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THE SILENT POOL

and other poems

by

HAROLD MONRO

(Chosen by Alida Monro)

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I

THE NIGHTINGALE NEAR THE HOUSE

Here is the soundless cypress on the lawn:
It listens, listens. Taller trees beyond
Listen. The moon at the unruffled pond
 Stares. And you sing, you sing.

That star-enchanted song falls through the air
From lawn to lawn down terraces of sound,
Darts in white arrows on the shadowed ground;
 While all the night you sing.

My dreams are flowers to which you are a bee,
As all night long I listen, and my brain
Receives your song, then loses it again
 In moonlight on the lawn.

Now is your voice a marble high and white,
Then like a mist on fields of paradise;
Now is a raging fire, then is like ice,
 Then breaks, and it is dawn.

2

THE GARDEN

He told me he had seen a ruined garden
Outside the town.
'Where? Where?'
I asked him quickly.
He said it lay toward the southern country;
He knew the road well: he would take me there.

Then he sat down and talked
About that garden.
He was so grandly proud and sure of it,
I listened all the evening to his talk.

And our glasses were emptied,
Talking of it.
We filled them and filled them again,
Talking of it.

He said that no one knew
The garden but himself;
Though hundreds passed it day by day,
Yet no one knew it but himself.

I

The garden, it was long and wide
And filled with great unconscious peace;
All the old trees were tall and large,
And all the birds—

The birds, he said, were like a choir
Of lively boys,
Who never went to school,
But sang instead.

He told me of the trailing flowers
Hung on the ruined walls;
The rivers and their waterfalls;
The hidden woods; the lawns; the bowers.

Small cool plantations; palm and vine,
With fig-tree growing by their side,
And violet and maidenhair
And

ii

we were late in conversation
Talking of that most wonderful garden,
And filled our glasses again and again
Talking about that beautiful garden,

Until he vowed in the middle of drink
To lead me to-morrow to see it myself.
We closed our hands on the pact.
He vanished away through the dark.

iii

To-morrow, to-morrow, we start our walk.
To-morrow is here and he meets me surely.
Out from the city we go and pursue
Mile after mile of the open road;

11

Come to a place of sudden trees,
Pass it across the fields, then on
By farmyards, through villages, over the downs:

Mile after mile we walk. He is pleased.
Our feet become heavy with dust, and we laugh,
And we talk all the while of our future delight.

IV

He came upon the garden in the dusk;
He leaned against the wall:
He pointed out its beauties in the gloom.
We lay down weary in the shadow of elms,
And stared between their branches at the moon,
And talked about to-morrow and the garden.
I knew that everything he said was true,
For we were resting up against the wall.

V

Oh hard awakening from a dream:
I thought I was in paradise.
He cooked the coffee we had brought,
Then looked about him.

We had not reached the wall, he found.
It was a little farther on.
We walked another mile or two,
And stood before the ruined gate.

He was not satisfied at all.
He said the entrance was not here.
I hardly understood his talk,
And so I watched him move about.
Indeed, it was the garden he had meant;
But not the one he had described.

VI

Then suddenly from out his conversation
I saw it in the light of his own thought:
A phantom Eden shining
Placid among his dreams.

And he, with large eyes and with hands uplifted,
Cried: 'Look, O look!' Indeed I saw the garden;
The ghostly palm and violet,
Fig, maidenhair, and fountain;

The rivers and their flowered lawns; the gleaming
Birds; and their song—I heard that clear I know.
And silent, in amazement,
We stared

Then both sat down beneath the wall and rested,
And in our conversation
lived in the garden.

VII

'We'll come again next week,' he said at last.
'We have no leisure to explore it now;
Besides we cannot climb this crumbling wall:
Our gate is on the farther side, I know.'

We'd have to go right round, and even then
I am not sure it's open till the spring.
I have affairs in town. If you don't mind,
We will go back directly. After all,
The garden cannot run away, or change.
Next week I'll have more time, and, once inside,
Who knows. . . . Who knows? How very curious
 too,
Hundreds of people pass it day by day
Along that high road over there; the cars—
Look at them! And the railway too! Well. Well,
I'm glad that no one cares for Eden now.
It would be spoilt so quickly. We'll go back
By train, if you don't mind. I've walked enough.
Look, there's the station. Eh?'

VIII

I did not see that man again
Until a year had gone or more.
I had not found him anywhere,
And many times had gone to seek
The garden, but it was not there.

One day along the country road
There was he coming all alone.
He would have passed me with a stare.
I held his arm, but he was cold,
And rudely asked me my affair.
I said, there was a garden, I'd been told . . .

IX

Then suddenly came that rapture upon us;
We saw the garden again in our mutual thought:
Blue and yellow and green,
Shining by day or by night.

'Those are the trees,' he said, 'and there is the
gateway.

To-day, I think, it is open. And shall we not go
there?'

Quickly we ran in our joy;
Quickly—then stopped, and stared.

X

An angel with a flaming sword
Stood large, and beautiful, and clear:
He covered up his golden eyes,
And would not look as we came near.

Birds wheeled about the flowery gate,
But we could never see inside,
Although (I often think) it stood
Slack on its hinges open wide.

The angel dropped his hopeless sword,
And stood with his great pinions furled,
And wept into his hands: but we
Feared, and turned back to our own world.

3

TREES

i

One summer afternoon, you find
Some lonely trees. Persuade your mind
To drowse. Then, as your eyelids close,
And you still hover into those
Three stages of a darkening doze,
This side the barrier of sleep,
Pause. In that last clear moment open quick
Your sight toward where the green is bright and
thick.

Be sure that everything you keep
To dream with is made out of trees.
Grip hard, become a root, so drive
Your muscles through the ground alive
That you'll be breaking from above your knees
Out into branches. Let your manhood be
Forgotten, your whole purpose seem
The purpose of a simple tree
Rooted in a quiet dream.

I did that. It is difficult to cease
Thinking. A thought will rise and trip
Your spirit on the brink of peace,
So your tough muscles lose their grip.
It will be hard to find
A way to lead you out of Mind,

And after that to keep
The passage of a natural sleep.
(Any silly man can swim
Down the channel of a dream,
Dawdling under banks of green.
That's an easy drift for him,
Snoozing like a little stream,
And a comfortable whim
Any shallow man can dream.
Water is a lazy thing,
Lipping at an edge of ground,
Elbowing and muttering.
I have heard a little stream
Imitate a human dream.)

