie and listen.

### LITANY

Deep is my sorrow,  
    darkness surrounds me,  
Lord, I am coming  
    home to your halls.



Long was the voyage,  
    weary and numbing,  
Barren the altar,  
    ripe my despair.

Parched for your vintage,  
    thirsting I falter,  
Much have I striven,  
    stark is my arm.

Rest to my stumbling  
    feet shall be given,  
Nothing regales me,  
    portion your bread!

Breath to incarnate  
    phantasy fails me,  
Hands became hollow,  
    fevered my mouth.

Temper the fire,  
    coolness shall follow,  
Free me from yearning,  
    lend me your light!

Love still besets me,  
    burning and churning,  
Only a strangled  
    cry from the core.

Stifle my craving,  
    heal what is mangled,  
Ease me of passion,  
    grant me your joy!

#### ELLORA

Pilgrims, you have reached the gate  
With your pack of worthless freight.  
Leave the garland, leave the flute,  
Shreds of solace, shreds of show,  
Tints shall fade, and sound be mute,  
Light and voices cease to flow  
On the threshold of Ellora.

High on socles ruby eyes  
Glint from hall to portico.  
Where the shadows float and nest  
Rings of mourning opals glow,  
People kneel with muffled cries,  
Yearn for darkness, yearn for rest  
In the chasms of Ellora.

All leave all, and pleasures pall:  
When our frenzy is allayed,  
Beating in our bosom stayed,  
Ebure columns cool and tall,  
Altar steps of unhewn stone  
Soothe the flame of flesh and bone  
In the temples of Ellora.

### SACRED LYRE

Are you still concerned with seeking  
Outer balms for inner rot,  
Filling buckets that are leaking,  
Striving for what can be bought?

You are all and all you fashion:  
Prayers in enchanted tide  
Melt to one with every passion,  
Call it God or friend or bride.

Never can an era borrow!  
When a storm has cleansed the earth  
You shall enter on your morrow,  
Turn your eyes with magic force

To the country in your keeping,  
To the throng within your spell:  
Land of dawn you once saw sleeping  
As an image in the well.

Do not fancy you can capture  
More than this: from summer sprays,  
From the stars and breathless rapture,  
One consummate song of praise.

## SONGS

### OPENING CHORD

Stars are rising there,  
Tuning up for song,  
Stars are setting there,  
Answering with song.

“You are fair and  
So the planets course,  
Be my own and  
I shall chart their course.

You are fair and  
Hold me unto death.  
You are lord and  
Lead to need and death.”

“I am fair, that  
Could, I think, be true.  
But I swear that  
I belong to you.”

### SONGS I-VI

This is a song  
For only you,  
Of childish fears  
And fervent tears.  
Through grass and dew it swings  
On weightless wings,  
And only you  
This simple song  
Shall move to rue.

My question erred  
Through windy grey,  
As faint as dream,  
And you devised  
A smile in turn.

A sudden light  
From rain and night!  
Now May will teem,  
And visions rise  
Of your hair and eyes!  
Day after day  
I wait and yearn.

Beside the stream  
The hazels burst,  
The very first!  
A twitter sifts  
From frosty spray,  
A shimmer drifts,  
A warming gleam  
That shifts and fails.  
The field's unsown,  
The tree still grey.  
Will flowers grace our trails  
When spring's full-blown?

In morning-dew  
You came to see  
The cherry tree  
In bloom, with me,  
And catch the musk  
Of early grass.  
No dust is here—  
The fruit and leaf  
Still in the husk.  
So young the year:  
A flower-sheaf!  
And southwinds pass.

In wintry haze  
The freezing tree  
Looms bare and high.  
In silence raise  
Your dream to him  
As you go by.  
His arms are spread—  
More often fling  
Him thanks that he  
When all is sad  
And cold and dim,  
Can hope for spring.

Here is the crossroads,  
We're at the end.  
Day will die soon,  
This is the end.  
Brief was the going,  
Who has grown faint?  
Weary for me soon,  
Sorrow makes faint.  
Hands were ready,  
You did not clasp?  
Sighs unsteady  
You did not grasp?  
This road is my road  
Which you do not fare.  
Tears are flowing,  
You do not care.

### SONGS I-III

Far from the noisy wharves  
Stretches the sunlit shore,  
Washed by the ebbing waves.  
Hope flickers down and fails.  
Then in the wind-swept sea  
Breakers swell up and arch,

Rear to a crest and crash,  
Taking the coast by storm:  
Passion and pain unleashed!  
Louder the pounding surf  
Hisses on hilly dunes,  
Spatters a cloud of foam:  
Love that is lost in moan.

My child is home,  
The seaweed tangled in his hair,  
His gait still rocks  
With fears he fought and young delight in quests.

The salty spray  
Has touched and tinged his cheeks with deeper tan,  
Fruit early ripe  
In savage scents and flame of alien suns.

His eyes are grave  
With secret things which I shall never know,  
And faintly veiled  
Since out of spring he came into our frost.

So rich the bud  
That almost shyly I withdrew my gaze,  
Denied myself  
The lips that had already learned to kiss.

My arm enfolds  
One who no longer moved by me, has grown  
To other worlds,  
My own, and yet how far from me, how far!

Love does not value one who feels a lack!  
It waits in torment for a single glimpse,  
And pours its treasures into thankless hands,  
Exalts the flame in which it is consumed.

But be this as it may, my dear, I cloud  
Your path to gladness, known to none but you,  
And so I bleed and go. A fate revealed  
Against my will, shall not bewilder you.

But even more, my sweet: Lest any breath  
Disturb your buoyance, I shall not return.  
And sad for both I leave, and pain is all  
That speaks in me and this unheeded song.

#### SOUTHERN BAY

Often I roved along this very coast  
—Like strings of pearls the cities, firm and proud—  
For here I longed to play the wedding-host,  
And yet a stranger takes the road.

And when I linger on a bridge I know  
—Not wiser, only more disconsolate!—  
I woo an old and tempting dream and go  
Expectantly from gate to gate.

When dancers move with flowers in their hair,  
Up in the hall, a swirl of gaudy frocks,  
I track the waifs and beggars on the docks,  
For loneliness is such despair.

#### SOUTHERN SEA

Far is our home, a dark and desert plain  
We left behind a range of snow and sleet,  
No sound from there that does not call in vain,  
This wonderland is still too strange and sweet.

Sharp-contoured pines and gentler olive trees  
In gardens where a cool resplendence trails,  
And waiting down below on silken seas  
Of sapphire, is our boat with yellow sails.

Here in the scent of roses and of balms  
The Prince of Death—no longer ruthless—stands  
As though he only came to lavish alms,  
And smiles, and passes lightly through the lands.

## SOUTHERN SHORE: DANCERS

The two of you were resting from the dance  
Beneath the pines, so young and unconcerned,  
A gay abandon in your open glance,  
Your strong and graceful bodies taut and burned.

You rose in rhythmic motion, pure and blithe,  
Into a plane of golden light you stepped  
With slender loins, your shoulders broad and lithe,  
And naked as the gods you swerved and leapt.

What urn, what frieze did you desert to pass  
All readied for a feast, to life below,  
Who kissed and bowed and circled to and fro,  
And swung above the silver spangled grass!

## RHINE

Was it not a beam that broke?  
Was the vineyard not in bloom?  
Were not you the friend for whom  
I was searching since I woke?

Did the river conjure rain,  
Scent of woods and light of land?  
Did a breath of growth remain?  
Shall I follow tracks in sand?

Bees insist with humming verve:  
"Sacrifice the old displays,  
Dreams of former nights and days,  
Learn to reverence and serve."

Broad horizons where a faint  
Hope is fused with early glow!  
High within his niche a saint  
Shows a wound of long ago.

## RAVINE

Have walls of ancient rock been washed and worn  
Away in this ravine by lashing hail?  
And has a claw or fallen boulder torn  
The knotty tree which rooted in the shale?



Is that a stain upon the ground, or here:  
The greyish patch of flakes you bend above,  
The feathers strewn in every cranny where  
A falcon struck and carried off a dove?

Why do you fling yourself among the stones  
And grooves, your head, and breast, and shoulders bare?  
Why do you wince and call with broken tones  
And weep into the earth in wild despair?

### WILD PARK

Misty shadows drip from the beeches,  
Glossy grass climbs lustily higher,  
Crowds the pond and shallows its reaches.  
What a murmur wells from the mire!

Day is quenched in branches and bushes,  
Stained with moss a naked and wan  
God is framed in the crescent of rushes,  
What a sigh has tempted you on!

Light your touch on the granite vases,  
Fruit is withered, brittle the bough.  
What a wind from infinite spaces,  
What a withe has tangled your brow!

And you tremble, guessing at dolour,  
Guessing at joy you run to the gate.  
What a flower has flaunted its colour,  
What a beam has blazoned your fate!

Windows where at dusk I once  
Looked across the fields with you,  
Now are bright with alien light.

There the gate and there the path  
Where you stood and did not turn  
When you reached the downward bend.

At the curve, the moon again  
Lit the pallor of your face,  
But it was too late to call.

Dark and silence, sluggish air  
Now as then besiege the house.  
All delight has left with you.

How the tower glitters from the crags,  
Calling up the bliss which summer brought,  
And below our faint expectance lags,  
Knowing winter came and doors are shut.

Every valley seems to lead us there,  
And the gable shines in icy thatch,  
But we sadly shun the threshold where  
We were banished when we dropped the latch.

Tears and groping never can retrace  
Rites that were, or move the bolt. Oh, when  
Shall we break the seals, and full of grace  
Enter and approach the shrine again,

From the sacred vessel take the host  
Which has always healed our every sting?  
Shall we see the golden key we lost  
In the snow, a gleam in grass of spring?

We long to stay and foot the dance with you!  
We love the charming valley just as much:  
The slanted meadow daubed with many hues,  
Fragrant beneath the morning's touch.

We like to gather blossoms and to skim  
The velvet dust from moth and dragonfly,  
To make them serve a swift and graceful whim,  
While ripples flicker by.

But over heath and ledges, rough and bare,  
An urge impels us to a find in store,  
The pointed stones and thorny creepers tear  
Our hands, our feet are sore.

And yet a matchless transport may accrue  
To us when on a path beset with dooms,  
Close to the chasm, crystalline and blue,  
    The magic flower blooms.

### SONGS I-III

Mourning crape in festive chambers!  
Wails of sorrow shrill and float!  
But through doleful dirges clammers  
Bright and strong a youthful note.

Fields that would not thrive, are covered  
With a misty copper hue,  
But when on your locks it hovered  
It was deepened by your glow.

Come and break apart the dreary  
Air in days of weighing pall,  
Succour me, the sick and weary,  
Pour your light into my fall.

“Whenever I approach your house,  
I send a prayer up to you  
As though you lay within it dead.”

When I set foot upon your bridge,  
A whisper from the river says  
That it was here I saw you first.

And when you chance to cross my path,  
My eyes no longer cling—they turn  
From you unmoved, without salute,

And greet you only from within,  
The way we do when to his last  
Repose a stranger passes by.

Must you insist on your rights,  
Spectre, at dusk and at dawn?  
Mingle with all my delights,  
Snatch at your tithe of my gain?

Am I still eager to feed  
You, who have mined out my core,  
Emptied the wine which I bore?  
Do I still bask in your greed?  
Shall I deny you a part?  
Sated with torment you gave,  
Shackle you down in a grave?  
Hammer a stake through your heart?

### THE FEAST

When you discard your garments, when you cord  
Wreaths for your brow, when torches scent the air,  
The day no longer weighs you with its care,  
You are in bondage to another lord!

When rooms grow wide with shadows, when the lights  
Leap from the bowls in green, and red, and blue,  
When horns and pipes release you and unite,  
You break the chain your will devised for you.

The feast crescendoes to a frenzied tide,  
Where kisses stain with blood and singe with fire,  
Where all are fused and lost in one desire,  
One breath alive in those the god has tried.

But when the dance no longer weds the throng,  
When limbs from sweet besieging are unwound,  
Then through the darkness wells a mournful sound,  
And tears are dropped on garlands worn too long.

### BEYOND

You laid the trowel aside and were content  
With what you built, but suddenly you thought  
That it was nothing but the fundament  
    Of that for which no stone was cut.

You trod the moss and plaited flower and frond,  
And spring and autumn gave you of their share,  
But when you gazed across to peaks beyond  
    You chose to seek your fortunes there.

While you exalted foreign wines, and you  
The waxen apples overseas, the ground  
Was littered with the fruit your gardens grew,  
    And berries withered all around.

And while you listened to the golden brawl  
Of bees or to the westwind's haunting sigh,  
You very often failed to hear the call  
    Of all the sweet that passed you by.

### HOMECOMING

Tired pilgrims who are frozen  
To our day, you slowly fare  
Homeward where no wishes cozen,  
Where you rise from old despair.

And you show your spectral counties  
To the stranger bowed in pain,  
Promise that their gentle bounties  
Soon will make him whole again.

None will rue the peace of fasting,  
Silence free from hopeless sighs,  
And a span of longed-for resting  
Will content him as he dies.

But before you enter under  
Arches of those calm demesnes  
Know: This heart will burst asunder  
With the fires it restrains.

From the furrows of the plain  
Where the voices drone and flicker  
Cruder in the crowds and thicker,  
To the hills I stormed again.

From the houses weighed with scent,  
From the gardens lush and tumbled,  
From the forest black and jumbled,  
Up to clearer air I went.

Now my head is proud and free.  
Are you calling from your hollow?  
Will you conjure me to follow?  
Will you teach me how to see?

And above the swirl and smoulder,  
Fumes and perfumes which I shun,  
Floats a magic, greater, older:  
You are sovereign and withdrawn.

This is not the realm of light  
Where I reigned and where I wooed,  
Alien sky and latitude,  
Meagre tufts on arid site.

Barren tracts of sand, the bole  
Of a twisted tree is sprung  
—Thinly webbed with green—among  
Puny weeds on wilted knoll.

What a sound is this I hear!  
Whisper trailing from the bough,  
By your voice I guess you, now  
I shall see you, you are near.

I have neither aim nor clue,  
None has joy of me or need,  
All I know is that you lead,  
Even here I follow you.

Forgotten the passion,  
The god's incarnation!  
A call from the chasm  
Now governs creation.

The craving is shallowed,  
The fires, the ravage  
Are flooded and swallowed  
By torrents more savage.

No more let us proffer  
The vow that united,  
In parting I offer  
My lips to the plighted.

Their gesture and glances  
Seem almost to fear me,  
I shun their advances,  
But you are still near me.

## TABLETS

### TO MELCHIOR LECHTER

To your mind, proud and free, and immune to distress,  
In the vessel of fate, metal cleared of all dross!

To your soul that has bowed realms of dream to its will,  
Year by year dazzles us and the world with its fill!

To your life, for the lonely a solace and guide,  
Pharos flaming through time in the dark of the tide.

### TO KARL AND HANNA

Though on your quests for beauty you amassed  
The gaudy spoils of life in rich variety,  
You shall extol one day which glorifies your past  
And points with holy finger into times to be.

### TO GUNDOLF

Why probe so much in men who are remote, why read the legends  
through,

If you yourself can find the words to tell a later age:  
You, for a time, were this to me, and I was that to you!  
Is that not light and truth beyond what zeal can gauge?

### MEMORY OF BRUSSELS: PERLS

I think of how your fevered glances met  
The towers of Saint Gudula . . . You drained  
The light which warmed the park before it waned,  
And down the Treuremberg you dragged your feet.

### GHOSTS: TO H.

Their eyes, blind to the day, are fixed on graves and broken stone,  
They dig the treasure up from tainted tombs. If none  
Can save them, they will melt away before they make their own  
Gold laughter and the golden light of dawn.



## KAIROS

The day had come, the star was toward,  
The gate ajar for you, the lord.  
And yet you left the hour unscored!  
This star alone could make you lord.

## TO HENRY

Since life has fenced you in with beauty, flood  
And chasm need not ever chill your blood.  
Attached to none, by everyone adored,  
You shun the last encounter—last reward!

## GUARDIANSHIP

You wisely locked behind protecting doors  
Your comely son, ablaze like burning tinder,  
You kept him stainless for his first of whores . . .  
Bare is the house, the grate is filled with cinders.

## JUGGLER

You blind yourself to darken other sight,  
Your flames, that seem unending, hiss, and swarm,  
And fume, and veer, but never shine and warm.  
They send the evil dreams that haunt by night.

## NORDICS

You reach your every goal with steady plod,  
When lightning strikes, you too feel beauty, but  
You were not made for frenzy! Who is shut  
From this, can never know the highest god.

## ERNESTO LUDOVICO

DIE SEPT. MENS. SEPT.

Time passes on, the hours flee, delight has fled.  
They come with us and open wide their hands.  
Salute to him who smiles on each, from him  
Who yields a hundred for a single one.

## IN MEMORIAM ELISABETHAE

Through awful space, the rift from soul to soul, a grief  
Unfurls its song and journeys to the empty house,  
Evokes the garden and the child who hid in play,  
And filled the air with laughter which has died away.  
This song can do no more than conjure tears on hands  
Supreme in pain—for only they may reach for what  
Is gone—and whisper: Is there anything in all  
The world more bitter than the death of a young dream?

## TO SABINE

The autumn colours twined the heat  
Of summer and its rueful hours  
Into a legend, ripe and sweet.  
More faintly our desires throbbed  
When golden children laughed and sobbed,  
And so the season was replete:  
A garland wreathed of fruit and flowers.

