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**POEMS 1921-1931**



# POEMS

1921-1931

ANNE FREMANTLE



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the poems in this book.

## CUPIO DISSOLVI

O frozen water, whom no arctic sunrise  
Has driven, foaming avalanche to sea;  
Cannot my kisses rouse your sleepy eyelids  
Still downwards bent, to lift your eyes to me?

Child, like to sleeping fawn in mazéd forest  
Long have I poured my passion on your face;  
To rid me of my longing I would fling it  
Into your heart's green turquoise marbled place.

Meanwhile, afar in sunless twilight,  
Dreaming Heaven's opal to avanturine.  
You weave your bridal vestments of spun crystal  
I kiss your feet and sing a song of mine.

Sing of the passion and the tireless hunger  
In the grave eyes of mitred priest at Mass,  
When in his hands he worships Israel's Master,  
And Calvary has come again to pass.

You smile—but when, some day, I want no  
longer,  
Your body, dearest, that I loved of old,  
My song will fail, but my reward will follow—  
When every woman's scented hair grows cold.

For then wakes passion lover cannot fathom;  
Then wakes desire no mass can satisfy.  
I know and greet it—but you may not listen—  
Too pure, you cannot grasp the wish to die!

## FEAST' OF SAINT MICHAEL

White lilies for the captain of high heaven  
White souls for soldiers? Nay,  
Passion stained, buffeted, uncrówned,  
Men who' have fought their way.

Those who have striven' to storm the gates,  
Who won, perhaps, or lost  
A place in hell—a place in heaven,  
And knew, nor counted cost.

Not timid, pale, oft-shriven souls  
No souls that "stand and wait"  
Only those wounded in God's fight  
Shall enter Michael's gate.

White lilies for her fields—for Mary's gold—  
But Michael's sword waves high,  
To welcome blood-stained charioteers  
Who yet have learnt to die!

## MILAN CATHEDRAL

The church is empty. All the guests are gone.  
Infinity remains to crowd the space  
Between the fluted columns. The lamps burn  
Lonely, fearing to reveal the face  
Portrayed above them; From the cross looks  
down  
He who forever watches in that place.

## FUERE . . . . .

### Lavarone-Pergine

Here, where they tore men's limbs with nails  
They lift Christ's body high;  
Here—where with lust of blood men cried.  
Mad, and were fain to die.

Here, where the Austrian guns poured steel  
Cyclamen sent the air;  
Where starving men ate flowers for bread,  
Goats browse—they do not care.

Here, where the thunder of shrapnel shook  
The eternal hills, the moon  
Smiles, because men and beasts and earth  
Forget it all—so soon.

## TU SCIS . . . QUIA AMO TE

Am I to give my body to be burned  
Cry with Aeneas: "Troy was, and I am",  
To prove I love you? Could you but have learned  
That I would leave the carcase where I dwell  
To crawl to you beneath the gates of Hell,  
Begging to follow—faithful—where you go—  
Ah, little heart, an exile loves you so.

Sonnets I cannot write—to etch your face  
With driving red-hot lines into their hearts  
Who know you not. So high a courage, such  
fair grace,  
Lives for itself—alone. I loved you—high  
Pinnacled tower of sunset—crowned to die.  
You called me—and I came. Now bid me leave  
This body that I weary of. I grieve  
To live, for you are dead. Now faint, now loud,  
Thunders the sterile cry of charity  
Beating within the tired caves and echoing. . .  
Ah, little heart, an exile loves you so.

“NOR CAST ONE LONGING, LINGERING  
LOOK BEHIND?”

Scent of Italian snows in April  
October mellowed earth in England's fields,  
The early hours, and mists among the moor-  
lanūs,  
And all the purple glory twilight yields,  
Shall I find these in Asphodel-starred Heavens  
Riding with Michael's armies 'cross the sky,  
Will Heaven give back to me my red June roses  
When they are faded on the grave wherein I lie?

“SI QUIS, QUID AGAM, FORTE REQUIRAT  
ERIT, VIVERE ME DICES”

Tell them I wake the whole world with my dreams  
Bid night fall with my sleep,  
Play with the thundering clamour of the spheres  
Of God's own harvest reap.

Tell them for me God lives, for me, God died —  
“My work?” They ask—God say  
I bear the gates of Hercules—I am—  
This my work, day by day.

And when at last, they need no longer ask  
When dust to dust I give;  
Go, shout to pitying skies and silent seas,  
Go, tell the world, I live!

