

**PAGES MISSING  
WITHIN THE  
BOOK ONLY**

**TEXT FLY WITHIN  
THE BOOK ONLY**

UNIVERSAL  
LIBRARY

**OU\_210819**

UNIVERSAL  
LIBRARY



OSMANIA UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Call No. 821.86  
8973

Accession No. 32658

Author

Title *Selects & Poems of Nigerian poets*

This book should be returned on or before the date last marked below.



**SELECTED POEMS**  
**of**  
**ALGERNON**  
**CHARLES**  
**SWINBURNE**



SELECTED POEMS  
of  
ALGERNON  
CHARLES  
SWINBURNE

---

With an Introduction by  
HUMPHREY HARE



---

WILLIAM HEINEMANN LTD  
MELBOURNE :: LONDON :: TORONTO

FIRST PUBLISHED 1950

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN  
AT THE WINDMILL PRESS  
KINGSWOOD, SURREY

# SELECTED POEMS

(1837—1866)

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	vii
Dirge from THE UNHAPPY REVENGE	<b>3</b>
Song from ROSAMOND	5
Mary Beatons Song from CHASTELARD	6
AFTER DEATH	7
THE BLOODY SON	9
THE SEA-SWALLOWS	12
A SONG IN TIME OF ORDER, 1852	14
A SONG IN TIME OF REVOLUTION, 1860	16
SAPPHICS	<b>19</b>
HENDECASYLLABICS	<b>22</b>
A LEAVE-TAKING	23
HERMAPHRODITUS	25
THE GARDEN OF PROSERPINE	<b>27</b>
ITYLUS	30
A BALLAD OF LIFE	32
A BALLAD OF DEATH	35
LES NOYADES	38
A CAMEO	41
A LITANY	42
AVE ATQUE VALE	47
LAUS VENERIS	54
FAUSTINE	67
THE TRIUMPH OF TIME	72
	83
	91

CONTENTS

vi

MATER TRIUMPHALIS	151
"NoN DOLET"	156
HYMN OF MAN	157
GENESIS	167
HERTHA	169

(1873—1878)

Chorus from ERECHTHEUS	179
IN THE BAY	182
A BALLAD OF FRANCOIS VILLON	191
A WASTED VIGIL	192
A BALLAD OF DREAMLAND	195
AT A MONTH'S END	196
AT PARTING	200
A VISION OF SPRING IN WINTER	201
EX-VOTO	204
A FORSAKEN GARDEN	208
RELICS	211

(1879—1909)

THALASSIUS	217
To A SEAMEW	230
SELECTION TAKEN FROM VOLUMES QUOTED	235

## INTRODUCTION

THE approach to Swinburne is one of singular hazard. He is among those poets who respond imperfectly to the methods of pure literary criticism. When note has been taken of the influence upon him of the Greek drama, of the medieval chronicles, of Shakespeare and the early English dramatists, of Villon and the Border Ballads, when his prosody has been discussed and his metric innovations proclaimed, it will be found that nothing of importance towards the understanding of his work has in fact been said. Yet most critics in the past have confined themselves to these and allied themes, and this fact, together with the exquisite evasions of Edmund Gosse's official biography, has tended to perpetuate the critical theory, first propounded by Meredith, that Swinburne lacked "an internal centre". He has been accused on the one hand of deriving his inspiration from purely literary sources and, on the other, of concealing a meaningless void beneath a flow of admittedly elegant sound. Unfortunately it cannot be denied that Swinburne too often justifies this last criticism. Nevertheless, by some small use of the selective faculty, proper to the art of reading, the attention can be centred on a considerable body of work—at least equal in quantity to the total output of Keats—to which it emphatically does not apply. The effort to elucidate that meaning, however, to expose that "internal centre", requires a biographical approach, demands some attempt at least at an analysis of the temperament from which it sprang. And this process is not without its hazards since, as Jowett remarked, Swinburne bore "an extreme and almost unintelligible unlikeness to ourselves".

On reading the polemical criticism that was showered upon him by his contemporaries, one suspects that with but few exceptions—such as Whistler, Lord Houghton, Rossetti and Sir Richard Burton—they failed, while belabouring him as a subverter of morality or hailing him as an apostle of freedom, to understand the nature of his genius or the true basis of his inspiration. For, indeed, the context of English letters seemed insufficiently wide to include him. If anything was clear, it was that he stood outside the main stream. Superficially he might echo the

classics or the English dramatists, but further, and increasingly horrified, inspection made it apparent that he lacked the respectability of known progenitors. To-day, however, it can be seen that he was no bastard child. Against the wider background of nineteenth-century European literature he takes his place between Baudelaire and D'Annunzio as one of the great figures of that revolutionary movement which has been called the "Romantic Agony".

That Swinburne should have been labelled the "Poet of Revolt" is an ironical coincidence. Goose and his school of critics were intent on hedging him about with the variegated laurels of nineteenth-century propriety. *Songs before Sunrise* and the other political poems allowed them to invent a label which might discount the outcry with which *Poems and Ballads* had been received in 1866—an outcry which still lingered in elderly memories. In a sense this label was perfectly correct, but in a sense quite other than was intended and infinitely more subtle. It was not until *La Jeunesse de Swinburne* appeared in 1928 that Swinburne was exhumed from the concealing clay to which the literary sextons had consigned him. Without Lafourcade's imaginative scholarship Swinburne would still remain what Gosse and Mr. Harold Nicolson would have him be: an inexplicable phenomenon. "There will be those doubtless", wrote the latter, "who ... will trace depressing and essentially erroneous analogies to Dr. Masoch and the Marquis de Sade \_\_\_\_\_"

It must be said at once that, if Swinburne is to be understood, those analogies, however depressing, must be traced. It is clear that a refusal to do so, a preconceived idea that they are "essentially erroneous", is one of the main causes for the criticism, so often levelled at Swinburne, of *a failure to communicate*. Unless it is realised that during the whole of his youth—the period of his greatest poetry—he was obsessed by his temperamental aberration and that it was the profound basis of his inspiration, his work will have no collective meaning at all. And it is notable that when, in later years, this esoteric inspiration lapsed, all unifying meaning disappears: he has no longer anything essential to convey.

This aberration, which was sufficiently notorious to become part of his European reputation—manifestations of the "Romantic Agony" were better understood on the continent at that date than in England—was far more than a regrettable sexual eccentricity. The pornography of *The Flogging Block* and *The Whippingham Papers*, the ridiculous

indecencies of the correspondence, were but symptomatic of an emotion infinitely more profound, of an anguished sensitivity/ which was of the very essence of his being and with which he responded to an outer world, whose impressions he received with an overwhelming intensity, with a shock, which left pleasure and pain inextricably confounded. And this incapacity to formulate the normal dichotomy between pleasure and pain—a peculiar confusion which, if the autobiographical novel, *Lesbia Brandon*, is to be trusted, was present from the first—permeated his whole character. In the same way that masochism becomes so easily sadistic—in the sense that there is a desire to give the loved one pleasure by inflicting pain—so in Swinburne a submissiveness, evident in the hero-worship lavished upon Landor, Hugo and Maszini, and the complete self-abandonment to the will of Watts-Dunton, are allied to a rebelliousness which caused him to leave prematurely both Eton and Oxford, to adopt in politics a violent republicanism, and to become embroiled in a continuous series of needless disputes. This is the clue to much in his life that would otherwise be incomprehensible. And if this is accepted as the basis of Swinburne's psychology, the history of his literary development assumes a logic, an inevitability, which is not without significance.

(1837—1866)

Swinburne's work, as indeed his life, falls into four main periods: the first and possibly most important of these included *Atalanta in Calydon* and came to an end with the publication of *Poems and ballads*. The attempt to elucidate these works will entail references to a background of others not included in this volume by reason of their length, their incompleteness, or their comparative lack of merit. This is necessary since the history of this first period is the history of his search for a formula to express a view of the universe conditioned by the peculiarities of his own temperament—the algolagnia demanding, as it were, an inclusive synthesis.

On the authority of his cousin, Mrs. Disney Leith, we know that Swinburne had in childhood written numbers of "blood-curdling dramas". One manuscript survives—that of *The Unhappy Revenge*, composed at Eton at the age of thirteen. It shows already a precocious reverence for the Elizabethan dramatists and a sense of the possibilities

of discovering voluptuous pleasures in martyrdom. At Oxford, though the element of *pastiche* is still present in the surviving dramatic fragments—*The Laws of Corinth*, *Laugh and Lie Down*, and *The Loyal Servant*—the *allognasia* is a direct expression, unintellectualised, unsublimated. In *Laugh and Lie Down* the flagellated page at the mercy of his beautiful mistress is identifiable with Swinburne himself (as is the chronicler of Lucrezia Borgia in *The Chronicles of Tebaldeo Tebaldei* and the young chorister in *Rosamond*, Arthur, who bears on his body "the stripes since last red week"). There is no ambiguity in their relationship. His pains are offered up on the altar of his love.

IMPERIA: Come, come, you are not old enough.

FRANK: I have bled for your sake some twenty times a month,  
Some twenty drops each time; are these no services?

IMPERIA: I tell you, if you use me lovingly  
I shall have you whipt again, most pitifully whipt,  
You little piece of love.

FRANK: God knows I care not  
So I may stand and play to you, and you kiss me. . . .  
What makes you sigh still? you are now  
So kind, the sweetness in you stabs mine eyes  
With sharp tears through. I would so fain be hurt  
But really hurt, hurt deadly, to do good  
To your most sudden fancy.

Under the influence of the Pre-Raphaelites and, in particular, that of Rossetti, whom he now met for the first time, the character of Imperia was to be developed into something much more significant. Rossetti's contribution to the nebulous ideals which formed the Pre-Raphaelite movement was in the main the earnest depiction of beautiful women to whom he applied the epithet "stunner". His ideal was medieval woman, a dolorous, romantic creature moving among the sanguinary complexities of history and legend. It becomes Swinburne's too. Rosamond, the unfortunate mistress of Henry II, whose tragic and horrible death had through centuries of chronicles and ballads become a poetic myth, gave him the opportunity for his first essay in the establishment of his prototype of *thefemme fatale*. Rosamond describes herself:

Yea, I am found the woman in all tales,  
 The face caught always in the story's face;  
 I Helen, holding Paris by the lips,  
 Smote Hector through the head; I Cressida  
 So kissed men's mouths that they went sick or mad,  
 Stung right at brain with me; I Guenevere  
 Made my queen's eyes so precious and my hair  
 Delicate with such gold in its soft ways  
 And my mouth honied so for Launcelot. . . . .

*Rosamond* was published together with *The Queen Mother* in 1860. The plot of the latter is concerned with the events which culminated in the massacre of St. Bartholomew's Eve. The theme was one which suited him exactly. His imagination was fired by the tumult, the torch-light, the crimson horror of the night, the sadistic laughter of the court ladies, the King's bestial delirium. "Il prist fort grand plaisir de voir passer soubz ses fenetres par la riviere plus de 4,000 corps ou se noyans ou tuez", recorded Brantome. And Swinburne makes the Queen comment:

All's clear again; he smells about the blood  
 That shall incense his madness to high strain.

The presentation of the massacre has a Neronic complacency. There was perhaps no room in this drama, side by side with a monstrous Charles IX, for a dominant *femme fatale*. Nevertheless, the King's relations with his mistress, Denise, show all the accustomed characteristics. She tells him:

Now I would kill you here between the eyes,  
 Plant the steel's bare chill where I set my mouth. . . . .

The publication of these two dramas passed unnoticed. "Of all still-born books", wrote Swinburne, "it was the stillest". It was to be five years before he published another—*Atalanta in Calydon*.

Nevertheless, long before *Atalanta* was conceived, he was composing *Chastelard*, of which a draft of the first act at least was in existence by the time he left Oxford, and many of the poems that were to appear in *Poems and Ballads*. *Chastelard* is the climax of this phase of his development. His main sources for this historical drama were

Brantôme's *Discours sur Marie Stuart* and Knox's *History of the Reformation*. From these, with one or two legitimate and comparatively minor alterations of fact—the date of Mary Stuart's marriage to Darnley, for instance—he built up his intrigue and its culminating tragedy. But, however correct his historical detail may have been, the chief characters are largely his own invention. With Chastelard he had necessarily a completely free hand since almost nothing is known of him. While Mary Stuart, though he has endowed her with an acute intellect and a practical folly of conduct—a paradox which seems to be upheld by the historians—is in her one important characteristic, as far as the drama is concerned, a projection of Chastelard's own mind—that is in her cruelty. She is the apotheosis of *foefemmesfatak*, the source of those twin, inseparable gifts, love and death.

I know not: men must love you in life's spite;  
 For you will always kill them; man by man  
 Your lips will bite them dead; yea, though you would,  
 You shall not spare one; all will die of you. . . .

And this sphinx-like, marmoreal cruelty—for which there is no warrant but Chastelard's last words on the scaffold: "Adieu, la plus belle et la plus cruelle princesse du monde"—is accepted by Chastelard with a perverse alacrity, an ecstasy of self-immolation. Condemned to death for compromising the Queen—deliberately forcing her to condemn him to death, since it is only thus that he can attain to the summit of pleasure—he refuses to escape and destroys the royal pardon.

And in the last interview in the prison, before the execution, there takes place a scene between Chastelard and Mary which for imaginative perversity is unsurpassed even by Swinburne himself. The Queen is at once his lover and his executioner:

Stretch your throat out that I may kiss all round  
 Where mine shall be cut through: suppose my mouth  
 The axe-edge to bite so sweet a throat in twain  
 With bitter iron, should not it turn soft  
 As lip is soft to lip?

This is the most purely sensual, the most purely physical of all his dramas. And it is notable that the dramatic success of this play is as

far in advance of the previous dramas as is the boldness with which he identifies his own imagination with Chastelard's. The whipped page of *Laugh and Lie Down* has become the central character of the piece—a Queen's lover ordered to the scaffold by his mistress. It is significant, too, that with Chastelard's death, the Queen loses her syren quality, survives only as an intellectual reconstruction of an historical character—possibly more accurate, certainly less interesting—which accounts for the failure of *Bothwell* and *Mary Stuart*, which were to be written many years later as the second and third parts of the trilogy.

Till he had achieved success with *Atalanta*, his friends advised against the publication either of the poems or *Cbastelard*. Rossetti issued serious warnings; Ruskin said they would "win him a dark reputation". He was condemned to five years' silence—years, nevertheless, of crucial development. The inner necessity for a justifying synthesis was about to be satisfied, the algolagnic aberration to be rationalised. And this process was due in the main to the influence upon him of the works of Sade, to which he was introduced by Lord Houghton as one of his many beneficences, to the study of the Prophetic Books of Blake, upon which he was engaged at this time for his *Essay*, and above all to the unsuccessful love affair with Jane Faulkner ("Boo"), which added to the pessimism of the resulting philosophy.

It was time, everyone was agreed, that Swinburne should produce a masterpiece; one, moreover, that might be safely published. It was probably Lord Houghton, anxious that his patronage should be justified without further delay, who suggested the classic form. It would have certain advantages. The cruel myths of the Middle Ages were obviously too dangerous, too exciting to Swinburne's temperament, whereas, in the convention of the Greek drama, tragedy and its implicit cruelty gained a certain impersonality, a saving lack of sensuality, from their supernatural origin. No suggestion, oddly enough, could at this juncture have been better suited to Swinburne's inspiration. The rebuff he had suffered from "Boo" had but confirmed the direction of his mind and the necessity for the poetical exploitation of his temperament. But now the *femme fatale*, as a projection of his imagination, was no longer sufficient. The study of Blake and Sade had caused him to rationalise those tendencies which she had hitherto been created to represent. A process of expansion was taking place in his mind, a synthesis was being formulated, and its inclusiveness

demanded that the *femme fatale* as the origin of pain should be replaced by God.

The theme of *Atalanta in Calydon* is a complaint against human destiny, against the cruelty of the gods who mingle pain with pleasure, permit no happiness to be unalloyed with sorrow, no life to be un-abridged by death. Swinburne has discovered that the law of suffering which he had discerned in the passions has a universal application.

Before the beginning of years  
 There came to the making of man  
 Time, with a gift of tears;  
 Grief, with a glass that ran;  
 Pleasure, with pain for leaven;  
 Summer, with flowers that fell;  
 Remembrance fallen from heaven,  
 And madness risen from hell;  
 Strength without hands to smite;  
 Love that endures for a breath:  
 Night, the shadow of light,  
 And life, the shadow of death.

Instead of the fatalistic theology of the Greek drama, the acceptance of the divinely inspired tragedy with apathetic lamentation, Swinburne cly through the media of the choruses, carries his critical warfare into the divine camp, storming Olympus itself with blasphemy upon his lips. There is only one possible conception of God. It is He who has "filled us full to the eyes and ears" with the agony implicit in living. It is the gods who "mock us with a little piteousness", who "at the last, sparing awhile, they smite and spare no whit". But of what use is the suffering of humanity unless it is in itself pleasing to God, who savours it with a voluptuous and Sadie cruelty? "What shall be done with all these tears of ours . . . ? A great well-head of lamentation satiating the sad Gods . . . !" And this conception of God was largely drawn from Blake's *Prophetic Books*—"O Urizen, Creator of Men! Mistaken Demon of heaven, Thy joys are tears . . .", from the *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, and "This abstract nonentity, This cloudy God, seated on waters, Now seen, now obscured, King of sorrow. . . ." from *The Book of Ahania*—while in his own *William Blake* Urizen is "God of cloud and star, 'Father of Jealousy', clothed

with a splendour of shadow, strong and sad and cruel... sorrow is in all his works . . ." And in the fourth chorus of *Atalanta* there is the resounding denunciation: "Tea, with thine hate, O God, thou hast covered us . . ." God is the supreme enemy:

When hast thou seen? or hast thou felt his breath  
 Touch, nor consume thine eyelids as the sun,  
 Nor fill thee to the lips with fiery death?  
 None hath beheld him, none  
 Seen above other gods and shapes of things,  
 Swift without feet and flying without wings,  
 Intolerable, not clad with death or life,  
 Insatiable, not known of night or day,  
 The lord of love and loathing and of strife  
 Who gives a star and takes a sun away;  
 Who shapes the soul, and makes her a barren wife  
 To the earthly body and grievous growth of clay;  
 Who turns the large limbs to a little flame  
 And binds the great sea with a little sand;  
 Who makes desire, and slays desire with shame;  
 Who shakes the heaven as ashes in his hand;  
 Who, seeing the light and shadow for the same,  
 Bids day waste night as fire devours a brand  
 Smites without sword, and scourges without f  
 The supreme evil, God.

Though the conception of the person of the divinity was to some extent borrowed from Blake, the perverse and anarchic pessimism that informed his "theory of the diabolic government of this world", to which he admitted in a letter to Nichol, was derived from Sade. To Lord Houghton he wrote, alluding to his article on *Atalanta* in *The Edinburgh Review*, ". . . you have wilfully misrepresented its source. I should have bowed to the judicial sentence if instead of 'Byron with a difference' you had said de Sade with a difference.'" Indeed, from Sade's tenebrous prose, from *Justine* and *Juliette*, he drew the general tone of his blasphemies: "Le mal est necessaire a Torganisation vicieuse de ce triste univers. Dieu est tres vindicatif, mechant, injuste. Les suites du mal sont eternelles; c'est dans le mal qu'il a cree le monde; c'est par le mal qu'il le'soutient; c'est pour le mal qu'il le perpdtrue;

c'est impregne de mal que la creature doit exister; c'est dans le sein du mal qu'elle retourne apres son existence. . . . Telle est la loi de l'Univers." And then, with a final perversity, he admitted in a letter that God was for him "the absurdest of all human figments". But Sade had already resolved the paradox. He had declared "formellement, authentiquement, publiquement, que je n'ai pas dans toi la plus legere croyance", and yet, because "les trois quarts de l'Europe attachent des idees tres religieuses a cette hostie . . . a ce crucifix . . . j'aime a les profaner; je fronde l'opinion publique, cek m'amuse; je foule aux pieds les prejuges de mon enfance, je les aneantis; cela m'echauffe k tete". In attacking God, the myth, Swinburne was attacking society itself. It was the inevitable result of his matured genius. The synthesis was complete. The innate instinct, the acquired philosophy and the aesthetic imperative had become integrated and fused. In *Atalanta* the fusion is as complete as he was ever able to achieve, and the result a masterpiece,

Indeed, it is difficult for the critic to approach *Atalanta* without enthusiasm. Here is the perfectly attuned work. However alien the implicit theme, it is expressed with a matchless perfection, a tact, which never permits it to dominate the formal structure of the drama. The selection of the classical, myth of the revenge of Artemis upon Calydon permitted him to work within a convention unhampered by the dictates of reality, absolved him from the necessity of creating characters, which was not a projection to which his genius lent itself with any facility. *Atalanta* is not in its essence a tragedy of blighted love or the death of youth; but rather a philosophic lament for this our earthly state. The main personages are symbols representing the forces of nature as he saw them in his Sade pessimism: Althaea, the earth-mother, fecund and fatal; *Atalanta*, love, the origin of pleasure and pain; and *Meleager*, suffering humanity, the helpless victim, accepting his destiny with passive fatalism. The story is perfectly suited to the theme. *Artegus* in her fury against Calydon sends *Atalanta*, the Virgin of *Afcadia*, to take part in the tragic boar hunt, causes *Meleager*, the King's son, to fall in love with her, to quarrel on her account with his mother's brothers, *Toxeus* and the "violent-souled" *Plexippus*, and to kill them. And then impels *Althaea*, *Meleager's* mother, to place upon the fire the magic brand on which his life depends. As it is consumed, so *Meleager* dies.