The trees throw up their singing leaves, and climb
Spray over spray. They break through Time.
Their roots lash through the clay. They lave
The earth, and wash along the ground;
They burst in green wave over wave,
Fly in a blossom of light foam;
Rank following windy rank they come:
They flood the plain,
Swill through the valley, top the mound,
Flow over the low hill,
Curl round
The bases of the mountains, fill
Their crevices, and stain
Their ridges green. ... Be sure you keep

Some memory of this for sleep.
Then hold your blood, contrive to fill
Your veins with sap. Now dive; now sink
Below the spray. Relax your will. . . .
The earth still has you by the heel?
(Do not remember what you feel!) . . .
Lift up your head above the spray.
Pull, (so trees live). Thrust! Drive your way!
The agony of One Idea will twist
Your branches. (Can you feel the dew?)
The wind will cuff you with his fist.
The birds will build their nests in you.
Your circulating blood will go
Flowing five hundred times more slow.
A thousand veils will darkly press
About your muffled consciousness:
So will you grow;
You will not know,
Not wonder, why you grow. . . .

II

I was cast up from that still tide of sleep,
I suddenly awakened—could not keep
A tranquil growth.
I heard the swinging clocks of man:
And I was conscious of unworthy sloth.
Oh, silly tree-adept!—
Out of arboreal delight I crept;
Crept, was afraid, and ran—
Too much mortality I kept.

They drove me forth. The angry trees
Roared till I tumbled lean and lewd
Out of their Paradise. The forest rose
To scourge my wavering conscience, and pursued.
A thousand doors clapped roughly and were close.
Low growling voices on that other side
Cursed in a tone of old offended wood. . . .

III

It is a dangerous journey. If you go
Think carefully of this, which now I know.
Tree-growth is but a corridor between
The Seen and the Unseen.
Trees are like sentinels that keep
The passage of a gate
From this sleep to that other sleep:
Between two worlds they wait.
If they discover you, you cannot hide.
Run backward. They are stern.
You may be driven out that other side,
And not return.

Better perhaps you love them distantly—
So if they tempt you, as a woman might,
Make of their love an Immorality,
And if they haunt you, regulate your sight
That tree-love may seem like Adultery;
And never visit them at all by night.
Lock door, draw curtains, close yourself within
When the cool flow of sunset shall begin:

Leave them to float alone about their gold.
But when the moon comes to them and they fold
Dark branches round her, you'll be jealous then—
Focus your vision and contract it near:
Read some new book, talk leisurely with men.
Banish their nightingales, and yet I fear
How they may call and echo through your sleep. . . .
There will be many sounds you must not hear
If you would keep
The ways of manly wisdom, and not be
Distracted by the love of any tree.

There are some men, of course, some men, I know,
Who, when they pass,
Seem like trees walking, and to grow
From earth, and, native in the grass,
(So taut their muscles) move on gliding roots.
They blossom every day: their fruits
Are always new and cover the happy ground.
Wherever they may stand
You hear inevitable sound
Of birds and branches, harvest and all delights
Of pastured and wooded land.
For them it is not dangerous to go
Each side that barrier moving to and fro:
They without trepidation undertake
Excursions into sleep, and safely come awake.

But it is different, different for me,
(Also for you I fear)

To whom a tree seems something more than tree,
And when we see,
Clustered together, two or three,
We almost are afraid to pass them near.
How beautifully they grow,
Above their stiles and lanes and watery places,
Crowding the brink of silence everywhere,
With branches dipping low
To smile toward us or to stroke our faces.
They drown us in their summer, and swirl round,
Leaving us faint: so nobody is free,
But always some surrounding ground
Is swamped and washed and covered in by tree.

They follow us and haunt us. We must build
Houses of wood. Our evening rooms are filled
With fragments of the forest: chairs and tables.
We swing our wooden doors;
Pile up, divide our sheds, byres, stables
With logs, make wooden stairs, lay wooden floors,
Sit, move, and sleep among the limbs of trees,
Rejoicing to be near them. How men saw,
Chisel and hammer, carve and tease
All timber to their purpose, modelling
The forest in their chambers. And the raw
Wild stuff, built like a cupboard or a shelf,
Will crack and shiver in the night, and sing,
Reminding everybody of itself;
Out of decayed old centuries will bring

A sudden memory
Of growing tree.

IV

And they are felled. The hatchet swings:
They pass their way. . . . Some learn to sail
Seaward on white enormous wings,
Scattering blossom along their trail;
Or be a little ship that ploughs
And glides across the rippled land,
Great frothing steeds high mounted at the bows,
Calm at the helm the ploughboy's guiding hand,
Crowded with sailing birds that flap and float,
Hang stiff against the air and hold the breeze,
Landworthy, and as trim a boat
As ever ploughed the seas.

So they are felled. . . . They change, they come,
Lingering their period of decay
In transitory forms; and some
Lie Sleeping all that shining Way
The lanky greyhound engines loop,
With open nostrils flashing by,
Lugging their drowsy noisy troupe—
They clank and clatter, crouch and cry,
Pass, vanish, fill the distance with a sigh.
And some, some trees, before they die,
Carved and moulded small,
Suddenly begin,

Oh, what a wild and windy woodland call
Out of the lips of the violin!

So trees are felled. . . . But Tree
Lingers immovably where it has stood,
Living its tranquil immortality
Impassive to the death of wood.

And you—be certain that you keep
Some memory of trees for sleep.

4

ELM ANGEL

O, why?—

Only a dove can venture that reply.

Large lawns were laid as far as eye could reach;

Ocean lolled inward on a cool long beach;

A tall town motionless and breathless gleamed;

The dead half-listened and their mind half-dreamed;

Wrecks trembled deep in their perpetual tomb;

A quiet drooped upon the summer room.

Now a blue hooded honeysuckle lane,

A garden built of roses on the wane,

Sahara buried under naked sand,

A boy with large eyes from an eastern land,

Muffled islands with hushed seas between

And one white temple glowing through the green;

Or, coming back, no place but only sound,

No elm that grew from any earthly ground,

But, heavenly throughout the atmosphere,

One ring dove cooing, crooning, cooing—Where?

5

THE SILENT POOL

i

I have discovered finally to-day
This house that I have called my own
Is built of straw and clay,
Not, as I thought, of stone.