## TO A JESUIT

Return, O suave and clever fathers, though  
With bane and dagger, for your ways outshine  
The traitor's who backs equal rights. A mean  
Like this, is every people's subtlest foe!

## TO VERWEY

We feverishly strained to hear a word  
From overseas, as if the war were ours!  
So few can brave the never-conquered dragon!  
While all the world acclaimed the daring venture,  
No one had eyes for silent hands of heroes.  
Then came the wretched end! A deal—a yoke!  
Masses are worthless now! No hope, no ways  
Or weapons of this world can bring relief.

G. v. V.

Nowhere did your tortured spirit find its tune.  
To the farthest cities ceaselessly you travelled,  
On to China's gardens, and among the ravelled  
Grasses stained with blood, you rest on barren dune.

TO CARL AUGUST KLEIN

Have we not shared alike  
    fortunes and visions, courses and aim?  
Did we not mingle our blood  
    to be brothers in strife?  
Was it the will of a star  
    that the decade is even the same  
Wherein we loosen the old  
    bond in the hope of new life?

TO HANNA WITH A PICTURE

No one but you will ever gauge the pain,  
The year of grief, the anguish of the lonely.  
This picture is unowned. Take it! The only  
Heart here on earth to which I turn again.

TO ROBERT: I BRIDGE

Water, whirl across the rocks below  
Blackened girders of the bridge! Your wild  
Tumble soon will steady to a mild  
Current in my river's kingly flow!

II EVENING IN ARLESHEIM

You wait forsaken on a darkening road,  
And full of mournful thoughts you doubt and cower,  
For you the fruits of earth have grown too sour,  
For your sick heart an urge is like a goad.

With poise which we have drawn from dream and daring,  
And all the marks which tears and kisses made,  
To go together into light and shade!  
On all the rest the New Life has no bearing.

### TO UGOLINO

Our minds, which swerve to different zones, divide  
Our lives much more than seas with ebb and tide.  
But I am grateful for your gentle tears  
Across the gap of dreams, and waves, and years.

### TO LOTHAR

Wait till the humid mists no longer bow  
The soul that sifts the ashes of the dead.  
You mourned the fate of those I loved, and now  
I never shall forget the tears you shed.

### TO ERNST

You draw your shades against the morning light  
And every wish. You shyly wait and muse,  
And your punctilious, faithful hand pursues  
Its work contrived of spider-webs and night.

### TO DERLETH

Your valiant thrusts were apt to slay and flay,  
And now you press inexorable wants.  
But when will you return from ghostly haunts,  
Led by a love that strengthens day by day?

In this we are alike within our round:  
That unrestrained by house and chattels, we  
Alone, wherever we may chance to be,  
Can up and follow when the fanfares sound.

### TO A POET

Behold these buds which deep in your ravine  
Autumnal light and gentle showers round,  
But only when the fullest sun abounds  
Can they unfold their most reluctant sheen.

### TO ANNA MARIA

“You flaunt your many charms, but lack what fate  
Will soon demand of you, what steels and kindles.  
The oil within your lamps, O sisters, dwindles!  
Our offerings, foolish virgins, make us great.”

Your ruthless glance implies that we are tares,  
Our aims a froth—but sometimes, waspish nun,  
Your smile transforms the darkness into sun,  
And field and town to marts of magic wares.

#### TO A POET

In your green and growing hour  
Rays you give and brightest colours,  
With foreboding of all dolours,  
Though the world is still in flower.

#### RHINE: I

Two queenly sisters as their own define  
The middle of the inner realm, but from  
Aeons of sleep the third true child will come  
And raise the crown long buried in the Rhine.

#### RHINE: II

And one arose! His mighty trident flails  
The spurting waters red with hidden gold!  
From barren sameness cliffs and shore unfold,  
And living glory springs from lifeless tales.

#### RHINE: III

You pour from whirling chasms with the groan  
And force of tempests to the Kingly Town,  
You rush from Silver Town through Golden Town  
To spires reared in consecrate Cologne.

#### RHINE: IV

Some seem to think this land is terror-struck  
Beneath the deluge of this filth and muck.  
Into the cleansing sea I spew afar  
The odious scum of reddle, chalk, and tar.

### RHINE: V

This is our land as long as fields are proud  
With grain and fruit, the vineyards mount in lustre,  
And spires thrust their challenge into cloud,  
While in the crannies rose and lilac cluster!

### RHINE: VI

Do not proclaim the Feast, the Kingdom Come,  
The new-made wine that brims the new-made bowl,  
Until your spirit, obstinate and numb,  
Throbs with my fiery blood, my Roman soul!

### MADONNA IN COLOGNE

“When sadly from the west I came, you taught  
Me joy, Madonna, on the homeward stretch.”  
“A people, clear as well as deep, once brought  
Me forth: the smiling Virgin with the Vetch.”

### PICTURE: ONE OF THE THREE WISE MEN

To you, new Lord, I bring my dues. Now give  
Me leave to journey to my native town.  
I still am young and light of heart and live  
For golden trinkets, for my darling crown.

### NORTHERN PAINTER

We brooded through the night to find the clue  
To both your secret and your flaw. You rimmed  
Your painted heavens with the residue  
Of light around a fallen angel's limbs.

### NORTHERN SCULPTOR

If you could break these chains and cast away  
The husk that mars perfection, then you might  
Transcend the heavy texture of the clay  
And dare to lift your work into the light.

### COLMAR: GRUENEWALD

On earth his limbs endured the hangman's nail,  
The hooves of monsters and their fetid hair,  
That he might see himself—an instant—smile  
Triumphant in a globe of rosy air.

### HEISTERBACH: THE MONK

The songs and tales, the spires which determine  
Your worth—all these were yours because you prayed.  
The world of now, a world where prayers fade,  
Is chaff before the Lord, and you are vermin.

### HOUSE IN BONN

Before you wage the battle of your star,  
I sing of strife and gains on higher stars.  
Before you know the bodies on this star,  
I shape you dreams among eternal stars.

### WORMS

The world awoke: A distant wind blew treasures  
And southern blooms into our northern day.  
Then came the frost: disputes and dour measures . . .  
The fairest spring escaped us in dismay.

### WINKEL: THE GRAVE OF GUENDERODE

You were the symbol of this land of lore,  
And with your self you quenched its ghostly spark,  
It aimless flames and moons. Along the shore  
An empty boat drifts down the Rhine at dark.

### AACHEN: DESECRATORS OF GRAVES

Is this what drives you? Then your crime is less!  
Your fear of pitch and sulphur sets you scratching  
In sacred tombs. You grope because you guess  
That at the gate the end's already hatching.

## HILDESHEIM

Let not the raid on holy places flood  
Your hearts with fury for the cold canaille!  
The Thousand-Year-Old Rose has—so they say—  
In faithful keeping born a golden bud.

## QUEDLINBURG

Niched in the oval arch and massive wall,  
The saints and the anointed reel in gales:  
We still protect the height although it pales!  
There in the east, the sands will mock your call.

## MUNICH

O soil, as yet untouched by double bane,  
Walls where the spirits still are free to roam!  
O town of youth and strength! Our only home  
Is where we see Our Lady's spires reign.

## INNS OF THE AU

The painted gables, rafters grey with time,  
The shingles conjure worlds that once have been.  
To us the village wit's incessant rhyme  
Is sorrow sounding on a sleepy green.

## BOZEN: ERWIN'S SHADOW

Voices blurred in the fragrant night, the sheen  
Which quivers on the walls, the tremulous  
Pulse of the earth—was this accorded us  
Because we go where, Erwin, you have been?

## BAMBERG

You, the most alien, sprang—when there was need—  
A lawful scion from your people's flank.  
Does not this shrine portray you on your steed,  
Proud and contending as a kingly Frank?



And carven—neither Ghibelline nor Guelph—  
In the imperial chamber, you are shown:  
A silent artist who surpassed himself  
And waits bemused for God to do his own.

#### TRAUSNITZ: CONRADIN'S CASTLE

Here, like your brothers spent in soul, you turned  
Away from level land and native stream,  
With the impassioned gaze of those who yearn  
South to the mountains as to gates of dream.

#### SISTER CITIES

None will recall our tubas' blaring note  
When every nation still will hold sublime  
The trace of heroes, gods, who for a time  
Ruled in this city, rustic and remote.

And here you threaten from the peak: the last  
And lustrous star before the era wanes.  
Your foot upon our neck, to be disgraced  
By you meant more than any vapid gains.

#### SHRINE

How flat the mobs and sounds of many a city ring!  
A Holbein painting seems the only living thing.  
And this: the death-mask of the head of one  
Who like no other spat his scorn at man.

#### QUAY

Who can regard this whirl with other thoughts  
(The thud of many feet, of hoof and hub)  
Than those the emperor had who ordered brought  
Ten thousand spiders gathered in a tub.

But tall against the railing stood a youth,  
Bare-headed, well above the din, and lost  
In looking at the sky, the only truth!  
With pallid hand he called and banished ghosts.

## CITY SQUARE

You—whether kings or hoi-poloi—pursue  
An idol who transforms your gold to cheap  
And common coin. My people, I shall weep  
When you atone with bondage, need, and rue.

## CENTENARY LINES

Ten thousand perish wordless, one alone,  
The founder, gives the name. One sounds the tone  
Ten thousand tongues will sing. Each age has only  
One god, and only one proclaims his throne.

## A SECOND

You too gave up your birthright for a dole.  
Soon you will take your precious gains for trash,  
Accept as truth a hocus, mad and rash.  
What's loose, alas! and runs on naked sole!

## A THIRD

A man! A deed! The people and the council plead.  
Look not to one who shared your feasts! For one who kept  
Beside your slayers many years, or one who slept  
Behind your prison bars, may rise and do the deed.

## A FOURTH: BATTLE

From far away I saw the flash of war  
Such as will soon be rampant at our door.  
The group I saw around the flag was small . . .  
And no one else saw anything at all.

## THE FIFTH: UPHEAVALS IN THE EAST

This clash will be a sawdust conflagration,  
Unless one man transcends the aimless rage!  
But who can fan true fires in a nation  
That is a blend of childhood and old age?

## A SIXTH

“Only the most remote can bring renewal!”  
The teeming spring resounds with this refrain.  
A single wedding cures two ills: dispersal  
And too much tasting of a honeyed bane.

## TEMPTER I

“Strew out this sand and twice you milk your cows  
And thresh your grain, the must gives double yield.  
Now mock your thrifty fathers and carouse.”  
But wait a year, and all is sear and sealed!

With shrillest of sounds the strings on their lyres grate:  
“Straight and yet bent, one and yet none, god and yet brute!”  
Dance through the world and through time! A marvel, a fête!  
He who can pick out the theme, though, will laugh and be mute!

## TEMPTER II

Our sum is not complete, we lack the three,  
And want the two to double us, so we  
Shall now evoke the four imploringly  
From fog and madness, spook and witchery.

## CORTEGE OF MASKS

The gods are winding down along the ramp  
With him who sows their love and hate, who trailed  
Life into death. But first to come and veiled  
Is one: the man and mother, with the lamp.

Where once they were conceived, they now must go  
To fetch the spark that lights celestial portals.  
At every turn of tide they fare below  
And bow in service at the feet of mortals.

## FEASTS

The common day has blurred the image now,  
But here, in times of senselessness and horrors,  
They came with torches, wreaths around their brow:  
The first procession of the new adorers.

## FOR THE END OF THE SEVENTH RING

Crested breakers reared in a turbulent sea,  
Wreckage and bodies sank in a rancorous sea.  
Later a scintillant light under starry gold:  
Shores encrusted with pearls, and corals, and gold.

### IDEM: QUESTION

“You, more aloof than kings, whose lordly glances gave  
The verdict that his brothers’ work was scum,  
Who are you stranger?” “Nothing but the lowly slave  
Of one who—with the dawn—is yet to come!”

### IDEM: OUT! OUT!

Out with the witches and the wizards who  
Are still abroad! The light is crowding through  
The cracks. The house is clean. He only may  
Return who dares to shed his sheath by day.

### IDEM

From fallow fields of home these verses sprang,  
And grew without a breath from foreign zones,  
So now what rang to men in temple tones  
They think more kindred to their native tongue.

### IDEM: TO WACLAW

This book was still a blank at our farewell.  
My native soil has fed its every stage.  
Now I am glad that on the final page  
Still—at the last—your noble shadow fell.

### IDEM

Our parting draught! And though the words you say  
Still move, your hands still warm me, yet today  
I feel more free than ever, and inured  
To friend and foe—prepared for any road.



# THE STAR OF THE COVENANT

## INTROIT

You, always our beginning, end, and middle,  
Our song of praise on your terrestrial journey  
Now rises to your star, O Lord of Turning!  
We saw a darkness laid across the land,  
The temple tottered and the inner fires  
No longer roused us, gnawed by other fevers  
Than those that urged our fathers to the victors,  
Serene and poised on thrones unreached and squandered  
Our noblest blood in lust for far horizons.  
Then you, our own from native stock, appeared  
Before us in the naked glow of godhood.  
No statue was so fair, no dream so real.  
Then out of hallowed hands fulfilment flooded,  
And there was light, and all desire died.

You took away the pain of inner schism,  
You, who were fusion made incarnate, bringing  
The two extremes together: light and frenzy!  
To domes above the clouds you were the pleader,  
Who wrestled with the spirit, held it fast,  
And turned a victim at the given hour.  
But in the spring you were the friend of freshets  
And clung in their caresses, slim and naked,  
You, the sweet sleeper in the meadow-grasses  
To whom a habitant of heaven leaned.  
We celebrated you with palms and roses,  
And to your twofold beauty offered homage,  
But did not know we knelt before the body  
In which the birth of god had come to pass.

Though who I am, you do not know, this may  
Be told: I have not tried the words and actions  
Earth asks of man, but now the year's at hand  
When I must find another form of being.  
I change and yet I keep my changeless substance.  
I cannot be like you! My choice is made.  
So bring the holy branches and the garlands  
Of violet-coloured, of sepulchral blossoms  
And carry forth the sacred flame. Farewell!  
My step already falls on other paths.  
I am already what I willed. In parting  
Accept a gift which only I can give:  
My breath that shall revive your strength and courage,  
My kiss that shall be branded in your spirit.

The waters rise, and my unbridled heart  
Is roused with passion blazing through millenia,  
Which it desires to spend in depths and brightness  
And never can discharge to mere reflections.  
Its sigh pursues the waves as if it hunted  
A creature which escaped and still escapes.  
It finds no help until these drops of blood  
Have vanished in the loud, unending current.  
Then you, the god, emerge before my eyes,  
And only you I see, by you elated.  
Your earthly vesture, such a slender shrine,  
A span which scarcely fills the arm that clasps it,  
Snares every thought agog for stars, and conjures  
Me here within the day for which I live.



Was time again at zenith? Wells of flame,  
"As if a world were just to be created!"  
Resplendent peak of noon, yet spectres flitted . . .  
The night with dances round the open fires,  
The golden boys with torches and the ivory  
Girls bearing garlands! Flutes resounded shrilly,  
And storms of kisses lashed us lip to lip.  
Then, with the dawn, the spirit caught us close,  
And frenzied questions cried for frenzied answers,  
Beguiled us into plighting faith and death-vows,  
Until in utmost awe we pleaded: Grace us,  
O voice and rhythm in our curbless welter,  
O crown and consecration of our prayers,  
O beam that splits the darkness of our dream!

Then stately shadows gathered in the chamber  
And flashes gleamed through haze which rose in spirals.  
Reflected bygones quivered: early beings  
Of timeless night and others proud and lovely.  
They flowed and flickered on metallic lustres,  
They strained and struggled to acquire substance,  
Involved us in their torment and grew paler.  
How helplessly we waited in their circle!  
Where is the hearth ablaze with earthly fires?  
Where is the stainless blood that will allay us?  
Nebulous vapours, thicken! Mass to bodies!  
Dip upward, silver feet, from purple waters!  
So through our passioned incantations sounded  
The mournful summons for a living kernel.

Resigned I face the riddle that he is  
My child, and I the child of my own child,  
That Destiny commands the great to spring  
From stuff of earth and then, with smiles and tears,  
To journey home unstained by deed. Her law  
Decrees that he who sacrificed his blood  
For all and for himself, shall be fulfilled,  
And only through his death beget the deed.  
The strongest root feeds on eternal night.  
You who surround and question me, let this  
Suffice: Through him alone I now am yours.  
My life was forfeit, yet I was reborn.  
Leave the unfathomed, bow your heads with me,  
Calling "O saviour!" through the winds of dread.

With you I now grow back through generations,  
More close to you in a more secret bond.  
I find you in the works of kingly forbears,  
You shine in tales of feud and heady venture,  
You are the living core—though chastely veiled—  
In fervent sayings of the sage and seer.  
The blood's unsuspended heritage of ages,  
Which lords it over lordliest of neighbours:  
This is the throbbing flame, the golden tide  
You sow in cycles—and the world bears fruit!  
And what a day, what hope and what fulfilment,  
When you reveal yourself and stand among us,  
Heart of the ring, the image born of earth,  
The essence of our people's sacred youth.

Who is your god? All that my dreams avowed,  
Kin to my vision, beautiful and proud.  
He is the force the lap of darkness vented,  
The sum of every greatness we were granted,  
The deepest source, the inmost blaze—he is  
Where I have found the purest form of these.  
He flooded every vein with richer teeming  
Who first for one was rescue and redeeming.  
He filled the gods of old with fresher breath,  
And all the words the world has done to death.  
The god is veiled in highest consecration,  
With rays around he manifests his station,  
Embodied in a son whom stars begot  
And a new center conjured out of thought.