The figures move in response to relentless and elemental stimuli. Their tragedy does not arise out of them, but is arbitrarily imposed

upon them. They are not of flesh and blood, but rather the inmates of a frieze whose ordered, tragic harmonies are fixed eternally by the unaccountable fury of the gods. And yet, as in the Greek drama, Swinburne permits his characters to comprehend the full horror of their actions, even in their senseless performance. Althaea has placed the brand upon the fire:

CHORUS: I see a faint fire lightening from the hall.  
 ALTHÆA: Gaze, stretch your eyes, strain till the lids drop off.  
 CHORUS: Flushed pillars down the flickering vestibule.  
 ALTHÆA: Stretch with your necks like birds: cry, chirp as they.  
 CHORUS: And a long brand that blackens: and white dust.  
 ALTHÆA: O children, what is this ye see? your eyes  
     Are blinder than night's face at fall of moon.  
     That is my son, my flesh, my fruit of life,  
     My travail, and the year's weight of my womb,  
     Meleager, a fire enkindled of mine hands  
     And of mine hands extinguished; this is he.  
 CHORUS: O gods, what word has flown out at thy mouth?  
 ALTHÆA: I did this and I say this and I die.

And Meleager, true to his passive role, aware that it is a divine madness that has compelled the tragedy, blames fate alone, exonerating his mother. Neither does he evince any anger against the gods. His rage at the "diabolic government of this world" Swinburne reserved, as has already been indicated, for the choruses. Meleager's passive acceptance of suffering and death is—as, increasingly in Swinburne's view, is humanity's—almost contemptible.

I would thou hadst let me live; but gods averse,  
 But fortune, and the fiery feet of change,  
 And time, these would not, these tread out my life,  
 These and not thou; me too thou hast loved, and I  
 Thee; but this death was mixed with all my life,  
 Mine end with my beginning: and this law,  
 This only, slays me, and not my mother at all.

But prelude to the Exodos is the Kommos. Swinburne never surpassed the magnificence of this symphonic passage. The antiphonal

voices answering each other in transcendent melody is overwhelming in its effect of pathos and horror. All the elusive rhythms of the tragedy are here knotted together into an exquisitely harmonic culmination. The heavy drum-beats of the first four lines in each stanza, the crying of the fifth, form a matchless metrical achievement.

MELEAGER: Let your hands meet  
                   Round the weight of my head;  
 Lift ye my feet  
                   As the feet of the dead;  
 For the flesh of my body is molten,  
                   the limbs of it molten as lead. . . .

The strange echoing beauty of these sad and faultless stanzas merges into Meleager's dying speech. Then Atalanta embraces him for the first and last time as he goes "down to the empty weary house Where no flesh is nor beauty nor swift eyes". And in two lines oppressive with sorrow she bids him adieu:

Hail thou: but I with heavy face and feet  
 Turn homeward and am gone out of thine eyes.

The effect of *Atalanta* is cumulative and its impact overwhelming. The critics were unable to deny that a new, an undoubted note of genius had been struck. In the words of Edmund Gosse, he "shot like a rocket into celebrity". He found himself exposed upon a solitary eminence of English letters. The prospect glowed with a deceptive charm. Encouraged by success, Swinburne proceeded to elucidate the underlying meaning which *Atalanta's* classical form had been so successful in disguising. A few months later *Chastelard* was published, and in the next year, 1866, appeared *Poems and ballads*.

*Chastelard* was received upon a note of puzzled interrogation. No one quite liked to condemn the author of *Atalanta*. But where was all this tending? The publication of *Poems and Ballads* removed all doubt. The critics made certain that this time there should be no misunderstanding. Theirs was a moral duty to point out what the innocent public might well have missed. And was it not all the more

dangerous since, as Professor Henry Morley discovered in one of the very few favourable reviews, there was "a terrible earnestness about this book"? It was certainly an earnestness that appealed to the young. For them it was a liberation, a long-awaited revolution in contemporary literature. But the critics need not have been dismayed. *Poems and Ballads* was tending nowhere—unless it was to the innocuous politics of *Songs before Sunrise*. In a sense it was but the commentary upon the process of development which had culminated in the synthesis of *Atalanta*. It was an anthology of seven years of verse—seven years of varied emotions gradually dominated by a single theme to which all others had become subordinate. It was a dead end. The synthesis achieved, the commentary published, the solitary eminence was to be promptly abandoned.

In spite of the fact that the dates of composition of most of the poems in *Poems and Ballads*—all written between 1858 and 1865—are known, it is useless to expect them to be a series of precise statements exposing in chronological order the development of Swinburne's thought. He was no logician, but a lyric poet beset by a multitude of emotions and influences. All that is possible here is to give in broad outline the incidence of the Sadie theme which is the dominant emotion of the volume, and whose culmination in *Anactoria* was exactly contemporary with the composition of *Atalanta*.

In the early poems it is easy to distinguish the first bloom of an undirected talent, the early undergraduate enthusiasms without system and without consequence. His retentive mind was stored with a wide historical reading, and his imagination fired by the Pre-Raphaelites into a sumptuous magnificence. Indeed, here, in these early poems, is the bright panoply of forming genius. But under the Pre-Raphaelite cloak, covering a multiplicity of inspirations, there is nevertheless a charged and personal emotion. Taken in conjunction with the early dramatic fragments, with *Rosamond* and *The Queen Mother*, there is a difference, felt as yet but obscurely, between his aspirations and those of the literature of the period. His sensitivity is unquestioned; but what form was its expression to take?

I sang these things long since and knew them not;  
 "Lo, here is love, or there is love, God wot,  
 This man and that finds favour in his eyes",  
 I said, "but I, what guerdon have I got?"

Sappho and Faustine, "the sterile growths of sexless root", the cruel infecundities of the love to which he was condemned, formed the intolerable basis of his fantasies. Their expression necessitated the theory of Art for Art's sake. How could desires so innate be wrong? The perfection of their expression, the beauty of that expression's form, was, indeed, *must* be, a substitute for morality, was, surely, morality itself? In *A Ballad of Life* and *A Ballad of Death*, written in 1862, he pursued this theory to its farthest limits. With them he opened *Poems and Ballads*. It was an explanation of the contents of the volume, a propounding of its pervasive aesthetic attitude.

Ah! in the days when God did good to me,  
 Each part about her was a righteous thing;  
 Her mouth an almsgiving,  
 The glory of her garments charity,  
 The beauty of her bosom a good deed,  
 In the good days when God kept sight of us;  
 Love lay upon her eyes,  
 And on that hair whereof the world takes heed;  
 And all her body was more virtuous  
 Than souls of women fashioned otherwise.

And yet in the first rhapsodies of his love for "Boo", Faustine and her disquieting allurements were abandoned. New hopes and aspirations dawned in him. His disappointment and frustration were tragically expressed in, *The Triumph of Time*. It is in the denial of this sane and normal love, in his rejection by the one being who had the power, so he supposed, to deliver him from Dolores, that lies the tragic core of *Poems and Ballads*. Half-consciously he knew now that he was condemned to be "a barren stock". The reaction was exactly what might have been expected: he turned back to the "violent delights which have violent ends". *Anactoria* is the fierce symbol of that reaction:

I would find grievous ways to have thee slain,  
 Intense device, and superflux of pain;  
 Vex thee with amorous agonies, and shake  
 Life at thy lips, and leave it there to ache;

Strain out thy soul with pangs too soft to kill,  
 Intolerable interludes, and infinite ill;  
 Relapse and reluctance of the breath,  
 Dumb tunes and shuddering semitones of death.

Reinforced by the agony of personal tragedy, the idea of beauty throughout *Poems and Ballads* is never pure; with it both pleasure and pain are inextricably confused, with, indeed, the emphasis upon the latter.

Ah, ah, thy beauty, like a beast it bites,  
 Stings like an adder, like an arrow smites. . . .

He set himself to analyse and develop this esoteric fusion. Cruelty becomes an essential attribute of the loved one. The desire to inflict it must be there as well as the craving to lie passive beneath its onslaught.

—O Sweet,  
 Had you felt, lying under the palms of your feet,  
 The heart of my heart, beating harder with pleasure  
 To feel you tread it to dust and death. . . .

But this passivity is capable of a delicate transition. If the desire to suffer at the hands of the loved one is a manifestation of love, it must be common to all lovers. Necessarily, therefore, the infliction of pain must also be one of love's attributes:

Cruel? But love makes all that loves him well  
 As wise as heaven and crueller than hell.

This active sadism is expressed over and over again throughout *Poems and Ballads*. One quotation will suffice to make the point. Here the algolagnia is carried to the last extreme. In the link which may be traced with the mock solemnities of the Cannibal Club, with Burton's semi-serious theory of anthropophagy ("Without cannibalism how could the Zealander have preserved his fine physical development?"), differing though these levels of seriousness are, the pervasiveness of the emotion in his consciousness becomes clear.

Ah that my lips were tuneless lips, but pressed  
 To the bruised blossom of thy scourged white breast!  
 Ah that my mouth for Muse's milk were fed  
 On the sweet blood thy sweet small wounds had bled!  
 That with my tongue I felt them, and could taste  
 The faint flakes from thy bosom to the waist!  
 That I could drink thy veins as wine, and eat  
 Thy breasts like honey! that from face to feet  
 Thy body were abolished and consumed,  
 And in my flesh thy very flesh entombed!

And in *Dolores* he announced once and for all this strange duality: the fundamental mixture of joy and suffering. But this paradox was not, as we have already seen in the case of *Atalanta*, limited to a mere theory of love. The anguished sensibility with which he responded to the Beautiful, of which the passions were only one manifestation, drove him on with the assistance of Sade to discover a universal law of suffering applicable to all nature. Ruin and destruction are the great principles upon which the universe is founded: to create is to destroy, to live is to suffer

For who shall change with prayers or thanksgivings  
 The mystery of the cruelty of things?  
 Or say what God above all gods and years  
 With offering and blood-sacrifice of tears,  
 With lamentation from strange lands, from graves  
 Where the snake pastures, from scarred mouths of slaves,  
 From prison, and from plunging prows of ships  
 Through flamelike foam of the sea's closing lips—  
 With thwartings of strange signs, and wind-blown hair  
 Of comets, desolating the dim air,  
 When darkness is made fast with seals and bars,  
 And fierce reluctance of disastrous stars,  
 Eclipse, and sound of shaken hills, and wings  
 Darkening, and blind inexpiable things—  
 With sorrow of labouring moons, and altering light  
 And travail of the planets of the night,  
 And weeping of the weary Pleiads seven,  
 Feeds the»mute melancholy lust of heaven?

And this expression of cosmic pessimism, this "vision of ghastly - glory", had certain necessity consequences. If the universe is based on a principle of suffering and death, these must also be the attributes of its creator. God must be essentially evil and cruel. "Is not his bitterness\* his meat Murder?" The accents of revolt are reminiscent of the Fourth Chorus of *Atatita*—*meth* which, indeed, they, are contemporary.' And in them, at the very moment of the completion of the synthesis, may be detected the seeds of its disintegration. No synthesis, no philosophy, is perfectly inclusive. The mere fact of triumphantly roofing a structure of thought establishes a new foundation, a basis for further building. That the new structure may prove too heavy for its supports is a philosophical commonplace. In Swinburne, as in Sade, the contradictions are obvious. How revolt against a "human figment"? Sade's admission of disbelief and his reasons for reviling, nevertheless, a non-existent deity amount to no more than a desire to *fpater les bourgeois*. The fundamental anarchy of "les Prospit6s du Vice" and "les Malheurs de la Vertu" was not one that in the long run could appeal to an intelligence so infinitely superior to his master's. Beside the Sadian rejection of Virtue and the exaltation of Vice—"Come down and redeem us from virtue, Our Lady of Pain"—and the cry for yet rarer and still more delicate sins—"Shall no new sin be born for men's trouble, no dream of impossible pangs?"—there is discernible the beginnings of a stoicism in face of the surrounding chaos. Anarchy is no solution; complaint, if there is no God, useless.

Can ye beat off one wave with prayer,  
Can ye move mountains?

Here and there he sounds a note of resignation and death is "The end of all, the popped sleep".

Nevertheless there are compensations: the contemplation of nature, the majesty of the elements, to which he had responded so sensitively from childhood, were not to be denied. They at least are enduring. Insensibly he passes from anti-theism to pantheism.

Wilt thou yet take all, Galilean? but these thou shalt not take,  
The laurel, the palms and the paean, the breasts of the nymphs  
in the brake.

He identified himself with the great forces of nature. The pantheistic ecstasy, which was to find its intellectual expression in *Hertha*, is present in *Poems and Ballads*, as it is, indeed, in the more or less contemporary *Lesbia Brandon*:

I shall sleep, and move with the moving ships,  
 Change as the winds change, veer in the tide;  
 My lips will feast on the foam of thy lips,  
 I shall rise with thy rising, with thee subside.

And by a natural extension he recognises that there is in man an aspect of the divine. His human pride, his courage, his latent need for action impel him to revolt. Man, being divine, is worthy of freedom. In the love of liberty, in the battle for political emancipation, he will find a new inspiration for his art. Indeed, in *Poems and Ballads*, in some of the last poems composed for it, may be found the foreshadowing of the next phase of his life. In *Filise* he proclaims the power to freedom that is latent in man:

Why should ye bear with hopes and fears  
 Till all these things be drawn in one,  
 The sound of iron-footed years,  
 And all the oppression that is done  
 Under the sun?

Indeed, here already was the first hint that the synthesis was shattered, that the structure had collapsed. The reverberations, unremarkable as yet, were to be extensive in their effect.

(1867—1872)

"R. [Ruskin] actually intimates", wrote Swinburne, "that 'genius ought to devote itself to the behalf of humanity and 'to overthrow its idols', in a word to justify the ways of Urizen to the sons of Enitharmon. Quelle horreur!" Curiously enough this is exactly what Swinburne was now about to do.

In the preceding section an attempt has been made to show the development, through both the dramas and *Poems and Ballads*, of an

attitude based on innate disposition; how it became formalised with his intellectual development and the semi-conscious processes of selection among the influences to which he was subject into what may, for want of a better term, be called a *synthesis*. Clearly it was no primordial process. Founded upon emotion rather than upon ratiocination, the paradox that the seeds of its dissolution should be discernible at the moment of integration in no way invalidates the thesis that *allognasia* was the dominant basis from which his inspiration sprang during the period in which he was most fecund of great poetry. During the years 1863 to 1865—the period of *Atalanta* and the best of *Poems and Ballads*—he reached the uttermost peak in the expression of erotic sensibility. Such passion and such music had scarce been heard in English poetry since the reign of Elizabeth. But the peak attained, there began the first gentle movements of a glissade which, gathering speed, was only to be arrested in the conciliating arms of the Philistines.

After the nervous strain and the excitement of the publication of *Poems and Ballads* the lassitude of exhaustion overcame him. Nevertheless, as early as October 1866 he was writing to W. M. Rossetti: "I have begun verse again after many months of enforced inaction through worry and weariness. I am writing a little song of gratulation for Venice with the due reserves and anticipations; and hope to wind up the scheme of the poem by some not quite inadequate expression of reverence towards Mazzini. I have already touched on most of the later patriots and martyrs—I am half afraid and half desirous to touch on him—i.e., to lay my lips on his feet—After all, in spite of jokes and perversities—malgré ce cher Marquis et ces foutus journaux—it is *nice* to have something to love and believe in as I do in Italy." He was composing *A Song of Italy* and at the same time a pamphlet entitled *Liberty and Loyalty*. He had taken refuge from the fantasies of fleshly beauty in politics. It had at least the advantage of giving full scope to his need for revolt. The compensating necessity of his nature—submission—was soon to find a corresponding satisfaction at Mazzini's feet.

Indeed, Swinburne had already prepared himself for total submission on that evening when, the manuscript of *A Song of Italy* under his arm, he set out for Karl Blind's lodging at 2, Winchester Road. Next day he wrote to his mother: "I did as I always thought I should and really meant not to do if I could help—I went down on my knees and kissed his hand/" And as Swinburne intoned *A Song of Italy* > Mazzini "held

mine between his for some time while I was reading and, now and then, gave it a great pressure. He says he will take me\*to Rome when the revolution comes, and crown me with his own hands in the Capitol". And to George Powell, with whom he had broken an engagement for the meeting, he wrote: "I unworthy spent much of last night sitting at my beloved Chief's feet. He was angelically good to me. I read him my Italian poem all through and he accepted it in words I can't trust myself to try to write down . . . to-day I am rather exhausted and out of sorts. Il y a bien de quoi. There's a tradition in the Talmud that when Moses came down from Sinai 'he was drunken with the kisses of the lips of God'." "I know, now I have seen him, what I guessed before; whenever he has said to anyone 'Go and be killed because I tell you' they have gone and been killed because he told them. Who wouldn't I should like to know?" But from Swinburne something perhaps even more difficult was to be demanded. "I wish very much", Mazzini wrote, "that he would write something . . . giving up the absurd immoral French art for art's sake's system." Swinburne gave it up and devoted his genius to the utilitarian end of furthering a cause that was in fact already lost. *Songs before Sunrise* was the result—perhaps the only volume of political poems in the language that is successful as a work of art.

In estimating the poems contained in *Songs before Sunrise* it is necessary to make a distinction between those that were inspired by the literal facts—or personalities—of political revolution and those, more philosophical, which belong to the *Hertha* group. Of these the most important in any attempted analysis are *Genesis* and the *Hymn of Man*. The purely political group suffer from the facts that the events of 1867—1870 were not susceptible to an afflatus which might indeed have been all very well in 1848, and that Swinburne himself had no direct experience of the events involved. A further disqualification, which was not altogether Swinburne's fault, was that, when eventually published, in 1871, the sun had very definitely set upon Mazzini's hopes with the entry into Rome of the Royal troops in September of the previous year. The clarion of revolution sounded but mutely in a Savoyard desert. Swinburne's verses, for all his assurance, were hardly "art and part" of the revolution. But these considerations, fortunately, do not apply to the central core of the book. Here that pantheism which had already been disclosed in *Poems and Ballads*, and which had led to the conception of the divinity of man and to his right to liberty,

is carried a stage further. It is notable that from the first impassioned but unintegrated revolutionary ardours of 1867 it took him three years to develop the full significance of his thought, which was to culminate in 1870 in the composition of *Hertha*.

Swinburne starts from the typically nineteenth-century Mazzinian doctrine "Humanity is not an aggregation of individuals but a collective Being". Mankind has a collective soul and its indestructible prerogative is Liberty.

Are ye so strong, O kings, O strong men? Nay,  
Waste all ye will and gather all ye may,  
Yet one thing is there that ye shall not slay,  
Even thought, that fire nor iron can affright.

The woundless and invisible thought that goes  
Free throughout time as north or south wind blows,  
For throughout space as east or west sea flows,  
And all dark things before it are made bright.

Thy thought, thy word, O soul republican,  
O spirit of life, O God whose name is man:  
What sea of sorrows but thy sight shall span?  
Cry wellaway, but well befall the right.

This philosophy of Liberty is made clear in a manifesto which, with William Rossetti, he composed in November 1869 for Ricciardi's anti-Catholic Council. This Council was being held at Naples as a counterblast to the famous Oecumenical Council which adopted the dogma of infallibility and the notorious *syllabus* condemning liberal doctrines.

Having vainly tried to get the manifesto printed in England he proceeded with the composition of the *Hymn of Man*, which expressed the same viewpoint. "I have in my head a sort of Hymn for the Congress—as it were a \*Te Hominem Laudamus' to sing the human triumph over 'things'—the opposing forces of life and nature—and over the God of his own creation, till he attains truth, self-sufficiency and freedom."

Indeed, Swinburne saw in the conception of God as a supreme being one of the main barriers to the development of the freedom of the soul. In *Christmas Antiphones* and *Before a Crucifix* he attacks the God of the Churches:

It was for this, that man should make  
 Thy name a fetter on men's necks,  
 Poor men's made poorer for thy sake,  
 And women's withered out of sex?  
 It was for this, that slaves should be,  
 Thy word was passed to set men free?

And in *Genesis* he endeavours to show the origin of this "human figment", that God was created from human fear of the pervasive reality, the necessity even, of the co-existence of good and evil.

The very darkness that time knew not of,  
 Nor God laid hand on, nor was man found there,  
 Ceased, and was cloven in several shapes; above  
 Light, and night under, and fire, earth, water, and air.

Sunbeams and starbeams, and all coloured things,  
 All forms and all similitudes began;  
 And death, the shadow cast by life's wide wings,  
 And God, the shade cast by the soul of man.