I wonder who the architect could be,
What builder made it of that stuff;
When it was left to me
The house seemed good enough.

Yet, slowly, as its roof began to sink,
And as its walls began to split,
And I began to think,
Then I suspected it;

But did not clearly know until to-day
That it was only built of straw and clay.

II

Now I will go about on my affairs
As though I had no cares,
Nor ever think at all
How one day soon that house is bound to fall,
So when I'm told the wind has blown it down
I may have something else to call my own.

I have enquired who was the architect,
What builder did erect.
I'm told they did design
Million and million others all like mine,
And argument with all men ends the same:---
It is impossible to fix the blame.

I am so glad that underneath our talk
Our minds together walk.
We argue all the while,
But down below our argument we smile.
We have our houses, but we understand
That our real property is common land.

III

At night we often go
With happy comrades to that real estate.
Where dreams in beauty grow,
And every man enjoys a common fate.

At night in sleep one flows
Below the surface of all argument;
The brain, with all it knows,
Is covered by the waters of content.

But when the dawn appears
Brain rises to the surface with a start,
And, waking, quickly sneers
At the old natural brightness of the heart.

Oh, that a man might choose
To live unconsciously like beast or bird,
And our clear thought not loose
Its beauty when we turn it into word.

IV

Those quarrelings between my brain and heart
(In which I'd take no part)
Pursue their violent course
Corrupting my most vital force
So that my natural property is spent
In fees to keep alive their argument.

v

Look downward in the silent pool:
The weeds cling to the ground they love;
They live so quietly, are so cool;
They do not need to think, or move.

Look down in the unconscious mind:
There everything is quiet too
And deep and cool, and you will find
Calm growth and nothing hard to do,
And nothing that need trouble you.

6

EARTHLINESS

How can I tell,
I who now live,
What I have been in the past before I was born?

Memory cries,
Heart can repeat
Echo of echo from cave after cave of my life.

I can imagine,
Stretching my thought
Backward and backward, my fathers, their fathers,
and theirs,

And the one long
Faithful desire
Driving through ages to me who am breathing and here.

But as I burrow
Deep into Mind,
Only the dark passage widens: I can't feel the walls.

Oh, there must be,
Somewhere beyond,
Through all that darkness, a light, for there's often
a sound,

That roars in my ears
Like waves on the rocks
Of an ocean I've known, and when I remember that
 life

Then in my body,
Or in my heart,
Or in my brain, some quarrel, or hunger or love,

Cruel, too great
To be hidden, too eager,
Too wild for the tame life we live, will arise and cry;

Suddenly shriek,
As one who has been
Buried alive, awak'ning, might shriek in the earth:

Calling and calling,
Shaking my body,
Till I unbury the dead and discover the past.

.

Soul, oh my soul,
Here is your master,
God and begetter, yes, hundred-fold father. He lives

Deep in your flesh,
Soul of my body, O soul:
You must be faithful to him. He is God unto you.

If he is wild
Is he not you?
If he is wanton, not you? If rebellious, not you?

In the young world,
Out of the sea,
Slowly he crept with you, feeling his way to the sun;

And in the light,
High on the beach,
Laid down your body, and moulded the shape of
you, Soul;

All that long time,
Low in your ear,
Whispered the spells of the earth, which you heard
not at first.

Slowly, the slow,
Slowly and slowly, the sound,
Sound of his whispering moulded your ear to his
voice.

.

Lift up your head
Over the hills:
The distance is filled with the image and shadow of
him;

Of him, and of him,
Like a forest, an ocean,
A mountain, a world.

But who is it speaks in me now?

Who is it speaks?
Is it my brain?
Who was it talking within me and to me at once?

Silence replies,
And no one can tell
The voice from the silence, or knows when the Voice
shall begin.

MIDNIGHT LAMENTATION

When you and I go down
Breathless and cold,
Our faces both worn back
To earthly mould,
How lonely we shall be!
What shall we do,
You without me,
I without you?

I cannot bear the thought
You, first, may die,
Nor of how you will weep,
Should I.
We are too much alone;
What can we do
To make our bodies one:
You, me; I, you?

We are most nearly born
Of one same kind;
We have the same delight,
The same true mind.
Must we then part, we part;
Is there no way
To keep a beating heart,
And light of day?

I could now rise and run
Through street on street
To where you are breathing—you,
That we might meet,
And that your living voice
Might sound above
Fear, and we two rejoice
Within our love.

How frail the body is,
And we are made
As only in decay
To lean and fade.
I think too much of death;
There is a gloom
When I can't hear your breath
Calm in some room,

O, but how suddenly
Either may droop;
Countenance be so white,
Body stoop.
Then there may be a place
Where fading flowers
Drop on a lifeless face
Through weeping hours.
Is then nothing safe?
Can we not find
Some everlasting life

In our one mind?

I feel it like disgrace

Only to understand

Your spirit through your word,

Or by your hand.

I cannot find a way

Through love and through;

I cannot reach beyond

Body, to you.

When you or I must go

Down evermore,

There'll be no more to say

—But a locked door.

8

DREAM EXHIBITION OF A FINAL WORLD

i

The murky curtains roll apart. A gigantic Proscenium.
Dawn.

The purple lips of the Siren begin to twitch.
Eastward, a giant arc-light reflects through my dream
Glaringly, into a forest of chimneys.
Heavy upon my chest the large gorilla squats,
Holding, loosely, my throat.

The pulley-sinewed God of Earth whose arm is like a
crane
Now will lever the cable to open the lip of the Siren.
She mutters; her great head is wobbling:
Then her cry
Rattles her throat, before rising through pouted mouth
To a whistle, a warble, a wild full blast and a shriek;
Now a screech as her cheeks puff out; and it gashes the
light.
Her hair in the wind of her howl is frayed on the sky.

Early dreaming-time has guttered away.
She dwindles. Her lips, her eyes are closing.
The light of morning hangs in ribbons, bulging.
Now the charabancs marshalled in regiments with
hooter roaring

Thunder around the earth, round the Great Exhibition,
Aeroplanes flood the sky writing the news, and heaven
Films to the world, and winks. Within the electric
proscenium

There shall be dawn every day, imitated;
Whatever the season, beautiful, artificial,
Such as the Worker loves, bright like a picture
postcard.

The exhibition was planned to endure through final
humanity.