## PRE-EXISTANCE

There are green weeds in the pond, and waterlilies  
And to me those green weeds seem  
A muddy echo of some pre-existence,  
Thin hauntings of a dream.

Was I a toad, and were those green things Heaven?  
Drowning, and these Hell's gates?  
Why should they move me, far beyond all thinking,  
All former loves and hates?

And waterlilies, . . . on what far-off island,  
In what clear pool or lake  
Did I with magic kiss their face quicken  
And watch these strange things wake?

Who knows? strange glimmerings, strange stories  
Where forgotten things have trod—  
And would I were where only I could learn them  
Where now they are—with God.

## MIMOSA

Beside the red tiles of the tube  
A beggar stands to sell his ware  
Scented mimosa from the south,  
I know . . . for I have seen it there.

I saw its gold dust blown across  
The thick blue Adriatic sky;  
Incense earth gave at Christmastide,  
Gold censers full the wind flung high.

Besmirched the flowers, their pale scent gone,  
Their gold and incense spent in vain;  
They have but myrrh to offer now—  
But myrrh . . . in London mist and rain.

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## EINSTEIN I

You are long dead. Now are your proud eyes tame  
Your hair is tarnished, your full lips are cold  
For centuries unkissed,—or now aflame  
For high immortal lovers? — —

. . . . .

I have you here, your head upon this lace  
Whilst your eyes leap to look upon my lips;  
You tear the fastenings of my dress, it slips . . .  
Was it this night I felt your burning face  
Prest close upon me? or was't yesternight?  
It matters not, we two are very near  
Nay . . . heart on heart.

Silent the dawn breaks, clear:  
The morning light has blinded me—your eyes  
Are far withdrawn. Must the sun always rise?





WRITTEN IN AN AUTOGRAPH ALBUM

The sound of weary lute-strings in the evening  
    Twixt vespers and night,  
Translucent sea-waves coiling like green serpents  
    Before the day's flight.

These lead my soul's feet through deserted gardens  
    To a great stream's side  
And bid her rest her tired limbs 'mid thyme flowers  
    ( Where the brown bees hide )

Then may my soul see, gazing on swift waters  
    Haply, her own eyes,  
And trail her fingers in, to stay the current  
    Before night clouds the skies.

## FLANDERS POPPIES

Here stands an altar of grey, rough-hewn stone  
Weathered by seven centuries, and worn  
By God-stained lips that priestly kisses gave  
Daily, five hundred years ago, at dawn.  
Then on this carved stone lay the soul of God  
Where now two dusty Flanders poppies lie;  
Here came the greatest mystery to pass,  
Here fed the Deathless those about to die.  
Where time is not, in some far state and strange  
The empty years are counted for as nought  
The changing of the clements is wrought.

. . . . .

The church smells musty, and the fading light  
Dies 'neath the yew-trees, leaving us the night.

## L'ATTENTE

Cold moonlight chills the June-enchanted earth,  
The warm soil shivers 'neath the icy stars;  
The marble steps are loved of the pale lights  
They glitter like the snows on polar seas;  
My silken dress is wet with dew—I hear  
Nought but the sleepy whisperings of the trees.

I must go in, for the far east is grey  
My eyes are heavy, all my limbs are numb.  
The curtain falls behind me. When the day  
Is come, I will go sleep; now through my tears  
I watch the shadows of the ghostly clouds,  
The waning moon looks down at me, and leers.

## “IN THE SERE AND YELLOW LEAF”

Come out into the woods alone with me . . .  
Into the autumn woods, where old and sad  
Bereft of those strong arms that all the year  
Were her custodians, Earth, a Brahminee  
Puts on her fairest sari, wears her shroud  
Gold edged, for her dead love, Hyperion.

. . . . .  
Her queenly head is garlanded about  
With shining leaves, as to the sacrifice  
The heifer, wreathed with flowers, is led forth,  
And for Hyperion Earth paints her lips  
With scarlet berries, and with amethysts  
Jewels her hands—that erstwhile held his face  
Pressed close against her breast.

No price men set

Upon her dying finery, and yet  
Clothed in the purple of her agony  
Her own fierce love the flame to light her pyre  
Kindling her limbs from her own heart on fire  
Dying-in-state of old age and desire  
She lifts our hearts and makes us comprehend  
Somewhat the hurt and purport of her end.