God being the invention of man, man necessarily remains his superior. Thus he was able to hymn "the human triumph over . . . the God of his own creation". The Collective Soul of Man is, indeed, the real, the only God:

Therefore the God that ye make you is grievous, and gives not aid,  
 Because it is but for your sake that the God of your making is made.  
 Thou and I and he are not gods made men for a span,  
 But God, if a God there be, is the substance of men which is man.  
 Our lives are as pulses or pores of his manifold body and breath;  
 As waves of his sea on the shores where birth is the beacon of death.  
 We men, the multiform features of man, whatsoever we be,  
 Recreate him of whom we are creatures, and all we only are he.  
 Not each man of all men is God, but God is the fruit of the whole;  
 Indivisible spirit and blood, indiscernible body from soul.  
 Not men's but man's is the glory of godhead, the kingdom of  
 time. . . .

In *Hertha* these conceptions are still further universalised. Against

the background of his wide reading and the new Darwinian theories of evolution he evolved the idea of *Hertha*, representing the principle of growth. "Of all I have done," he wrote, "I rate *Hertha* highest as a single piece, finding in it the most of lyric force and music combined with the most of condensed and clarified thought". Indeed here the Collective Soul of Man is coextensive with God and Liberty.

Freedom we call it, for holier  
Name of the soul there is none.

This is the essence of man's evolution, the principle upon which depends the attainment of his full stature. The soul is infinite and finite, objective and subjective, supreme and subservient, the essence, the all-inclusive.

I am that which began;  
Out of me the years roll;  
Out of me God and man;  
I am equal and whole;  
God changes, and man, and the form of them bodily; I am the soul.

Man having abandoned the false Gods—"O my sons, O too dutiful towards God not of me"—will at last be able to attain to his full personality, be able to develop and grow in truth and freedom to unimaginable heights. Already "God trembles in heaven," and his angels are white with the terror of God". But this tremendous anti-theism is followed by the promise that man will arise from the ashes of a false creed knowing himself, aware of the magnificence of his destiny:

Thought made him and breaks him,  
Truth slays and forgives;  
But to you, as time takes him,  
This new thing it gives,  
Even love, the beloved Republic, that feeds upon freedom and  
lives.  
For truth only is living,  
Truth only is whole,  
And the love of his giving  
Man's polestar and pole;  
Man, pulse of my centre, and fruit of my body, and seed of my soul.

One birth of my bosom;  
     One beam of mine eye;  
 One topmost blossom  
     That scales the sky;  
 Man, equal and one with me, man that is made of me, man that is I.

It is impossible on reading *Hertha* to acquit Swinburne of "the (to me) most hateful charge of optimism". It is clear that he viewed the "false God" as being in a state of decline and that the liberation of man from these figments would place him in a true relation to "the vital principle of matter", and that this process in his opinion was already taking place. How could it be otherwise when men were holding anti-Catholic Councils in Naples and dying for the cause of freedom? It was natural to suppose—and Mazzini's failure was not yet apparent—that these very proper sentiments would spread. Indeed, was it not possible that man was almost on the point of manumission? The belief has always been dear to revolutionaries that their particular success is the spark that will send a mighty flame of freedom flaring across the world. Indeed if the synthesis implicit in *Atalanta* and the central poems of *Poems and Ballads* is one founded upon a profound pessimism, that of the central poems of *Songs before Sunrise* is founded upon an optimism only proportionately more qualified. *Hertha* is necessarily, as a result, more philosophically constructive. But what promise did it hold of further poetic development? At first sight it would appear that a considerable advance had been made both in intellectual power and the control of emotion; a new and rare perfection of form had been attained; but the synthesis was exclusive. In it there was no room for the esoteric passion which until now had been the mainspring of his inspiration. And it was too violent an emotion, too important an ingredient of his sensibility, to admit of neglect in the long run if his inspiration was to maintain the quality of white heat—"pies with the devil's fingers in them"—which was so essential an element of his genius. The love of liberty and freedom was all very well, but as the inspiration of great poetry in Swinburne it seems that it required certain particular conditions. Without these conditions it was all too apt to degenerate at best into invective, at worst into irritability. And the circumstances in which *Songs before Sunrise* was composed were never to recur: the participation—Swinburne felt it to be that—in the actuality of revolution; the close communion with, and

heroworship for, that revolution's leader; and, perhaps psychologically most important of all, the temporary stilling of his erotic fantasies in the first overwhelming release provided by the "fair friend who keeps a maison de supplices à la Rodin" in the Euston Road which, there is reason to believe, Swinburne only began to frequent at this time. It is possible that "Mrs. A." was as much responsible for the form of *Songs before Sunrise* as was Mazzini himself. But the fact remains that when Swinburne followed Ruskin's precept to devote himself "to the behalf of humanity . . . 'to overthrowing its idols'," and Mazzini's command to abandon Art for Art's sake, he was, in his own way, compromising with society, attacking its tenets, not for art's sake but for its own good. And compromise was to be fatal to his art. That he conceived of Liberty as a goddess who, unrestrained and cruel in the exaction of human sacrifices, was merely a sublimation of the *femme fatale* is irrelevant. He was not aware of it. Whereas in *Prelude* he made it quite clear that he was abandoning one basis of inspiration for another. It is therefore no paradox incapable of resolution to say that Swinburne ceased to be a revolutionary upon committing himself to a volume of revolutionary poems. It is in this sense that *Songs before Sunrise* was prophetic of a decline in his genius.

(18731878)

The years immediately following the publication of *Songs before Sunrise* and Mazzini's death in 1872 are marked by a tragic lack of direction. There was no possibility of a return to the aesthetic theory which alone had given him an independent inspiration, a personal poetic core. And now, with the collapse of the revolution and the removal of the Chief, his particular ideal of Liberty, the philosophy of *Hertha*, seemed no longer capable of poetic development. It had, in a sense, been an extension of Mazzini's personality, and the bright white light of Liberty had been fused with the Chief's conception of an ideal Republic and conditioned by the ecstasy of submission which was the tropic atmosphere in which Swinburne's heroworship thrived. A dramatist, a critic, an historian, a pamphleteer emerges. And because

Swinburne's genius was a lyric genius, his most memorable work had now been done. The thirtyodd volumes of his last thirtyseven years add little to an estimate of his genius. They, with the fact that he lived into a new generation from which his early biographers with all their necessary reticences were drawn, served merely to obscure the true proportions of his art.

His life, too, in this period became increasingly clouded. Though Mazzini himself had not tried to exercise any direct influence upon Swinburne's manner of living, the mere feeling that the Chief was there to disapprove must have caused him to endeavour, not altogether successfully, to curb his worst excesses. But with the Chief's disappearance all restraint went too. Even in the last year of Mazzini's life, when Swinburne had not seen him for many months, the deterioration had noticeably set in. The brandy bottle, his "fearful propensity", was in the ascendant.

Indeed, these were sad years of loneliness and selfinduced illhealth. He languished without the support of an overwhelming inspiration, without the comfort of an idolised leader. "Your letter," he wrote to Churton Collins in March 1876, "gave me great pleasure and a sense of something in the rather dull monotonous puppetshow of my life, which often strikes me as too barren of action or enjoyment to be much worth holding to, better than nothingness, or at least seeming better for a minute." And in contemplating the work, the letters, the politics of these years one becomes aware of the presence of an implicit though unacknowledged sense of insufficiency; something was lacking. The afflatus which had buoyed him up had withdrawn its support. Could it be that in recapitulating the past he might recapture the fire, the urgency of direction, the consciousness of significance, which had invested his life with so radiant a nimbus? He plunged into *Bothmll* "The fusion of lyric with dramatic form," he wrote, "gives the highest type of poetry." But where was the passion that had informed *Chaste larçfi* For three years he wrestled with it. The detail of history usurped the place of inspiration. "It is," he wrote, "necessary to omit no detail, drop no link in the chain, if the work is to be either dramatically coherent or historically intelligible." "Mon drame 6pique" became "my chronicle play", and when, in 1874, the fivehundredodd pages were published, it was no error to describe the immense drama as an "ambitious, conscientious, comprehensive piece of work". That it was well received by the critics and the public says much for the leisure

and the powers of concentration of that monumental age.

In *Erechtheus* alone, perhaps, of the productions of these years is to be found some echo of the whiteheat of authentic inspiration. Written during a comparatively happy interlude in 1874, it at least achieves a splendour of diction and an unusually sustained control. Critics have been unable to agree as to its merits. To some it has seemed to be the passionate and dramatic expression of the philosophy of *Hertha*, to contain an elevated and transcendent morality. The sacrifice of a young girl, at the behest of the gods, and to ensure the safety of the State, has appeared to them a proper, indeed a lofty, contribution to the concept of the ideal human Republic. Ever since the anonymous writer in *The Edinburgh Review* in 1876, who likened the sacrifice of Chthonia to the Atonement on Calvary, this view has had its adherents. T. Earle Welby, for instance, while admitting that "*Atalanta* issues from the totality of Swinburne's genius; *Erechtheus* from what was specialised in it", goes on to say that "it is not the poet, majestically at home in this rarefied atmosphere, but we who are to be condemned if the ideal is too foreign to us for complete appreciation". This may well be so; but while not denying that the play, if it is to be intelligible, must be approached from the standpoint of *Songs before Sunrise*, it is not always easy to be convinced that its "rarefied atmosphere" arises entirely from the elevation of its idealism. There would seem, indeed, to have been a certain degeneration in Swinburne's philosophy of the ideal Republic and the divinity of man: have not the autochthonous gods returned with a more ruthless, a more meaningless, a more catastrophic cruelty even than before? It is possible to discern in this mingling of Sade and Mazzini a manifestation of the lack of direction which afflicted these years. But what impact does the play make upon the reader? Beyond the immediate verbal effects of its poetry, its "marmoreal uniformity of diction", it cannot be considered altogether successful. To quote Mr. Harold Nicolson: "It is never wholly clear whether Athens is to be destroyed by the Thracians or by the sea; it is never wholly clear whether the central theme is the sacrifice of Chthonia or the heroism of her mother; and the final holocaust of *Erechtheus* and his remaining daughters is treated in a manner wholly unconvincing and almost incidental". And, indeed, planned under Jowett's eye, with a tooconscious regard to exact conformity with the principles of the Eschylean drama, with a toodisciplined, a tooimpeccably hellenic symmetry, the play moves in a serene,

remote empyrean, in an atmosphere too rarefied for the breath of human tragedy or the quickening of the heart's beat.

He was, too, during these years slowly collecting the poems that were to be published as *poems and Ballads: Second Series* in 1878. Many of the poems had been written before 1872, such as *Ave atque Vah* by far the most distinguished poem in the book, ranking, as it does, among Swinburne's masterpieces. Many more were translations, essays in literary technique or necrological poems. Biographically, interest is centred in some halfdozen lyrics composed during the period. These, mostly written in lucid intervals in the country, where from time to time long stays were made necessary by the state of his health or the condition of his finances, are informed with a new, an unimpassioned, an almost quietist emotion. Many critics, emerging shocked and battered from the tumultuous flood of the earlier poems, have been tempted, reassured by the safe poetic harbours of nostalgia and melancholy, to discover in these exquisite lyrics the perfection of Swinburne's mature genius. There is, indeed, a certain tremulous sorrow, a wistfulness of retrospection, a calm, an almost lethargic regret evident in their elaborate cadences.

I hid my heart in a nest of roses,  
 Out of the sun's way, hidden apart;  
 In a softer bed than the soft white snow's is,  
 Under the roses I hid my heart.

And it is not only in *The Ballad of Dreamland* that there is, side by side with the melancholy, an undercurrent of longing—for rest was it, for safety? The note is struck again in *Sestina*:

I saw my soul at rest upon a day  
 As a bird sleeping in the nest of night. . . .

Indeed, it is not straining interpretation unduly to see in these poems a reflection of the physical conditions in which they must have been composed. His health was rapidly deteriorating; he suffered the heartsearchings of remorse; he feared the future. And from that fear sprang the ache of nostalgia for the vibrant past. In *A Vision of Spring in Winter* he pleaded for its recapture:

The morning song beneath the stars that fled  
    With twilight through the moonless mountain air,  
    While youth with burning lips and wreathless hair  
Sang toward the sun that was to crown his head,  
Rising; the hopes that triumphed and fell dead,  
    The sweet swift eyes and songs of hours that were;  
These may'st thou not give back for ever; these,  
    As at the sea's heart all her wrecks lie waste,  
    Lie deeper than the sea;  
But flowers thou may'st, and winds, and hours of ease,  
    And all its April to the world thou may'st  
    Give back, and half my April back to me.

The plaintive note discernible in the lyrics of this period echoes not only a conscious regret at declining inspiration—a decline of which he must at moments have been aware—but a melancholy dissatisfaction at his way of life. Gradually during these years, his existence, which he had never been altogether competent to conduct, became increasingly unmanageable. Little by little he came subconsciously to long for some change in its rhythm, some haven, perhaps, from which the sharp angularities might be viewed objectively as once he had looked upon stormy seas as a child from the windows of East Dene. As already with failing inspiration he had capitulated in his art, so now with failing health he was to capitulate in his life. Submission was to become the dominant trait in his character. But it was a long process—a process, indeed, which might never have come to fruition but for a number of fortuitous circumstances and, above all, the patient, tactful, almost feline resilience and perseverance of WattsDunton.

(1879—1909)

When WattsDunton removed from Great James Street a dying Swinburne, utterly prostrate, who had taken no food for days, the poet was no longer capable of objection. And there was never to be any question of his leaving The Pines, in which he was installed. Behind that prim suburban facade life was, from the first, calm, regular and orderly. But it was WattsDunton's life; it was the life of a retired provincial solicitor was literary interests, it was a life in which routine

became hallowed and incident was rigorously excluded. The sharp pangs of rebellion and revolt, the disorders of excess, the eccentricities of genius were deftly suppressed. With what determined tact, with what soft yet unremitting persuasion WattsDunton laboured to tame his captive poet, to reform his genius to the accepted moral standards of the Victorian middle class! And with what extraordinary success his labours were crowned!

The first year of convalescence achieved, his health perfectly restored, what persuaded Swinburne to continue subject to his jealous guardianship? For a jealous guardianship, arrogant and selfassertive under the tact, the wariness, the delicacy of its application, it was. Behind the solicitude for Swinburne's health, for his reputation, for his finances, for his manuscripts, there was a proprietary air which was determined to create a Swinburne according to the Duntonian mode. Hence he was jealous of Swinburne's past—a past that must be eliminated, denied, repudiated, so that the genius of Swinburne might become a projection of WattsDunton himself. And this, in effect, it very nearly did.

Imperceptibly, from the period of Mazzini's domination—not to give too precise a date to it—the emphasis was shifting from the sadistic in his character to the masochistic, from rebellion to submission. These two compensating traits had always been there, had, indeed, been the basis of his temperament, the motive forces in his life to a degree exaggerated beyond normal. And now, with the sharp lessons of selfinduced illhealth, mortgaged dignity, and failing genius he had no longer the strength of will to assert his right to an independent but unmanageable existence. His temperament found its solace in a subjection which, if less impassioned, less ecstatic than his relations with Mazzini, was fuller, deeper, wider, which included not only his mind, and his art, but every detail of his life, his eating, his drinking, his exercise and his rest, even the visitors he might receive. And Watts Dunton did something else too, he restored his faith in his genius.

WattsDunton was always at hand with advice and encouragement. "For the last thirty years," he wrote in 1910, "his thoughts had been mainly absorbed in two subjects. The first of these was the study and contemplation of nature in various localities. The second . . . was childhood." And if the contemplation of nature led to an unbridled and meaningless fluency, the presence in the household of Watts Dunton's nephew, Bertie Mason—of whom Swinburne was already

writing in 1884: "When my forthcoming volume [*A Midsummer Holiday and Other Poems*] is out, I shall have published fifty poems on a single child"—led to a no less distressing bathos:

A baby shines as bright  
 If winter or if May be  
 On eyes that keep in sight  
                   A baby.

Though dark the skies or grey be,  
 It fills our eyes with light  
 If midnight or midday be.

Love hails it, day and night,  
 The sweetest thing that may be,  
 Yet cannot praise aright  
                   A baby.

And as each mechanical composition was struck *off* by the machine WattsDunton was on hand to assure the author that it was "*the best poem I ever wrote*". Indeed, from the moment Swinburne went to live at The Pines there seems never to have been a doubt in his mind as to the quality of his productions. WattsDunton at least gave him the happiness, whatever he may have come to think about some of his early work, of complete certainty in his present genius. Nevertheless, even this last period produced, if no great poetry, at least work of merit. Outstanding in the interminable procession of his compositions is *Tristram of Lyonesse*. This work, which had been lingering in his mind since 1858, he intended to be his masterpiece. In 1871 he wrote the sonorous invocation to Love which forms the Prelude, but the forced labour of *Eothis* and other avocations interfered with the poem's immediate completion. It lay on his hands too long and when, after "parcels of Tristram" had been composed at intervals, he set himself in the summer of 1881 to complete it, the inspiration had faded. As always, the narrative or epic form eluded him and he was brought to realise that in fact it had become "a succession of dramatic scenes and pictures with descriptive settings and backgrounds". In its totality it cannot be considered an unqualified success. It is likely, too, that WattsDunton was instrumental in toning down some of the more

frankly amorous passages, while he insisted upon its being published in the same volume together with a number of morally unimpeachable verses which Swinburne designated "Songs of Innocence" and which were not calculated to enhance the major poem's effectiveness.' *The Tale of Balen*, published in 1896, is also not without merit. His imagination played about the vivid freedoms of Northumberland which once he had known, and "a sun more blithe, a merrier breeze" stirred and illumined the drab hangings of the Putney villa. Perhaps for a moment he was really able to persuade himself that he lived "close to the edge of a noble down". And in two of the closing stanzas, with the dying Balen, he recaptured, with a wistful, insistent nostalgia, the surge and lifting of a boy's heart.

And there low lying, as hour on hour  
 Fled, all his life in all its flower  
 Came back as in a sunlit shower  
 Of dreams, when sweetsouled sleep has power  
     On life less sweet and glad to be,  
 He drank the draught of life's first wine  
 Again: he saw the moorland shine,  
 The rioting rapids of the Tyne,  
     The woods, the cliffs, the sea.

The joy that lives at heart and home,  
 The joy to rest, the joy to roam,  
 The joy of crags and scaurs he clomb,  
 The rapture of the encountering foam  
     Embraced and breasted of the boy,  
 The first good steed his knees bestrode,  
 The first wild sound of songs that flowed  
 Through ears that thrilled and heart that glowed,  
     Fulfilled his death with joy.

Indeed, during these last years his industry was prodigious. After 1880 some twentyfour volumes of verse and prose were published during his lifetime and a further five posthumously, while from T. J. Wise's vast collection of manuscripts, now in the British Museum, something approaching one hundred were edited and privately printed. There were, too, between 1882 and 1909, two hundred and twenty three contributions to reviews, magazines and newspapers. Watts

Dunton approved. Indeed, what could be more satisfactory? Swinburne was happy and busy, while the financial results, under his own able management, were really quite gratifying. But into this vast, overwhelming flood it is neither possible, nor desirable, to do more than dip. Out of it only two poems seem to present themselves as suitable for inclusion in this volume: *Thalassius*, composed in 1880, the most consciously autobiographical of all his verse, and *To a Seamew*, nostalgic, sincere with implied protest against the cage in which he was confined. For, in general, the mere contemplation of the bulk of the work of these years induces a certain lassitude, while its perusal culminates in an extraordinary tedium. Nor are the reasons for this far to seek. His technique was at least as good as it had ever been, the astonishing music of which he was capable still poured out in endless, insistent, metrical stresses. But now there was no longer any essential experience to communicate. As verse is piled upon verse, stanza upon stanza, with an incredible virtuosity of rhyme, alliteration and assonance, it becomes increasingly clear that there is no outline to the flood of his distressing fluency. Words, phrases, stanzas have no meaning beyond their musical sound: nothing is conveyed. It is as if we were contemplating the exquisite convolutions of a carved marble chimneypiece—the same indeed that we gazed upon with so much admiration in former years—but now it has lost all meaning: the hearth is empty, the fire has gone out.



SWINBURNE: SELECTED POEMS

1837—1866



## THE UNHAPPY REVENGE

(Written by A. C. Swinburne at Eton at the age of thirteen)  
B.M. Addenda MS. 40887.

### DIRGE

WHEN the rough storm howleth wildly,  
And the rude winds rock thy bed,  
When booming thunder rolleth,  
Softly rest thy wearied head  
Where the gloomy cypress bloweth  
And thy soft grave groweth green;  
Let the whirlwinds rock thee loudly,  
Thou wilt never more be seen.  
Fear no more man's darkening frown,  
Nor the blasting thunderstroke;  
Thou art free from vain man's torment,  
And thy life's bright thread is broke.  
All must wither into dust;  
Snowy age and youth all must  
In the grave join bloodless hands,  
Tied in everlasting bands!  
Let worldly joys and sorrows vain  
Swell false fortune's glistening train;  
But the flowers of your blest *spirits*  
Are but fed with earthy dust;  
While thy soul heaven's joys inherits  
Freed from care and mortal lust.  
Farewell to all on this wild earth;  
We bid thee not farewell  
With sighing breath, nor wanton mirth,  
Nor a rugged chorus swell.  
Angels tune a jubilee  
While we vainly mourn for thee;  
All must wither in the grave;  
No man can his body save.  
But the gloomy wave of Death  
Chills our hot and panting breath.  
Stoop from heavenly skies awhile,  
Bless us with one radiant smile.