(Hefty gorilla, lift your claws from my throat,
Lurking ancestor phantom of final world,
Pranked in a purple Top-hat.)

II

The Gate is rare and precious,
Built of granite, the last to be quarried on earth,
Guarded by armies of negroes pranked in helmets of
scarlet.

Not far within are kept, in golden cages,
Small broods, diminishing, of those old beasts:
Last lion of earth, last tiger, rhinoceros, buffalo;
In marble tank the last large whale of ocean.

Honoured: each has a lecturer talking
Glibly of habit and haunt, day and night, day and
night.

Here is a tiny forest, reared by an old-world expert,
Fanned, that it whisper well, by regulated zephyrs;

There lives, walking up and down, in tweed, with a
stick of rarest ash-plant,
Murmuring, making a note, or sipping beer from a
tankard,
(Gloated upon by the crowd),
Rarer than lion, or granite, the last, last, Nature Poet.

Beyond is the last great valley (Charabanc, Charabanc,
roaring!)
Here are the old cascades,
Warranted still in their ancient courses,
Guaranteed to be haunted yet by the spirit of beauty,
Mumbling mysteriously far within their barb-wire
encircled enclosures;
And every train-and-villa-girdled mountain
Is crowned with proud hotels.

There stands the last cathedral. Out beyond,
The free and vast asylum of beliefs
(Encooped are they in one gigantic cold enclosure)
Folds all the faithful. They may build therein
Church, Meeting House, Synagogue, Mosque, or Chapel.
Dreamy cranes are waiting without to lift within that
arid space
Complete, ready for use, direct from the factory,
Chapel, church, or cathedral, of corrugated iron.
Under the pulpit where preaches the Pope Himself
Latest American upstart may roar; here Salvation
Army

Mass bands. Here rules, at length, the Spirit of Freedom.

For nobody fights any more about any religion.
Nobody troubles the clockwork heart of the God,
Lest cog, chain, piston, crank of the great machine
Should waver to hear or argue, or break, like a heart.

III

But, oh! the Mob is roaring! Here is mob roaring!
Armies (here it is different), armies, howling revenge.
The narrow, enormous arena where rules the down-
turned thumb.

Charabanc massed. Epsom. Telescope, Nero! Nero!
Tank! Bomb! Tank! Bomb! Every Terminus ending
here!

Beautiful hail of blood. Millions killed in a minute.
War final, War! Never a shortage of bodies.
Watch the game, heroes! Hurrying clouds of corpses!
(Only a Magnate need gnash his teeth at Another.)
'Card of the War, sir? No seats left.
One in the upper circle. Only a thousand guineas.'
Here is the final Circus, here is the final. . . .

IV

Gorilla clutching my heart!
Shall I waken at all from the last Exhibition?
Will there be forest again, and sunrise and cornfield,
this morning,
Farmhouse, haystack, flowers in the garden,

Protective, patient tree, that leans over the roof,
Near the trembling dimpering sea, where the long sand
 is hot,
And the slow tide rises and falls.
Breezes play lightly through meadows in long,
 dwindling, sunsets.
You bathe your limbs, you talk slowly; birds are all
 friendly?

v

Nightmare of future earth, again must I try
To build you. How can you be vaguely constructed,
Torment of dream,
Threatening to conquer: what are you like?
Shall it be thus? Two battleships for feet.
Two Eiffel Towers for legs, for your thin arms,
Two cranes that, either, lift ten thousand tons;
Your ribs long spans of bridges, your cold heart
Big Ben; your liver, clogged with bile, your guts,
 infirm,
Cluttered with refuse; your large belching stomach
Bulging with factories you have gulpingly swallowed:
All regulated by your clockwork heart?
But when at last I come to try your face,
I can see nothing, though your purple Siren
(So, Dream) can stroke it with arthritic hand.

You are held together by millions of wires and cables.
Could I alone cut one, one, the whole would fall apart.

VI

Now the moment is here to throw the gaunt gorilla
(Clutching my heart and making my dream)

Shivering with apish calls across the room.

He tumbles along the wainscot, becomes a shadow

Made by my lord, the Sun, the real

Redeemer, transmitter, transfuser, creator, giver,

Receiver.

I rise at the open window; see real trees,

Real fields, real men, real dogs, real—Oh, the

Charabanc,

Real; and there's the new, tall, factory chimney,

Real: and there, his cart-load real with bricks

The sawdust jerry-builder trolleys along the road,

Real. And how shall I finally murder the vaunting
gorilla?

How can I ever succeed in protecting life, life, from
the dream?

9

FATE

i

I have so often
Examined all this well-known room
That I inhabit.

There is the open window;
There the locked door, the door I cannot open,
The only doorway.

When at the keyhole often, often
I bend and listen, I can always hear
A muffled conversation.

An argument:
An angry endless argument of people
Who live behind;

Some loudly talking,
Some dimly into separate conflict moving,
Behind the door.

There they seem prisoned,
As I, in this lone room that I inhabit:
My life; my body.

You, of the previous Being,
You who once made me, and who now discuss me,
Tell me your edict.

You, long ago,
With doubting hands and eager trembling fingers,
Prepared my room.

Before I came,
Each gave a token for remembrance, left it,
And then retired behind the bolted door.

There is the pot of honey
One brought, and there the jar of vinegar
On the same table.

Who poured that water
Shining beside the flask of yellow wine?
Who sighed so softly?

Who brought that living flower to the room?
Who groaned—and I can ever hear the echo?
—You do not answer.

Meanwhile from out the distance
Sounds reach me as of building other houses:
Men building houses.

And if they ever
Should open up a doorway in the wall,
And I pass onward,

What should I take them
Beyond those doorways, in the other rooms?
What shall I bring them,
That they may love me?

Fatal question!

For all the jangling voices rise together:

'What should he take them?'

'What shall he take them?' . . .

Through that locked door there is no final answer.

They are debating, endlessly debating . . .

ii

O Fate! Have you no other gift

Than voices in a muffled room?

Why do you live behind a door,

And hide yourself in gloom?

And why, again, should you not have

One purpose only, one sole word,

Ringling for ever round my heart:

Plainly delivered, plainly heard?

Your conversation fills my brain

And tortures all my life, and yet

Gives nothing, and I often think

You've grown so old, that you forget;

And having learnt man's fatal trick

Of talking, talking, talking still,

You're tired of definite design,

And laugh at having lost your Will.