## BOOK ONE

“Since now your tempest, O thunderer, shatters the clouds,  
Your winds incite disaster and topple the ramparts,  
Is not the stalking of verses a labour unblest?”

“The solemn harp-strings and even the flexible lyre  
Utter my will through the rising and falling of time,  
Utter the changeless design of the fixed constellations.  
And words like these you shall keep in your heart: That no  
saviour,

No prince can grow on this planet unless the breath  
He draws at birth, is suffused with the chanting of seers,  
Unless his cradle is sheathed in a song of the great.”

“All your youth sped lightly as a dance.  
As the trill of flutes, the call of clarions?”  
“Lord, with this I lured your shining children,  
Scouted trifling pleasure for your song,  
Took the yoke of pilgrimage upon me,  
Searched until I found you in their radiance.  
Day and night, since I recall a life  
Of my own, I did this only: hunted  
You on every way and quay.”

Now that your seed I carried in distress,  
And nourished with myself, and nursed through dangers,  
Has risen green and deathless, I have one  
More hunger while sweet light is still about me:  
To keep the place you chose for me, and even  
Though friends applaud, disciples utter praise,  
Desist from setting words to hidden rhythms,  
And in the fret and clatter of the rabble  
Unflinchingly protect your holy secret.

The highest act of grace is that you live  
And only reel at each allotted thrust,  
Double and split beneath the blows of fate.  
For many are destroyed in first encounters,  
The best confront the second: stand and perish.  
But you held out! So obdurately armed  
That what would crush another, leaves you sound.  
When quick with strength you near the goal and find  
One, more elect, you do not challenge him,  
But burn with joy to be the first to serve.

When as a youth you recognized your calling,  
You were an outcast walled in clammy air.  
Your single self sustained the pain of all.  
Then such a cry broke from your lips and mounted  
Up to the stars, that earth and heaven flinched.  
And stars with greater force intoned their answer  
Than ear of man had ever heard before.  
It snared and swept you upward: Stay! Who takes  
So strange a course has none to guide him, only  
What you have helped create can help you, never  
Condemn your grief, for you yourself are grief.  
Reverse the symbol and reverse the song!

That things we cannot grasp are deeply bedded  
In former lives, is the conceit of poets.  
Your every work shall match your earliest dream!  
From grains of dust you realized the state,  
Walked as if led and knew that you were chosen.  
"You fought a universe which rose against you,"  
Established codes and language, set the norm.  
Your labours done, you portioned out your realm  
And went serenely on to wider reaches.

Those you gave light to mount the way to you  
Know they must not reveal you, and that words  
Which might convey you, set before the people,  
Are valid for a time and then decay  
Unless a new awakener brings renewal.  
Before I wring from you my full allotment,  
I must attempt to solve the one enigma:  
How build within the space which you have meted?  
Perform the task each day demands, and venture  
The mating with the vision of tomorrow?

Call it the bolt that struck, the sign that pointed,  
This thing which reached me at the given hour,  
This germ of life, impalpable yet real!  
Call it the spark that spurted out of nothing,  
Call it return of circling thought. No word  
Can hold it. As a force, a flame it quickens  
The image and the world of earth and God.  
I am not here to bring what comes once only,  
I curve an age that tends to arrow-straightness,  
I lead the round and wrest into the ring.

Do words beget the deed, or deeds the word?  
In days of old the city called the bard,  
And though his limbs were feeble, yet his verse  
Aroused the broken host, and he dispensed  
The triumph long delayed. So—with a smile—  
Fate interchanges role and stuff. My dream  
Turned flesh and ushered into life a form  
Shaped of sweet earth. His step is firm: the child  
Of deepest passion and transcendent thrall.

I am the One, I am the Two,  
I am the womb, I am the sire,  
I am the shadow and the true,  
I am the faggot and the fire.  
I am the bow, I am the shaft,  
I am the seer and his prediction,  
I am the sheath, I am the haft,  
I am abundance and affliction,  
I am the victim and the slayer,  
I am the symbol and the meaning,  
I am the altar and the prayer,  
I am an end and a beginning.

The wrath of heaven broke from crimson clouds:  
I turn away from nations such as this.  
The soul is sick! The deed is dead!  
The only ones whose steps I still pursue  
With grace, are those who fled in golden triremes  
To holy pales, who play my harps, and tender  
Their offerings in my temple—and those others,  
Still groping for the way, who filled with fervour  
Reach out into the setting sun. And all  
The rest is night and nothingness.

Having all and knowing all, they still complain:  
Life is meagre! Want and hunger everywhere!  
Lack of fill!  
Yet I know of lofts in every house,  
Harvest cast to winds and stacked anew,  
No one takes!  
Cellars under every hall where wines  
Dry or ooze away into the sand,  
No one drinks!  
Tons of gold abandoned in the dust,  
Men in tatters brush it with their hems,  
No one sees!

The eras which your time that seems so free,  
So mild and wise, indicts as dark and savage,  
Strove on—at least—through torture, madness, dread,  
Through twist, and maze, and murder—on to God.  
You traitors are the first to throttle God,  
To carve an image, not like him, invent  
Endearing names for what is more than monstrous,  
And hurl the best you have into its jaws.  
You call it your approach and will not check  
Your barren ecstasy until all venal  
And base alike, instead of God's red blood  
The pus of idols circles in your veins.

You build and violate all bounds and measures.  
What's high could be still higher! But no find,  
No prop or patch now serves. The structure quakes.  
And at your wisdom's end, you howl to heaven:  
"Do what to keep from choking in the rubble,  
The spook we shaped from gnawing at our brains?"  
But Heaven laughs: Too late to stop or mend!  
Ten thousand must submit to holy madness,  
Ten thousand perish in the holy plague,  
And tens of thousands in the holy war!

Above the silent town a streak of blood!  
And then a storm exploded from the darkness,  
And through spasmodic gusts I heard the trampling  
Of hosts, first dim then near, the clash of iron.  
And proud and threatening rang a thrice divided  
Metallic call, and I was overwhelmed  
With rage and strength, and yet I felt a shudder  
As if a sword sank flat upon my head.  
A quicker beat, and faster marched the columns,  
And more and more battalions, and the selfsame  
Stridor of fanfares. Can this be the last  
**Rebellion of the gods above this land?**



Speak not of the supreme! While you are flawed  
You drag it down to what you think and are.  
God is a spectre when your spirit rots.  
Speak not of woman! Not until you grasp  
Her law: to moan in lust beneath the sharp  
And fecund impact of a stronger stuff.  
Speak not of simple folk! For none of you  
Can guess what governs clod and threshing-floor,  
Knows how to mix with, rise, or sink again,  
And knot the golden threads that now are broken.

And one emerged who keen as flash and steel  
Laid open chasms and divided camps,  
Reversed your Here to fashion out a There,  
Who dinned into your heads that you were mad,  
With such insistence that his throat was cracked.  
And you? The shrewd or dull, the false or true,  
You acted as if nothing had occurred.  
You hear, and stare, you talk, and laugh, and breed!  
The warner passed! The wheel is hurtling down  
Into the void with none to block its passage.

“Consider what the blaze will do to scrolls,  
To precious pictures which you prize as we.”  
If left to you—I scoff—your acid drivel,  
Your morgues of art would ruin them far more  
Than wreckage and the lap of Mother Earth.  
Perhaps that once from even scantly fragments,  
Sheltered by rubble, from a broken wall,  
Corroded metal, weatherbeaten stone,  
Or yellowed script, life will again be kindled.  
The way in which you hoard is sheer decay!

A sunset world, and once again the Lord  
Went to the city graced with gates and temples,  
And he who came to raze, was poor and mocked.  
He knew, no mortared stone may keep its place  
If the foundation, if the whole shall stand.  
And those who were at odds, though like in purpose,  
Countless their busy hands, and big and countless  
Their words, though there was need of only one!  
A sunset world—they frolicked and they sang,  
And all of them looked right, but he looked left.

Fear not the scar, the gash, the wound, the sprain!  
The magic that destroys, builds up again.  
Each thing is fair and perfect as before,  
Yet other breath has slipped into its core.  
Whatever has received a name is laid:  
A stalk without the pith, a blunted blade,  
The rank and file, and those the past has claimed.  
Bring crown and garland for the great Unnamed!

Helpers of yesterday, the judgment nears!  
Its pros and cons dissolve all other bonds  
And silence former loves and tears of two.  
We crossed the bar and you remained behind.  
With strength, and skill, and earnest zeal you change  
Celestial manna into lethal poppies  
And—like the rest—drive toward an evil end,  
So that the best among your sons resemble  
A pack of mongrels, and the final vestige  
Of dream is blotted from your children's brows.

You who must yearn immured in self, who let  
Your fancy rove because what's solid irks you,  
Stay guiltless in the twilight you exalt,  
One move ahead and life becomes a lie.  
You are comprised in us, not we in you.  
Whatever you achieve hails from the substance  
You mock and call unreal, and near the verge  
You wait and clamour: "Ecstasy, engulf us!  
Embrace us, vast beyond! Break through, O sun,  
Solution!" But what comes is only night.

One way alone is left. The time grows short.  
The adamant we held eternal, quakes.  
But yield what will, that stock which firmly holds  
To what it long divined, shall have its say.  
The noble are fulfilled when they perfect  
Their image, but they pay for this with blood.  
The base live on like larvae, callous to  
Perfection, and at last put up with death.  
To stars you spun your thoughts and music, now  
Probe what is more: the spell of finite form!

You, the extremes: the one from barren snow-drifts  
And wave-swept cliffs, the other from the glowing  
Wastes of a spectral god, are both at equal  
Remove from radiant seas and fields where mortals  
Live out their lives and shape themselves and gods.  
Fair-haired or dark, the selfsame womb begot you.  
Each hates and seeks and does not know his brother,  
And always roams and never is fulfilled.

You ride in headlong haste and have no goal.  
You ride, a whirlwind, over sea and land.  
You ride through men and yearn for one to bind you  
Who never can be bound, for one to fill you  
Who never can be filled, and shun a peace  
Where no one will confront you but yourself  
From whom you flinch as your most spiteful foe,  
And your escape? The death you deal yourselves!

You were created for an age of heroes  
And dark beginnings—not for later days!  
And so you must set out for alien regions.  
Your precious blood—a beast's, a child's—will spoil  
If not alloyed in realms of grain and wine.  
Your ferment works in other stuff than yours.  
You light-haired hosts, how often has your god  
Done you to death when you had almost won!

Titanic and not wholly shapen forces,  
Our era which has marked the faintest rumble,  
The frailest swirl of dust within its book,  
Heard all, knew all, yet not what really is,  
Was deaf to you when under earth you thundered.  
It might have used you, saturate with bygones,  
To quicken what is cold, but it ignored you  
Who hovered in the shadow of oblivion.  
So back to night you plunge, your strength untapped,  
Smouldering sparks around the inner light.

You have the eagle's gaze! He calmly fixes  
The sun and only drops to strike and hack.  
Your kindred are the men who took to scourges  
And ropes to curb the all-too venal flesh,  
Who spurred the flaccid mind with wrath and rigour,  
Or Francis, chaste and poor, who crossed the land  
And shed on offal his seraphic light,  
Bernard who roused the rapture of crusaders.  
But you, the tardy champion, had no room  
Within the weary Church. Her lap has narrowed.  
She can no longer hold your earthy strength.

You flicker over ancient walls, a goblin  
Athirst for pregnancy, crouch beneath the arches  
And suck the aftermath of life from ruins.  
You touched the fragments of an urn, a cylix,  
And what you thought rose palpably before us:  
The golden columns hung with garlands, braziers  
Of bronze which fumed beside the purple couches,  
And—locked in every manner of embracing—  
The bodies milk and rose, and brown and copper.  
A foot which faltered and then crossed the threshold . . . .  
But day was hostile to that throng of shadows,  
The spook was gone: the coiled and wanton splendours  
Of Rome, the harlot who had kings for lovers!

All can be doubted since the one evades!  
The spirit blindly struggled from the yoke,  
The truant soul became an idle joke,  
All can be shouted: thresh on empty blades.  
From ferment, tumult, chrysalis, and night  
Now wrest the heart enraged by hate and scorn.  
The earth is swept with joy, the deed is born!  
The image, free and naked, fronts the light!

## BOOK TWO

Yield up your spirit to calm  
Under immaculate clouds,  
Send it to listen and rest  
Long in the terrors of night,  
Till it be tempered and strong,  
And you emerge from your shell  
No longer silent and numb  
Now when the god in you stirs,  
Now in the breath of your love.

“Release me from the first, too easy promise.  
Since such a flame was not enough to forge me,  
Count me among the sluggish souls, I am  
Not fit for further rites.”—“Do not imagine  
That nothing is where nothing meets the eye.  
The other evening when I sat with you,  
I saw a second face behind your features,  
That of the god grew slowly in your own.”

On your breast where I can hear your heart beat,  
Let me lay my mouth to suck the festered  
Sores of former fevers, as a healing  
Stone upon a wound extracts the venom.  
When my hand takes yours, a current runs  
Through your body, and you move untrammelled.  
Sigh no more that turbid fumes which foul  
Dreams have bred, torment your rallied spirit  
Over and again. They flame disbanded  
In the conflagration of this passion.

“Come and shackle me, the sombre,  
And destroy me in my madness!  
You will profit, I shall prosper!”  
“Curb your fury, give your hand!  
You shall bear another bondage,  
Pace another path to gladness.  
Sun shall reign and overtide you,  
Loose what holds you in its spell.”

Sacred night which he allotted,  
Let me stay within your shadow.  
Not until I drain your rapture,  
And perfect what you have founded,  
Shall the day impose its burdens.  
Only light which he has shown me  
Shall invest with warmth and clearness.

He is radiance! When he blazes,  
Do not turn your head from stainless  
Light, where on a crystal summit  
We can laugh at what's below.  
He is darkness, and he sweeps us  
Into surges where we tremble  
Blind and frenzied. Can you fathom  
Where through you, he ushers me?

When to your mouth, my mouth is pressed in yearning,  
Your inner breath impels my every heart-beat,  
And then I loose the arms which hold me clasped,  
Release your body, fountain of my fires,  
And draw away from you with bended forehead,  
It is because I feel my flesh confront me:  
In pasts too far and dark for thought to gauge,  
With you I sprang from the same stem of kings.

This circle which is mine and yours and ours,  
Add to its fill and we shall be fulfilled.  
When you have spent yourself, you feel the richer,  
The ring we narrowed widens, you are solely  
My own, and this makes all more dear to me.  
See how this day of radiance breaks through barriers,  
Comprises what has been and what will come!

“You came to me from years of perfect plenty,  
And gave at will as you have always given.  
I do not yield myself for what is rationed,  
I am the outset, always wanting all.”  
“But you shall be my life and more than transport,  
And bliss, and blaze, as long as fate exacts it,  
Be everything to me, my inmost heart,  
And such a cycle is eternity.”

Put away what pained and tried,  
For the rebel soul is routed,  
And the god shall be your guide.  
The ferocious dream is flouted  
Where in you my self had died.  
Now a greater force directed  
That in you I be perfected.

Not he who lost or never had should weep,  
But he who is unworthy of his wealth  
Because he does not spend. You found the rod  
That jerks where healing waters wait to rise  
And lap of darkness prisons veins of gold.  
Do not recoil and ask: Must it be I?  
Nor thrust the charm, your reason does not grasp,  
Defiantly aside. But help and taste  
Delight while in your hand the wand obeys.



Not aware of what I wanted  
I divined my growth and ferment,  
Like a tree's that buds and branches.  
I was locked in husks of heavy  
Sleep until a breath awoke me.  
Come, my helper, let me strengthen,  
Only you can guess my stresses.  
Free me from my wintry bondage,  
Let me thaw, and stir, and quicken!

You have received and you have given  
In keeping with our law.  
You will not lose nor make for losses  
Until the ring is closed.  
Then do not reach for goals and gladness,  
For more than we have had.  
A noble spirit is not wanton  
With vintage of the god.  
Live in the shade of consummation  
Aware of its demands,  
And praise the force supreme which never  
Will hurl you to the depths.

Since I am twined in you with every fibre,  
I wish I could unfold a fairer fulness  
To multiply the gift I have to offer.  
Destroy me! Let me drink your flame! I freely  
Gave up my freedom for your keeping. Every  
Ambition shall dissolve and every bond  
Break in the service of this love, save one  
Of subtler strength: the sacred tie of honour.

What more have I to give? I let you mould me  
Like clay between your palms, I tune my thinking  
To match the rhythm of your heart. Your marrow  
Within my bone will shape me in your image.  
Your eyes, your steps direct my course. Your colour  
Has dyed the fabric of my dream, you help me  
Articulate the words which make my prayer,  
Your breath pervades my song the stars have prompted.

What happened that I almost am a stranger  
To my own self, the same yet something more!  
Who loved and valued me still does, my comrades  
Still wait for me with fair constraint. All that  
I had is still my own: delights of summer,  
Audacious dreams, the touch of tender lips.  
My blood is running with a bolder rhythm!  
While I denied and stinted, I was needy,  
But since I gave myself, my self is mine!

You tell me it is much you take as yours  
All that is mine—but how your words fall short  
Of the whole truth! You share my every hour,  
Your wishes have the weight of a command.  
I must protect you when you head for danger,  
And bear the blow intended for your hurt.  
I vouch for you with all your flaws, I shoulder  
The load you found too heavy and cast off.  
And it is I who weep the tears your spirit  
Should wring from you—the tears you never weep.