## SWINBURNE SELECTED POEMS

Those who stood on the world's *rack*?  
Lie in Death's corrosive bands;  
And their humble graves must lack  
Offices of pious hands.  
But the garland of thy grave  
Never a withering time shall have.  
Earth's cold weight can ne'er in ties  
Oppress the blossom of the skies.

## ROSAMOND

### SONG

This was written in God's name;  
The devil kissed me  
Mouth on mouth with little shame  
Under a big tree.  
He fed me full with good meat,  
The best there might be;  
He gave me black wine and sweet  
Red fruit and honeymeal to eat;  
*Domine, laudamus te.*  
He made straight the lame  
And fat he made me;  
So he gat good game,  
Kisses three by three.  
He was shapen like a carl,  
A swine's foot had he;  
Like a dog's his mouth did snarl,  
His hands were foul with loam and marl;  
*Domine, laudamus te.*  
A bat came out of heaven  
That had a flat snout;  
A loaf withouten leaven,  
Crumbs thereof fell out;  
The devil thrust up with his thumb,  
Said tho to me,  
Lo you, there shall be left no crumb  
When I and you in heaven come;  
*Domine, laudamus te.*  
There were many leaves thick  
Grown well over me;  
A big branch of a little stick  
Is this greene tree;  
He showed me brave things to wear,  
Pleasant things to see;  
A good game had we twain there,  
The leaves weren broad and fair;  
*Domine, laudamus te.*

## CHASTELARD

### MARY BEATON'S SONG

i

Between the sunset and the sea  
My love laid hands and lips on me;  
Of sweet came sour, of day came night,  
Of long desire came brief delight:  
Ah love, and what thing came of thee  
Between the seadowns and the sea?

2

Between the seamark and the sea  
Joy grew to grief, grief grew to me;  
Love turned to tears, and tears to fire,  
And dead delight to new desire;  
Love's talk, love's touch there seemed to be  
Between the seasand and the sea.

3

Between the sundown and the sea  
Love watched one hour of love with me;  
Then down the allgolden waterways  
His feet flew after yesterdays;  
I saw them come and saw them flee  
Between the seafoam and the sea.

4

Between the seastrand and the sea  
Love fell on sleep, sleep fell on me;  
The first star saw twain turn to one  
Between the moonrise and the sun;  
The next, that saw not love, saw me  
Between the seabanks and the sea.

## *AFTER DEATH*

THE four boards of the coffin lid  
Heard all the dead man did.

The first curse was in his mouth,  
Made of grave's mould and deadly drouth.

The next curse was in his head,  
Made of God's work discomfited.

The next curse was in his hands,  
Made out of two gravebands.

The next curse was in his feet,  
Made out of a gravesheet.

"I had fair coins red and white,  
And my name was as great light;

I had fair clothes green and red,  
And strong gold bound round my head.

But no meat comes in my mouth,  
Now I fare as the worm doth;

And no gold binds in my hair,  
Now I fare as the blind fare.

My live thews were of great strength,  
Now am I waxen a span's length;

My live sides were full of lust,  
Now are they dried with dust."

The first board spake and said:  
"Is it best eating flesh or bread?"

The second answered it:  
"Is wine or honey the more sweet?"

The third board spake and said:  
"Is red gold worth a girl's gold head?"

The fourth made answer thus:  
"All these things are as one with us."

The dead man asked of them:  
"Is the green land stained brown with flame?"

Have they hewn my son for beasts to eat,  
And my wife's body for beasts' meat?

Have they boiled my maid in a brass pan,  
And built a gallows to hang my man?"

The boards said to him:  
"This is a lewd thing that ye deem.

Your wife has gotten a golden bed,  
All the sheets are sewn with red.

Your son has gotten a coat of silk,  
The sleeves are soft as curded milk.

Your maid has gotten a kirtle new,  
All the skirt has braids of blue.

Your man has gotten both ring and glove,  
Wrought well for eyes to love."

The dead man answered thus:  
"What good gift shall God give us?"

The boards answered him anon:  
"Flesh to feed hell's worm upon."

## THE BLOODY SON

(Finnish)

"O WHERE have ye been the morn sae late,  
My merry son, come tell me hither?  
O where have ye been the morn sae late?  
And I wot I hae not anither."  
"By the watergate, by the watergate,  
O dear mither."

"And whatten kin' o' wark had ye there to make,  
My merry son, come tell me hither?  
And whatten kin' o' wark had ye there to make?  
And I wot I hae not anither."  
"I watered my steeds with water frae the lake,  
O dear mither."

"Why is your coat sae fouled the day,  
My merry son, come tell me hither?  
Why is your coat sae fouled the day?  
And I wot I hae not anither."  
"The steeds were stamping sair by the weary banks of clay,  
O dear mither."

"And where gat ye thae sleeves of red,  
My merry son, come tell me hither?  
And where gat ye thae sleeves of red?  
And I wot I hae not anither."  
"I have slain my ae brither by the weary waterhead,  
O dear mither."

"And where will ye gang to mak your mend.  
My merry son, come tell me hither?  
And where will ye gang to mak your mend?  
And I wot hae not anither."  
"The warldis way, to the warldis end,  
O dear mither."

"And what will ye leave your father dear,  
My merry son, come tell me hither?  
And what will ye leave your father dear?  
And I wot hae not anither."  
"The wood to fell and the logs to bear,  
For he'll never see my body mair,  
O dear mither."

"And what will ye leave your mither dear,  
My merry son, come tell me hither?  
And what will ye leave your mither dear?  
And I wot I hae not anither."  
"The wool to card and the wool to wear,  
For ye'll never see my body mair,  
O dear mither."

"And what will ye leave for your wife to take,  
My merry son, come tell me hither?  
And what will ye leave for your wife to take?  
And I wot I hae not anither."  
"A goodly gown and a fair new make,  
For she'll do nae mair for my body's sake,  
O dear mither."

"And what will ye leave your young son fair,  
My merry son, come tell me hither?  
And what will ye leave your young son fair?  
And I wot ye hae not anither."  
"A twiggen schoolrod for his body to bear,  
Though it garred him greet he'll get nae mair,  
O dear mither."

"And what will ye leave your little daughter sweet,  
My merry son, come tell me hither?  
And what will ye leave your little daughter sweet?  
And I wot ye hae not anither."  
"Wild mulberries for her mouth to eat,  
She'll get nae mair though it garred her greet,  
O dear mither."

"And when will ye come back frae roamin',

My merry son, come tell me hither?

And when will ye come back frae roamin'?

And I wot I hae not anither."

"When the sunrise out of the north is comen,

O dear mither."

"When shall the sunrise on the north side be,

My merry son, come tell me hither?

When shall the sunrise on the north side be?

And I wot I hae not anither."

"When chuckiestanes shall swim in the sea,

O dear mither."

"When shall stanes in the sea swim,

My merry son, come tell me hither?

When shall stanes in the sea swim?

And I wot I hae not anither."

"When birdies' feathers are as lead therein,

O dear mither."

"When shall feathers be as lead,

My merry son, come tell me hither?

When shall feathers be as lead?

And I wot I hae not anither."

"When God shall judge between the quick and dead,

O dear mither."

*THE SEA-SWALLOWS*

THIS fell when Christmas lights were done,  
(Red rose leaves will never make wine)  
But before the Easter lights begun;  
The ways are sair fra' the Till to the Tyne.

Two lovers sat where the rowan blows  
And all the grass is heavy and fine,  
By the gatheringplace of the seaswallows  
When the wind brings them over Tyne.

Blossom of broom will never make bread,  
Red rose leaves will never make wine;  
Between her brows she is grown red,  
That was full white in the fields by Tyne.

"O what is this thing ye have on,  
Show me now, sweet daughter of mine?"  
"O father, this is my little son  
That I found hid in the sides of Tyne."

"O what will ye give my son to eat?"  
(Red rose leaves will never make wine.)  
"Fenwater and adder's meat."  
The ways are sair fra' the Till to the Tyne.

"Or what will ye get my son to wear?"  
(Red rose leaves will never make wine.)  
"A weed and a web of nettle's hair."  
The ways are sair fra' the Till to the Tyne.

"Or what will ye take to line his bed?"  
(Red rose leaves will never make wine.)  
"Two black stones at the kirkwalls head."  
The ways are sair fra' the Till to the Tyne.

"Or what will ye give my son for land?"  
(Red rose leaves will never make wine.)  
"Three girl's paces of red sand."  
The ways are sair fra' the Till to the Tyne.

"Or what will ye give me for my son?"  
(Red rose leaves will never make wine.)  
"Six times to kiss his young mouth on."  
The ways ar sair fra' the Till to the Tyne.

"But what have ye done with the bearingbread,  
And what have ye made of the washingwine?  
Or where have ye made your bearingbed,  
To bear a son in the sides of Tyne?"

"The bearingbread is soft and new,  
There is no soil in the straining wine;  
The bed was made between green and blue,  
It stands full soft by the sides of Tyne.

"The fair grass was my bearingbread,  
The wellwater my washingwine;  
The low leaves were my bearingbed,  
And that was best in the sides of Tyne."

"O daughter, if ye have done this thing,  
I wot the greater grief is mine;  
This was a bitter childbearing,  
When ye were got by the sides of Tyne.

"About the time of seaswallows  
That fly full thick by six and nine,  
Ye'll have my body out of the house,  
To bury me by the sides of Tyne.

"Set nine stones by the wall for twain,"  
(Red rose leaves will never make wine)  
"For the bed I take will measure ten."  
The ways are sair fra' the Till to the Tyne.

"Tread twelve girl's paces out for three,"  
(Red rose leaves will never make wine)  
"For the pit I made has taken me."  
The ways are sair fra' the Till to the Tyne.

*A SONG IN TIME OF ORDER, 1852*

PUSH hard across the sand,  
For the salt wind gathers breath;  
Shoulder and wrist and hand,  
Push hard as the push of death.

The wind is as iron that rings,  
The foamheads loosen and flee;  
It swells and welters and swings,  
The pulse of the tide of the sea.

And up on the yellow cliff  
The long corn flickers and shakes;  
Push, for the wind holds stiff,  
And the gunwale dips and rakes.

Good hap to the fresh fierce weather,  
The quiver and beat of the sea!  
While three men hold together,  
The kingdoms are less by three.

Out to the sea with her there,  
Out with her over the sand;  
Let the kings keep the earth for their share!  
We have done with the sharers of land.

They have tied the world in a tether,  
They have bought over God with a fee;  
While three men hold together,  
The kingdoms are less by three.

We have done with the kisses that sting,  
The thief's mouth red from the feast,  
The blood on the hands of the king  
And the lie at the lips of the priest.

Will they tie the winds in a tether,  
Put a bit in the jaws of the sea?  
While three men hold together,  
The kingdoms are less by three.

Let our flag run out straight in the wind!  
The old red shall be floated again  
When the ranks that are thin shall be thinned,  
When the names that were twenty are ten;

When the devil's riddle is mastered  
And the galleybench creaks with a Pope,  
We shall see Buonaparte the bastard  
Kick heels with his throat in a rope.

While the shepherd sets wolves on his sheep  
And the emperor halts his kine,  
While Shame is a watchman asleep  
And Faith is a keeper of swine,

Let the wind shake our flag like a feather,  
Like the plumes of the foam of the sea!  
While three men hold together,  
The kingdoms are less by three.

All the world has its burdens to bear,  
From Cayenne to the Austrian whips  
Forth, with the rain in our hair  
And the salt sweet foam in our lips;

In the teeth of the hard glad weather,  
In the blown wet face of the sea;  
While three men hold together,  
The kingdoms are less by three.

*A SONG IN TIME OF REVOLUTION, 1860*

THE heart of the rulers is sick, and the highpriest corcers  
his head:

For this is the song of the quick that is heard in the ears  
of the dead.

The poor and the halt and the blind are keen and mighty  
and fleet:

Like the noise of the blowing of wind is the sound of the  
noise of their feet.

The wind has the sound of a laugh in the clamour of days  
and of deeds:

The priests are scattered like chaff, and the rulers broken  
like reeds.

The highpriest sick from qualms, with his raiment bloodily  
dashed;

The thief with branded palms, and the liar with cheeks  
abashed.

They are smitten, they tremble greatly, they are pained for  
their pleasant things:

For the house of the priests made stately, and the might in  
the mouth of the kings.

They are grieved and greatly afraid; they are taken, they  
shall not flee:

For the heart of the nations is made as the strength of the  
springs of the sea.

They were fair in the grace of gold, they walked with delicate  
feet:

They were clothed with the cunning of old, and the smell  
of their garments was sweet.

For the breaking of gold in their hair they halt as a man  
made lame:

They are utterly naked and bare; their mouths are bitter  
with shame.

Wilt thou judge thy people now, O king that was found  
most wise?

Wilt thou lie any more, O thou whose mouth is emptied  
of lies?

Shall God make a pact with thee, till his hook be found in  
thy sides?

Wilt thou put back the time of the sea, or the place of the  
season of tides?

Set a word in thy lips, to stand before God with a word in  
thy mouth:

That "the rain shall return in the land, and the tender dew  
after drouth."

But the arm of the elders is broken, their strength is unbound  
and undone:

They wait for a sign of a token; they cry, and there cometh  
none.

Their moan is in every place, the cry of them filleth the  
land:

There is shame in the sight of their face, there is fear in the  
thews of their hand.

They are girdled about the reins with a curse for the girdle  
thereon:

For the noise of the rending of chains the face of their  
colour is gone.

For the sound of the shouting of men they are grievously  
stricken at heart:

They are smitten asunder with pain, their bones are smitten  
apart.

There is none of them all that is whole; their lips gape  
open for breath;

They are clothed with sickness of soul, and the shape of the  
shadow of death.

The wind is thwart in their feet; it is full of the shouting  
of mirth;

As one shaketh the sides of a sheet, so it shaketh the ends  
of the earth.

The sword, the sword is made keen; the iron has opened  
its mouth;  
The corn is red that was green; it is bound for the sheaves  
of the south.

The sound of a word was shed, the sound of the wind as  
a breath,  
In the ears of the souls that were dead, in the dust of the  
deepness of death;

Where the face of the moon is taken, the ways of the stars  
undone,  
The light of the whole sky shaken, the light of the face of  
the sun:

Where the waters are emptied and broken, the waves of  
the waters are stayed;  
Where God has bound for a token the darkness that maketh  
afraid;

Where the sword was covered and hidden, and dust had  
grown in its side,  
A word came forth which was bidden, the crying of one  
that cried:

The sides of the twoedged sword shall be bare, and its  
mouth shall be red,  
For the breath of the face of the Lord that is felt in the bones  
of the dead.

## SAPPHICS

ALL the night sleep came not upon my eyelids,  
Shed not dew, nor shook nor unclosed a feather,  
Yet with lips shut close and with eyes of iron  
    Stood and beheld me.

Then to me so lying awake a vision  
Came without sleep over the seas and touched me,  
Softly touched mine eyelids and lips; and I too,  
    Full of the vision,

Saw the white implacable Aphrodite,  
Saw the hair unbound and the feet unsandalled  
Shine as fire of sunset on western waters;  
    Saw the reluctant

Feet, the straining plumes of the doves that drew her,  
Looking always, looking with necks reverted,  
Back to Lesbos, back to the hills whereunder  
    Shone Mitylene;

Heard the flying feet of the Loves behind her  
Make a sudden thunder upon the waters,  
As the thunder flung from the strong unclosing  
    Wings of a great wind.

So the goddess fled from her place, with awful  
Sound of feet and thunder of wings around her;  
While behind a clamour of singing women  
    Severed the twilight.

Ah the singing, ah the delight, the passion!  
All the Loves wept, listening; sick with anguish,  
Stood the crowned nine Muses about Apollo;  
    Fear was upon them,

While the tenth sang wonderful things they knew not.  
Ah the tenth, the Lesbian! the nine were silent,  
None endured the sound of her song for weeping;  
    Laurel by laurel,

Faded all their crowns; but about her forehead,  
 Round her woven tresses and ashen temples  
 White as dead snow, paler than grass in summer,  
     Ravaged with kisses,

Shone a light of fire as a crown for ever.  
 Yea, almost the implacable Aphrodite  
 Paused, and almost wept; such a song was that song.  
     Yea, by her name too

Called her, saying, "Turn to me, O my Sappho;"  
 Yet she turned her face from the Loves, she saw not  
 Tears for laughter darken immortal eyelids,  
     Heard not about her

Fearful fitful wings of the doves departing,  
 Saw not how the bosom of Aphrodite  
 Shook with weeping, saw not her shaken raiment,  
     Saw not her hands wrung;

Saw the Lesbians kissing across their smitten  
 Lutes with lips more sweet than the sound of lutestrings,  
 Mouth to mouth and hand upon hand, her chosen,  
     Fairer than all men;

Only saw the beautiful lips and fingers,  
 Full of songs and kisses and little whispers,  
 Full of music; only beheld among them  
     Soar, as a bird soars

Newly fledged, her visible song, a marvel,  
 Made of perfect sound and exceeding passion,  
 Sweetly shapen, terrible, full of thunders,  
     Clothed with the wind's wings.

Then rejoiced she, laughing with love, and scattered  
 Roses, awful roses of holy blossom;  
 Then the Loves thronged sadly with hidden faces  
     Round Aphrodite,

Then the Muses, stricken at heart, were silent;  
 Yea, the gods waxed pale; such a song was that song.  
 All reluctant, all with a fresh repulsion,  
     Fled from before her.

All withdrew long since, and the land was barren,  
Full of fruitless women and music only.  
Now perchance, when winds are assuaged at sunset,  
    Lulled at the dewfall,

By the grey seaside, unassuaged, unheard of,  
Unbeloved, unseen in the ebb of twilight,  
Ghosts of outcast women return lamenting,  
    Purged not in Lethe,

Clothed about with flame and with tears, and singing  
Songs that move the heart of the shaken heaven,  
Songs that break the heart of the earth with pity,  
    Hearing, to hear them.

## *HENDECASYLLABICS*

IN the month of the long decline of roses  
I, beholding the summer dead before me,  
Set my face to the sea and journeyed silent,  
Gazing eagerly where above the seamark  
Flame as fierce as the fervid eyes of lions  
Half divided the eyelids of the sunset;  
Till I heard as it were a noise of waters  
Moving tremulous under feet of angels  
Multitudinous, out of all the heavens;  
Knew the fluttering wind, the fluttered foliage,  
Shaken fitfully, full of sound and shadow;  
And saw, trodden upon by noiseless angels,  
Long mysterious reaches fed with moonlight,  
Sweet sad straits in a soft subsiding channel,  
Blown about by the lips of winds I knew not,  
Winds not born in the north nor any quarter,  
Winds not warm with the south nor any sunshine;  
Heard between them a voice of exultation,  
"Lo, the summer is dead, the sun is faded,  
Even like as a leaf the year is withered,  
All the fruits of the day from all her branches  
Gathered, neither is any left to gather.  
All the flowers are dead, the tender blossoms,  
All are taken away; the season wasted,  
Like an ember among the fallen ashes.  
Now with light of the winter days, with moonlight,  
Light of snow, and the bitter light of hoarfrost,  
We bring flowers that fade not after autumn,  
Pale white chaplets and crowns of latter seasons,  
Fair false leaves (but the summer leaves were falser),  
Woven under the eyes of stars and planets  
When low light was upon the windy reaches  
Where the flower of foam was blown, a lily  
Dropt among the sonorous fruitless furrows  
And green fields of the sea that make no pasture:  
Since the winter begins, the weeping winter,  
All whose flowers are tears, and round his temples  
Iron blossom of frost is bound for ever."

A *LEAVETAKING*

LET us go hence, my songs; she will not hear.  
Let us go hence together without fear;  
Keep silence now, for singintime is over,  
And over all old things and all things dear.  
She loves not you nor me as all we love her.  
Yea, though we sang as angels in her ear,  
She would not hear.

Let us rise up and part; she will not know.  
Let us go seaward as the great winds go,  
Full of blown sand and foam; what help is here?  
There is no help, for all these things are so,  
And all the world is bitter as a tear.  
And how these things are, though ye strove to show,  
She would not know.

Let us go home and hence; she will not weep.  
We gave love many dreams and days to keep,  
Flowers without scent, and fruits that would not grow,  
Saying, "If thou wilt, thrust in thy sickle and reap."  
All is reaped now; no grass is left to mow;  
And we that sowed, though all we fell on sleep,  
She would not weep.

Let us go hence and rest; she will not love.  
She shall not hear us if we sing hereof,  
Nor see love's ways, how sore they are and steep.  
Come hence, let be, lie still; it is enough.  
Love is a barren sea, bitter and deep;  
And though she saw all heaven in flower above,  
She would not love.

Let us give up, go down; she will not care.  
Though all the stars made gold of all the air,  
And the sea moving saw before it move  
One moonflower making all the foamflowers fair;  
Though all those waves went over us, and drove  
Deep down the stifling lips and drowning hair,  
She would not care.

Let us go hence, go hence; she will not see.  
Sing all once more together; surely she,  
She too, remembering days and words that were,  
Will turn a little toward us, sighing; but we,  
We are hence, we are gone, as though we had not been  
there.  
Nay, and though all men seeing had pity on me,  
She would not see.