10

BITTER SANCTUARY

I

She lives in the porter's room; the plush is nicotined.
Clients have left their photos there to perish.
She watches through green shutters those who press
To reach unconsciousness.
She licks her varnished thin magenta lips,
She picks her foretooth with a finger nail,
She pokes her head out to greet new clients, or
To leave them (to what torture) waiting at the door.

II

Heat has locked the heavy earth,
Given strength to every sound,
He, where his life still holds him to the ground,
In anaesthesia, groaning for re-birth,
Leans at the door.
From out the house there comes the dullest flutter;
A lackey; and thin giggling from behind that shutter.

iv

His lost eyes lean to find and read the number.
Follows his knuckled rap, and hesitating curse.
He cannot wake himself; he may not slumber;
While on the long white wall across the road
Drives the thin outline of a dwindling hearse.

lv

Now the door opens wide.

He: 'Is there room inside?'

She: 'Are you past the bounds of pain?'

He: 'May my body lie in vain

Among the dreams I cannot keep!'

She: 'Let him drink the cup of sleep.'

v

Thin arms and ghostly hands; faint sky-blue eyes;

Long drooping lashes, lids like full-blown moons,

Clinging to any brink of floating skies:

What hope is there? What fear?—Unless to wake and
see

Lingering flesh, or cold eternity.

O yet some face, half living, brings

Far gaze to him and croons:

She: 'You're white. You are alone.

Can you not approach my sphere?'

He: 'I'm changing into stone.'

She: 'Would I were! Would I were!'

Then the white attendants fill the cup.

vi

In the morning through the world,

Watch the flunkeys bring the coffee;

Watch the shepherds on the downs,

Lords and ladies at their toilet,

Farmers, merchants, frothing towns.
But look how he, unfortunate, now fumbles
Through unknown chambers, unheedful stumbles.
Can he evade the overshadowing night?
Are there not somewhere chinks of braided light?

VII

How do they leave who once are in those rooms?
Some may be found, they say, deeply asleep
In ruined tombs.
Some in white beds, with faces round them. Some
Wander the world, and never find a home.

11

THE EARTH FOR SALE

i

How perilous life will become on earth
When the great breed of man has covered all.
The world, that was too large, will be too small.
Deserts and mountains will have been explored,
Valleys swarmed through; and our prolific breed,
Exceeding death ten million times by birth,
Will halt (bewildered, bored),
And then may droop and dwindle like an autumn
weed.

How shall we meet that moment when we know
There is no room to grow;
We, conscious, and with lonely startled eyes
Glaring upon ourselves, and with no Lord
To pray to: judged, without appeal,
What shall we feel?
He, being withdrawn, no supplicating cries
Will call Him back. He'll speak no further word.

Can special vision be required to see
What few pale centuries will take us there,
Where, at the barrier of the future, we
Shall stand condemned, in serried ranks, and stare
At Nothing—fearing Something may appear?

The Earth is covered with large auction boards,
And all her lands are reckoned up for sale.
The spaces that are now called virgin soil
Will soon be bought, and covered with great breed
Of human seed;
And, when the driven hordes
Cry 'Food!'—but find no more for any toil,
Fear, fear will strike all eyes and faces pale.
Then no one more will speak,
But, rising from a murmur to a wail,
One voice, for all, will, like a Siren, shriek.

II

Is there no pledge to make at once with Earth
While yet we have not murdered all her trees;
Before it is too late for oath or pledge;
While yet man may be happy in his birth—
Before we have to fall upon our knees,
Clinging for safety to her farthest edge?

It is not very noble that we kill
Her lions and tigers, all. Is that our reign?—
Then let us build ourselves on earth again.
What is the human will?

Is it so clearly better than the ant's?
And is our life more holy than the plants'?
They do fulfil their purpose every year,
And bring no pain, nor fear.

III

Woe to that miserable last mankind;
And, when I think of that, I have a dread
I may awake on earth, again, to find
Myself, among it, living, oh, not dead.

IV

I had been thinking of that final Earth.
Then I remembered she herself would lick
Her own lithe body clean, and from her girth
Wipe any vermin that might cling too thick.

Damned! Damned! Apparent conqueror to-day—
Oh, evanescent sway!
O drunken lust!
O swarming dust!

Man makes himself believe he has a claim
To plant bright flags on every hill he swarms;
But in the end, and in his own wild name,
And for the better prospect of his fame,
Whether it be a person or a race,
Earth, with a smiling face,
Will hold and smother him in her large arms.

12

STRANGE MEETINGS

i

If suddenly a clod of earth should rise,
And walk about, and breathe, and speak, and love,
How one would tremble, and in what surprise
Gasp: 'Can you move'?

I see men walking, and I always feel:
'Earth! How have you done this? What can you be?'
I can't learn how to know men, or conceal
How strange they are to me.

ii

The dark space underneath is full of bones,
The surface filled with bodies—roving men,
And floating above the surface a foam of eyes:
Over that is Heaven. All the Gods
Walk with cool feet, paddle among the eyes;
Scatter them like foam-flakes on the wind
Over the human world.

iii

Rising toward the surface, we are men
A moment, till we dive again, and then
We take our ease of breathing: we are sent
Unconscious to our former element,

There being perfect, living without pain
Till we emerge like men, and meet again.

IV

You live there; I live here:
Other people everywhere
Haunt their houses, and endure
Days and deeds and furniture,
Circumstances, families,
And the stare of foreign eyes.

V

Often we must entertain,
Tolerantly if we can,
Ancestors returned again
Trying to be modern man.
Gates of Memory are wide;
All of them can shuffle in,
Join the family, and, once inside,
Alas, what a disturbance they begin!
Creatures of another time and mood,
They wrangle; they dictate;
Bawl their experience into brain and blood,
Call themselves *Fate*.

VI

Eyes float above the surface, trailing
Obedient bodies, lagging feet.
Where the wind of words is wailing
Eyes and voices part and meet.

VII
(BIRTH)

One night when I was in the House of Death,
A shrill voice penetrated root and stone,
And the whole earth was shaken under ground:
I woke and there was light above my head.

Before I heard that shriek I had not known
The region of Above from Underneath,
Alternate light and dark, silence and sound,
Difference between the living and the dead.

VIII
It is difficult to tell,
(Though we feel it well,)
How the surface of the land
Budded into head and hand:
But it is a great surprise
How it blossomed into eyes.