The secret pain which racked me is uncovered.  
When, driven by the storm of youth, I found you,  
The elder who accepted me, I felt  
That I should rather suffer any sorrow  
Than let a bond like this grow slack or break.  
The burning force which masters me, informs  
Me when to stay and when to move. My station  
Will shift as gently as the sliding seasons,  
Yet every rung involves a bond with you.  
Already I have changed my place in silence.

As one, who walked the cliffy ledge unscathed,  
Looks back and knows he cannot cross again  
Now that he sees the danger of each step,  
So you recoil from what you dared when I  
Put all my self into your hands! Had they  
Been weak or frail, I should have been destroyed.  
Now yield to this unyielding law and heed  
The form in which I carry out its bidding,  
For stuff the soul is made of, must decay  
Unless the dark surrender is renewed.

The seed calls in the furrow: From the plot  
Of dark and ferment everything must spring.  
Do not condemn the dread in which you cling,  
Be not afraid of so much night. The lot  
Of those who carry is beset with sorrow.  
But I foresee the gladness of a morrow  
When sun will shine on what we both begot.

Over miracles I mused  
In the lower shafts of wisdom.  
Did the vision which enthralled me,  
Did the god who lit my being  
Come from unimagined summits?  
Was it I myself that bore him?  
Spirit, pray! Discard reflection!  
Are there miracles like this one  
That has lasted through the year?  
Was a star torn from its orbit  
Down to narrow life, by nothing  
But the power of my love!

When I left the land of rapture,  
Bloom and fruit of lavish regions,  
Here at home in frail and golden-  
Green and brittle spring I saw you  
Sprung from earth among the flowers,  
Standing stripped and clearly contoured  
Up against the white of birches,  
You, a god of now and nearness!  
Eyes alight and still unshadowed,  
Knees and shoulders of a shepherd,  
Strong and firm your wrists and fingers,  
You, the god of dawn-beginnings!

Is this the boy of common legend,  
Who came—they said—with limbs as rosy  
And tender as a girl's? With wanton  
Wreaths in his locks, with coaxing eyes?  
Now he is slim and taut. He takes  
And does not ask, is unadorned.  
The lust for venture lights his glances,  
His kiss is brief and burning—after  
His sacred seed is sown, he urges  
Relentlessly to risk and toil.

When gracious peace returns and gracious freedom,  
The song again shall rise to all the powers,  
And lovers, light of heart, will sport in meadows  
And woods, and sip the cup of sweet abandon.  
I still must hold our rapture in abeyance,  
But when you know me in my true vocation  
And recognize the rank I am accorded,  
The day will come that brings you my surrender.

You shared my cup of wine with me the evening  
Before our celebration in the hills.  
We left the river, climbing to the heights,  
And all at once the grassy green of heaven  
Grew limpid blue like southern bays. A halo  
Of gold transformed the trees and roofs to dwellings  
Of the immortals. Timeless flash of Now,  
When landscape turns to spirit, dream to substance.  
We trembled in a moment of consummate  
Delight that held and crowned our whole existence  
And put an end to envy for the longed-for  
Sea of the gods, the radiant island-sea.

Give thanks to him, the guide, who chose us both  
To do tomorrow's deed and fall as victims  
In praise of stars, my brother in the fight!  
You thirst for glory and I covet rest.  
No give and take can mitigate the fires  
Which you have roused in me, and the same power  
Which holds would crush me. No togetherness  
But blood we spill together will release me.  
O quiet of a last night in your arms!  
Before the signal calls me to oblivion,  
O peerless joy of magic dawn! To conquer  
With God and you, with you to welcome death!

The drunken Lord of Autumn said: "Before  
You try to find my twin in these terrains  
As one embodied, as a separate self,  
—A hope too unrestrained, a wish too daring—  
Savour this fruit and taste this cup of wine.  
The average plant is sweeter there than here,  
And grows more lush than in your native soil.  
The choicest of the choice thrives only here."

I do not know if I have duly praised you,  
You the incarnate, you the uncreated.  
I know one only: He is many-shapen,  
And grows and craves to be destroyed, and quickens  
Again in freshened flame. First he is single,  
Then fills his many forms, and each with equal  
And yet with other majesty, whenever  
He reascends from purifying night.

Some teach that this is earthly, that eternal,  
Another: I am want and you abundance.  
We tell how earthly stuff can be eternal,  
And one man's want another man's abundance.  
Unconscious of its dawn and dusk is beauty,  
The deathless spirit snatches what is mortal,  
It shapes, it keeps alive and heightens beauty,  
And with empyreal power makes immortal.  
A body that is fair incites my blood,  
I, who am spirit, clasp it with enchantment,  
And changed in works of spirit and of blood,  
It is my own and changeless in enchantment.

Where are the pearls? Ah, where the tender  
Lament? The roses? Couch of ease?  
The game of wooing and surrender?  
The scent is rank, the splendour flees.  
Atone with stern and silent rite—  
The month of growth, the dawn is breaking,  
The secret bud, a chaste awaking,  
A crisper breath, a cooler light.

## BOOK THREE

What light has touched the morning earth with wonder  
As on the first of dawns? The wind is sated  
With the astounded song of wakened worlds.  
The timeless mountains seem to change their shape,  
And flowers nod as in the days of childhood.  
The river laps against the shore and drowns  
The dust of ages with a wash of silver.  
Is this a state of grace? Creation trembles,  
And everyone who walks the road is ringed  
With majesty which he is unaware of.  
Across the land a wealth of sun is flooded,  
And all who move within its beams are blessed.

Here the spirit rules! Reflection  
Of my realm and grove and grange!  
Each is born again and newly  
Shapen here. His home and country  
Dim to legend, and the rites  
Of the message, of the blessing  
Change your kindred, name, and station.  
Father, mother are no more.  
From the sons whom I have chosen,  
I elect my lords of earth.

Who ever circled the flame  
Always shall follow the flame.  
No matter how he may rove,  
Reached by the rays he will not  
Wander too far from the goal.  
But when he loses their light,  
Tricked by a gleam of his own,  
Lacking the law of the core,  
He will be scattered in space.

The distinction you desire  
Does not hail from crown and scutcheon.  
Through their glances men of any  
Rank betray their venal fancies  
And their raw and ribald prying.  
Matchless sons of kingly spirit  
Spring from masses, not from peerage,  
And you will descry your kindred  
By their frank and fervent eyes.

With the women of an alien  
Kind you shall not taint your bodies.  
Patience! Peacocks are for monkeys!  
Near the lake Velede governs,  
Teaches girls forgotten knowledge,  
Woman's most intrinsic secret.  
Versed in laws of world-beginnings  
She will join you to the ripened  
Wombs avowed to bear your children.

Grey and golden drifts of twilight  
Thread the garden with their croon.  
And bemused, a spectre brushes  
Summer cobwebs from her forehead.  
Wistful cadence! Through the windows  
Wisps of music coax and beckon,  
Sap the soul with sweetness. Hasten!  
All of this is autumn song,  
And the voice in you wants neither  
Potions nor a faded sheen.



Your friend conducted you. With him you crossed  
The sacred threshold for the consummation.  
Roused to the core you knelt in silent fervour,  
Surrendered to the One, the All-Comprising.  
Old qualms dissolved, new meanings dawned for you.  
You rose in exultation and not only  
Your features, but your body burned with radiance.  
A loving heart can fathom every creature,  
An eager heart storms every height and, holy  
Though sober, now the common day begins.

You have avowed with eyes that span the world,  
And sacrificed with wreathed and wind-blown hair,  
Vying in body with the swiftest, lithest.  
Unblessed are they who jeer the bond which holds you,  
Who fix you with their stare and rather suffer  
The chains they forged than welcome a deliverer.  
Their doubting is not freedom but distortion,  
Constraint, and lassitude. Faith is the vigour  
Of blood, the strength of full and fair existence.

Under changeless constellations  
Peoples shift from dawn to darkness,  
Spirit ripens, spirit withers,  
Sleep is tantamount to waking.  
Wash of ebb and tide erases  
Even proudest earthly unions.  
But this knowledge does not weigh us,  
For our year gives us our frontier,  
Flame within the ring our fire,  
Tending it our aim and bliss.

Now we no longer haunt the tract  
Of sterile land, the forest greyed  
In blighting wind, and furrows cracked  
With drought, the shrivelled weed and blade.  
Fresh islands rise in secret, girded  
With bloom, on hills a fountain broke:  
The new commandment you have worded,  
New generations you evoke.

The new commandments for the new are these:  
The old may revel in their store of riches,  
The distant thunder does not reach their ears.  
But brand as slaves the young who, in this era,  
Can lull their hearts with melting strains and toy  
With chains of roses on the brink of chasms.  
Spew out the morsel seasoned with decay  
And mask the sword in laurel sprays, adjusted  
In pace and rhythm to the coming fight.

What you have met with, clasps you like a ring  
Of steel. If madness swept you and you wake  
And cannot face the dawn unflinchingly,  
Run on your sword: the chosen death of heroes!  
If—in some trifling thing—you harmed an equal,  
Leave him in silence and atone with deeds  
Before returning. You have not the right  
To soil his honour and your own and redden  
Your brother's brow with shame. For it is vile  
To ask to be forgiven, to forgive!

Fate has it that your foe is never reared  
Outside yourself, your want is what creates him.  
His function is to parry thrust with thrust.  
He is a hybrid, tricks and foils, but whets  
Your blade and quickens your essential powers,  
Brings needed poisons with his loathsome deeds.  
So challenge the aggressors from without:  
Block us! You cannot wilt the word that blooms!  
Hear us! You favour it, and yet it blooms!  
Kill us! Whatever blooms, will brim with blooms!

One knowledge like for all implies a hoax!  
For knowledge has three forms: the one that grows  
From blind divinings of the throng, from seed  
And stuff into alert and clever sons.  
The schools and books of ages give the second,  
Only initiates pass into the third.  
Three rungs for those who know—and none but fools  
Try to dispense with that of birth and flesh.  
The other, just as strong, is grasp and vision,  
But only he the god knew, knows the last.

The spirit that is always male has shaped  
The world we know. The woman's gift is substance,  
No less a shrine to bow to! Woman bears  
The beast, but men and women come from man.  
Your rib produced her, adequate and wicked.  
Eschew her secret! Hers the inner circle!  
In council she is evil and nefarious.  
As in the Book of Books, so the Anointed  
Proclaims at every era's turn: "My mission  
Is to dissolve the works of woman."

If a recluse should accost you,  
One of those who muse in deserts,  
Gaunt with matted hair, and counsel:  
—Calling this the peak of wisdom—  
“Keep to one that stands for all things  
To prepare for Nothing.” Answer:  
“He whose love was never squandered  
Never need repent of earthly  
Fulness, nor reject the body.”

“Break the seal which keeps us silent,  
Let us read the rune to hungry  
Throngs who cry their want aloud!”  
“Do not blunder like the dullards  
Who demand solution only  
To pollute the rune, divest it  
Of its power, scratch it under,  
And become more needy. No one  
But the master sets the day.”

If you can cheat your times that do not look,  
But blink, that do not feel, but twitch and quiver,  
How will it be when many rise and tempt  
With dazzling summons: “Come! We are the way!”  
Then my bequest shall serve: I gave you eyes  
That see, in lieu of brains that dupe. His body  
And face will show you the elect. Before  
The seventh year, when light begins to break  
In us, he grows into the mould of kingship,  
The kiss of coronation on his brow.

Now shut the gate, dismiss the unprepared!  
The blind in soul can be destroyed by knowledge.  
It thrives concealed in sound, and dance, and image,  
Only from mouth to mouth conveys a teaching  
Whose weight no one may voice who lives today.  
At the first oath you learned what calls for silence,  
And awe still prompts us to withhold the name  
Of our revered precursor, who so clearly  
Foretold what you have dreamed and not yet dreamed of.

So far the secret lore may be discovered:  
More than the sum of parts, the total counts,  
And through the circle new élan is ushered  
So that the strength of every member mounts.  
And from this source of love which never shallows,  
Each templar draws the vigour to attain  
A greater force, which tides into his fellows  
And washes back into the ring again.

You are the cornerstone, and I acclaim you  
For your approach to me, yourselves, and others,  
Your way of work, your quest for faithful hearts.  
And you, the vassals, are the realm: a truth  
As real and hidden as that other stars,  
Before or after, show the trends of earth.  
You shall not sue for swifter growth of power.  
The crowning number holds all multiples,  
Its basis soon will base the whole, and what  
You cannot live today, will never be.

Who was allowed to see the depths becomes  
Immune, and for the common good transmits  
The spell as rite and image. If he brings  
Nothing but tokens, he annuls himself  
And them: He saw too much, but lacks an eye!  
No one who found true wisdom ever blabs,  
For men would be convulsed and numbed with terror,  
The blood and semen of the most intrepid  
Would freeze, their limbs would fail them, if the cruel,  
The awful otherness rose up before them.

The rapture of the waking! When you turned  
To leave, and up above my roof I saw  
A golden star which signed to me, the first  
To be transmuted wholly by the spirit,  
You granted me the right to put a question.  
I hesitated first, and then renounced:  
"Who lived the utmost needs no clues. If we  
Could grasp you, we should be your equals. You  
Gave me enough to change the course of planets:  
The single foot of solid ground I stand on."

I took the praise the schools awarded,  
They held me worthy of their honours . . .  
The time for guilelessness is gone.  
Then insight dawned: to know while knowing  
That which can be acquired is cheap.  
Only the wisdom which the god confers,  
Makes wise! With you I pass through sacred  
Terrains and toward the sacred goal.  
I sense accord in bloom and wilting,  
And joy in all I live and do.

Who would desire a different you, when with  
A smile you droop your head and slowly swerve,  
Too full a flower on a stem too fragile!  
Who would begrudge you gentle air and sun!  
And yet I tell you, you must face the day  
When salutary tempest sweeps the last  
Remains of ashes from your golden hair.  
“Do not condemn a weaker one who left you.  
Remember how you once indulged me, seeing  
Me as a light-haired marvel—nothing more.”

Do not dissect too much what no one knows!  
The symbols life has traced cannot be read!  
The wild swan which you wounded in the wing  
And tended in your yard awhile, reminded  
You—so you said—of infinitely distant  
Yet kindred substance you had crushed within him.  
He wasted, never grateful for your kindness  
And never vexed, but when his end had come,  
His breaking eyes expressed reproach that you  
Had forced him to invade an alien circle.

You hung your head, both diffident and young.  
I guessed where books had failed you. Whether flesh  
Or spirit shall prevail, the tenor of  
The hour prompts. A living hand must point  
What's axle and what's wheel, what shifts, what stands.  
Once at a feast, the lord we feasted flung  
His spell on you. The frenzy of his flame,  
Deluge of long-restrained delight, submerged  
More than the spirit. Late, when haltingly  
You came to where I lay, the flesh was silent.

Friend and teacher, dictum, counsel  
Did not help me on my way,  
But you grasped the bitter need of  
Youth, and vouched for me until  
Precious growth of those imperilled  
Years had strengthened for the clash.  
So to you I pledged my being.  
Bid me go from pole to pole!  
Let me throttle those who hate you,  
Take my blood to wage your work!

Now you may venture from the inner space,  
The cell which holds the nucleus of powers  
And life unborn. Before you lies the land.  
The rung you reached is written in your eyes  
And in your form your kind of future daring.  
Your ways divide, your purpose is the same.  
Within your veins the wine of love runs triple.  
The fair today will be the strong tomorrow,  
Who throve because the wakener leaned and knew them,  
Gave them his strength, transformed them with his smile.

After the field was won, the battle ended,  
When furrows reached for seed again, and crowned  
With leaves the troops and crews were homeward bound,  
From fairest shores the sound of fête ascended.  
Where flanked by flute and clarion, glittering  
With every colour, caught in dance and cadence,  
And wound in waves of fruit- and flower-fragrance,  
The paean rises, an eternal spring.



## CLOSING CHORUS

God has laid his path before us,  
God has linked us to his land,  
God has spurred us to his combat,  
God has ringed us with his wreath.  
God has quelled our heart with quiet,  
God has steeled our breast with strength,  
God has grooved our brows with anger,  
God has leased our lips with love.  
God has locked us in filiation,  
God has swept us with his blaze,  
God has lit us with elation,  
God has steeped us in his grace.

# THE KINGDOM COME

## GOETHE'S LAST NIGHT IN ITALY

What a ray has reached me from southerly seas?  
There I see two pines with their sombre pinions  
Spread through the night's everlasting blue and between them  
Silver and glimmering, single and tranquil, a star.  
Now the two emerge from the grove, on a lawn  
Circed with shrubs advance toward the image of marble,  
Shining as they who are clasped as they pledge their faith.  
Great through the power of mystical rites, their heads  
Lift with the promise of rule and radiance. Astounded  
Spaces filled with the glow of eternity listen  
Long to their paeon ambrosial winds carry on  
Over the slumbering land and the sibilant surf.

Parting claws at my heart—farewell to the sacred  
Soil where first I saw creatures moving in light,  
And through the broken columns the dance of the blessed.  
I whom you dubbed “the heart of the people” and called  
“Truest of heirs” felt poor and deprived and I trembled.  
Starting afresh as a child, here I grew to a man.  
Through the mist I can hear your censorious voices:  
“Lotus of Hellas deadened his love for his country.”  
Oh, could you fathom my words, for no wiser befit you:  
Over the mountains you still shall continue to lavish  
Not only drops of your kingliest blood, but a torrent.  
This be your share and your task until you are freed.