## HERMAPHRODITUS

### I

LIFT up thy lips, turn round, look back for love,  
Blind love that conies by night and casts out rest;  
Of all things tired thy lips look weariest,  
Save the long smile that they are wearied of.  
Ah sweet, albeit no love be sweet enough,  
Choose of *two* loves and cleave unto the best;  
Two loves at either blossom of thy breast  
Strive until one be under and one above.  
Their breath is fire upon the amorous air,  
Fire in thine eyes and where thy lips suspire:  
And whosoever hath seen thee, being so fair,  
Two things turn all his life and blood to fire;  
A strong desire begot on great despair,  
A great despair cast out by strong desire.

### II

Where between sleep and life some brief space is,  
With love like gold bound round about the head,  
Sex to sweet sex with lips and limbs is wed,  
Turning the fruitful feud of hers and his  
To the waste wedlock of a sterile kiss;  
Yet from them something like as fire is shed  
That shall not be assuaged till death be dead,  
Though neither life nor sleep can find out this.  
Love made himself of flesh that perisheth  
A pleasurehouse for all the loves his kin;  
But on the one side sat a man like death,  
And on the other a woman sat like sin.  
So with veiled eyes and sobs between his breath  
Love turned himself and would not enter in.

## III

Love, is it love or sleep or shadow or light  
 That lies between thine eyelids and thine eyes?  
 Like a flower laid upon a flower it lies,  
 Or like the night's dew laid upon the night.  
 Love stands upon thy left hand and thy right,  
 Yet by no sunset and by no moonrise  
 Shall make thee man and ease a woman's sighs,  
 Or make thee woman for a man's delight.  
 To what strange end hath some strange god made fair  
 The double blossom of two fruitless flowers?  
 Hid love in all the folds of all thy hair,  
 Fed thee on summers, watered thee with showers,  
 Given all the gold that all the seasons wear  
 To thee that art a thing of barren hours?

## IV

Yea, love, I see; it is not love but fear.  
 Nay, sweet, it is not fear but love, I know;  
 Or wherefore should thy body's blossom blow  
 So sweetly, or thine eyelids leave so clear  
 Thy gracious eyes that never made a tear—  
 Though for their love our tears like blood should flow,  
 Though love and life and death should come and go,  
 So dreadful, so desirable, so dear?  
 Yea, sweet, I know; I saw in what swift wise  
 Beneath the woman's and the water's kiss  
 Thy moist limbs melted into Salmacis,  
 And the large light turned tender in thine eyes,  
 And all thy boy's breath softened into sighs;  
 But Love being blind, how should he know of this?

*Au Mush du Louvre, Mars 1863.*

## THE GARDEN OF PROSERPINE

HERE, where the world is quiet;  
Here, where all trouble seems  
Dead winds' and spent waves' riot  
In doubtful dreams of dreams;  
I watch the green field growing  
For reaping folk and sowing,  
For harvesttime and mowing,  
A sleepy world of streams.

I am tired of tears and laughter,  
And men that laugh and weep;  
Of what may come hereafter  
For men that sow to reap:  
I am weary of days and hours,  
Blown buds of barren flowers,  
Desires and dreams and powers  
And everything but sleep.

Here life has death for neighbour,  
And far from eye or ear  
Wan waves and wet winds labour,  
Weak ships and spirits steer;  
They drive adrift, and whither  
They wot not who make thither;  
But no such winds blow hither,  
And no such things grow here.

No growth of moor or coppice,  
No heatherflower or vine,  
But bloomless buds of poppies,  
Green grapes of Proserpine,  
Pale beds of blowing rushes  
Where no leaf blooms or blushes  
Save this whereout she crushes  
For dead men deadly wine.

Pale, without name or number,  
 In fruitless fields of corn,  
 They bow themselves and slumber  
 All night till light is born;  
 And like a soul belated,  
 In hell and heaven unmated,  
 By cloud and mist abated  
 Comes out of darkness morn.

Though one were strong as seven,  
 He too with death shall dwell,  
 Nor wake with wings in heaven,  
 Nor weep for pains in hell;  
 Though one were fair as roses,  
 His beauty clouds and closes;  
 And well though love reposes,  
 In the end it is not well.

Pale, beyond porch and portal,  
 Crowned with calm leaves, she stands  
 Who gathers all things mortal \*  
 With cold immortal hands;  
 Her languid lips are sweeter  
 Than love's who fears to greet her  
 To men that mix and meet her  
 From many times and lands.

She waits for each and other,  
 She waits for all men born;  
 Forgets the earth her mother,  
 The life of fruits and corn;  
 And spring and seed and swallow  
 Take wing for her and follow  
 Where summer song rings hollow  
 And flowers are put to scorn.

There go the loves that wither,  
 The old loves with wearier wings;  
 And all dead years draw thither,  
 And all disastrous things;  
 Dead dreams of days forsaken,  
 Blind buds that snows have shaken,  
 Wild leaves that winds have taken,  
 Red strays of ruined springs.

We are not sure of sorrow,  
And joy was never sure;  
Today will die tomorrow;  
Time stoops to no man's lure;  
And love, grown faint and fretful,  
With lips but half regretful  
Sighs, and with eyes forgetful  
Weeps that no loves endure.

From too much love of living,  
From hope and fear set free,  
We thank with brief thanksgiving  
Whatever gods may be  
That no life lives for ever;  
That dead men rise up never;  
That even the weariest river  
Winds somewhere safe to sea.

Then star nor sun shall waken,  
Nor any change of light:  
Nor sound of waters shaken,  
Nor any sound or sight:  
Nor wintry leaves nor vernal,  
Nor days nor things diurnal;  
Only the sleep eternal  
In an eternal night.

## ITYLUS

SWALLOW, my sister, O sister swallow,  
How can thine heart be full of the spring?  
A thousand summers are over and dead.  
What hast thou found in the spring to follow?  
What hast thou found in thine heart to sing?  
What wilt thou do when the summer is shed?

O swallow, sister, O fair swift swallow,  
Why wilt thou fly after spring to the south,  
The soft south whither thine heart is set?  
Shall not the grief of the old time follow?  
Shall not the song thereof cleave to thy mouth?  
Hast thou forgotten ere I forget?

Sister, my sister, O fleet sweet swallow,  
Thy way is long to the sun and the south;  
But I, fulfilled of my heart's desire,  
Shedding my song upon height, upon hollow,  
From tawny body and sweet small mouth  
Feed the heart of the night with fire.

I the nightingale all spring through,  
O swallow, sister, O changing swallow,  
All spring through till the spring be done,  
Clothed with the light of the night on the dew,  
Sing, while the hours and the wild birds follow,  
Take flight and follow and find the sun.

Sister, my sister, O soft light swallow,  
Though all tilings feast in the spring's guestchamber,  
How hast thou heart to be glad thereof yet?  
For where thou fliest I shall not follow,  
Till life forget and death remember,  
Till thou remember and I forget.

Swallow, my sister, O singing swallow,  
 I know not how thou hast heart to sing.  
 Hast thou the heart? is it all past over?  
 Thy lord the summer is good to follow,  
 And fair the feet of thy lover the spring:  
 But what wilt thou say to the spring thy lover?

O swallow, sister, O fleeting swallow,  
 My heart in me is a molten ember  
 And over my head the waves have met.  
 But thou wouldst tarry or I would follow,  
 Could I forget or thou remember,  
 Couldst thou remember and I forget.

O sweet stray sister, O shifting swallow,  
 The heart's division divideth us.  
 Thy heart is light as a leaf of a tree;  
 But mine goes forth among seagulfs hollow  
 To the place of the slaying of Itylus,  
 The feast of Daulis, the Thracian sea.

O swallow, sister, O rapid swallow,  
 I pray thee sing not a little space.  
 Are not the roofs and the lintels wet?  
 The woven web that was plain to follow,  
 The small slain body, the flowerlike face,  
 Can I remember if thou forget?

O sister, sister, thy firstbegotten!  
 The hands that cling and the feet that follow,  
 The voice of the child's blood crying yet.  
*Who hath remembered me? who hath forgotten?*  
 Thou hast forgotten, O summer swallow,  
 But the world shall end when I forget.

## A BALLAD OF LIFE

I FOUND in dreams a place of wind and flowers,  
Full of sweet trees and colour of glad grass,  
In midst whereof there was  
A lady clothed like summer with sweet hours.  
Her beauty, fervent as a fiery moon,  
Made my blood burn and swoon  
Like a flame rained upon.  
Sorrow had filled her shaken eyelids' blue,  
And her mouth's sad red heavy rose all through  
Seemed sad with glad things gone.

She held a little cithern by the strings,  
Shaped heartwise, strung with subtlecoloured hair  
Of some dead luteplayer  
That in dead years had done delicious things.  
The seven strings were named accordingly;  
The first string charity,  
The second tenderness,  
The rest were pleasure, sorrow, sleep, and sin,  
And lovingkindness, that is pity's kin  
And is most pitiless.

There were three men with her, each garmented  
With gold and shod with gold upon the feet;  
And with plucked ears of wheat  
The first man's hair was wound upon his head:  
His face was red, and his mouth curled and sad;  
All his gold garment had  
Pale stains of dust and rust.  
A riven hood was pulled across his eyes;  
The token of him being upon this wise  
Made for a sign of Lust.

The next was Shame, with hollow heavy face  
Coloured like green wood when flame kindles it.  
He hath such feeble feet  
They may not well endure in any place,

His face was full of grey old miseries,  
And all his blood's increase  
Was even increase of pain.  
The last was Fear, that is akin to Death;  
He is Shame's friend, and always as Shame saith  
Fear answers him again.

My soul said in me: This is marvellous,  
Seeing the air's face is not so delicate  
Nor the sun's grace so great,  
If sin and she be kin or amorous.  
And seeing where maidens served her on their knees  
I bade one crave of these  
To know the cause thereof.  
Then Fear said: I am Pity that was dead.  
And Shame said: I am Sorrow comforted.  
And Lust said: I am Love.

Thereat her hands began a luteplaying  
And her sweet mouth a song in a strange tongue;  
And all the while she sung  
There was no sound but long tears following  
Long tears upon men's faces, waxen white  
With extreme sad delight.  
But those three following men  
Became as men raised up among the dead;  
Great glad mouths open and fair cheeks made red  
With child's blood come again.

Then I said: Now assuredly I see  
My lady is perfect, and transfigureth  
All sin and sorrow and death,  
Making them fair as her own eyelids be,  
Or lips wherein my whole soul's life abides;  
Or as her sweet white sides  
And bosom carved to kiss.  
Now therefore, if her pity further me,  
Doubtless for her sake all my days shall be  
As righteous as she is.

Forth, ballad, and take roses in both arms,  
Even till the top rose touch thee in the throat  
Where the least thornprick harms;  
And girdled in thy golden singingcoat,  
Come thou before my lady and say this:  
Borgia, thy gold hair's colour burns in me,  
Thy mouth makes beat my blood in feverish  
rhymes;  
Therefore so many as these roses be,  
Kiss me so many times.  
Then it may be, seeing how sweet she is,  
That she will stoop herself none otherwise  
Than a blown vinebranch doth,  
And kiss thee with soft laughter on thine eyes,  
Ballad, and on thy mouth.

## A BALLAD OF DEATH

KNEEL down, fair Love, and fill thyself with tears,  
Girdle thyself with sighing for a girth  
Upon the sides of mirth,  
Cover thy lips and eyelids, let thine ears  
Be filled with rumour of people sorrowing;  
Make thee soft raiment out of woven sighs  
Upon the flesh to cleave,  
Set pains therein and many a grievous thing,  
And many sorrows after each his wise  
For armet and for gorget and for sleeve.

O Love's lute heard about the lands of death,  
Left hanged upon the trees that were therein;  
O Love and Time and Sin,  
Three singing mouths that mourn now underbreath,  
Three lovers, each one evil spoken of;  
O smitten lips wherethrough this voice of mine  
Came softer with her praise;  
Abide a little for our lady's love.  
The kisses of her mouth were more than wine,  
And more than peace the passage of her days.

O Love, thou knowest if she were good to see.  
O Time, thou shalt not find in any land  
Till, cast out of thine hand,  
The sunlight and the moonlight fail from thee,  
Another woman fashioned like as this.  
O Sin, thou knowest that all thy shame in her  
Was made a goodly thing;  
Yes, she caught Shame and shamed him with her kiss,  
With her fair kiss, and lips much lovelier  
Than lips of amorous roses in late spring.

By night there stood over against my bed  
Queen Venus with a hood striped gold and black,  
Both sides drawn fully back  
From brows wherein the sad blood failed of red,  
And temples drained of purple and full of death.  
Her curled hair had the wave of seawater

And the sea's gold in it.  
Her eyes were as a dove's that sickeneth.  
Strewn dust of gold she had shed over her,  
And pearl and purple and amber on her feet.

Upon her raiment of dyed sendaline  
Were painted all the secret ways of love  
And covered things thereof,  
That hold delight as grapeflowers hold their wine;  
Red mouths of maidens and red feet of doves,  
And brides that kept within the bridechamber  
Their garment of soft shame,  
And weeping faces of the wearied loves  
That swoon in sleep and awake wearier,  
With heat of lips and hair shed out like flame.

The tears that through her eyelids fell on me  
Made mine own bitter where they ran between  
As blood had fallen therein,  
She saying; Arise, lift up thine eyes and see  
If any glad thing be or any good  
Now the best thing is taken forth of us;  
Even she to whom all praise  
Was as one flower in a great multitude,  
One glorious flower of many and glorious,  
One day found gracious among many days:

Even she whose handmaiden was Love—to whom  
At kissing times across her stateliest bed  
Kings bowed themselves and shed  
Pale wine, and honey with the honeycomb,  
And spikenard bruised for a burnt offering;  
Even she between whose lips the kiss became  
As fire and frankincense;  
Whose hair was as gold raiment on a king,  
Whose eyes were as the morning purged with flame,  
Whose eyelids as sweet savour issuing thence.

Then I beheld, and lo on the other side  
My lady's likeness crowned and robed and dead.  
Sweet still, but now not red,  
Was the shut mouth whereby men lived and died.

And sweet, but emptied of the blood's blue shade,  
 The great curled eyelids that withheld her eyes.  
 And sweet, but like spoilt gold,  
 The weight of colour in her tresses weighed.  
 And sweet, but as a vesture with new dyes,  
 The body that was clothed with love of old.

Ah! that my tears filled all her woven hair  
 And all the hollow bosom of her gown—  
 Ah! that my tears ran down  
 Even to the place where many kisses were,  
 Even where her parted breastflowers have place,  
 Even where they are cloven apart—who knows not this?  
 Ah! the flowers cleave apart  
 And their sweet fills the tender interspace;  
 Ah! the leaves grown thereof were things to kiss  
 Ere their fine gold was tarnished at the heart.

Ah! in the days when God did good to me,  
 Each part about her was a righteous thing;  
 Her mouth an almsgiving,  
 The glory of her garments charity,  
 The beauty of her bosom a good deed,  
 In the good days when God kept sight of us;  
 Love lay upon her eyes,  
 And on that hair whereof the world takes heed;  
 And all her body was more virtuous  
 Than souls of women fashioned otherwise.

Now, ballad, gather poppies in thine hands  
 And sheaves of brier and many rusted sheaves  
 Rainrotten in rank lands,  
 Waste marigold and late unhappy leaves  
 And grass that fades ere any of it be mown;  
 And when thy bosom is filled full thereof  
 Seek out Death's face ere the light altereth,  
 And say "My master that was thrall to Love  
 Is become thrall to Death."  
 Bow down before him, ballad, sigh and groan,  
 But make no sojourn in thy outgoing;  
 For haply it may be  
 That when thy feet return at evening  
 Death shall come in with thee.

## LES NOYADES

WHATEVER a man of the sons of men  
Shall say to his heart of the lords above,  
They have shown man verily, once and again,  
Marvellous mercies and infinite love.

In the wild fifth year of the change of things,  
When France was glorious and bloodred, fair  
With dust of battle and deaths of kings,  
A queen of men, with helmeted hair,

Carrier came down to the Loire and slew,  
Till all the ways and the waves waxed red:  
Bound and drowned, slaying two by two,  
Maidens and young men, naked and wed.

They brought on a day to his judgmentplace  
One rough with labour and red with fight,  
And a lady noble by name and face,  
Faultless, a maiden, wonderful, white.

She knew not, being for shame's sake blind,  
If his eyes were hot on her face hard by.  
And the judge bade strip and ship them, and bind  
Bosom to bosom, to drown and die.

The white girl winced and whitened; but he  
Caught fire, waxed bright as a great bright flame  
Seen with thunder far out on the sea,  
Laughed hard as the glad blood went and came.

Twice his lips quailed with delight, then said,  
"I have but a word to you all, one word;  
Bear with me; surely I am but dead;"  
And all they laughed and mocked him and heard.

"Judge, when they open the judgmentroll,  
I will stand upright before God and pray:  
'Lord God, have mercy on one man's soul,  
For his mercy was great upon earth, I say.

" Lord, if I loved thee—Lord, if I served—  
 If these who darkened thy fair Son's face  
 I fought with, sparing not one, nor swerved  
 A hand'sbreadth, Lord, in the perilous place—

" I pray thee say to this man, O Lord,  
*Sit thou for him at my feet on a throne.*  
 I will face thy wrath, though it bite as a sword,  
 And my soul shall burn for his soul, and atone.

" Tor, Lord, thou knowest, O God most wise,  
 How gracious on earth were his deeds towards me.  
 Shall this be a small thing in thine eyes,  
 That is greater in mine than the whole great sea?"

"I have loved this woman my whole life long,  
 And even for love's sake when have I said  
 'I love you'? when have I done you wrong,  
 Living? but now I shall have you dead.

"Yea, now, do I bid you love me, love?  
 Love me or loathe, we are one not twain.  
 But God be praised in his heaven above  
 For this my pleasure and that my pain!

"For never a man, being mean like me,  
 Shall die like me till the whole world dies.  
 I shall drown with her, laughing for love; and she  
 Mix with me, touching me, lips and eyes.

"Shall she not know me and see me all through,  
 Me, on whose heart as a worm she trod?  
 You have given me, God requite it you,  
 What man yet never was given of God."

O sweet one love, O my life's delight,  
 Dear, though the days have divided us,  
 Lost beyond hope, taken far out of sight,  
 Not twice in the world shall the gods do thus.

Had it been so hard for my love? but I,  
    Though the gods gave all that a god can give,  
I had chosen rather the gift to die,  
    Cease, and be glad above all that live.

For the Loire would have driven us down to the sea,  
    And the sea would have pitched us from shoal to shoal;  
And I should have held you, and you held me,  
    As flesh holds flesh, and the soul the soul.

Could I change you, help you to love me, sweet,  
    Could I give you the love that would sweeten death,  
We should yield, go down, locked hands and feet,  
    Die, drown together, and breath catch breath;

But you would have felt my soul in a kiss,  
    And known that once if I loved you well;  
And I would have given my soul for this  
    To burn for ever in burning hell.

A CAMEO

THERE was a graven image of Desire  
    Painted with red blood on a ground of gold  
    Passing between the young men and the old,  
And by him Pain, whose body shone like fire,  
And Pleasure with gaunt hands that grasped their hire.  
    Of his left wrist, with fingers clenched and cold.  
    The insatiable Satiety kept hold,  
Walking with feet unshod that pashed the mire.  
The senses and the sorrows and the sins,  
    And the strange loves that suck the breasts of Hate  
Till lips and teeth bite in their sharp indenture,  
Followed like beasts with flap of wings and fins.  
    Death stood aloof behind a gaping grate,  
Upon whose lock was written *Peradventure*.

## A LITANY

---

*ev otipavip̄ (fiaevvas*  
*Kp̄yto irap̄ v̄jlv̄ aityds,*  
*ai'as Itp̄ WKrbf IITTL vitcras ee* **Ge, κ. τ. λ.**  
*Antb. Sac.*

---

### FIRST ANTIPHONE

ALL the bright lights of heaven  
I will make dark over thee;  
One night shall be as seven  
That its skirts may cover thee;  
I will send on thy strong men a sword,  
On thy remnant a rod;  
Ye shall know that I am the Lord,  
Saith the Lord God.

### SECOND ANTIPHONE

All the bright lights of heaven  
Thou hast made dark over us;  
One night has been as seven  
That its skirt might cover us;  
Thou hast sent on our strong men a sword,  
On our remnant a rod;  
We know that thou art the Lord,  
O Lord our God.

### THIRD ANTIPHONE

As the tresses and wings of the wind  
Are scattered and shaken,  
I will scatter all them that have sinned,  
There shall none be taken;  
As a sower that scattereth seed,  
So will I scatter them;  
As one breaketh and shattereth a reed,  
I will break and shatter them.

## FOURTH ANTIPHONE

As the wings and the locks of the wind  
Are scattered and shaken,  
Thou hast scattered all them that have sinned,  
There was no man taken;  
As a sower that scattereth seed,  
So hast thou scattered us;  
As one breaketh and shattereth a reed,  
Thou hast broken and shattered us.

## FIFTH ANTIPHONE

From all thy lovers that love thee  
I God will sunder thee;  
I will make darkness above thee,  
And thick darkness under thee;  
Before me goeth a light,  
Behind me a sword;  
Shall a remnant find grace in my sight?  
I am the Lord.