IX
A flower is looking through the ground,
Blinking at the April weather;
Now a child has seen the flower:
Now they go and play together.

Now it seems the flower will speak,
And will call the child its brother—
But, oh strange forgetfulness!—
They don't recognize each other.

X

Yesterday I heard a thrush;
He held me with his eyes:
I waited on my yard of earth,
He watched me from his skies.

My whole day was penetrated
By his wild and windy cries,
And the glitter of his eyes.

XI

The stars must make an awful noise
In whirling round the sky;
Yet somehow I can't even hear
Their loudest song or sigh.

So it is wonderful to think
One blackbird can outsing
The voice of all the swarming stars
On any day in spring.

XII

Oh, how reluctantly some people learn
To hold their bones together, with what toil
Breathe and are moved, as though they would
return,
How gladly, and be crumbled into soil!

They knock their groping bodies on the stones,
Blink at the light, and startle at all sound,

With their white lips learn only a few moans,
Then go back under ground.

XIII

The ploughboy, he could never understand—
While he was carried dozing in the cart,
Or strolling with the plough across the land,
He never knew he had a separate heart,

Had someone told him, had he understood,
It would have been like tearing up the ground.
He slowly moves and slowly grows like wood,
And does not turn his head for any sound.

So they mistook him for a clod of land,
And round him, while he dreamed, they built a
town.

He rubs his eyes; he cannot understand,
But like a captive wanders up and down.

XIV

You may not ever go to heaven;
You had better love the earth:
You'll achieve, for all your pain,
(What you cannot understand)
Privilege to drive a flower
Through an inch of land.
All the world is in your brain:
Worship it, in human power,
With your body and your hand.

XV

I often stood at my open gate,
Watching the passing crowd with no surprise:
I don't think I had used my eyes for hate
Till they met your eyes.

XVI

How did you enter that body? Why are you here?
At once, when I had seen your eyes appear
Over the brim of earth, they were looking for
me.

How suddenly, how silently
We rose into this long-appointed place.
From what sleep have you arrived,
That your beauty has survived?
You, the everlasting—you
Known before a word was....

XVII

To-day, when you were sitting in the house,
And I was walking to you from the town,
At the far corner of the alder-wood,
I'm certain you were strolling up and down.

I thought: 'She's come to meet me, and mean-
while

Is talking to the cowslips in the dew.'
Just as you saw me, and began to smile—
It was not you,

Now I'm not certain—for how shall I say?
I cannot tell, however I may stare,
If it be you here in the house all day,
Or whether you are wandering still out there.

XVIII

Wipe away, please,
That film from your eyes.
I can't see you plainly. Are you
The friend that I seem to remember? Are we
The people I think we must be?
We have talked for an hour: it seems you are he.
I know you, I'm sure, though your eyes are so
 altered.
Oh, in what life of our lives did we meet?—
But you smile, then you sigh, then you frown:
Now you stare at me angrily. How can it be?
I know you—you do not know me.

XIX

A man who has clung to a branch and he hangs—
 Wondering when it will break.

A woman who sits by the bed of a child,
 Watching for him to wake.

People who gaze at the town-hall clock,
 Waiting to hear the hour.

Somebody walking along a path,
Stooping to pick a flower.

Dawn; and the reaper comes out of his home,
Moving along to mow.

A frightened crowd in a little room,
Waiting all day to go.

A tall man rubbing his eyes in the dusk,
Muttering 'Yes'; murmuring 'No'.

XX

It is not difficult to die:
You hold your breath and go to sleep;
Your skin turns white or grey or blue,
And some of your relations weep.

The cheerful clock without a pause
Will finish your suspended day.
That body you were building up
Will suddenly be thrown away.

You turn your fingers to the ground,
Drop all the things you had to do:
It is the first time in your life
You'll cease completely to be you.

XXI

Memory opens; memory closes:
Memory taught me to be a man.

It remembers everything:
It helps the little birds to sing.

It finds the honey for the bee:
It opens and closes, opens and closes.. .

*—Proverbs for the humble wise;
Flashes out of human eyes;
Oracles of paradise.*

13

REAL PROPERTY

Tell me about that harvestfield.

Oh! Fifty acres of living bread.

The colour has painted itself in my heart.

The form is patterned in my head.

So now I take it everywhere;

See it whenever I look round;

Hear it growing through every sound,

Know exactly the sound it makes—

Remembering, as one must all day,

Under the pavement the live earth aches.

Trees are at the farther end,

Limes all full of the mumbling bee:

So there must be a harvest field

Whenever one thinks of a linden tree.

A hedge is about it, very tall,

Hazy and cool, and breathing sweet.

Round paradise is such a wall

And all the day, in such a way,

In paradise the wild birds call.

You only need to close your eyes

And go within your secret mind,

And you'll be into paradise:

I've learnt quite easily to find
Some linden trees and drowsy bees,
A tall sweet hedge with the corn behind.

I will not have that harvest mown:
I'll keep the corn and leave the bread.
I've bought that field; it's now my own:
I've fifty acres in my head.
I take it as a dream to bed.
I carry it about all day. . . .

Sometimes when I have found a friend
I give a blade of corn away.

14

CORONILLA

i

Coronilla! Coronilla!

Heavy yellow tepid bloom:
(Midnight in a scented room)—

Coronilla.

Southern road; muffled house, . . .

Later on to-night
I'll come again so quietly
By moonlight.

.

Oh, what is that I think I see
So pale beyond the yellow dusk,
Beyond the trailing bitter flower
And reek of marrow-bone and musk?

Is it a face?—My frozen hands
Are hiding in their bone:
The stare above the little mouth;
And she and I alone.

She calls me. Oh, I wonder why.
She wants me. Shall I go?
Now is your time, my brain, to cry
The often-practised No.

.

Coronilla, I have passed you
Seven times a day.
Why do I always take my walk
The southern way?

Although I hate your bitter reek,
I still return, and still
Long that your hidden voice may speak
Against my wavering will.

Wait for me. I will come to-morrow.
Must you have your way?
Wait, then; I will come to morrow.
I am going home to-day.

• • • • •

Coronilla! Coronilla!
Are you here to-night?
Seven times I've come to you
By moonlight.

Now I must feel your tepid bloom.
I'll twist your tendrils through my skin;
So, if you have a shuttered room,
Coronilla, let me in.