Fate denied you the lot of more fortunate stems  
Who were accorded a seer at the dawn of their eras,  
One who was born as a son, not a grandson of Gaia,  
Sensing the secrets in strata of earth and beyond them,  
Who was a guest in the halls of celestials and there  
Stole for his people a spark of empyreal flame,  
So that their years are not wholly entangled in error.  
One who went forth to the gorge where the terrible Mothers  
Sit at the roots of the undermost regions as watchers,  
Forced them to yield to him, while they struggled and screamed,  
Wrested from them the magic he needs for his spells.  
You had no helper like this, and I am not he.

Once—I remember—we rode on the Rhine, our ship  
Gallant with flags, to the vineyards of neighbouring shores.  
Feathery blue of the autumn sky transfigured  
Meadows, the oaks on the hill, the white-washed houses.  
They were loading the last of the harvested clusters.  
Naked and gaudy with gold and fluttering ribbons,  
Revelling vintagers twined the vats with their garlands.  
Echoes of laughter and singing! The must full of fragrance!  
Crowds of Bacchantes with scarlet vines in their hair,  
Stormed up the road by the river, glowing and green.  
There at the empire's limits: the Roman wall,  
All of a sudden I guessed from where I was sprung.

But where I lived was your land of longing and music.  
In your cathedrals I worshipped with reverent prayers,  
Till from the nebulous dimness, fretwork, and turrets,  
Crying in torment, my spirit reached out for the sun.  
Now I bring you one of the life-giving beams,  
But in my heart I must hide the more passionate fires,  
Lest they destroy while confusion still reigns in your minds.  
Open your soul to this beam! Do not think it too tepid!  
And I shall scatter you quartzes, and simples, and metals,  
Colourful sequence suggesting now nothing, now all,  
Till you have learned to see and can fathom the magic—  
Norm of the gods—which lurks in bodies and things.

Long will the wisest among you refuse to acknowledge  
Tidings of gladness. They fondle their billowing beards,  
Point their fingers at mould-spotted volumes, and clamour:  
“Foe of our fatherland, prophet of gods that are false!”  
Ah, when the circle of time is closed, for a thousand  
Years the refractory necks and the carefully reasoning  
Minds of your rulers and sages again will follow  
Indigent bands of the frenzied who fled from their countries.  
They will believe in the wildest of miracle-legends,  
Taste with their senses the body and blood of a saviour,  
Then for another millenium kneel in the dust,  
Bowed to a boy whom you have enthroned as a god . . .

Where do you lure and lead me, illustrious two?  
Are these the shadows of yearning, lovely and vexing?  
Pillared courts I see with trees and fountains,  
Groups of the young and the old in action and leisure,  
Measure and strength I had fancied were only allied to  
Attic sublimeness, and sound to the vigour and sweetness  
From an Aeolian mouth. Instead I encounter  
Sons my people bore, and the tongue of my people  
Rings in my ear. Delight overwhelms me, the promise  
Marble and roses held out to me, now is fulfilled.  
What a tremor is loosed from inviolate space!  
What a ray has reached me from southerly seas!

## HYPERION

“A sign was enough  
For those who yearned, and so the gods,  
Since time began, gave signs and were silent.”

### I

Where, O my brothers, my people,  
Was it a far-away region  
Where I was nurtured?  
That though I drink of our vintage,  
Live on the grain of our country,  
Still I am alien!  
Just as the son in his proud  
Dreams is remote from his younger  
Half-brothers, knowing  
Even in laughter and games that  
He is aloof, that his father  
Must have been better.  
You who are snared in reflection,  
Melted away into music,  
Lag in your labours,  
Wailing, alas! by what waters,  
Weeping, alas! by what willows,  
And for what pleasures!  
You who are yielding, yet brutal,  
You cannot master the lovely  
Steps of a dancer.  
Shying from fruitful communion,  
Lonely though friend is with friend,  
You who need mirrors!

### II

Kindred to you is my core,  
  children of island and sea,  
You who linked action with grace,  
  art with sublimeness and fused  
Charm of Ionia with stern  
  Spartan command and restraint.

Who led the chorus in youth,  
                                  shaped the heroic in age,  
He who was lord of the feast,  
                                  guided his country in stress.  
Temples and games joined the tribes  
                                  zealously vying in deeds.  
No later wisdom has brought  
                                  more than the founders of then.  
Ships which have sailed on these seas,  
                                  people who passed on these shores!  
There, when an era grew old,  
                                  under the cypress a mind  
Grasping the whole of his time  
                                  taught the most kingly of youths.  
Darlings of Fortune, your hand  
                                  conquered whatever it touched,  
Rendered the grandson intact  
                                  all that his fathers had stored.  
You who made patterns for men,  
                                  formed them in flesh and in bronze,  
You who in frenzy and poise  
                                  dared to give birth to our gods!  
Thousands lament in despair  
                                  that this was destined to fall,  
That by implacable law  
                                  life is the killer of life,  
That at the Syrian's decree  
                                  beauty was plunged into night.

### III

I journeyed home: Such floods of flowers never  
Had welcomed me before, and in the fields  
And groves I sensed the pulse of sleeping powers.  
I saw the spell on valley, hill, and stream,  
Saw you, my brothers, heir to sunny morrows.  
Your eyes, still chaste, are tranquil pools of dream.  
In time you will be moulded by your yearning.  
My anguish reaches out for rest. And yet  
A gracious promise of the gods is granted

The suppliant who will not pace the realm.  
I shall be earth, the very grave for heroes,  
Which fervent sons invoke to be fulfilled.  
“They bring the second era. Love engendered  
The world and Love shall kindle it again.”  
I spoke the magic and I drew the circle.  
Before I drown in night a vision sweeps  
Me upward: Soon the god will set his weightless  
Foot on my cherished land—the flame made flesh.



## THE CHILDREN OF THE SEA

### I

Once I revered you as my host—then shunned you.  
Is this the vengeance for my long evasion,  
That waves with changing contours guide my fancy,  
Convoy me on this portion of my way?  
When you appeared in dismal streets you brought  
Us joy and torment and you seemed a wonder  
Hailing from bays as he, the nearest, dearest,  
From woods beside the sea where beads of amber  
Once drifted from an undiscovered world.  
The most remote, forbidden dream is wreathed  
Around your stubborn, northern brow and lights  
Your tranquil eye, a well of shade, because  
The child was shifted by his destiny  
From dusk of rocking ships to magic ports.  
Though free of care, you seem to drag a chain,  
Elude us, and yet strengthen our belief  
That those with hair as fair as light still squander  
Their priceless blood in sweet and senseless spending.  
A sailor's luck and hunger for adventure  
Sweep you, the startling spell in days of fervour,  
Beyond our ken and to the furthest sea.

### II

A land of bloom! The favour of immortals  
Shines on the shores they chose, and only smoke  
Betrays the crater gorged with inner fires.  
O fair and glowing son this earth begot,  
Come to the bronzes of a Golden Age,  
The seated Hermes with the limbs that conjure,  
And do not shun the temple near the water.  
The spirit does not ask or plead, it kneels,  
And like the lord of life and death, you tether  
The soul with subtle threads and merely lifting  
Your lashes, long and black, you move to fear  
Whenever you approach. How wan the morning!

Is there a film in fragile domes of blue?  
A tarnish on the sated blue of waves?  
A menace rising through the organ tones?  
Do longings we are versed in, cloud these coasts  
Of rapture and forgetfulness? Not they!  
The sun is still the same, the glistening air,  
The limpid calm on days of sacrifice.  
Only your eyes, less bright today, have darkened  
The fathomless abode of gods: the sea.

### III

Awaited guest who often at our door  
Called us for fleeting walks in autumn winds,  
Whose soft metallic laugh and questions were  
A balm to winter's night—who after years  
Of care confronts us supple, fair, and free,  
Upon his fresh young lips the sacred loathing  
And lovely greed that stamp the sons of gods!  
You too were nurtured to the sough of surges,  
On blessed shores where men are not enslaved  
By toil and need, and where as yet no breath  
Of sleepless lust afflicts with languid sleep.  
On tiers of rising foothills rimmed with white  
A moving flood of green, a candid sail  
Gleam through the silver lace of olive branches,  
And in the dark the cliff resounds with song  
Of deathless passion locked in deathless grief.  
And after you have dealt delight, unknowing,  
More kin to us through common rites of life,  
Your quest begins, and wrested from our keeping  
—Greater in force—you leave your noble harbour  
To seek what other land, what other sea?

## IV

### ECHO

The sea resounds, on every coast the lustre,  
The rising and the ebbing of the surf,  
The flakes of shining foam, the screaming birds!  
O Children of the Sea whose early dreams  
Divine the bliss of ever young horizons,  
Want and abundance, action and repose,  
The waters sing for you—your praises surge  
Within the hollow shell the sea abandoned,  
The shell a boy holds to his ear, and listens,  
And gazes out into the salty wind.

For you the song, and now you live in us,  
Unfathomed, cool-eyed, as if just forsaking  
The lap of waters and yet unaware  
How close the end! What alien shimmer masks  
Your head with smiles of smooth malignant oceans?  
No god can help you steer an even course.  
The wave that bore you washes you like flotsam  
And in the west still glistens with your hair.

On azure shores the gentle midday murmur  
Of sun-enveloped seas evokes your face  
In palpable and luring loveliness.  
You stand among the throngs with sombre eyes,  
Your cheek suffused with summer, and are equal  
To those we name with awe who, bridled only  
By strength within them, lived erect, and light,  
And shining as the body of the Foamborn.

But you the sea has cast from south to north,  
You, the amazing blend of fire and ice,  
Of sudden zest for strife and flaccid pauses.  
Why cling to us, you ending of this age,  
Choose us along with others for your whims?  
You feel the drive of wish or wave, but soon  
Your soul will have exhausted every pale,  
And moan and stray, too frail for love or faith.

The ring is closed. The sea-god circles cliff  
And island with his song, he flings a spell  
And links the course of destinies with waters  
That press and thrust and throng, or plead and glide,  
Are almost quelled but gather for return . . .  
Now, scourged beneath the longed-for storm, the tide  
Engulfs what moulders, and the current snatches  
You too! And yet your souls remain and sound  
Within the hollow shell the sea abandoned,  
The shell a boy holds to his ear, and listens,  
And gazes out into the salty wind.

## THE WAR

. . . a mind imbued  
With shame for others or itself grows strange,  
And well may find that what you say is crude.

But do not listen, nor have lies derange  
Your tale. Your vision shall be manifest,  
And let him scratch himself who has the mange.

Although the sounds you utter may molest  
When tasted first, once they have been absorbed  
The food which they provide is of the best.

DANTE, DIVINE COMEDY, PARADISE XVII

As jungle beasts, which slink away or snarl  
At one another in their greed to rend,  
Seek company and huddle in a flock  
When forests are ablaze, or mountains quake,  
So in our country, split to factions, foes  
United at the cry of war. A breath  
Not felt before, a breath of union floated  
From rank to rank, and a confused divining  
Of what was now to come. The people, seized  
By tremors great as changing worlds, one instant  
Forgot the glut and gauds of coward years  
And saw themselves majestic in their need.

They journeyed to the hermit on the hill:  
“Does this stupendous fate still leave you calm?”  
He said: These shudders were your best response.  
What grips you now—I knew it long ago!  
Long have I sweated blood of anguish while  
They played and played with fire. I exhausted  
My tears before and I have none today.  
The thing was almost done and no one saw,  
The worst is yet to be and no one sees.  
You yield to pressure goading from without . . .  
These are the beacons only, not the tidings.  
The struggle, as you wage it, is not mine.

The seer is never thanked, he meets with scorn  
And stones when he foretells disaster, fury  
And stones when it arrives. The crimes unnumbered  
Which all ascribe to force or luck, the hidden  
Descent of man to larva call for penance!  
What are the slaughtered multitudes to him,  
If life itself is slain! He cannot splutter  
Of native virtue and of Latin malice.  
Here whining women, old and sated burghers  
Are more at fault than bayonets and guns  
Of adversaries, for our sons' and grandsons'  
Dismembered bodies, for their glassy eyes!

His charge is praise and blame, amends and prayer.  
He loves and serves upon his way, with blessings  
Dispatched the youngest of those dear to him.  
They do not march for catchwords, but themselves.  
They know what drives, what renders them immune!  
His dread goes deeper, for he feels the powers  
Are more than fable. Who can grasp his plea:  
You, who on reeking corpses swing your scourges,  
May you preserve us from too light an ending  
And from the worst, the blood-betrayal! Races  
Committing this will wholly be uprooted  
Unless their best is used to halt the doom.

You shall not cheer. No rise will mark the end,  
But only downfalls, many and inglorious.  
Monsters of lead and iron, tubes and rods  
Escape their maker's hand and rage unruly.  
Who saw his comrade crushed to pulp and fragments,  
Who lived the life of vermin in the broken  
And desecrated earth, must laugh with hatred  
At speeches once heroic, now deceitful.  
The ancient god of battles is no more.  
And in decay a fevered world is sickening  
Toward death. The only ichors that are sacred  
Are those which, still unstained, are spent in floods.

Where is the man who stands for all? And where is  
The only word that holds on Judgment Day?  
Monarchs with pasteboard crowns and silly gestures,  
Lawyers, and scribes, and traders—froth and chaff!  
Even in firm and chartered limits: turmoil!  
Then threat of chaos. From a modest house  
In suburbs of the greyest of our towns,  
Supported by his cane, a plain, forgotten  
Old man appeared and solved the hour's riddle.  
He saved what they—God knows!—with pompous slogans  
Had driven to the chasm's brink: the realm,  
But from the fouler foe he cannot succour.

“Have you no eye for sacrifice unmeasured,  
For strength of unity?” These also flourish  
Across the border. In nefarious eras  
Offerings are useless, duties dim and dull.  
Crowds have their value, but they shape no symbols,  
Are aimless and forgetful. Only sages  
Want reasons. People drool of charity,  
Humaneness—and embark on monstrous slaughter.  
On spittle of the basest wooing follows  
The slime of vile affront, and what's at odds  
Would fawn with fond caresses if the future  
Made manifest its terror to their eyes.

This bloated mask is spirit? Blooms so frail  
Spring from another soil. The withered cant  
Of zenith and a resurrection savours  
Of rotted fruit. The old will not be young  
When they return! Who speaks of truth and errs  
In basic truth is maddest of the mad.  
The wily say: a lesson for the future!  
That will be different, though, and those who face it  
Must learn to change, to grow the inner eye.  
Not one who summons now and thinks he governs,  
Knows that he gropes about in doom, and no one  
Can see the palest flicker of a dawn.

Less strange that millions die than that more millions  
Still dare to live! Whose rhythm is his era's  
Will see the present only as a spook.  
A childish fool finds comfort in: You did it!  
No! All and none—so reads the final verdict.  
A cheating fool pretends: This time the kingdom  
Of peace is near. But when reprieves are over,  
Your ankles and your knees again shall wade  
In must the Master trod. But then a race  
Will spring to life whose gaze does not dissemble,  
Who know their fate and will not turn to stone  
For fear of pitiless Gorgonian law.

In neither camp a single thought, a glimmer  
Of what's at stake. Here, only greed to traffic  
Where others came before, to be converted  
To that which one reviles and not acknowledge  
That when its gods have died a people dies.  
And there they boast of old prestige, and splendour,  
And culture, while they want to sprawl in comfort,  
In gains—and in the lap of clearest judgment  
They do not even guess that those they slighted  
Destroy what has been ripening for destruction.  
And that, perhaps, "a hate and scorn of mankind"  
Will bring salvation in a different form.

But let the song not end in curse! Some ears  
Already grasp my praise of stuff and stem,  
Of seed and fruit. And many hands already  
Are stretched toward me when I proclaim: O land,  
Too beautiful for alien feet to ravage,  
Where groves are harps for winds, where in the osiers  
A flute resounds, and where the dream still weaves,  
Although your children always try to rend it,  
And where the radiant Mother of Caucasians  
Who are embroiled and vicious now, first showed  
Her real unchanging face, O land, still hiding  
So great a promise that it cannot fall!



Now youth calls up the gods, both the eternal  
And the returning when their day is rounded.  
The king of storms gives him of clear horizons  
The scepter and delays the Longest Winter.  
Who hung upon the Tree of Weal cast off  
The pallor of pale souls and vies in frenzy  
With Iacchus. Secretly Apollo leans  
On Baldur: for a while there will be night—  
This time the east will not bring light! The war  
Has been resolved on stars, he is the victor  
Who shelters the palladium in his confines,  
And who can change is lord of worlds to come.

## THE POET IN TIMES OF CONFUSION

### TO THE MEMORY OF COUNT BERNHARD UXKULL

In placid times, they say the poet is  
A winged child who sings his tender dreams  
And showers beauty on a busy world.  
But when abuses swell into a storm,  
And destiny pounds at the door, his verses  
Ring like a pick on ore and are misheard.  
When all are blinded he, the only seer,  
Unveils the coming doom in vain, but though  
The cries of a Cassandra fill the house,  
The frantic rabble sees one thing alone:  
The horse, the horse, and rushes to its death.  
Then prophets may foretell the anger of  
The tribal god, the trot of Assur's thousands  
Which drag the chosen people into bondage,  
The clever council has more sure report,  
Derides the warner, shuts him in a cell.  
And when the Holy City is besieged  
Burghers and warriors jostle in confusion,  
Within the lords and priests have bloody quarrels  
For broomsticks while without the stoutest bulwark  
Is falling, he is silent and he sighs.  
But when the victor rides, and loots, and burns,  
And saddles man and woman with his yoke,  
Then some in foaming rage reject their guilt  
And charge the fault to other hands, and some  
Weary with hunger, struggle for the crust  
The shameless conqueror throws, and numb themselves  
With bawdy mirth, and lick the palm that strikes.  
He stays aloof, the only one who feels  
The utter wretchedness, the utter shame.