## VICE VERSA

I was born c'ld, and am, alas, too young  
My soul is w'ary, y'et my limbs are strong;  
I seek for quiet waters, and am flun'g  
Into a tavern full of wine and song.

My soul is a young hound straining his thongs,  
My body is decrepit and decayed;  
I would go battle fiercely with all wrongs—  
And yet my quivering sinews are afraid.



## “MULIER PERIGRINA”

Grey owl—light in a night-jar haunted forest  
Where many mazed paths creep,  
Amongst the oak and wych elm trees, to spaces  
Where marshland flowers sleep.

Here stands a pilgrim, whose red lips are  
bleeding,  
Scarred by acacia thorn;  
Her yielding eyes fighting in vain the darkness,  
Her sandalled feet all torn,

She sought the mountains, e'er her feet came  
roaming

Unto this prison land.  
For on the boundaries of the shrine-filled country  
Which was her goal, they stand.

But white mists rise around, her body shrouding  
And from her hunted eyes  
They hide far heaven, and snare-filled earth  
forever

Slowly the white mists rise.

Thus goes she always, never the hills attaining,  
Nor over the hills, her goal  
Snared in the serpent-like embraces  
Of the woods of her own soul.





## REFLECTIONS

Like a green glass goblet you have coloured all  
the love I poured into your heart  
Till the transparency of it is become a cold green  
flame,  
Misty and still, yet with strange unrest about it,  
that must flicker and start  
As though my love were a wildness, that even your  
quiet cannot tame.  
But now that I have given you all, and all has  
left me  
I am so alone and undone; for I think you can  
love only what I poured  
Into your heart. For it is become part of you, and  
you cannot see  
That in the unquiet green flame, it is only your-  
self you have adored.

MAY EVE  
London-Oxford by 'bus

From London down to Uxbridge  
The sky was daffodil,  
And Ealing way and Acton  
And Hayes, had all their fill  
Of golden streets at evening  
And sky of daffodil.

From Uxbridge to High Wycombe  
All orange was the sky  
With red and purple shadows that  
Went leisurely drifting by  
Whilst the big cars went quietly  
Under the orange sky.

From Beaconsfield to Oxford  
The sky was apple green  
With a crescent moon a-climbing  
'Mongst stars, with sky between;  
Not orange now nor daffodil  
But only apple green.

## SEPTEMBER 1931

Since summer was not, why must winter be?  
This year the red grapes ripened without sun;  
Green still the mildewed corn, though harvest's  
done;  
The sodden leaves to gold change on each tree.  
Septembrine woodsmoke fills the autumnal air;  
But, cheated of our flowering May and June,  
Given but robin's song for cuckoo's tune  
We are not comforted; though years more fair  
Bring back the swallows. Since our April's lost,  
Though the bare boughs put on more verdant green  
Next year, and August's loveliness be seen,  
Yet no hereafter can make up the cost  
Of these four wasted months to us, whose spring  
Comes not again, since winter must death bring.

## BALM IN GILEAD

When all our sodden English fields  
With bungalows are desecrate,  
Yet will the cloud-grey skies be swept  
By mist, and rain will consecrate  
The starveling poplar trees that grace  
The country's smug, suburban face.

What though where trees once grew, and grass  
The garden cities thickly crowd?  
At night the tired earth shall smile  
To see the stars, remote and proud  
Tread quietly the heavens, and light  
The empty spaces of the night.

When crazy pavement hides the soil  
And trim herbaceous borders stand  
Where cowslips grew, and daffodil  
And bluebells carpeted the land  
Behind the red brick chimneys high  
Shall glow the many-coloured sky.

The sunset shall not need the streets,  
Nor shall the winds less gently blow  
Because on common land, and plough,  
Semi-detached small villas grow,  
And we, who hear the linnets sing  
Shall know, here, once again, is spring.

## :TOISON ROUGE

Oncques ne vit Jason  
Toison  
Si beau qu'ici . . . .

Cadmium red they to the tall house cling,  
Most tenderly the motley bricks they cover  
With Cyprus-umber foliage; their tendrils fling  
About these vulgar Gothic walls, as though their  
lover.

No Argus sails this crimson fleece to shear;  
The passing crowds ignore the virgin creeper,  
To scarlet madder and Mars violet blind;  
This sterile harvest craves no sicklied reaper.

Yet is the glory of these leaves more rare  
Than sunset orange or than sunrise gold  
Nor questing Jason colour found so fair,  
Nor Helen's cloak e'er fell in lovelier fold.







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