II

He cooled the hollow of his cheek,
And filled it with the drowsy flower,

He has become so gentle, weak,
And feverish in her power.

Now all the sappy little leaves
Are clinging to his frozen lips;
And she has drawn the shutter back,
And drawn him with her finger-tips.

The candles flicker in the room
He trembles by the wall.
She gave him all and all again,
But still he asks for all.

So one by one the candles droop
And close their eyes and faint away.
The yellow blooms begin to stoop:
He has not noticed it is day.

III

Now he has laid his body down,
And all his skin is silver pale;
He'll never, never rise again:
His muscles have begun to fail.

He's covered with a winding sheet.
There's yet a little time to rave,
Then he will hear the grains of earth
Drip-dropping on his grave.

Yellow, yellow is the flower;
 Fatal is the bloom;
And no one any time returned
 Who slept inside the shuttered room.

15

GRAVITY

i

Fit for perpetual worship is the power
That holds our bodies safely to the earth.

When people talk of their domestic gods,
Then privately I think of You.

We ride through space upon your shoulders
Conveniently and lightly set,
And, so accustomed, we relax our hold,
Forget the gentle motion of your body—
But You do not forget.

Sometimes you breathe a little faster,
Or move a muscle:
Then we remember you, O Master.

ii

While people meet in reverent groups
And sing to their domestic God,
You, all that time, dear tyrant (How I laugh!)
Could, without effort, place your hand among
 them,
And sprinkle them.

But all your ways are carefully ordered,
For you have never questioned duty.
We watch your everlasting combinations;
We call them fate; we turn them to our pleasure,
And when they most delight us, call them beautr.

III

I rest my body on your grass,
And let my brain repose in you:
I feel these living moments pass,
And, from within myself to those far places
To be imagined in your time and spaces,
Deliberate the various acts you do:—

Sorting and re-arranging worlds of Matter
Keenly and wisely. Thus you brought our earth
Through stages, and from purpose back to
purpose;
From fire to fog, to dust, to birth
Through beast to man, who led himself to brain—
(And you will draw him back to dust again,)

By leave of you he places stone on stone;
He scatters seed: you are at once the prop
Among the long roots of his fragile crop.
You manufacture for him, and insure
House, harvest, implement and furniture,
And hold them all secure.

IV

The hill... The trees... From underneath
I feel You pull me with your hand:
Through my firm feet up to my heart
You hold me,—You are in the land,
Reposing underneath the hill.

You keep my balance and my growth.
I lift a foot, but where I go
You follow: you, the ever-strong,
Control the smallest thing I do.

If by some little human power
I turn your purpose to my end,
For that I thank you every hour,
I stand at worship, while you send
Thrills up my body to my heart,
And I am all in love to know
How by your strength you keep me part.
Of earth, which cannot let me go;
How everything I see around,
Whether it can or cannot move,
Is granted liberty of ground,
And freedom to enjoy your love;

Though you are silent always, and, alone
To You yourself, your power remains unknown.

16

OVERHEARD ON A SALT MARSH

Nymph, nymph, what are your beads?
Green glass, goblin. Why do you stare at them?
Give them me.

No.

Give them me. Give them me.

No.

Then I will howl all night in the reeds,
Lie in the mud and howl for them.

Goblin, why do you love them so?

They are better than stars or water,
Better than voices of winds that sing,
Better than any man's fair daughter,
Your green glass beads on a silver ring.

Hush I stole them out of the moon.

Give me your beads, I desire them.

No.

I will howl in a deep lagoon
For your green glass beads, I love them so.
Give them me. Give them.

No.

17

CHILDREN OF LOVE

The holy boy
Went from his mother out in the cool of the day
Over the sun-parched fields
And in among the olives shining green and shining grey.

There was no sound,
No smallest voice of any shivering stream.
Poor sinless little boy,
He desired to play, and to sing; he could only sigh
and dream.

Suddenly came
Running along to him naked, with curly hair,
That rogue of the lovely world,
That other beautiful child whom the virgin Venus bare.

The holy boy
Gazed with those sad blue eyes that all men know.
Impudent Cupid stood
Panting, holding an arrow and pointing his bow.

(Will you not play?
Jesus, run to him, run to him, swift for our joy.
Is he not holy, like you?
Are you afraid of his arrows, O beautiful dreaming
boy?)

And now they stand
Watching one another with timid gaze;
Youth has met youth in the wood,
But holiness will not change its melancholy ways.

Cupid at last
Draws his bow and softly lets fly a dart.
Smile for a moment sad world!—
It has grazed the white skin and drawn blood from
the sorrowful heart.

Now, for delight,
Cupid tosses his locks and goes wantonly near;
But the child that was born to the cross
Has let fall on his cheek, for the sadness of life, a
compassionate tear.

Marvellous dream!
Cupid has offered his arrows for Jesus to try;
He has offered his bow for the game.
But Jesus went weeping away, and left him there
wondering why.

MILK FOR THE CAT

When the tea is brought at five o'clock,
And all the neat curtains are drawn with care,
The little black cat with bright green eyes
Is suddenly purring there.

At first she pretends, having nothing to do,
She has come in merely to blink by the grate,
But, though tea may be late or the milk may be
sour,
She is never late.

And presently her agate eyes
Take a soft large milky haze,
And her independent casual glance
Becomes a stiff hard gaze.

Then she stamps her claws or lifts her ears
Or twists her tail and begins to stir,
Till suddenly all her lithe body becomei
One breathing trembling purr.

The children eat and wriggle and laugh;
The two old ladies stroke their silk:
But the cat is grown small and thin with desire,
Transformed to a creeping lust for milk.

The white saucer like some full moon descends
At last from the clouds of the table above;
She sighs and dreams and thrills and glows,
Transfigured with love.

She nestles over the shining rim,
Buries her chin in the creamy sea;
Her tail hangs loose; each drowsy paw
Is doubled under each bending knee.

A long dim ecstasy holds her life;
Her world is an infinite shapeless white,
Till her tongue has curled the last holy drop,
Then she sinks back into the night,

Draws and dips her body to heap
Her sleepy nerves in the great arm-chair,
Lies defeated and buried deep
Three or four hours unconscious there.

19

SOLITUDE

When you have tidied all things for the night,
And while your thoughts are fading to their sleep,
You'll pause a moment in the late firelight,
Too sorrowful to weep.