Go to the peaks once more, go to your spirits,  
And bring a better solace to relieve us  
Of this affliction, says an aged man.  
What boots a voice from skies when no one listens

To simple sense? What boots the talk of spirit  
When there is not a single urge in common  
Save fight for food? When every guild reproaches  
The other and upholds its flimsy craft  
Although it foundered, looks for help in increase  
Of darling gadgets? When the wisest babble  
Of new construction built on ancient vices,  
And counsel: Shrink to worms so that the thunder  
May spare you and the lightning fail to strike!  
The living of this epoch who have wandered  
Through long distress will always burn their incense  
To every promise of the lying idols  
That hurl them into serfdom and destruction.  
For they forgot their highest inner law  
And what allows them to survive, rejected  
Faith in a lord and need of an atoner,  
And want to dodge their destiny with guile.  
Still harsher ploughs must break those clods to furrows,  
Still denser vapours must oppress the air,  
And not a glint of blue shall pierce the darkness  
And fall upon the people of our era,  
Until all those who speak a common tongue  
Join hands, and arm against corruption tear  
The faded tatters of their flags, regardless  
Of red or blue or black, and think of nothing  
Except another Vespers—day and night!

But in a mournful age it is the poet  
Who keeps the marrow sound, the germ alive.  
He stirs the holy flame that leaps across  
And shapes the flesh in which to burn, discovers  
The truth of tidings which our fathers gave:  
That those elected to the highest goal  
Begin by passing through the waste, that once  
The heart of Europe shall redeem the earth.  
And when the final hope has almost perished  
In sternest grief, his eyes already see  
A coming light. Unstained by venal mobs,  
By threadbare minds and follies steeped in poison,  
A younger generation rises toward him,  
The youths who, steeled by times of galling pressure,

Again have honest standards for the probe  
Of men and things who—fair and grave and proud—  
In alien worlds accept themselves for what  
They are, avoid the rocks of brazen boasting  
And the morass of would-be brotherhood,  
Spat out the lifeless, stale, and base, and from  
Their consecrated dreams, and deeds, and sorrows  
Begot the only one who can restore.  
He breaks the chains and sweeps aside the rubble,  
He scourges home the lost to lasting law,  
Where lord again is lord, the great is great  
Again, where poise again is poise. He fastens  
The true device upon the nation's banner.  
Through tempests and the dread fanfares of dawning,  
He leads his tried and faithful to the work  
Of sober day and founds the Kingdom Come.

## TO A YOUNG LEADER IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR

When to your country you came home from the desolate field,  
Whole out of shattering hail, trenches in billows of dust,  
Chastely your words seemed to flow as of a service enjoined.  
From the most daring of rides, from the most agonized toils  
Proud rose your shoulders and free bearing a weight even then:  
Fate of your squadron.

Action and rapid command lay in the lift of your hand,  
Gentle and pondering eyes watched for a danger in wait,  
All of your being exhaled power and calm and poise,  
So that the older suppressed that he was secretly moved,  
When the slim form of a boy, looming light and erect,  
Swung from the saddle.

Dice in the conflict were cast otherwise than you had dreamed,  
When the disintegrate host turned from the weapons of war.  
Sadly you faced me as though after a sumptuous fête  
Workaday soberly dawns, empty of shining rewards,  
And with tears you deplored rare and significant years  
Utterly wasted.

You, though, should not ape the crowd, always a plaything of  
whims,  
Branding as rubbish today what in the past they extolled,  
Razing a milestone that tripped feet no more sure of the way.  
Suddenly all were at one, marched to the gates of success,  
Fell under onerous yoke. Meaning is hidden in this,  
Meaning within you.

All that has ripened in you while you won honours in war,  
Never can pass from your grasp, arms you for struggles to  
come.

And as you walked at my side looking to me for advice,  
Evening which paled in the sky haloed your fluttering hair,  
Haloed your temples with light. First it ringed you with rays  
And then it crowned you!

## SIGNS

M.

“Now, after centuries the instant  
Has come at last that sets us free!  
Now all the chains at last are broken,  
The earth is riven, and a half-god  
Mounts from the chasm, young and beautiful.”

One came from the fields and toward the gate.  
Carmine fires broke along the peaks,  
Lifeless air and ashen heavens weighed  
On the walls as though before a quake.  
Everyone was lapped in deepest sleep,  
He was roused and all his body shook:  
“Lord, have I construed your signs aright?”  
Down the answer chimed: “The time is full!”

Three stood in a room and were afraid,  
Joined their hands to form a ring, and fixed  
Each the other with ecstatic eyes:  
“We are here to meet your hour, Lord!  
If you choose us as your messengers,  
Give us strength to bear the load of joy,  
For we witnessed the eternal child  
Rise incarnate from a world of night.”

Seven on a hill surveyed the land,  
Ruins smouldered, mildew greyed the grass.  
“Through the realm we have diffused your breath,  
In the furrow we have sown your seed,  
Lord, a second time you shift the lots,  
Though the drouth which you decree be long,  
We shall wait, the keepers of your height,  
Die serene for we have seen your light.”

## PRAYERS

### I

When I recall those avenues of April,  
The light around us, waiting for your glances,  
The evening saturate with purple darkness,  
When life had quickened us with its enchantment  
Until in vaults of night it ebbed to prayer,  
It seemed to me the dream my blood had nourished  
Was only a mirage of poise and power,  
That I had hardly even grasped the tremors  
We felt before your fair and fervent nearness,  
And that my song was pale to what had happened  
As to a thing its shadow in the water.  
But now I know a single mouth can never  
Extol the consummation of the tidings  
Which seer and sage have told since time was measured.  
And now I face the many noble foreheads  
Which unaware caught something of your splendour  
And so exalt your being through their beauty.  
Resigned, a worker who has done his portion,  
In word and verse I shall lament no longer,  
I must submit since you have proved the stronger.

### II

In wild confusion and the sad expectance  
Of words that tell of tears and ruins, summons  
Which come from graves—where shall I find a refuge  
To celebrate the fête of earth in freedom?  
I feared that, walled in clouds of frost and rigour,  
I trusted less profoundly in the presage,  
And that the zeal which goads my days, no longer  
Impregnates stubborn matter with my fire,  
That left without the fairest torch of guidance  
I stumbled backward into utter darkness.  
But from the mountains comes a wind, a deluge  
Of blue and brightness floods the greying gardens,

The planes of shadow swim in tints of nacre,  
And silver as the south, the mild resplendence  
Of early dusk is laid on arch and tower  
As in the spring when you appeared before me.  
I tremble with the hope that soon a gateway  
Will echo with the steps I long have yearned for,  
As if you walked—in other incarnation—  
Through streets your presence granted consecration.

### III

No one has ever known delight so perfect  
That he was given sojourn in its radiance,  
It only lasts in that it dawns and darkens.  
My heart is bowed above the sombre waters  
To probe the depths again and find the image  
Other, yet always you, and draw it upward.  
The most profound of rites calls for renewal  
And so makes permanent the fleeting moment.  
Then let me pay the law of life my homage  
By seizing every joy as fuel for rapture.  
Since dulness threatens us when we are stagnant,  
Our spirit often bursts beyond its borders.  
It textures dreams from luminous beginnings,  
In endless series to the latest eras.  
It follows move by move the games of hazard,  
Hails an imagined dawn with exultation,  
And hovers spellbound in uncharted levels.  
And then again it ventures into mazes  
Toward a fixed star, your star, for constant praises  
And changelessness amid siderial phases.



# BURG FALKENSTEIN

TO ERNST

To the forrested summit  
                                  I climbed at your side,  
Where the rough-cornered bastion  
                                  holds a circular tower,  
And from a weather-worn fissure  
                                  springs a vigorous tree.  
Here lies the Pagan Wall,  
                                  there the stones of the fort,  
Tier on tier toward the lowland  
                                  slant the boroughs and hills  
To our river that shines  
                                  far off and eternal.

My hand pointed downward:  
                                  “Look! The inſcrutable face  
Of this ponderous stronghold  
                                  fronting full toward the blue,  
And the fair, watered valley.  
                                  They conjure the dream  
Of inviolate childhood  
                                  which quickened me once  
With the voice of the woods  
                                  and smoke from the hearth at dusk,  
In the unhurried dawns  
                                  of tranquil beginnings.”

Gravely you answered:

                                  “So stupendous a thing,  
Magic, has other roots,  
                                  does not take nature’s course,  
Does not flit with the wraith  
                                  over mouldering walls,  
Does not breathe from the branches,  
                                  floating spectres of dark.  
Lost forever the age  
                                  of reflective delight.  
Gone is our forefathers’ soul,  
                                  gone with the flutes of the shepherds.

Here a people, a past:

                                  toil that verges on thrall,  
Rarely at peace with themselves,  
                                  joyless all they have done,  
Who so long have not felt  
                                  a more generous urge.  
Clogged with knowledge, they lack  
                                  lightness akin to the gods.  
Where they founded their homes,  
                                  they are stifled and hemmed,  
All too often their songs  
                                  turn into dirges!”

“But I am struck by a note

                                  clear on the somnolent air,  
Broken the old string, but stretched  
                                  taut was already the new.  
Alien as yet to the ear,  
                                  golden the sound is released  
—Canons our fathers ordained,  
                                  prophecies pledged by our god—  
Rises from shimmering straits,  
                                  flows over undulant fields,  
Cities with traffic and haze,  
                                  pierces the wintery heart.

Over the glaciers and peaks  
  on to the cedars and groves,  
Down to the luminous gulf,  
  purged of babble and din,  
Vibrates the powerful tone  
  born of a metal more pure.  
With the procession of shades  
  legends return to the north,  
Tales of orgies and blood,  
  tales of glory and glow:  
Splendour our emperors shed,  
  storms our batallions unbound.

## SECRET GERMANY

Let me stand at your verge,  
Chasm, yet not be dismayed!

Where irrepressible greed has  
Trampled down every inch of  
Earth from equator to pole and  
Shamelessly wielded relentless  
Glare and mastery over  
Every nook of the world,

Where in the smothering cells of  
Hideous houses, madness  
Just has found what will poison  
All horizons tomorrow:  
Even shepherds in yurtas,  
Even nomads in wastes—

Where no more in a stony  
Forest valley the she-wolf  
—Rugged nurse!— suckles boy twins,  
And neither untrodden islands,  
Nor a queendom of virgins  
Bloom to foster the Great,

There in the sorest of trials  
Powers below pondered gravely,  
Gracious celestials gave their  
Ultimate secret: They altered  
Laws over matter and founded  
Space—a new space in the old . . .

Once down by the southern  
Sea I lay on a boulder,  
Wrung as lately my kin  
Spirit, when breaking through  
Olives, the Spook of Noon  
With goaten foot flicked me:

“Now that your eyes grew discerning,  
Go and find in your sacred  
Land primordial soil,  
Slumbering lap of fill,  
And regions as pathless and dark  
As the densest of jungles!”

Pinions of sunny dream,  
Poise me above the depth!

They told me of one who from rock-ridden coast  
An instant had seen the Olympian gods  
In heavens which split with the light of dawn,  
Whereat his soul was flooded with dread.  
He shunned the board where his friends were grouped  
And plunged into weltering waters.

In the town where minutiae from everywhere  
Are posted on pillars and patches of wall  
For people to gape at and hasten on,  
No one had eyes for the greater event:  
Uncanny through tottering structures and streets  
The dangerous prow of the demon!

In winter he stood in the candle-lit hall,  
His shimmering shoulder hidden in folds,  
The flame on his cheek in the sprays of a wreath.  
The god concealed from the stare of fools,  
In clear-scented warmth of the winds of spring,  
Set foot on flowering courses.

The Listener who knew every person and thing,  
Played ball with the stars in a rapturous reel,  
The hunter unhunted, yet here he avowed  
With stammering lips, his apostle-like form  
Transfixed in the gleam of the opaline globe:  
“This passes my grasp, I am silenced.”

Then forth from the region of order and peace,  
Through louring clouds a tempest unloosed  
The clash and the clamour of savage wars,  
The smoulder of worlds in the throes of the end.  
And crumbling terrains and darkness unleashed  
The chargers shodden with silver.

I came upon him of the pale-golden hair  
Who smilingly lavished serene repose  
Wherever he went. He was hailed by us all  
The darling of Fortune, but late he confessed  
His vigour was drained to give strength to a friend,  
His life a sequence of offerings.

I loved him who—my blood in his veins—  
Had sung the song only less than the best,  
Who idly shattered his lute when he failed  
To gain a treasure he once divined,  
Who merged with anonymous throngs and bowed  
A forehead destined for laurels.

Throughout the country, on roads and in squares,  
Wherever I was on the watch, I asked  
Omniscient Rumour with hundreds of eyes:  
“Have you ever heard of the like?” And he  
—Though loth to be startled—replied: “I heard  
Of much—but this is unheard-of!”

Let me mount to your height,  
Summit, yet not be destroyed!

Who then, who of you brothers  
Doubts, unshocked by the warning,  
That what most you acclaim, what  
Most you value today is  
Rank as leaves in the fall-wind,  
Doomed to perdition and death!

Only what consecrate earth  
Cradles in sheltering sleep  
Long in the innermost grooves,  
Far from acquisitive hands,  
Marvels this day cannot grasp  
Are rife with the fate of tomorrow.

## HE WHO WAS HANGED

### THE QUESTIONER

I cut you from the noose! Now will you answer?

### THE HANGED

When through the hue and cry of all the town  
They dragged me to the gates with maledictions,  
I saw in every one who cast a stone,  
Who scornfully had spread his arms akimbo,  
Who stretched his finger out above the shoulder  
Of him who stood in front, and gaped, and glowered,  
That one of my defects was rife in him,  
But narrowed in or hedged about with fear.  
And when I reached the gallows and the elders  
Regarded me with grim contempt and pity,  
I only laughed: Have you not guessed how much  
You need the sinner you have flouted? Virtue  
Which I transgressed could never beam so brightly  
—However real—within your eyes and those  
Of honest girls and wives, had I not trespassed!  
And when the rope around my neck was tightened,  
I gloated on a triumph I foresaw:  
For as a victor I shall yoke your minds,  
Dug under as I am, and in your litter  
Live as a hero one extols in song,  
A god! And now, before you even dreamed it,  
I curve this rigid crossbar to a wheel.

## MAN AND FAUN

MAN

The narrow stream—and here a waterfall!  
But what is this that hangs a shaggy leg  
From cushioned mosses dripping on the rock?  
A bushy, curling pate and—look! A horn!  
Though I have hunted far on wooded mountains,  
I never yet have met his like. Stand still!  
The way is blocked. And do not try to hide!  
In limpid waves I see a goaten foot.

FAUN

Your find will pleasure neither you nor me.

MAN

Through ancient tales I learned of creatures kin  
To you, but did not know that even now  
Such useless, ugly monsters still survive.

FAUN

When you have driven off the last of us,  
Your search for noble quarry will be vain,  
The gnawing beasts and worms will be your prey.  
And when you have explored the densest thickets  
The drouth will take what most you need: the well!



## MAN

You, of a baser stuff, would tutor me?  
We slew the hydra, giant, dragon, gryphon,  
And cleared the wilderness that bore no fruit.  
Where marshes spread, the wheaten acre sways,  
Our docile cattle browse in sappy fields,  
Estates and cities rise and shining gardens,  
And woods enough are left for stag and doe.  
We lifted treasures from the sea and earth,  
The columns cry our victories to heaven.  
What do you want, you relic of the jungle?  
Our tracks alone are dogged by law and light.

## FAUN

You are mere man, and where your wisdom flounders  
Our own begins. You only see the brink  
When you have suffered for the step beyond.  
When harvests ripen, when your cattle thrive,  
When sacred branches yield you grapes and olives,  
You think this only comes through your devising.  
The earths that drowse in dumb, primeval darkness  
Do not decay! If ever they were joined  
They sunder when a link escapes the ring.  
Your rule is right for your appointed time.  
But now away with you! You saw the faun!  
The worst in store, you do not know: Your mind,  
That can do much, will lose itself in cloud,  
And rend apart its bond with clod and creature.  
You will no longer grasp the cyclic change:  
Loathing and lust, monotony and flux,  
And dust and blaze, and death and being born.

## MAN

Who tells you so? The gods shall be our sponsors!

FAUN

We never speak of them. You claim they helped you  
In person, fools! But without go-betweens  
They never came to you. You dawn, you die—  
Whose thing you are in truth, you never learn.

MAN

Soon you will have no room for shameless sport.

FAUN

Soon you will pray to him you curse today.

MAN

You poisonous monster with the crooked mouth,  
Your shape is freakish, yet resembles ours  
So closely that I dare not shed your blood.

FAUN

Beasts are devoid of shame and men of thanks.  
With all that you contrive, you never learn  
What most you need, but we in silence serve.  
This only: Slaying us, you slay yourselves.  
Where we have trailed our shag, the milk will spurt,  
Where we withhold our hooves, no blade will grow.  
Your mind alone at work and long ago  
Your kind had been destroyed with all it does.  
Your field would be infertile, dry your brake . . .  
Only by magic, life is kept awake.

## THE LORD AND THE CENTURION

CENTURION

I know, Lord, that your words exhale eternal life,  
That for the children of your house you come with bread,  
And yet do not begrudge the stranger fallen crumbs.  
So ease my tortured soul!

THE LORD

Wherein, Philippus? Speak!

CENTURION

Those miracles for which they praise you, are they true?