## SIXTH ANTIPHONE

From all our lovers that love us  
Thou God didst sunder us;  
Thou madest darkness above us,  
And thick darkness under us;  
Thou hast kindled thy wrath for a light,  
And made ready thy sword;  
Let a remnant find grace in thy sight,  
We beseech thee, O Lord.

## SEVENTH ANTIPHONE

Wilt thou bring fine gold for a payment  
For sins on this wise?  
For the glittering of raiment  
And the shining of eyes,

For the painting of faces  
 And the sundering of trust,  
 For the sins of thine high places  
 And delight of thy lust?

For your high things ye shall have lowly,  
 Lamentation for song;  
 For, behold, I God am holy,  
 I the Lord am strong;  
 Ye shall seek me and shall not reach me,  
 Till the winepress be trod;  
 In that hour ye shall turn and beseech me,  
 Saith the Lord God.

## EIGHTH ANTIPHONE

Not with fine gold for a payment,  
 But with coin of sighs,  
 But with rending of raiment  
 And with weeping of eyes,  
 But with shame of stricken faces  
 And with strewing of dust,  
 For the sin of stately places  
 And lordship of lust;

With voices of men made lowly,  
 Made empty of song,  
 O Lord God most holy,  
 O God most strong,  
 We reach out hands to reach thee  
 Ere the winepress be trod;  
 We beseech thee, O Lord, we beseech thee,  
 O Lord our God.

## NINTH ANTIPHONE

In that hour thou shalt say to the night,  
 Come down and cover us;  
 To the cloud on thy left and thy right,  
 Be thou spread over us;

A snare shall be as thy mother,  
 And a curse thy bride;  
 Thou shalt put her away, and another  
 Shall lie by thy side.

Thou shalt neither rise up by day  
 Nor lie down by night;  
 Would God it were dark! thou shalt say;  
 Would God it were light!  
 And the sight of thine eyes shall be made  
 As the burning of fire;  
 And thy soul shall be sorely afraid  
 For thy soul's desire.

Ye whom your lords loved well,  
 Putting silver and gold on you,  
 The inevitable hell  
 Shall surely take hold on you;  
 Your gold shall be for a token,  
 Your staff for a rod;  
 With the breaking of bands ye are broken,  
 Saith the Lord God.

## TENTH ANTIPHONE

In our sorrow we said to the night,  
 Fall down and cover us;  
 To the darkness at left and at right,  
 Be thou shed over us;  
 We had breaking of spirit to mother  
 And cursing to bride;  
 And one was slain, and another  
 Stood up at our side.

We could not arise by day,  
 Nor lie down by night;  
 Thy sword was sharp in our way,  
 Thy word in our sight;

The delight of our eyelids was made  
As the burning of fire;  
And our souls became sorely afraid  
For our soul's desire.

We whom the world loved well,  
Laying silver and gold on us,  
The kingdom of death and of hell  
Riseth up to take hold on us;  
Our gold is turned to a token,  
Our staff to a rod;  
Yet shalt thou bind them up that were broken,  
O Lord our God.

## AVE ATQUE VALE

*In Memory of Charles Baudelaire.*

Nous devrions pourtant lui poftet quelques fleuts;  
Les morts, les pauvres morts, ont de grandes douleurs,  
Et quand Octobre souffle, emondeur des vieux arbres,  
Son vent melancolique a l'entour de leurs marbres,  
Certe, ils doivent trouver les vivants bien ingrats.

*Les Fleurs du Mai*

### I

SHALL I strew on thee rose or rue or laurel,  
    Brother, on this that was the veil of thee?  
    Or quiet seaflower moulded by the sea,  
Or simplest growth of meadowsweet or sorrel,  
    Such as the summersleepy Dryads weave,  
    Waked up by snowsoft sudden rains at eve?  
Or wilt thou rather, as on earth before,  
    Half-faded fiery blossoms, pale with heat  
    And full of bitter summer, but more sweet  
To thee than gleanings of a northern shore  
    Trode by no tropic feet?

### ii

For always thee the fervid languid glories  
    Allured of heavier suns in mightier skies;  
    Thine ears knew all the wandering watery sighs  
Where the sea sobs round Lesbian promontories,  
    The barren kiss of piteous wave to wave  
    That knows not where is that Leucadian grave  
Which hides too deep the supreme head of song.  
    Ah, salt and sterile as her kisses were,  
    The wild sea winds her and the green gulfs bear  
Hither and thither, and vex and work her wrong,  
    Blind gods that cannot spare.

## III

Thou sawest, in thine old singing season, brother,  
     Secrets and sorrows unbeheld of us:  
     Fierce loves, and lovely leafbuds poisonous,  
 Bare to thy subtler eye, but for none other  
     Blowing by night in some unbreathed-in clime;  
     The hidden harvest of luxurious time,  
 Sin without shape, and pleasure without speech;  
     And where strange dreams in a tumultuous sleep  
     Make the shut eyes of stricken spirits weep;  
 And with each face thou sawest the shadow on each,  
     Seeing as men sow men reap.

## IV

O sleepless heart and sombre soul unsleeping,  
     That were athirst for sleep and no more life  
     And no more love, for peace and no more strife!  
 Now the dim gods of death have in their keeping  
     Spirit and body and all the springs of song,  
     Is it well now where love can do no wrong,  
 Where stingless pleasure has no foam or fang  
     Behind the unopening closure of her lips?  
     Is it not well where soul from body slips  
 And flesh from bone divides without a pang  
     As dew from flowerbell drips?

## V

It is enough; the end and the beginning  
     Are one thing to thee, who art past the end.  
     O hand unclasped of un beholden friend,  
 For thee no fruits to pluck, no palms for winning,  
     No triumph and no labour and no lust,  
     Only dead yewleaves and a little dust.  
 O quiet eyes wherein the light saith nought,  
     Whereto the day is dumb, nor any night  
     With obscure finger silences your sight,  
 Nor in your speech the sudden soul speaks thought,  
     Sleep, and have sleep for light,

## VI

Now all strange hours and all strange loves are over,  
 Dreams and desires and sombre songs and sweet,  
 Hast thou found place at the great knees and feet  
 Of some pale Titanwoman like a lover,  
 Such as thy vision here solicited,  
 Under the shadow of her fair vast head,  
 The deep division of prodigious breasts,  
 The solemn slope of mighty limbs asleep,  
 The weight of awful tresses that still keep  
 The savour and shade of oldworld pineforests  
 Where the wet hillwinds weep?

## VII

Hast thou found any likeness for thy vision?  
 O gardener of strange flowers, what bud, what bloom,  
 Hast thou found sown, what gathered in the gloom?  
 What of despair, of rapture, of derision,  
 What of life is there, what of ill or good?  
 Are the fruits grey like dust or bright like blood?  
 Does the dim ground grow any seed of ours,  
 The faint fields quicken any terrene root,  
 In low lands where the sun and moon are mute  
 And all the stars keep silence? Are there flowers  
 At all, or any fruit?

## VIII

Alas, but though my flying song flies after,  
 O sweet strange elder singer, thy more fleet  
 Singing, and footprints of thy fleeter feet,  
 Some dim derision of mysterious laughter  
 From the blind tongueless warders of the dead,  
 Some gainless glimpse of Proserpine's veiled head,  
 Some little sound of unregarded tears  
 Wept by effaced unprofitable eyes,  
 And from pale mouths some cadence of dead sighs—  
 These only, these the hearkening spirit hears,  
 Sees only such things rise.

## IX

Thou art far too far for wings of words to follow,  
 Far too far off for thought or any prayer.  
 What ails us with thee, who art wind and air?  
 What ails us gazing where all seen is hollow?  
 Yet with some fancy, yet with some desire,  
 Dreams pursue death as winds a flying fire,  
 Our dreams pursue our dead and do not find.  
 Still, and more swift than they, the thin flame flies,  
 The low light fails us in elusive skies,  
 Still the foiled earnest ear is deaf, and blind  
 Are still the eluded eyes.

## X

Not thee, O never thee, in all time's changes,  
 Not thee, but this the sound of thy sad soul,  
 The shadow of thy swift spirit, this shut scroll  
 I lay my hand on, and not death estranges  
 My spirit from communion of thy song—  
 These memories and these melodies that throng  
 Veiled porches of a Muse funereal—  
 These I salute, these touch, these clasp and fold  
 As though a hand were in my hand to hold,  
 Or through mine ears a mourning musical  
 Of many mourners rolled.

## XI

I among these, I also, in such station  
 As when the pyre was charred, and piled the sods,  
 And offering to the dead made, and their gods,  
 The old mourners had, standing to make libation,  
 I stand, and to the gods and to the dead  
 Do reverence without prayer or praise, and shed  
 Offering to these unknown, the gods of gloom,  
 And what of honey and spice my seedlands bear,  
 And what I may of fruits in this chilled air,  
 And lay, Oresteslike, across the tomb  
 A curl of severed hair.

## XII

But by no hand nor any treason stricken,  
 Not like the lowlying head of Him, the King,  
 The flame that made of Troy a ruinous thing,  
 Thou liest, and on this dust no tears could quicken.  
 There fall no tears like theirs that all men hear  
 Fall tear by sweet imperishable tear  
 Down the opening leaves of holy poets' pages.  
 Thee not Orestes, not Electra mourns;  
 But bending usward with memorial urns  
 The most high Muses that fulfil all ages  
 Weep, and our God's heart yearns.

## XIII

For, sparing of his sacred strength, not often  
 Among us darkling here the lord of light  
 Makes manifest his music and his might  
 In hearts that open and in lips that soften  
 With the soft flame and heat of songs that shine.  
 Thy lips indeed he touched with bitter wine,  
 And nourished them indeed with bitter bread;  
 Yet surely from his hand thy soul's food came,  
 The fire that scarred thy spirit at his flame  
 Was lighted, and thine hungering heart he fed  
 Who feeds our hearts with fame.

## XIV

Therefore he too now at thy soul's sunseting,  
 God of all suns and songs, he too bends down  
 To mix his laurel with thy cypress crown,  
 And save thy dust from blame and from forgetting.  
 Therefore he too, seeing all thou wert and art,  
 Compassionate, with sad and sacred heart,  
 Mourns thee of many his children the last dead,  
 And hallows with strange tears and alien sighs  
 Thine unmelodious mouth and sunless eyes,  
 And over thine irrevocable head  
 Sheds light from the under skies.

## XV

And one weeps with him in the ways Lethan,  
 And stains with tears her changing bosom chill:  
 That obscure Venus of the hollow hill,  
 That thing transformed which was the Cytherean.  
 With lips that lost their Grecian laugh divine  
 Long since, and face no more called Erycine;  
 A ghost, a bitter and luxurious god.  
 Thee also with fair flesh and singing spell  
 Did she, a sad and second prey, compel  
 Into the footless places once moie trod,  
 And shadows hot from hell.

## XVI

And now no sacred staff shall break in blossom,  
 No choral salutation lure to light  
 A spirit sick with perfume and sweet night  
 And love's tired eyes and hands and barren bosom,  
 There is no help for these things; none to mend  
 And none to mar; not all our songs, O friend,  
 Will make death clear or make life durable.  
 Howbeit with rose and ivy and wild vine  
 And with wild notes about this dust of thine  
 At least I fill the place where white dreams dwell  
 And wreathe an unseen shrine.

## XVII

Sleep; and if life was bitter to thee, pardon,  
 If sweet, give thanks; thou hast no more to live;  
 And to give thanks is good, and to forgive.  
 Out of the mystic and the mournful garden  
 Where all day through thine hands in barren braid  
 Wove the sick flowers of secrecy and shade,  
 Green buds of sorrow and sin, and remnants grey,  
 Sweet-smelling, pale with poison, sanguinehearted,  
 Passions that sprang from sleep and thoughts that started,  
 Shall death not bring us all as thee one day  
 Among the days departed?

## XVIII

For thee, O now a silent soul, my brother,  
Take at my hands this garland, and farewell.  
Thin is the leaf, and chill the wintry smell,  
And chill the solemn earth, a fatal mother,  
With sadder than the Niobeian womb,  
And in the hollow of her breasts a tomb.  
Content thee, howsoe'er, whose days are done;  
There lies not any troublous thing before,  
Nor sight nor sound to war against thee more,  
For whom all winds are quiet as the sun,  
All waters as the shore.

## LAUS VENERIS

Lors dit en plpurant; Helas trop malheureux homme et mauldikt pescheur, oncques ne verraije ctemence et misericorde de Dieu. Ores m'en iraië d'icy et me cacherai dedans le mont Horsel, en requerant de faveur et d'amoureuse merci ma douce dame Ve'nus, car pour son amour seraije bien e tout jamais damne" en cnfcr. Voicy la fin de tous mes faicts d'armes et de toutes mes belles chansons. He"las, trop belle estoyt la face de ma dame et ses yeulx, et en mauvais jour je vis ces chousesla. Lors s'en alia tout en germssant et se retourna chez elle, et la vescu tristement en grand amour pres de sa dame. Puis apres advmt que le pape vit un jour esclater sur son baston force belles fleurs rouges et blanches et maints boutons de feuilles, et ainsi vitil reverdir toute Tescorce. Ce dont il cut grande crainte et moult s'en esmut, et grande pitie" lui prit de ce chevalier qui s'en estoyt depart! sans espoir comme un homme miserable et damne'. Donques envöya force messaigers devers luy pour le ramener, disant qu'il aurait de Dieu grace et bonne absolution de son grand pesche d'amour. Mais oncques plus ne le virent; car toujours demeura ce pauvre chevalier aupres de Venus la haulte et forte de"esse es flancs de la montagne amoureuse.

*Iivre des grandes merveilks d amour, escript en latin  
et en franfoys par Matstre Antoine Gaget. 1530.*

ASLEEP or waking is it? for her neck,  
Kissed over close, wears yet a purple speck  
Wherein the pained blood falters and goes out;  
Soft, and stung softly—fairer for a fleck.

But though my lips shut sucking on the place,  
There is no vein at work upon her face;  
Her eyelids are so peaceable, no doubt  
Deep sleep has warmed her blood through all its ways.

Lo, this is she that was the world's delight;  
The old grey years were parcels of her might;  
The strewings of the ways wherein she trod  
Were the twain seasons of the day and night.

Lo, she was thus when her clear limbs enticed  
All lips that now grow sad with kissing Christ,  
Stained with blood fallen from the feet of God,  
The feet and hands whereat our souls were priced.

Alas, Lord, surely thou art great and fair.  
But lo her wonderfully woven hair!  
And thou didst heal us with thy piteous kiss;  
But see now, Lord; her mouth is lovelier.

She is right fair; what hath she done to thee?  
Nay, fair Lord Christ, lift up thine eyes and see;  
    Had now thy mother such a lip—like this?  
Thou knowest how sweet a thing it is to me.

Inside the Horsel here the air is hot;  
Right little peace one hath for it, God wot;  
    The scented dusty daylight burns the air,  
And my heart chokes me till I hear it not.

Behold, my Venus, my soul's body, lies  
With my love laid upon her garmentwise,  
    Feeling my love in all her limbs and hair  
And shed between her eyelids through her eyes.

She holds my heart in her sweet open hands  
Hanging asleep; hard by her head there stands,  
    Crowned with gilt thorns and clothed with flesh like fire,  
Love, wan as foam blown up the salt burnt sands—

Hot as the brackish waifs of yellow spume  
That shift and steam—loose clots of arid fume  
    From the sea's panting mouth of dry desire;  
There stands he, like one labouring at a loom.

The warp holds fast across; and every thread  
That makes the woof up has dry specks of red;  
    Always the shuttle cleaves clean through, and he  
Weaves with the hair of many a ruined head.

Love is not glad nor sorry, as I deem;  
Labouring he dreams, and labours in the dream,  
    Till when the spool is finished, lo I see  
His web, reeled off, curls and goes out like steam.

Night falls like fire; the heavy lights run low,  
And as they drop, my blood and body so  
    Shake as the flame shakes, full of days and hours  
That sleep not neither weep they as they go.

Ah yet would God this flesh of mine might be  
Where air might wash and long leaves cover me,  
    Where tides of grass break into foam of flowers,  
Or where the wind's feet shine along the sea.

Ah yet would God that stems and roots were bred  
 Out of my weary body and my head,  
 That sleep were sealed upon me with a seal,  
 And I were as the least of all his dead.

Would God my blood were dew to feed the grass,  
 Mine ears made deaf and mine eyes blind as glass,  
 My body broken as a turning wheel,  
 And my mouth stricken ere it saith Alas!

Ah God, that love were as a flower or flame,  
 That life were as the naming of a name,  
 That death were not more pitiful than desire,  
 That these things were not one thing and the same!

Behold now, surely somewhere there is death:  
 For each man hath some space of years, he saith,  
 A little space of time ere time expire,  
 A little day, a little way of breath.

And lo, between the sundawn and the sun,  
 His day's work and his night's work are undone;  
 And lo, between the nightfall and the light,  
 He is not, and none knoweth of such an one.

Ah God, that I were as all souls that be,  
 As any herb or leaf of any tree,  
 As men that toil through hours of labouring night,  
 As bones of men under the deep sharp sea.

Outside it must be winter among men;  
 For at the gold bars of the gates again  
 I heard all night and all the hours of it  
 The wind's wet wings and fingers drip with rain.

Knights gather, riding sharp for cold; I know  
 The ways and woods are strangled with the snow;  
 And with short song the maidens spin and sit  
 Until Christ's birthnight, lilylike, arow.

The scent and shadow shed about me make  
 The very soul in all my senses ache;  
 The hot hard night is fed upon my breath,  
 And sleep beholds me from afar awake.

Alas, but surely where the hills grow deep,  
Or where the wild ways of the sea are steep,  
Or in strange places somewhere there is death,  
And on death's face the scattered hair of sleep.

There loverlike with lips and limbs that meet  
They lie, they pluck sweet fruit of life and eat;  
But me the hot and hungry days devour,  
And in my mouth no fruit of theirs is sweet.

No fruit of theirs, but fruit of my desire,  
For her love's sake whose lips through mine respire;  
Her eyelids on her eyes like flower on flower,  
Mine eyelids on mine eyes like fire on fire.

So lie we, not as sleep that lies by death,  
With heavy kisses and with happy breath;  
Not as man lies by woman, when the bride  
Laughs low for love's sake and the words he saith.

For she lies, laughing low with love; she lies  
And turns his kisses on her lips to sighs,  
To sighing sound of lips unsatisfied,  
And the sweet tears are tender with her eyes.

Ah, not as they, but as the souls that were  
Slain in the old time, having found her fair;  
Who, sleeping with her lips upon their eyes,  
Heard sudden serpents hiss across her hair.

Their blood runs round the roots of time like rain:  
She casts them forth and gathers them again;  
With nerve and bone she weaves and multiplies  
Exceeding pleasure out of extreme pain.

Her little chambers drip with flowerlike red,  
Her girdles, and the chaplets of her head,  
Her armlets and her anklets; with her feet  
She tramples all that winepress of the dead.

Her gateways smoke with fume of flowers and fires,  
With loves burnt out and unassuaged desires;  
Between her lips the steam of them is sweet,  
The languor in her ears of many lyres.

Her beds are full of perfume and sad sound,  
 Her doors are made with music, and barred round  
 With sighing and with laughter and with tears,  
 With tears whereby strong souls of men are bound.

There is the knight Adonis that was slain;  
 With flesh and blood she chains him for a chain;  
 The body and the spirit in her ears  
 Cry, for her lips divide him vein by vein.

Yea, all she slayeth; yea, every man save me;  
 Me, love, thy lover that must cleave to thee  
 Till the ending of the days and ways of earth,  
 The shaking of the sources of the sea.

Me, most forsaken of all souls that fell;  
 Me, satiated with things insatiable;  
 Me, for whose sake the extreme hell makes mirth,  
 Yea, laughter kindles at the heart of hell.

Alas thy beauty! for thy mouth's sweet sake  
 My soul is bitter to me, my limbs quake  
 As water, as the flesh of men that weep,  
 As their heart's vein whose heart goes nigh to break.

Ah God, that sleep with flowersweet fingertips  
 Would crush the fruit of death upon my lips;  
 Ah God, that death would tread the grapes of sleep  
 And wring their juice upon me as it drips.

There is no change of cheer for many days,  
 But change of chimes high up in the air, that sways  
 Rung by the running fingers of the wind;  
 And singing sorrows heard on hidden ways.

Day smiteth day in twain, night sundereth night,  
 And on mine eyes the dark sits as the light;  
 Yes, Lord, thou knowest I know not, having sinned  
 If heaven be clean or unclean in thy sight.

Yea, as if earth were sprinkled over me,  
 Such chafed harsh earth as chokes a sandy sea,  
 Each pore doth yearn, and the dried blood thereof  
 Gasps by sick fits, my heart swims heavily,

There is a feverish famine in my veins;  
Below her bosom, where a crushed grape stains  
The white and blue, there my lips caught and clove  
An hour since, and what mark of me remains?

I dare not always touch her, lest the kiss  
Leave my lips charred. Yea, Lord, a little bliss,  
Brief bitter bliss, one hath for a great sin;  
Nathless thou knowest how sweet a thing it is.