The large and gentle furniture has stood
In sympathetic silence all the day
With that old kindness of domestic wood;
Nevertheless the haunted room will say:
'Some one must be away.'

The little dog rolls over half awake,
Stretches his paws, yawns, looking up at you,
Wags his tail very slightly for your sake,
That you may feel he is unhappy too.

A distant engine whistles, or the floor
Creaks, or the wandering night-wind bangs a door.

Silence is scattered like a broken glass.
The minutes prick their ears and run about.
Then one by one subside again and pass
Sedately in, monotonously out.

You bend your head and wipe away a tear.
Solitude walks one heavy step more near.

20

WEEK-END

i

The train! The twelve o'clock for paradise.
Hurry, or it will try to creep away.
Out in the country everyone is wise:
We can be only wise on Saturday.
There you are waiting, little friendly house:
Those are your chimney-stacks with you
between,
Surrounded by old trees and strolling cows,
Staring through all your windows at the green.
Your homely floor is creaking for our tread;
The smiling teapot with contented spout
Thinks of the boiling water, and the bread
Longs for the butter. All their hands are out
To greet us, and the gentle blankets seem
Purring and crooning: 'Lie in us, and
dream.'

ii

The key will stammer, and the door reply,
The hall wake, yawn, and smile; the torpid stair
Will grumble at our feet, the table cry:
'Fetch my belongings for me; I am bare.'
A clatter! Something in the attic falls.
A ghost has lifted up his robes and fled.

The loitering shadows move along the walls;
Then silence very slowly lifts his head.
The starling with impatient screech has flown
The chimney, and is watching from the tree.
They thought us gone for ever: mouse alone
Stops in the middle of the floor to see.
Now all you idle things, resume your toil.
Hearth, put your flames on. Sulky kettle, boil.

III

Contented evening; comfortable joys;
The snoozing fire, and all the fields are still:
Tranquil delight, no purpose, and no noise—
Unless the slow wind flowing round the hill.
'Murry' (the kettle) dozes; little mouse
Is rambling prudently about the floor.
There's lovely conversation in this house:
Words become princes that were slaves before.
What a sweet atmosphere for you and me
The people that have been here left behind...,
Oh, but I fear it may turn out to be
Built of a dream, erected in the mind:
So if we speak too loud, we may awaken
To find it vanished, and ourselves mistaken.

IV

Lift up the curtain carefully. All the trees
Stand in the dark like drowsy sentinels.
The oak is talkative to-night; he tells

The little bushes crowding at his knees
That formidable, hard, voluminous
 History of growth from acorn into age.
They titter like school-children; they arouse
 Their comrades, who exclaim: 'He is very sage,'
Look how the moon is staring through that cloud,
 Laying and lifting idle streaks of light.
O hark! was that the monstrous wind, so loud
 And sudden, prowling always through the night?
 Let down the shaking curtain. They are
 queer,
 Those foreigners. They and we live so neai.

v

Come, come to bed. The shadows move about,
 And someone seems to overhear our talk.
The fire is low; the candles flicker out;
 The ghosts of former tenants want to walk.
Already they are shuffling through the gloom.
 I felt an old man touch my shoulder-blade;
Once he was married here: they love this room,
 He and his woman and the child they made.
Dead, dead, they are, yet some familiar sound,
 Creeping along the brink of happy life,
Revives their memory from under ground—
 The farmer and his troublesome old wife.
 Let us be going: as we climb the stairs,
 They'll sit down in our warm half-empty
 chairs.

VI

Morning! Wake up! Awaken! All the boughs
Are rippling on the air across the green.
The youngest birds are singing to the house.
Blood of the world!—and is the country clean?
Disturb the precinct. Cool it with a shout.
Sing as you trundle down to light the fire.
Turn the encumbering shadows tumbling out,
And fill the chambers with a new desire.
Life is no good, unless the morning brings
White happiness and quick delight of day.
These half-inanimate domestic things
Must all be useful, or must go away.
Coffee, be fragrant. Porridge in my plate,
Increase the vigour to fulfil my fate.

VII

The fresh air moves like water round a boat.
The white clouds wander. Let us wander too.
The whining wavering plover flap and float.
That crow is flying after that cuckoo.
Look! Look!... They're gone. What are the great
trees calling?
Just come a little farther, by that edge
Of green, to where the stormy ploughland, falling
Wave upon wave, is lapping to the hedge.
Oh, what a lovely bank! Give me your hand.
Lie down and press your heart against the
ground.

Let us both listen till we understand,
Each through the other, every natural
sound....
I can't hear anything to-day, can you,
But, far and near: 'Cuckoo! Cuckoo!
Cuckoo!'

VIII

The everlasting grass—how bright, how cool!
The day has gone too suddenly, too soon.
There's something white and shiny in that pool—
Throw in a stone, and you will hit the moon.
Listen, the church-bell ringing! Do not say
We must go back to-morrow to our work.
We'll tell them we are dead: we died to-day.
We're lazy. We're too happy. We will shirk.
We're cows. We're kettles. We'll be anything
Except the manikins of time and fear.
We'll start away to-morrow wandering,
And nobody will notice in a year....
Now the great sun is slipping under ground.
Grip firmly!—How the earth is whirling
round.

IX

Be staid; be careful; and be not too free.
Temptation to enjoy your liberty
May rise against you, break into a crime,
And smash the habit of employing Time.

It serves no purpose that the careful clock
Mark the appointment, the officious train
Hurry to keep it, if the minutes mock
Loud in your ear: 'Late. Late. Late. Late again.'
Week-end is very well on Saturday:
On Monday it's a different affair—
A little episode, a trivial stay
In some oblivious spot somehow, somewhere.
On Sunday night we hardly laugh or speak:
Week-end begins to merge itself in Week.

x

Pack up the house, and close the creaking door.
The fields are dull this morning in the rain.
It's difficult to leave that homely floor.
Wave a light hand; we will return again.
(What was that bird?) Good-bye, ecstatic tree,
Floating, bursting, and breathing on the air.
The lonely farm is wondering that we
Can leave. How every window seems to stare!
That bag is heavy. Share it for a bit.
You like that gentle swashing of the ground
As we tread? ...

It is over. Now we sit
Reading the morning paper in the sound
Of the debilitating heavy train.
London again, again. London again.