THE LORD

Child who has need of them, child whom they sting with gall.  
Before the throng they came to pass and faith gave help.  
The blind man saw, the lame took up his bed and walked,  
The water turned to wine. But what are they to you,  
Since you are not of those who feel them in themselves?

CENTURION

You never teach the wise, but poorest of the poor,  
The fishers, tollmen, too untutored for your light.

THE LORD

The dull and bright cry to our Father's throne for aid.  
At times the wisdom men possess is dust and chaff.  
The world cannot be saved except through kindled blood.

## CENTURION

From early youth I served the ever valid law  
You also have enjoined to win the realm of God.  
I listened long to orators of great renown,  
And on my journeys learned the mysteries of him  
Who is the sun—they never may be told!—and of  
The “Mothers” and “The Three” whom island folk revere.  
I joined the naked hermits near the sources of the Nile . . .  
The essence was the same. Have you a different creed?

## THE LORD

You give your own reply in that you seek me out.

## CENTURION

Great one, I plead! You know : in sacred bounds, before  
We are allowed to see the highest, we are shown  
That only he who leads the dance unites with God.  
You never trod nor taught it. Are the rites then wrong?

## THE LORD

You err, not they. The love-feast done, I led the dance  
For those with me. But words are void where thought is vast.  
They only need my inner blaze and not my core.  
The banner of the Son shall triumph over worlds,  
For aeons men shall gaze upon his sign before  
One comes who sees the bond fulfilled: the dancing Christ.

## CENTURION

But tell me, Master: Do you bring the final reign?

## THE LORD

Your mind will be confused whether I speak or not.

CENTURION

Take me. I kneel! Why should I not belong to you?

THE LORD

Because your watered lymph cannot endure the strength of God.  
What you can have you now have had. Get up and go!

# THE BURNING OF THE TEMPLE

THE PRIESTS: THE ELDEST, FIRST, SECOND, AND THIRD. THE  
FOURTH AND FIFTH AS MESSENGERS

## THE ELDEST

That I should live to see it: In the outskirts,  
Where wall meets city, they are tearing up  
The stones and sowing grass.

## THE FIRST

Do you remember  
—Twelve years ago—how when the drought befell us,  
Our king crept through his gardens, old and witless,  
And leaned above the earth? With pallid hands  
He broke the arid soil to plant a straggle  
Of roots.

## THE SECOND

And all is quaking, all is lost  
Since we were vanquished in the Scarlet Field  
Where—turned to flee—our prince and leader fell.  
Since giants came upon us, and the castle,  
The throne are his.

## THE FIRST

What we have built through decades  
He topples in a day.

## THE THIRD

But checks his warriors!  
And even now the stolid throng is almost  
Content.

## THE FIRST

They cringe to every whip, if only  
They have their meagre rations and may watch  
Their betters founder . . .

THE SECOND

And the crumbling peerage  
Thinks he will never fall.

THE THIRD

He's just, the rumour.

THE ELDEST

I think: too cool for hate!

THE FIRST

To merchants who  
Exhorted him to moderate the taxes  
Which speed their ruin he dispatched this answer:  
"Who cannot live beneath my rule must perish."

THE SECOND

And to the wailing women who implored him  
That food be given to their new-born children,  
He made reply: "If wenches drop their young  
Upon the streets, their brood were better stifled."

THE FIRST

And how he thrust aside our fervent plea  
To save our shrine! But with the vicious zealots  
Who—laxly spared—have always scorned our law  
And state—with them he came to terms and claims:  
"You are not fit to heal your country's foulness.  
What use are gods that cannot help you? Volumes  
And images that fail to rouse? Be grateful  
To one who helps you cast them off!"

THE THIRD

His words  
Are simple and direct and not like ours.  
They strike like lightning, suffer no retort.

### THE FIRST

No one can tell his age or name, and no one  
Has seen him with his helmet off. A breath  
Of power circles him but, like a beggar's,  
His wants are few. He lives among his men,  
A common soldier, yet they vie to serve him.

### THE THIRD

He listens, but rejects all flattery.

### THE FIRST

He prays, they say, before an unhewn stone.

### THE SECOND

His form is lithe, his cheeks are young, but ageless  
His mouth and brow.

### THE FIRST

His host addresses him  
As "Lord," his mother calls him "son," his friend  
—When none is present—with a sound like "Ili."  
He dubbed himself "the Scourge of God."

### THE THIRD

Since Clelio

Died he has grown austere and even grim.

### THE FIRST

The best of all his men, his sword in battle,  
His only friend surrendered to the glamour  
Of gold and of our daughters' silken tresses,  
And in the council duped his lord—who felt it!  
Three days he did not speak, then summoned him:  
"Your sorrow cannot shrive you for my sorrow  
Cannot be measured! Do you still recall  
The proudest evening in our years of conquest,  
When both of us contested for the wreath?  
We made a promise then that each should grant  
The other one demand, nor ask for reasons.



You had yours long ago, my own is: Sentence  
Yourself, lest I be forced to sentence you.”  
And Clelio kissed the hand which had condemned him,  
And was dismissed, and rushed upon his sword.

#### THE SECOND

It almost seemed as if his yoke was lighter  
When, with her vulture’s eye and mannish mouth,  
The crone was still beside his chair. He exiled  
Her to a convent near the woods, but gave her  
Escort and honours and the consolation  
That he would always be where she could find him.

#### THE FIRST

To her reproach that she had been his comrade  
And counselor from childhood on, he answered:  
“A woman may have suffrage in the times  
Of tents and trails, but in the palace age  
She spells the fall of rule.” Before she left him,  
They claim she tried to tempt him with this tale:  
“You were a babe in arms when in our flight  
Before your uncle’s henchmen, all in haste,  
We climbed with Phrixus over icy mountains.  
Then suddenly a pair of wolves attacked us,  
Our faithful guard stabbed one, but with the second  
He could not cope. I laid you on the beast  
Whose flesh still held its warmth, and ran to aid.  
And so, along with milk, you tasted blood.  
I carried you for hours from the narrow  
Valley we lived in, to the rocky peaks,  
That you might see the sun. You owe your fortune  
And all your prowess to those early rays.”  
He answered: “Mother, you have always willed  
My happiness, but now you plot my ruin.”  
And sent her off!

#### THE SECOND

Is he a mortal man!

## THE ELDEST

While here you weigh the destiny of strangers  
Our own is jeopardized. This lofty house  
With statues of the gods, with sacred tablets  
And writings, precious gifts of many forebears,  
Which we have guarded to this day and hour,  
Is threatened with destruction. All the rites  
Have been performed, our fathers' customs honoured.  
We have done all that we can do ourselves.  
And now Eternal Powers must lend their favour.

## THE SECOND

Our princess in her lovely youth, not he,  
Was meant to govern us. She nobly chose  
To do this heavy errand in our stead.  
Now she is with him he may feel compassion.

## THE FIRST

How many gladly would have cast away  
Goods, life, and honour for her slightest gesture!  
Now she must cross a hostile threshold—pleading!

## THE ELDEST

Protector of these precincts, give her aid!  
The hour nears that renders us our sentence.

## THE FOURTH (entering)

This is the message: With a trumpet blast,  
As though she were a queen, he had her bidden  
And ushered to the throne, then asked her wish.  
She told him warmly both what you had prompted  
And what she felt herself: that it would heighten  
His fame to spare the marvels of the temple.  
He only made the same reply which once  
He meted out to us. Her train alleges  
His features were suffused with terrible light.  
"I have been sent with torch and steel that you  
Grow hard and not that I grow soft. You cannot  
Appraise your needs. If, in your fall, you will not  
Give up what saps you more and more, then I  
Must wrest you from its grip. This is the law."

With brimming eyes which would have thawed the coldest,  
With that enchanting smile which even quickened  
Old men to tremors, she began once more:  
"How could I dare to argue law with you?  
But majesty has one celestial gift  
To offer when all else is forfeit: mercy!"  
He hesitated for a single breath,  
Surveyed her gravely with his chaste, barbarian,  
Unclouded eyes, and answered: "Majesty  
Should spare the weak, but never when the plan  
Of fate is thwarted. So it would be here.  
Shall I indulge your wish at such a price?  
What bends me now would break me down tomorrow."  
Before his gaze she dropped her lids and, shaken  
With anguish, glided from his presence. When  
She had returned with her devoted women,  
She freely left a world which now has lost  
A treasure held in all-too slight esteem.

#### THE ELDEST

When those we name with awe and cannot grasp  
Deserted us, you were our shield, and we  
Stood firm in stress through you alone, but now  
That you no longer breathe the air we breathe,  
Our brittle hope is shards. Pamfilia,  
You, the most exquisite, most perfect flower  
Of all our stem, here, now, before the others  
I cleanse you of the loathsome rumour that  
You loved him since he galloped through the gate.  
Your brave and faithful heart could not endure  
That this barbarian witnessed your abandon  
To tears and to entreaties.

#### THE PRIESTS

She has done

What we must do hereafter.

THE FIFTH (entering)

Save yourselves!

The halls are thick with smoke, from every corner  
The fire flares and soars.

THE PRIESTS

The temple's burning!

THE ELDEST

It burns, and half a thousand years must come  
And go before it can arise again.

## VERSES FOR THE LIVING

“Why at the crossroads wonder and wait?”  
“Ought I go to the left or the right?”  
“Love has called you, follow her plan!  
Dare to determine the course of your fate,  
It is the first year you choose as a man.”

While a tremor still holds us,  
While a shadow still broods  
Balking the probe of your reason,  
What I ask of you is  
That you yield to the song  
Of which you are the soul.

Let the wash of the moon-  
Dappled river submerge  
You by shivering reeds.  
Shed what has governed your day,  
All that covers you, all  
Sham is shattered and drowned.  
Stirred and stricken you rise  
Between me and the night.  
What this hand now enjoins,  
What is wrung from these lips  
Bears witness to what you are worth.

Prize the treasure you were given,  
It will never slip your fingers,  
But you cannot weigh it fully  
Till you know how it was granted,  
When, with whom you have to share it,  
And when you possess unchallenged.

This is what must still be done:  
See the steps your glance comprised  
As a miracle within.

What you think fulfilment, though  
You may call it kin to gods,  
Is an outset sheathed in light.

Good and great and precious things  
Gain—when one thing more accrues—  
Double depths, unique delight.

Love, indeed, cannot be gauged,  
And to measure yours were heinous,  
Great the deed it did with greatness!  
But there are degrees of awe.  
What occurred is past belief!  
Can you even it that my  
Awe is more profound than yours?

If by yourself you cannot see  
A light will dawn on you, the day  
That I absolve one from his vow  
Who rants to you of being free.

If my doubt perhaps offends  
Wait! A little time will tell.  
I have much to make amends:  
All I own is yours as well.

Riddles flicker old and new,  
Now you cannot read the rune  
Which you shall decipher soon . . .  
Bow and give them all their due.

My hand pleads and threatens. Today  
You were as I wished, if you could  
Tomorrow be still as you should . . .  
What vistas, beloved, and what joy!

A.

I

It was your voice I heard, but not your soul.  
One year our course must lead through storm and sleet,  
Each heart must tremble with the other's beat.  
Now that you know—will you still brave the goal?

II

With grace and pride you govern in your round,  
And do not suffer if it springs a flaw.  
I am not free when I transgress my law,  
I do not know I love until I sound.

All that the day demands you do aright,  
But what you lack is awe of destiny,  
And so that advent made me pensively  
Give up for you what promised me delight.

III

You savoured all the sweets of life: no bliss  
Or frenzied dream to which you were a stranger,  
Do not demur that now your fate is this:  
The other part true life comprises: danger!

B.

I

By night we walk in step along the gate,  
No want nor force will open it. My one  
Request to you, beloved, is: watch and wait  
With me until we hear the call within.

II

You know the inner world, you understand  
I cannot chain you in the reach of day,  
You cannot gain me with the speech of day,  
The heavy wind of dreams must first descend.

They change and dye each thing in space and time,  
So we may see the form that is its own,  
So by its proper name it may be known . . .  
But yours the mouth that causes all to chime.

### III

This hour shall afford you certainty.  
The thoughts it brought were neither great nor rare,  
And from our lips the words came haltingly.  
And yet the inner space was charged, and there  
You heard a heart that augured ecstasy.

W.

### I

Could you not, should you not let  
Arms you confided in  
Lift you across the only  
Threshold that offers and thank them,  
Impious child of this age?

Ignorant child of this age,  
Who will later invest  
You with the power to break  
Open the door when you toil  
Vainly with lacerate fingers?

### II

You chose and think that you may choose again,  
But only once the easy way is plain,  
That you will take the hard is to be doubted,  
You dream of solace, and what comes is pain.

### III

We broach the rim of fate with equal rue:  
“Our joy was great—can we attain this too?”  
If you mean those who hope to win what’s rare  
Without an effort—then there is no heir!



P.

These many years you head for seas and shores  
To know the world with jeopardies and wars.  
Unconsecrate you hunt for life and so  
It sends you back with not a thing to show.

The highest grace which man receives from fate  
Was held in store for you, was at your gate.  
You did not see, you always will be blind.  
You did not feel, a child unto the end.

G. R. H.

Your foot still roots in clods of yester-year,  
Your poise and gesture burgeon from the new,  
And far into a world of sunrise you  
Fling out your arm whose greeting finds me here.

H. M.

How wise is he who from the noisy mart  
To brush and plectrum silently retires,  
But wiser who—though master of his art—  
At times regards it wrong to finger lyres.

L.

I

A great achievement does not need display,  
But burning impulse craves to be expressed.  
For days I set myself a single quest:  
To find a word for our unwonted way.

II

Constant waiting draws a sneer,  
Constant hoping is amiss,  
And the darkest secret this:  
God of gods the Now and Here.

F. W.

Let Fate extinguish nations with her bolt,  
The disciplined survive the rudest jolt.  
God weighs alike the wars within and out,  
Where there are men like you they win the bout.

J.

Your untouched flesh took confidence from me,  
And up your spirit rose from fog and sea.  
I clasp you, tempered now and sound again,  
And gird myself with strength from your domain.

E.

I saw you, perfect in your flowering year,  
Our lives were merged, our days a shining chain . . .  
Perhaps you once will change and bloom again  
Should southwind sweep you over your frontier.

R . . .

He ranks the highest whom the god has let  
Advance beyond the threshold here on earth,  
Not much beneath who—knowing this—is yet  
Content to serve wherever he is set.

S . . .

“Can summer not be spent more wisely,” you objected  
When with the swimmers’ merriment incognito I vied.  
Let me avoid the poet’s lot, who at the ford reflected  
So long upon the boys’ conundrum that he died.

## A. VERWEY

A poet, always eager to make clear  
Where true and false in wild pursuing veer,  
Must expiate with silence for a year.

You spoke from your soul;  
"I found unsurpassed  
Companions at last."  
But years took their toll,  
You write hard and fast  
And day after day  
To drive them away.

"Here is the rift, I can believe no longer!"  
What? What you hide or what you frankly say?  
Believe that sterile worlds again will blossom,  
For poets, poet, nothing else should count!

You and none but you  
Know, van buiten, through  
These terrains alone  
Ageless realms shine on.  
Search through multitudes,  
Ask if others caught  
Your exalted thought.  
Then your wrath will flee,  
Miss the mark and be  
Brief as brothers' feuds.

Do you recall that years ago you told me  
With resignation "I have reached the end."  
But then you quickened with a quicker current,  
For all the spirits alien to your soul  
Were loosed and broke into your narrow home.  
Though you remained yourself, you were renewed.  
And now with lavish phrases you are trying  
To gloss your sorrow that I need not say  
As you yourself must say: I am alone,  
I am the very last among my people.

## M.

In thinning mist of early morning hours  
Your garden wakened to the happy twitter  
Of many birds, where once you loved the litter  
Of tangled branches and luxuriant flowers.

And sultry sorcery kept you surrounded  
With garnet walls as steep as precipices,  
Until your eyes, wide-open and astounded,  
Slowly attuned to cool and boundless spaces.

And spurred from grey of dawn to fullest splendour,  
The slave of dreams into a comrade grew.  
He wanders at my side, serene and tender,  
And gently laves his childish face in dew.

## THE DANCER

The garden wavers with the roundelay  
Of children, and the dusk subdues their rhyme,  
They swing in circles, then in pairs they sally  
And to the same refrain disband and rally,  
How gayly, hand in little hand, they sway,  
But one invents the moves and marks the time.

How light the legs that leap and whirl with him,  
How lithe and swift the hips that bound and rest.  
His hair floats on the dark with trembling shimmer,  
He is the lodestar in a maze of glimmer,  
He is the heart of youth with all its dream,  
He is the heart of youth with all its zest.

B.v.ST.

I

In streets where gods have walked through summer blaze,  
We often mused, and mourned the traces of  
The princely child who died .

What do we gain from triumphs, wit, and strength,  
From brave defense in lowlands soaked with blood,  
If majesty has vanished!

The upstart finds himself in empty halls,  
His gardens will be sterile once the old  
And sacred tree is felled.

What gain in ease and equal rights for all  
—Granted that these are more than guileless dreams—  
When graciousness has vanished!

II

Imperishably charming come and go  
In streets where fate unwound—and with us you  
In full and fairest flower.

That was your time of lordly rule and we  
Adored you while the people even claimed  
Their prince was resurrected.

HEAVEN

“Come with me to the mystic who convinces us so well  
Of true hereafters and of false terrestrial gleams.”  
“I have been there! Before he said a single word, I knew  
His heaven is an evil jest and nothing more.”