Sin, is it sin whereby men's souls are thrust  
Into the pit? yet had I a good trust  
To save my soul before it slipped therein,  
Trodden under by the fireshod feet of lust.

For if mine eyes fail and my soul takes breath,  
I look between the iron sides of death  
Into sad hell where all sweet love hath end,  
All but the pain that never finisheth.

There are the naked faces of great kings,  
The singing folk with all their luteplayings;  
There when one cometh he shall have to friend  
The grave that covets and the worm that clings.

There sit the knights that were so great of hand,  
The ladies that were queens of fair green land,  
Grown grey and black now, brought into the dust,  
Soiled, without raiment, clad about with sand.

There is one end for all of them; they sit  
Naked and sad, they drink the dregs of it,  
Trodden as grapes in the winepress of lust,  
Trampled and trodden by the fiery feet.

I see the marvellous mouth whereby there fell  
Cities and people whom the gods loved well,  
Yet for her sake on them the fire gat hold,  
And for their sakes on her the fire of hell.

And softer than the Egyptian loteleaf is,  
The queen whose face was worth the world to kiss  
Wearing at breast a suckling snake of gold;  
And large pale lips of strong Semiramis,

Curled like a tiger's that curl back to feed;  
 Red only where the last kiss made them bleed;  
 Her hair most thick with many a carven gem,  
 Deep in the mane, greatchested, like a steed.

Yea, with red sin the faces of them shine;  
 But in all these there was no sin like mine;  
 No, not in all the strange great sins of them  
 That made the winepress froth and foam with wine.

For I was of Christ's choosing, I God's knight,  
 No blinkard heathen stumbling for scant light;  
 I can well see, for all the dusty days  
 Gone past, the clean great time of goodly fight.

I smell the breathing battle sharp with blows,  
 With shriek of shafts and snapping short of bows;  
 The fair pure sword smites out in subtle ways,  
 Sounds and long lights are shed between the rows

Of beautiful mailed men; the edged light slips,  
 Most like a snake that takes short breath and dips  
 Sharp from the beautifully bending head,  
 With all its gracious body lithe as lips

That curl in touching you; right in this wise  
 My sword doth, seeming fire in mine own eyes,  
 Leaving all colours in them brown and red  
 And flecked with death; then the keen breaths like sighs,

The caughtup choked dry laughters following them,  
 When all the fighting face is grown aflame  
 For pleasure, and the pulse that stuns the ears,  
 And the heart's gladness of the goodly game.

Let me think yet a little; I do know  
 These things were sweet, but sweet such years ago,  
 Their savour is all turned now into tears;  
 Yea, ten years since, where the blue ripples blow,

The blue curled eddies of the blowing Rhine,  
 I felt the sharp wind shaking grass and vine  
 Touch my blood too, and sting me with delight  
 Through all this waste and weary body of mine

That never feels clear air; right gladly then  
I rode alone, a great way off my men,  
And heard the chiming bridle smite and smite,  
And gave each rhyme thereof some rhyme again,

Till my song shifted to that iron one;  
Seeing there rode up between me and the sun  
Some certain of my foe's men, for his three  
White wolves across their painted coats did run.

The first redbearded, with square cheeks—alack,  
I made my knave's blood turn his beard to black;  
The slaying of him was a joy to see:  
Perchance too, when at night he came not back,

Some woman fell aweping, whom this thief  
Would beat when he had drunken; yet small grief  
Hath any for the ridding of such knaves;  
Yea, if one wept, I doubt her teen was brief.

This bitter love is sorrow in all lands,  
Draining of eyelids, wringing of drenched hands,  
Sighing of hearts and filling up of graves;  
A sign across the head of the world he stands,

An one that hath a plaguemark on his brows;  
Dust and spilt blood do track him to his house  
Down under earth; sweet smells of lip and cheek,  
Like a sweet snake's breath made more poisonous

With chewing of some perfumed deadly grass,  
Are shed all round his passage if he pass,  
And their quenched savour leaves the whole soul weak,  
Sick with keen guessing whence the perfume was.

As one who hidden in deep sedge and reeds  
Smells the rare scent made where a panther feeds,  
And tracking ever slotwise the warm smell  
Is snapped upon by the sweet mouth and bleeds,

His head far down the hot sweet throat of her—  
So one tracks love, whose breath is deadlier,  
And lo, one springe and you are fast in hell,  
Fast as the gin's grip of a wayfarer.

I think now, as the heavy hours decrease  
 One after one, and bitter thoughts increase  
 One upon one, of all sweet finished things;  
 The breaking of the battle; the long peace

Wherein we sat clothed softly, each man's hair  
 Crowned with green leaves beneath white hoods of vair;  
 The sounds of sharp spears at great tourneyings,  
 And noise of singing in the late sweet air.

I sang of love too, knowing nought thereof;  
 "Sweeter," I said, "the little laugh of love  
 Than tears out of the eyes of Magdalen,  
 Or any fallen feather of the Dove.

"The broken little laugh that spoils a kiss,  
 The ache of purple pulses, and the bliss  
 Of blinded eyelids that expand again—  
 Love draws them open with those lips of his,

"Lips that cling hard till the kissed face has grown  
 Of one same fire and colour with their own;  
 Then ere one sleep, appeased with sacrifice,  
 Where his lips wounded, there his lips atone."

I sang these things long since and knew them not;  
 "Lo, here is love, or there is love, God wot,  
 This man and that finds favour in his eyes,"  
 I said, "but I, what guerdon have I got?

"The dust of praise that is blown everywhere  
 In all men's faces with the common air;  
 The bayleaf that wants chafing to be sweet  
 Before they wind it in a singer's hair."

So that one dawn I rode forth sorrowing;  
 I had no hope but of some evil thing,  
 And so rode slowly past the windy wheat,  
 And past the vineyard and the waterspring,

Up to the Horsel. A great eldertree  
 Held back its heaps of flowers to let me see  
 The ripe tall grass, and one that walked therein,  
 Naked, with hair shed over to the knee,

She walked between the blossom and the grass;  
 I knew the beauty of her, what she was,  
     The beauty of her body and her sin,  
 And in my flesh the sin of hers, alas!

Alas! for sorrow is all the end of this.  
 O sad kissed mouth, how sorrowful it is!  
     O breast whereat some suckling sorrow clings,  
 Red with the bitter blossom of a kiss!

Ah, with blind lips I felt for you, and found  
 About my neck your hands and hair enwound,  
     The hands that stifle and the hair that stings,  
 I felt them fasten sharply without sound.

Yea, for my sin I had great store of bliss:  
 Rise up, make answer for me, let thy kiss  
     Seal my lips hard from speaking of my sin,  
 Lest one go mad to hear how sweet it is.

Yet I waxed faint with fume of barren bowers.  
 And murmuring of the heavyheaded hours;  
     And let the dove's beak fret and peck within  
 My lips in vain, and Love shed fruitless flowers.

So that God looked upon me when your hands  
 Were hot about me; yea, God brake my bands  
     To save my soul alive, and I came forth  
 Like a man blind and naked in strange lands

That hears men laugh and weep, and knows not whence  
 Nor wherefore, but is broken in his sense;  
     Howbeit I met folk riding from the north  
 Towards Rome, to purge them of their souls' offence,

And rode with them, and spake to none; the day  
 Stunned me like lights upon some wizard way,  
     And ate like fire mine eyes and mine eyesight;  
 So rode I, hearing all these chant and pray,

And marvelled; till before us rose and fell  
 White cursed hills, like outer skirts of hell  
     Seen where men's eyes look through the day to night,  
 Like a jagged shell's lips, harsh, untunable,

Blown in between by devils' wrangling breath;  
 Nathless we won well past that hell and death,  
 Down to the sweet land where all airs are good,  
 Even unto Rome where God's grace tarrieth.

Then came each man and worshipped at his knees  
 Who in the Lord God's likeness bears the keys  
 To bind or loose, and called on Christ's shed blood,  
 And so the sweetsouled father gave him ease.

But when I came I fell down at his feet,  
 Saying, "Father, though the Lord's blood be right sweet,  
 The spot it takes not off the panther's skin,  
 Nor shall an Ethiop's stain be bleached with it.

"Lo, I have sinned and have spat out at God,  
 Wherefore his hand is heavier and his rod  
 More sharp because of mine exceeding sin,  
 And all his raiment redder than bright blood

"Before mine eyes; yea, for my sake I wot  
 The heat of hell is waxen seven times hot  
 Through my great sin." Then spake he some sweet word,  
 Giving me cheer; which thing availed me not;

Yea, scarce I wist if such indeed were said;  
 For when I ceased—lo, as one newly dead  
 Who hears a great cry out of hell, I heard  
 The crying of his voice across my head.

"Until this dry shred staff, that hath no whit  
 Of leaf nor bark, bear blossom and smell sweet,  
 Seek thou not any mercy in God's sight,  
 For so long shalt thou be cast out from it."

Yea, what if driedup stems wax red and green,  
 Shall that thing be which is not nor has been?  
 Yea, what if sapless bark wax green and white,  
 Shall any good fruit grow upon my sin?

Nay, though sweet fruit were plucked of a dry tree,  
 And though men drew sweet waters of the sea,  
 There should not grow sweet leaves on this dead stem,  
 This waste wan body and shaken soul of me.

Yea, though God search it warily enough,  
 There is not one sound thing in all thereof;  
 Though he search all my veins through, searching them  
 He shall find nothing whole therein but love.

For I came home right heavy, with small cheer,  
 And lo my love, mine own souFs heart, more dear  
 Than mine own soul, more beautiful than God,  
 Who hath my being between the hands of her—

Fair still, but fair for no man saving me,  
 As when she came out of the naked sea  
 Making the foam as fire whereon she trod,  
 And as the inner flower of fire was she.

Yea, she laid hold upon me, and her mouth  
 Clove unto mine as soul to body doth,  
 And, laughing, made her lips luxurious;  
 Her hair had smells of all the sunburnt south,

Strange spice and flower, strange savour of crushed fruit,  
 And perfume the swart kings tread underfoot  
 For pleasure when their minds wax amorous,  
 Charred frankincense and grated sandalroot.

And I forgot fear and all weary things,  
 All ended prayers and perished thanksgivings,  
 Feeling her face with all her eager hair  
 Cleave to me, clinging as a fire that clings

To the body and to the raiment, burning them;  
 As after death I know that suchlike flame  
 Shall cleave to me for ever; yea, what care,  
 Albeit I burn then, having felt the same?

Ah love, there is no better life than this;  
 To have known love, how bitter a thing it is,  
 And afterward be cast out of God's sight;  
 Yea, these that know not, shall they have such bliss

High up in barren heaven before his face  
 As we twain in the heavyhearted place,  
 Remembering love and all the dead delight,  
 And all that time was sweet with for a space?

For till the thunder in the trumpet be,  
Soul may divide from body, but not we  
    One from another; I hold thee with my hand,  
I let mine eyes have all their will of thee,

I seal myself upon thee with my might,  
Abiding alway out of all men's sight  
    Until God loosen over sea and land  
The thunder of the trumpets of the night.

EXPLICIT LAUS VENERIS

*FAUSTINE*

*Ave Faustina Imperatrix, morturi te salutant*

LEAN back, and get some minutes' peace;  
Let your head lean  
Back to the shoulder with its fleece  
Of locks, Faustine.

The shapely silver shoulder stoops,  
Weighed over clean  
With state of splendid hair that droops  
Each side, Faustine.

Let me go over your good gifts  
That crown you queen;  
A queen whose kingdom ebbs and shifts  
Each week, Faustine.

Bright heavy brows well gathered up:  
White gloss and sheen;  
Carved lips that make my lips a cup  
To drink, Faustine,

Wine and rank poison, milk and blood,  
Being mixed therein  
Since first the devil threw dice with God  
For you, Faustine.

Your naked newborn soul, their stake,  
Stood blind between;  
God said "let him that wins her take  
And keep Faustine."

But this time Satan throve, no doubt;  
Long since, I ween,  
God's part in you was battered out;  
Long since, Faustine.

The die rang sideways as it fell,  
Rang cracked and thin,  
Like a man's laughter heard in hell  
Far down, Faustine,

A shadow of laughter like a sigh,  
Dead sorrow's kin;  
So rang, thrown down, the devil's die  
That won Faustine.

A suckling of his breed you were,  
One hard to wean;  
But God, who lost you, left you fair  
We see, Faustine.

You have the face that suits a woman  
For her soul's screen—  
The sort of beauty that's called human  
In hell, Faustine.

You could do all things but be good  
Or chaste of mien;  
And that you would not if you could,  
We know, Faustine.

Even he who cast seven devils out  
Of Magdalene  
Could hardly do as much, I doubt,  
For you, Faustine.

Did Satan make you to spite God?  
Or did God mean  
To scourge with scorpions for a rod  
Our sins, Faustine?

I know what queen at first you were,  
As though I had seen  
Red gold and black imperious hair  
Twice crown Faustine.

As if your fed sarcophagus  
Spared flesh and skin,  
You come back face to face with us,  
The same Faustine.

She loved the games men played with death,  
Where death must win;  
As though the slain man's blood and breath  
Revived Faustine.

Nets caught the pike, pikes tore the net;  
Lithe limbs and lean  
From drainedout pores dripped thick red sweat  
To soothe Faustine.

She drank the steaming drift and dust  
Blown off the scene;  
Blood could not ease the bitter lust  
That galled Faustine.

All round the foul fat furrows reeked,  
Where blood sank in;  
The circus splashed and seethed and shrieked  
All round Faustine.

But these are gone now: years entomb  
The dust and din;  
Yea, even the bath's fierce reek and fume  
That slew Faustine.

Was life worth living then? and now  
Is life worth sin?  
Where are the imperial years? and how  
Are you, Faustine?

Your soul forgot her joys, forgot  
Her times of teen;  
Yea, this life likewise will you not  
Forget, Faustine?

For in the time we know not of  
Did fate begin  
Weaving the web of days that wove  
Your doom, Faustine.

The threads were wet with wine, and all  
Were smooth to spin;  
They wove you like a Bacchanal,  
The first Faustine.

And Bacchus cast your mates and you  
Wild grapes to glean;  
Your flowerlike lips were dashed with dew  
From his, Faustine.

Your drenched loose hands were stretched to hold  
The vine's wet green,  
Long ere they coined in Roman gold  
Your face, Faustine.

Then after change of soaring feather  
And winnowing fin,  
You woke in weeks of feverish weather,  
A new Faustine.

A star upon your birthday burned,  
Whose fierce serene  
Red pulseless planet never yearned  
In heaven, Faustine.

Stray breaths of Sapphic song that blew  
Through Mitylene  
Shook the fierce quivering blood in you  
By night, Faustine.

The shameless nameless love that makes  
Hell's iron gin  
Shut on you like a trap that breaks  
The soul, Faustine.

And when your veins were void and dead,  
What ghosts unclean  
Swarmed round the straitened barren bed  
That hid Faustine?

What sterile growths of sexless root  
Or epicene?  
What flower of kisses without fruit  
Of love, Faustine?

What adders came to shed their coats?  
What coiled obscene  
Small serpents with soft stretching throats  
Caressed Faustine?

But the time came of famished hours,  
Maimed loves and mean,  
This ghastly thinfaced time of ours,  
To spoil Faustine.

You seem a thing that hinges hold,  
A lovmachine  
With clockwork joints of supple gold—  
No more, Faustine.

Not godless, for you serve one God,  
The Lampsacene,  
Who metes the gardens with his rod;  
Your lord, Faustine.

If one should love you with real love  
(Such things have been,  
Things your fair face knows nothing of,  
It seems, Faustine);

That clear hair heavily bound back,  
The lights wherein  
Shift from dead blue to burntup black;  
Your throat, Faustine,

Strong, heavy, throwing out the face  
And hard bright chin  
And shameful scornful lips that grace  
Their shame, Faustine,

Curled lips, long since half kissed away,  
Still sweet and keen;  
You'd give him—poison shall we say?  
Or what, Faustine?

## THE TRIUMPH OF TIME

BEFORE our lives divide for ever,  
While time is with us and hands are free  
(Time, swift to fasten and swift to sever  
Hand from hand, as we stand by the sea),  
I will say no word that a man might say  
Whose whole life's love goes down in a day;  
For this could never have been; and never,  
Though the gods and the years relent, shall be.

Is it worth a tear, is it worth an hour,  
To think of things that are well outworn?  
Of fruitless husk and fugitive flower,  
The dream foregone and the deed forborne?  
Though joy be done with and grief be vain,  
Time shall not sever us wholly in twain;  
Earth is not spoil for a single shower;  
But the rain has ruined the ungrown corn.

It will grow not again, this fruit of my heart,  
Smitten with sunbeams, ruined with rain.  
The singing seasons divide and depart,  
Winter and summer depart in twain.  
It will grow not again, it is ruined at root,  
The bloodlike blossom, the dull red fruit;  
Though the heart yet sickens, the lips yet smart,  
With sullen savour of poisonous pain.

I have given no man of my fruit to eat;  
I trod the grapes, I have drunken the wine.  
Had you eaten and drunken and found it sweet,  
This wild new growth of the corn and vine,  
This wine and bread without lees or leaven,  
We had grown as gods, as the gods in heaven,  
Souls fair to look upon, goodly to greet,  
One splendid spirit, your soul and mine.

In the change of years, in the coil of things,  
In the clamour and rumour of life to be,  
We, drinking love at the furthest springs,  
Covered with love as a covering tree,

We had grown as gods, as the gods above,  
 Filled from the heart to the lips with love,  
 Held fast in his hands, clothed warm with his wings,  
 O love, my love, had you loved but mel

We had stood as the sure stars stand, and moved  
 As the moon moves, loving the world; and seen  
 Grief collapse as a thing disproved,  
 Death consume as a thing unclean.  
 Twain halves of a perfect heart, made fast  
 Soul to soul while the years fell past;  
 Had you loved me once, as you have not loved;  
 Had the chance been with us that has not been.

I have put my days and dreams out of mind,  
 Days that are over, dreams that are done.  
 Though we seek life through, we shall surely find  
 There is none of them clear to us now, not one.  
 But clear are these things; the grass and the sand,  
 Where, sure as the eyes reach, ever at hand,  
 With lips wide open and face burnt blind,  
 The strong seadaisies feast on the sun.

The low downs lean to the sea; the stream,  
 One loose thin pulseless tremulous vein,  
 Rapid and vivid and dumb as a dream,  
 Works downward, sick of the sun and the rain;  
 No wind is rough with the rank rare flowers;  
 The sweet sea, mother of loves and hours,  
 Shudders and shines as the grey winds gleam,  
 Turning her smile to a fugitive pain.

Mother of loves that are swift to fade,  
 Mother of mutable winds and hours.  
 A barren mother, a mothermaid,  
 Cold and clean as her faint salt flowers.  
 I would we twain were even as she,  
 Lost in the night and the light of the sea,  
 Where faint sounds falter and wan beams wade,  
 Break, and are broken, and shed into showers.

The loves and hours of the life of a man,  
 They are swift and sad, being born of the sea,

Hours that rejoice and regret for a span,  
 Born with a man's breath, mortal as he;  
 Loves that are lost ere they come to birth,  
 Weeds of the wave, without fruit upon earth.  
 I lose what I long for, save what I can,  
 My love, my love, and no love for me!

It is not much that a man can save  
 On the sands of life, in the straits of time,  
 Who swims in sight of the great third wave  
 That never a swimmer shall cross or climb.  
 Some waif washed up with the strays and spars  
 That ebbtide shows to the shore and the stars;  
 Weed from the water, grass from a grave,  
 A broken blossom, a ruined rhyme.

There will no man do for your sake, I think,  
 What I would have done for the least word said.  
 I had wrung life dry for your lips to drink,  
 Broken it up for your daily bread:  
 Body for body and blood for blood,  
 As the flow of the full sea risen to flood  
 That yearns and trembles before it sink,  
 I had given, and lain down for you, glad and dead.

Yea, hope at highest and all her fruit,  
 And time at fullest and all his dower,  
 I had given you surely, and life to boot,  
 Were we once made one for a single hour.  
 But now, you are twain, you are cloven apart,  
 Flesh of his flesh, but heart of my heart;  
 And deep in one is the bitter root,  
 And sweet for one is the lifelong flower.

To have died if you cared I should die for you, clung  
 To my life if you bade me, played my part  
 As it pleased you—these were the thoughts that stung,  
 The dreams that smote with a keener dart  
 Than shafts of love or arrows of death;  
 These were but as fire is, dust, or breath,  
 Or poisonous foam on the tender tongue  
 Of the little snakes that eat my heart.

I wish we were dead together today,  
Lost sight of, hidden away out of sight,  
Clasped and clothed in the cloven clay,  
Out of the world's way, out of the light,  
Out of the ages of worldly weather,  
Forgotten of all men altogether,  
As the world's first dead, taken wholly away,  
Made one with death, filled full of the night.

How we should slumber, how we should sleep,  
Far in the dark with the dreams and the dews!  
And dreaming, grow to each other, and weep,  
Laugh low, live softly, murmur and muse;  
Yea, and it may be, struck through by the dream,  
Feel the dust quicken and quiver, and seem  
Alive as of old to the lips, and leap  
Spirit to spirit as lovers use.