THE KEY

“I listened to your words. No one can grasp and show  
The world like you, now I myself shall see and test it!”  
“The alpha of all wisdom is the key: with it  
You may unlock the world. Your way is wrong.  
Search seven years and go to every teacher,  
You will return less wise than you are now.”

## BODY AND SOUL

“The Sage has taught,” you said, “the body’s beauty  
Weighs lighter than the soul’s.” But soul and body  
Express one thing in flux. The state grew weak,  
The burgher dull and brash, then the Divine  
Devised the soul for therapy and succour . . .  
Not long ago you sketched a former friend:  
His eyes, once bright, had dimmed, his noble forehead  
Seemed narrower, and his young lips were dry.  
Was it his soul you pictured or his body?

## THE TEACHER OF WISDOM

“For thirty years you delivered your lectures to thousands.  
Who backs you now?” “Not this or that one, but the world!”  
“Then surely, O teacher, you better had kept the doors bolted,  
Since you have worked for nothing save a worthless word.”

## EDUCATOR

“The wonted way has missed the goal, now we shall try!  
Two failures! But a third attempt may score success!”  
“You should not act until your heart is sure it knows,  
In your profession to experiment is crime!”

## TEACHING

“I want to learn from you. What is your charge?”  
“Let me have access to your secret being,  
So that your inner beauty may unfold.  
I am your destined teacher if I love.  
Your core must burn, it matters not for whom.  
You are my destined pupil if you love.”

## DISCIPLES' DOUBT

"He who circled in your orbit,  
Can he bear to break away?"

"Some give only passing service,  
Treason comes from festered blood."

"He who sat at such a banquet,  
Can he ever be destroyed?"

"Some have drunk the wine of living,  
Others eaten of their death."

"Love and only love you taught us,  
Yet your call is often harsh!"

"Peace is what I have accorded  
These, but those I bring the sword."

## VERSES FOR THE DEAD

When these generations are purged of dishonour  
And hurl from their shoulders the shackles of bondage  
And feed in their vitals the hunger for virtue,  
Then flashes of blood will illumine the millions  
Of graves of the fallen, then thundering armies  
Will ride over clouds and the terror of terrors,  
The third of the tempests will sweep through the country:  
    The dead turning homeward.

When men of this nation no longer are cowards  
Or weaklings, but feel their vocation and mission,  
Their hearts will decipher the message of heaven,  
In dread beyond measure. Their hands will be lifted,  
Their lips will be tuned to the homage of honour,  
The flag of the king, the legitimate symbol  
Will fly through the dawn and be lowered in praise of  
    The hallowed, the heroes!

### HEINRICH F.

Your daring mind that fanned your fiery core  
Comprised the close and distant in its zone,  
Like an adventurer who walks a shore  
No foot has trod and claims it for his own.  
  
Blithe as a child, a bird, bewitched and proud,  
You left us, friend, your fate was in your eye,  
And you—away before you said goodbye —  
Were first to fall, the gallant flag your shroud.



WALTER W.

Their mournful dance whose lightness was pretended!  
The puffs of dainty satin, pink and frilled!  
They were the last whose lives were linked and filled.  
This was my world—it was—but now is ended.

Where can we find a footing, where a prop?  
The hinges creak and all the rafters crumble,  
Soon in the brittle house the flames will tumble,  
What shall we do? How can we help or stop?

I found the longed-for door, I dreamed of wonder,  
Implored and knocked—no words or wits availed.  
I cannot bear to see the prize I failed  
To capture—so the wave shall wash me under.

WOLFGANG

Before you solved the riddle of this year  
Into the next you dexterously crossed,  
Where pleasures bound to comfort you appear . . .  
But you, too clever, know what you have lost.

You look at me—what word shall I devise  
To speed you? Can I find no stronger spell?  
Drive out the sadness lurking in your eyes,  
Or, rider, this will be your last farewell!

NORBERT

You lived a monkish life with books and felt  
Distaste for tools of war, but once you knew  
The rough, confining cloth, the soldier's belt,  
You scorned the safety which was offered you.

You seemed too spent to fight, too overbred,  
But grazed by winds from worlds without a name,  
Like any lusty youth you stormed ahead  
And fell, dispersed in air, and earth, and flame.

## BALDUIN

The poise with which you rode across the square,  
Your eyes which, on that day, were filled with glory,  
The way you stood and paced the thoroughfare—  
Is like a dream, is even now a story.

## BALDUIN

But for what did we lay down our lovely mantle,  
Shed the sheath of tender flesh among the flowers?  
So that you might raze our pillared houses,  
Set your idols on the ruins of our temples?

Oh, I

Know how long our dead have yearned for Lethe,  
How they famish for the drop that brings forgetting.

Was it this for which the radiance of the jewelled  
Crown was dimmed? Has darkness brimmed our shining vessels,  
That you, rebels, might pollute the living essence,  
And, though beggars, sell the foe your kin and children?

See with

What desire to level shores they hasten  
And allay their parching lips with sombre waters.

Do not bring us wreaths or harass us with statues!  
Do not take the ashes back to soil you tainted,  
For the plains on which we fell we call our homeland,  
And our mother holy earth that offers refuge.

Oh, though

Deep the draught, our staring eyes are wild with anguish,  
And our foreheads grooved with awful accusation.

## VICTOR AND ADALBERT

V: Across our sunlit days among the hills  
A shadow seemed to fall. We ousted it  
With joy. But tell me now: Why are you sad?

A: While everyone is feeding idle hopes,  
I feel the threat of chaos and despair  
Draw closer and refuse to be engulfed.

V: We muster greater strength with greater dangers.

A: Dangers I braved too long! Enough of war  
And murder! Now that I am sound again  
I have begun to think, and know that this  
Is madness doomed to end in madness, know  
That in the coming battle I shall be  
The first to fall. I rather go unbid.

V: That would be flight, and flight is base!

A: For one  
Who hoards his life as I have never done.

V: Forestall the gods! That would be sacrilege!

A: These very gods of yours have changed my vision.

V: Were I to name the many who will mourn you,  
And suffer from an act they cannot grasp,  
I should be silenced by your weightier word.  
But you are consecrate! Who can accord you  
The leave to go?

A: It is my consecration  
Which drives me to obey my law and shrink from  
Whatever might subtract from what I am.  
To fall in blind haphazardness no longer  
Befits me, nor to lead a slowly fading  
Existence in an era of decay.  
If we remain, we rot. If now we loosen  
Our hold on earth and go with pride and valour,  
We shall continue in our shining courses  
Ageless as the immortal constellation.

V: My friend, did you say "our"? Then let me say:  
Though you infused me with your stronger strength,  
I cannot feel as you, and so your Must  
Is not my own. I slept or watched beside you  
Serene through this most magic spring. But sometimes,  
Since we were last together, thinner substance  
Than air surrounded us, our pulses beat  
With something that had not the weight of blood.

A: I will not beg you and I dare not force you.  
If you ignore my plea, or rather Fate's,  
I know your lips will pale before the grasses  
Have time to yellow. Do you see me tremble?  
I shudder with the thought that this could be.

V: How can those hours blazing with abundance  
And marvels cede to fears!

A: This is the turning!

V: Through fallow autumn looms the ghostly peak  
Where now the witches dance. If you must utter  
Such reckless words, then wait until the new moon.

A: Faced with the grave, you play with childish fancies  
The demon in me stamps as silly spook.  
And yet you guess the savage goad which prods me.

V: And would you go, though I do not?

A: I must.

V: If long and sunny mornings spent together,  
If radiant evenings in the valley, full  
Of tranquil joy while worlds were split asunder,  
Were not too much of happiness for mortals,  
And call for penance now—I cannot tell.  
If not another need than that which moves us  
Enjoins the sombre deed, I do not know.  
The gods have given me no sign, but I  
Believe in all that holds for you and keep  
The vow we made when we were adolescent  
And often have repeated since. I cannot  
Live on without you, impious though it be.  
So if you choose the gate of dark, obeying  
Your destiny in this, then take me too!

## THE SONG

WHATEVER WORD AND THOUGHT I STILL CAN FRAME,  
WHAT I STILL LOVE—THE FEATURES ARE THE SAME.

What a venturesome foot  
Flits through the garden of fay:  
Our grandmothers' innermost kingdom?

What a riot of sound  
Pours from a silvery horn  
Through slumbering thickets of legend?

What a breath from beyond,  
Born of yesterday's grief,  
Invades and fondles the spirit?

## THE SONG

A boy once roamed into the woods,  
His cheek was smooth and bright,  
He lost his way in woods of fay  
And was not home by night.

The village folk turned out and searched  
From dawn till day was sped,  
But since they found no trace of him  
They gave him up as dead.

Now after seven years had passed  
One morning it befell  
That he was seen beyond the green  
And heading toward the well.

They asked him who he was and stared,  
His face seemed strange and dim.  
His parents both were gone, and no  
One else remembered him.

“A while ago I lost the path  
And walked in woods of fay,  
I came in time to feast with them,  
But soon was sent away.

The people there are white as snow  
And they have golden locks,  
These are their words for sun and moon,  
For valleys, hills, and brooks.”

They laughed: “This early in the day  
He can't be full of wine!”  
They said that he was mad and made  
Him keeper of their kine.

So every day he fared afield  
And sat upon a stone,  
And late into the night he sang,  
They left him quite alone.

And only children heard his song  
And often sat beside,  
They sang it far into the years,  
Long after he had died.

## SAILOR'S SONG

### YVO'S FAREWELL TO JOLANDA

You wait in vain! Though he is gone  
And lies at rest where no one shall  
Discover him, my blood has cooled,  
I go aboard and far from you.

When strangled down the cliff he sank,  
The joy I thought so near was fled.  
You guess at much but not the whole:  
I am not yours, the wild wave calls.

Your tears will flow when late at night  
The message comes I am at sea,  
My ship my friend until in work  
On foreign strand my course is run.

We all are base, may you stay pure!  
Soon you will sigh, and wind a wreath  
Around the shrine on rocky shore,  
And pray for your and for my soul.

The brooding earth decrees below:  
Though free as fish and fowls of air,  
Wherein you cling you do not know.

A later mouth may once reveal:  
You too have taken of our share,  
You too have tasted of our meal.

Yours was a vision fair and new,  
But time grew old, none lives today,  
If one will ever come to view

This vision too—you cannot say.

## SEA SONG

When on the verge the fiery ball  
Dips downward in reluctant fall,  
I linger on the dunes and yearn  
For one I cherish to return.

This time of day is dull at home,  
The flower wilts in salty foam,  
And no one seeks the last, lone door  
And her who came from alien shore.

A fair-haired child now passes by  
With naked limbs and cloudless eye.  
Singing and skipping as he nears,  
He skirts the boat and disappears.

I watch him come, I watch him go,  
He never speaks to me, and though  
My lips are silent, just to see  
Him for an instant gladdens me.

My hearth is warm, my roof is tight,  
And yet it harbours no delight.  
The rents in every net are sewed  
And room and kitchen well bestowed.

I wait, I sit upon the sand,  
My temple pulses in my hand,  
For if the blond child stays away,  
What use to me the livelong day!



## THE FOOLISH PILGRIMESS

Where the highway from the hills  
Turns abruptly toward the stream,  
And the furrows climb the crest  
Where the pregnant woman once  
Asked my help to lift her hay-load,

There beside the road a girl  
Lay as though she had been felled  
By fatigue—with tangled hair  
And bedraggled skirt. I bent  
Down to her and helped her up.

Sadly thanking me, she said  
With her hand against her brow:  
“Often have I passed you by,  
Nothing but my luckless fall  
Caused your eyes to rest upon me.

When we meet again, I shall  
Wear a finer frock, and though  
Even this will fail to please,  
You will look at me because  
Once you raised me from the ground.”

## THE LAST OF THE FAITHFUL

While he is kept on foreign shores,  
My native land seems dim to me.  
I feel I am a stranger here  
Because my king is banished.

I do not live for joys and feasts  
Like others, and I only wait  
These many springs, these many falls,  
Because my king may call me.

And if he never should return  
Nor summon me to serve him there,  
My only thought and aim is: die  
When he, my king, is dying.

## THE WORD

I carried to my country's shore  
Marvels and dreams, and waited for  
The tall and twilit norn to tell  
The names she found within her well.  
Then I could grasp them, they were mine,  
And here I see them bloom and shine . . .  
Once I had made a happy haul  
And won a rich and fragile jewel.  
She peered and peered: "No symbol lies  
Below," she said, "to match your prize."  
At this it glided from my hand  
And never graced my native land.  
So I renounced and came to know:  
A thing which lacks the word must go.

## THE CUPS

This is the cup of gold,  
Gorged with glittering wine,  
Each has the right to a taste.  
That is of wood and it holds  
Three dice chiselled of stone,  
Each has the right to a cast.  
This, when it rests in the hand,  
Gives us a share which we  
Take with a tranquil heart.  
That conveys a decree  
No one can shift or command,  
Which is my part, which is your part.

## THE LIGHT

We grieve when you deprive us of your favour  
And turn to others who are given more  
On evenings when your essence weaves a savour  
Around our spirit yearning to adore.

We should be fools to let our hatred touch you,  
When often with your blaze you threaten blight,  
We should be children if we tried to clutch you—  
Because you shine for every one, sweet light!

Through deepest rest  
Of ordered day  
A glance has flashed  
That rouses to alarm  
Undreamed the tranquil soul.

Just as on heights  
The moveless tree  
Looms firm and proud,  
And late a tempest bends  
It downward to the ground.

Just as the tide  
With strident sound,  
With savage lunge,  
Once more into the long  
Abandoned sea-shell thrusts.

You like a flame, unflawed and slender,  
You flower sprung from Crown and Spear,  
You like the morning, light and tender,  
You like a spring, withdrawn and clear,

Companion me in sunny meadows,  
Encompass me in evening haze,  
And where I go, you shine through shadows,  
You cool of wind, you breath of blaze.

You are my thought and my desire,  
The air I breathe with you is blent,  
From every draught I drink your fire,  
And you I kiss in every scent.

You like the morning, light and tender,  
You flower sprung from Crown and Spear,  
You like a flame, unflawed and slender,  
You like a spring, withdrawn and clear.

## THE PREFACES OF STEFAN GEORGE

### TO THE SECOND EDITION OF ODES, PILGRIMAGES, AND ALGABAL

The author distributed the first printing of his poems, which began to appear a decade ago, as a gift to his friends and patrons. This relieved him of all consideration for a public which, at that time, was particularly unwilling or unable to accept and enjoy poems as works of art. Now that painting and the decorative arts are on the upward trend and have awakened a new longing for beauty in many sections of our country, the author believes that, in response to increasing requests, he may abandon the shelter of his seclusion. ODES, PILGRIMAGES, AND ALGABAL introduce this series of his publications. Except for slight changes and additions and more punctuation marks—sometimes desirable though more often superfluous—they are given here in the form which originally won them friends. And so it is to be hoped that a little of what was prophesied for these books may come true.

(1899)

### TO THE SECOND EDITION OF ECLOGUES AND EULOGIES

These three books should be prefaced by the statement that they are not intended as reflections of any particular epoch of history or development. They mirror a soul which has temporarily taken refuge in other eras and regions. Here—obviously—traditional concepts were just as helpful as the tangible environment of the moment: our still undesecrated valleys and woods, our rivers flowing in the aura of the Middle Ages, and then again the almost palpable air of the towns we venerate. In every age, a spirit which shapes and integrates what is alien and past transfers it to the pale of the personal and the present. And what has here been presented of our three great spheres of civilization is only what some of us still maintain as a living heritage.

(1899)

## TO THE SECOND EDITION OF THE YEAR OF THE SOUL

Even those who have very nearly understood what the author had in mind, thought that identifying persons and places would make for a better understanding of THE YEAR OF THE SOUL. But just as no one profits by looking for human and regional models in sculptures and paintings, so in poetry too we should avoid so idle a search. Art has transformed them so completely that they have become unimportant to the poet himself, and his readers would be more confused than enlightened by a knowledge of the facts. Names should be mentioned only when they serve to indicate a gift or to bestow eternity. And one should remember that in this book, to an almost unprecedented extent, the I and the You represent the same soul.

(1899)

## TO THE SECOND EDITION OF THE TAPESTRY OF LIFE

### MELCHIOR LECHTER

This edition, intended for a wider public, must do without the drawings of the first: the lavish marginal decorations and the pictures of an angel throned in the clouds, flowers pouring forth the waters of life, and a harp struck by the hand of ultimate passion. But I should like to set down on these pages the revered name which is so closely connected with them and shall adorn them forever.

(1901)

## TO THE SECOND EDITION OF THE STAR OF THE COVENANT

This book was courted by misunderstandings which, though it is easy to see how they arose, were utterly unfounded. It was said that the poet had dealt with actualities of the present rather than with distance and dream, and that he had set out to write a breviary for the people and more especially for the younger generation fighting at the front. But the truth of the matter is this: THE STAR OF THE COVENANT was originally intended for a circle of intimate friends, and only the consideration that, in our day, it is hardly possible to conceal what has been shaped in words, led to the decision to publish as the best means of protection. The torrent of world events which followed immediately upon publication, made wider strata emotionally receptive for a volume which might have remained a sealed book for years to come.

(1914)

## TO THE FIRST EDITION OF THE KINGDOM COME

This volume comprises all the poems written after the completion of THE STAR OF THE COVENANT. Many appeared in the "Blaetter fuer die Kunst" (1914-19). "The War," and "The Poet in Times of Confusion" together with two other poems, were published as separate pamphlets. "Goethe's Last Night in Italy" which opens a new series, dates back to 1908.

(1928)