Sick dreams and sad of a dull delight;  
For what shall it profit when men are dead  
To have dreamed, to have loved with the whole soul's might,  
To have looked for day when the day was fled?  
Let come what will, there is one thing worth,  
To have had fair love in the life upon earth:  
To have held love safe till the day grew night,  
While skies had colour and lips were red.

Would I lose you now? would I take you then,  
If I lose you now that my heart has need?  
And come what may after death to men,  
What thing worth this will the dead years breed?  
Lose life, lose all; but at least I know,  
O sweet life's love, having loved you so,  
Had I reached you on earth, I should not lose again,  
In death nor life, nor in dream or deed.

Yea, I know this well: were you once sealed mine,  
Mine in the blood's beat, mine in the breath,  
Mixed into me as honey in wine,  
Not time, that sayeth and gainsayeth,  
Nor all strong things had severed us then;  
Not wrath of gods, nor wisdom of men,

Nor all things earthly, nor all divine,  
 Nor joy nor sorrow, nor life nor death.

I had grown pure as the dawn and the dew,  
 You had grown strong as the sun or the sea,  
 But none shall triumph a whole life through:  
 For death is one, and the fates are three.  
 At the door of life, by the gate of breath,  
 There are worse things waiting for men than death;  
 Death could not sever my soul and you,  
 As these have severed your soul from me.

You have chosen and clung to the chance they sent you,  
 Life sweet as perfume and pure as prayer.  
 But will it not one day in heaven repent you?  
 Will they solace you wholly, the days that were?  
 Will you lift up your eyes between sadness and bliss,  
 Meet mine, and see where the great love is,  
 And tremble and turn and be changed? Content you;  
 The gate is strait; I shall not be there.

But you, had you chosen, had you stretched hand,  
 Had you seen good such a thing were done,  
 I too might have stood with the souls that stand  
 In the sun's sight, clothed with the light of the sun;  
 But who now on earth need care how I live?  
 Have the high gods anything left to give,  
 Save dust and laurels and gold and sand?  
 Which gifts are goodly; but I will none.

O all fair lovers about the world,  
 There is none of you, none, that shall comfort me.  
 My thoughts are as dead things, wrecked and whirled  
 Round and round in a gulf of the sea;  
 And still, through the sound and the straining stream,  
 Through the coil and chafe, they gleam in a dream,  
 The bright fine lips so cruelly curled,  
 And strange swift eyes where the soul sits free.

Free, without pity, withheld from woe,  
 Ignorant; fair as the eyes are fair.  
 Would I have you change now, change at a blow,  
 Startled and stricken, awake and aware?

Yea, if I could, would I have you see  
My very love of you filling me,  
And know my soul to the quick, as I know  
    The likeness and look of your throat and hair?

I shall not change you. Nay, though I might,  
    Would I change my sweet one love with a word?  
I had rather your hair should change in a night,  
    Clear now as the plume of a black bright bird;  
Your face fail suddenly, cease, turn grey,  
Die as a leaf that dies in a day.  
I will keep my soul in a place out of sight,  
    Far off, where the pulse of it is not heard.

Far off it walks, in a bleak blown space,  
    Full of the sound of the sorrow of years.  
I have woven a veil for the weeping face,  
    Whose lips have drunken the wine of tears;  
I have found a way for the failing feet,  
A place for slumber and sorrow to meet;  
There is no rumour about the place,  
    Nor light, nor any that sees or hears.

I have hidden my soul out of sight, and said  
    "Let none take pity upon thee, none  
Comfort thy crying: for lo, thou art dead,  
    Lie still now, safe out of sight of the sun.  
Have I not built thee a grave, and wrought  
Thy graveclothes on thee of grievous thought,  
With soft spun verses and tears unshed,  
    And sweet light visions of things undone?"

"I have given thee garments and balm and myrrh,  
    And gold, and beautiful burial things.  
But thou, be at peace now, make no stir;  
    Is not thy grave as a royal king's?  
Fret not thyself though the end were sore;  
Sleep, be patient, vex me no more.  
Sleep; what hast thou to do with her?  
    The eyes that weep, with the mouth that sings?"

Where the dead red leaves of the years lie rotten,  
    The cold old crimes and the deeds thrown by,

The misconceived and the misbegotten,  
 I would find a sin to do ere I die,  
 Sure to dissolve and destroy me all through,  
 That would set you higher in heaven, serve you  
 And leave you happy, when clean forgotten,  
 As a dead man out of mind, am I.

Your lithe hands draw me, your face burns through me,  
 I am swift to follow you, keen to see;  
 But love lacks might to redeem or undo me;  
 As I have been, I know I shall surely be;  
 "What should such fellows as I do?" Nay,  
 My part were worse if I chose to play;  
 For the worst is this after all; if they knew me,  
 Not a soul upon earth would pity me.

And I play not for pity of these; but you,  
 If you saw with your soul what man am I,  
 You would praise me at least that my soul all through  
 Clove to you, loathing the lives that lie;  
 The souls and lips that are bought and sold,  
 The smiles of silver and kisses of gold,  
 The lapdog loves that whine as they chew,  
 The little lovers that curse and cry.

There are fairer women, I hear; that may be;  
 But I, that I love you and find you fair,  
 Who are more than fair in my eyes if they be,  
 Do the high gods know or the great gods care?  
 Though the swords in my heart for one were seven,  
 Would the iron hollow of doubtful heaven,  
 That knows not itself whether nighttime or day be,  
 Reverberate words and a foolish prayer?

I will go back to the great sweet mother,  
 Mother and lover of men, the sea.  
 I will go down to her, I and none other,  
 Close with her, kiss her and mix her with me;  
 Cling to her, strive with her, hold her fast:  
 O fair white mother, in days long past  
 Born without sister, born without brother,  
 Set free my soul as thy soul is free.

O fair greengirdled mother of mine,  
 Sea, that art clothed with the sun and the rain,  
 Thy sweet hard kisses are strong like wine,  
 Thy large embraces are keen like pain.  
 Save me and hide me with all thy waves,  
 Find me one grave of thy thousand graves,  
 Those pure cold populous graves of thine  
 Wrought without hand in a world without stain.

I shall sleep, and move with the moving ships,  
 Change as the winds change, veer in the tide;  
 My lips will feast on the foam of thy lips,  
 I shall rise with thy rising, with thee subside;  
 Sleep, and not know if she be, if she were,  
 Filled full with life to the eyes and hair,  
 As a rose is fulfilled to the roseleaf tips  
 With splendid summer and perfume and pride.

This woven raiment of nights and days,  
 Were it once cast *off* and unwound from me,  
 Naked and glad would I walk in thy ways,  
 Alive and aware of thy ways and thee;  
 Clear of the whole world, hidden at home,  
 Clothed with the green and crowned with the foam,  
 A pulse of the life of thy straits and bays,  
 A vein in the heart of the streams of the sea.

Fair mother, fed with the lives of men,  
 Thou art subtle and cruel of heart, men say.  
 Thou hast taken, and shalt not render again;  
 Thou art full of thy dead, and cold as they.  
 But death is the worst that comes of thee;  
 Thou art fed with our dead, O mother, O sea,  
 But when hast thou fed on our hearts? or when,  
 Having given us love, hast thou taken away?

O tenderhearted, O perfect lover,  
 Thy lips are bitter, and sweet thine heart.  
 The hopes that hurt and the dreams that hover,  
 Shall they not vanish away and apart?  
 But thou, thou art sure, thou art older than earth;  
 Thou art strong for death and fruitful of birth;

Thy depths conceal and thy gulfs discover;  
 From the first thou wert; in the end thou art.

And grief shall endure not for ever, I know.  
 As things that are not shall these things be;  
 We shall live through seasons of sun and of snow,  
 And none be grievous as this to me.  
 We shall hear, as one in a trance that hears,  
 The sound of time, the rhyme of the years;  
 Wrecked hope and passionate pain will grow  
 As tender things of a springtide sea.

Seafruit that swings in the waves that hiss,  
 Drowned gold and purple and royal rings.  
 And all time past, was it all for this?  
 Times unforgotten, and treasures of things?  
 Swift years of liking and sweet long laughter,  
 That wist not well of the years thereafter  
 Till love woke, smitten at heart by a kiss,  
 With lips that trembled and trailing wings?

There lived a singer in France of old  
 By the tideless dolorous midland sea.  
 In a land of sand and ruin and gold  
 There shone one woman, and none but she.  
 And finding life for her love's sake fail,  
 Being fain to see her, he bade set sail,  
 Touched land, and saw her as life grew cold,  
 And praised God, seeing; and so died he.

Died, praising God for his gift and grace:  
 For she bowed down to him weeping, and said  
 "Live"; and her tears were shed on his face  
 Or ever the life in his face was shed.  
 The sharp tears fell through her hair, and stung  
 Once, and her close lips touched him and clung  
 Once, and grew one with his lips for a space;  
 And so drew back, and the man was dead.

O brother, the gods were good to you.  
 Sleep, and be glad while the world endures.  
 Be well content as the years wear through;  
 Give thanks for life, and the loves and lures;

Give thanks for life, O brother, and death,  
 For the sweet last sound of her feet, her breath,  
 For gifts she gave you, gracious and few,  
 Tears and kisses, that lady of yours.

Rest, and be glad of the gods; but I,  
 How shall I praise them, or how take rest?  
 There is not room under all the sky  
 For me that know not of worst or best,  
 Dream or desire of the days before,  
 Sweet things or bitterness, any more.  
 Love will not come to me now though I die,  
 As love came close to you, breast to breast.

I shall never be friends again with roses;  
 I shall loathe sweet tunes, where a note grown strong  
 Relents and recoils, and climbs and closes,  
 As a wave of the sea turned back by song.  
 There are sounds where the soul's delight takes fire,  
 Face to face with its own desire;  
 A delight that rebels, a desire that reposes;  
 I shall hate sweet music my whole life long.

The pulse of war and passion of wonder,  
 The heavens that murmur, the sounds that shine,  
 The stars that sing and the loves that thunder,  
 The music burning at heart like wine,  
 An armed archangel whose hands raise up  
 All senses mixed in the spirit's cup  
 Till flesh and spirit are molten in sunder—  
 These things are over, and no more mine.

These were a part of the playing I heard  
 Once, ere my love and my heart were at strife;  
 Love that sings and hath wings as a bird,  
 Balm of the wound and heft of the knife.  
 Fairer than earth is the sea, and sleep  
 Than overwatching of eyes that weep,  
 Now time has done with his one sweet word,  
 The wine and leaven of lovely life.

I shall go my ways, tread out my measure,  
 Fill the days of my daily breath

With fugitive things not good to treasure,  
Do as the world doth, say as it saith;  
But if we had loved each other—O sweet,  
Had you felt, lying under the palms of your feet,  
The heart of my heart, beating harder with pleasure  
To feel you tread it to dust and death—

Ah, had I not taken my life up and given  
All that life gives and the years let go,  
The wine and honey, the balm and leaven,  
The dreams reared high and the hopes brought low?  
Come life, come death, not a word be said;  
Should I lose you living, and vex you dead?  
I never shall tell you on earth; and in heaven,  
If I cry to you then, will you hear or know?

## ANACTORIA

---

τίνοι αἶ τὸ πειθαῖ  
μὰψ σαγγηεύσαις φιλόταται;  
SAPPHO

---

MY life is bitter with thy love; thine eyes  
Blind me, thy tresses burn me, thy sharp sighs  
Divide my flesh and spirit with soft sound,  
And my blood strengthens, and my veins abound.  
I pray thee sigh not, speak not, draw not breath;  
Let life burn down, and dream it is not death.  
I would the sea had hidden us, the fire  
(Wilt thou fear that, and fear not my desire?)  
Severed the bones that bleach, the flesh that cleaves,  
And let our sifted ashes drop like leaves.  
I feel thy blood against my blood: my pain  
Pains thee, and lips bruise lips, and vein stings vein.  
Let fruit be crushed on fruit, let flower on flower,  
Breast kindle breast, and either burn one hour.  
Why wilt thou follow lesser loves? are thine  
Too weak to bear these hands and lips of mine?  
I charge thee for my life's sake, O too sweet  
To crush love with thy cruel faultless feet,  
I charge thee keep thy lips from hers or his,  
Sweetest, till theirs be sweeter than my kiss:  
Lest I too lure, a swallow for a dove,  
Eroton or Erinna to my love.  
I would my love could kill thee; I am satiated  
With seeing thee live, and fain would have thee dead.  
I would earth had thy body as fruit to eat,  
And no mouth but some serpent's found thee sweet.  
I would find grievous ways to have thee slain,  
Intense device, and superflux of pain;  
Vex thee with amorous agonies, and shake  
Life at thy lips, and leave it there to ache;  
Strain out thy soul with pangs too soft to kill,  
Intolerable interludes, and infinite ill;  
Relapse and relucration of the breath,

Dumb tunes and shuddering semitones of death.  
I am weary of all thy words and soft strange ways,  
Of all love's fiery nights and all his days,  
And all the broken kisses salt as brine  
That shuddering lips make moist with waterish wine,  
And eyes the bluer for all those hidden hours  
That pleasure fills with tears and feeds from flowers,  
Fierce at the heart with fire that half comes through,  
But all the flowerlike white stained round with blue;  
The fervent underlid, and that above  
Lifted with laughter or abashed with love;  
Thine amorous girdle, full of thee and fair,  
And leavings of the lilies in thine hair.  
Yea, all sweet words of thine and all thy ways,  
And all the fruit of nights and flower of days,  
And stinging lips wherein the hot sweet brine  
That Love was born of burns and foams like wine,  
And eyes insatiable of amorous hours,  
Fervent as fire and delicate as flowers,  
Coloured like night at heart, but cloven through  
Like night with flame, dyed round like night with blue,  
Clothed with deep eyelids under and above—  
Yea, all thy beauty sickens me with love;  
Thy girdle empty of thee and now not fair,  
And ruinous lilies in thy languid hair.  
Ah, take no thought for Love's sake; shall this be,  
And she who loves thy lover not love thee?  
Sweet soul, sweet mouth of all that laughs and lives,  
Mine is she, very mine; and she forgives.  
For I beheld in sleep the light that is  
In her high place in Paphos, heard the kiss  
Of body and soul that mix with eager tears  
And laughter stinging through the eyes and ears;  
Saw Love, as burning flame from crown to feet,  
Imperishable, upon her storied seat;  
Clear eyelids lifted toward the north and south,  
A mind of many colours, and a mouth  
Of many tunes and kisses; and she bowed,  
With all her subtle face laughing aloud,  
Bowed down upon me, saying, "Who doth thee wrong,  
Sappho?" but thou—thy body is the song,  
Thy mouth the music; thou art more than I,  
Though my voice die not till the whole world die;

Though men that hear it madden; though love weep,  
Though nature change, though shame be charmed to sleep.  
Ah, wilt thou slay me lest I kiss thee dead?  
Yet the queen laughed from her sweet heart and said:  
"Even she that flies shall follow for thy sake,  
And she shall give thee gifts that would not take,  
Shall kiss that would not kiss thee" (yea, kiss me)  
"When thou wouldst not"—when I would not kiss thee!  
Ah, more to me than all men as thou art,  
Shall not my songs assuage her at the heart?  
Ah, sweet to me as life seems sweet to death,  
Why should her wrath fill thee with fearful breath?  
Nay, sweet, for is she God alone? hath she  
Made earth and all the centuries of the sea,  
Taught the sun ways to travel, woven most fine  
The moonbeams, shed the starbeams forth as wine,  
Bound with her myrtles, beaten with her rods,  
The young men and the maidens and the gods?  
Have we not lips to love with, eyes for tears,  
And summer and flower of women and of years?  
Stars for the foot of morning, and for noon  
Sunlight, and exaltation of the moon;  
Waters that answers waters, fields that wear  
Lilies, and languor of the Lesbian air?  
Beyond those flying feet of fluttered doves,  
Are there not other gods for other loves?  
Yea, though she scourge thee, sweetest, for my sake,  
Blossom not thorns and flowers not blood should break.  
Ah that my lips were tuneless lips, but pressed  
To the bruised blossom of thy scourged white breast!  
Ah that my mouth for Muses' milk were fed  
On the sweet blood thy sweet small wounds had bled!  
That with my tongue I felt them, and could taste  
The faint flakes from thy bosom to the waist!  
That I could drink thy veins as wine, and eat  
Thy breasts like honey! that from face to feet  
Thy body were abolished and consumed,  
And in my flesh thy very flesh entombed!  
Ah, ah, thy beauty! like a beast it bites,  
Stings like an adder, like an arrow smites.  
Ah sweet, and sweet again, and seven times sweet,  
The paces and the pauses of thy feet!  
Ah sweeter than all sleep or summer air

The fallen fillets fragrant from thine hair!  
 Yea, though their alien kisses do me wrong,  
 Sweeter thy lips than mine with all their song;  
 Thy shoulders whiter than a fleece of white,  
 And flowersweet fingers, good to bruise or bite  
 As honeycomb of the inmost honeycells,  
 With almondshaped and roseleafcoloured shells,  
 And blood like purple blossom at the tips  
 Quivering; and pain made perfect in thy lips  
 For my sake when I hurt thee; O that I  
 Durst crush thee out of life with love, and die,  
 Die of thy pain and my delight, and be  
 Mixed with thy blood and molten into thee!  
 Would I not plague thee dying overmuch?  
 Would I not hurt thee perfectly? not touch  
 Thy pores of sense with torture, and make bright,  
 Thine eyes with bloodlike tears and grievous light?  
 Strike pang from pang as note is struck from note,  
 Catch the sob's middle music in thy throat,  
 Take thy limbs living, and newmould with these  
 A lyre of many faultless agonies?  
 Feed thee with fever and famine and fine drouth,  
 With perfect pangs convulse thy perfect mouth,  
 Make thy life shudder in thee and burn afresh,  
 And wring thy very spirit through the flesh?  
 Cruel? but love makes all that love him well  
 As wise as heaven and crueller than hell.  
 Me hath love made more bitter toward thee  
 Than death toward man; but were I made as he  
 Who hath made all things to break them one by one,  
 If my feet trod upon the stars and sun  
 And souls of men as his have always trod,  
 God knows I might be crueller than God.  
 For who shall change with prayers or thanksgivings  
 The mystery of the cruelty of things?  
 Or say what God above all gods and years  
 With offering and bloodsacrifice of tears,  
 With lamentation from strange lands, from graves  
 Where the snake pastures, from scarred mouths of slaves,  
 From prison, and from plunging prows of ships  
 Through flamelike foam of the sea's closing lips—  
 With thwartings of strange signs, and windblown hair  
 Of comets, desolating the dim air,

When darkness is made fast with seals and bars,  
And fierce reluctance of disastrous stars,  
Eclipse, and sound of shaken hills, and wings  
Darkening, and blind inexpiable things—  
With sorrow of labouring moons, and altering light  
And travail of the planets of the night,  
And weeping of the weary Pleiads seven,  
Feeds the mute melancholy lust of heaven?  
Is not his incense bitterness, his meat  
Murder? his hidden face and iron feet  
Hath not man known, and felt them on their way  
Threaten and trample all things and every day?  
Hath he not sent us hunger? who hath cursed  
Spirit and flesh with longing? filled with thirst  
Their lips who cried unto him? who bade exceed  
The fervid will, fall short the feeble deed,  
Bade sink the spirit and the flesh aspire,  
Pain animate the dust of dead desire,  
And life yield up her flower to violent fate?  
Him would I reach, him smite, him desecrate,  
Pierce the cold lips of God with human breath,  
And mix his immortality with death.  
Why hath he made us? what had all we done  
That we should live and loathe the sterile sun,  
And with the moon wax paler as she wanes,  
And pulse by pulse feel time grow through our veins?  
Thee too the years shall cover; thou shalt be  
As the rose born of one same blood with thee,  
As a song sung, as a word said, and fall  
Flowerwise, and be not any more at all,  
Nor any memory of thee anywhere;  
For never Muse has bound above thine hair  
The high Pierian flower whose graft outgrows  
All summer kinship of the mortal rose  
And colour of deciduous days, nor shed  
Reflex and flush of heaven about thine head,  
Nor reddened brows made pale by floral grief  
With splendid shadow from that lordlier leaf.  
Yea, thou shalt be forgotten like spilt wine,  
Except these kisses of my lips on thine  
Brand them with immortality; but me—  
Men shall not see bright fire nor hear the sea,  
Nor mix their hearts with music, nor behold

Cast forth of heaven, with feet of awful gold  
And plumeless wings that make the bright air blind,  
Lightning, with thunder for a hound behind  
Hunting through fields unfurrowed and unsown,  
But in the light and laughter, in the moan  
And music, and in grasp of lip and hand  
And shudder of water that makes felt on land  
The immeasurable tremor of all the sea,  
Memories shall mix and metaphors of me.  
Like me shall be the shuddering calm of night,  
When all the winds of the world for pure delight  
Close lips that quiver and fold up wings that ache;  
When nightingales are louder for love's sake,  
And leaves tremble like lutestrings or like fire;  
Like me the one star swooning with desire  
Even at the cold lips of the sleepless moon,  
As *I* at thine; like me the waste white noon,  
Burnt through with barren suolight; and like me  
The landstream and the tidestream in the sea.  
*I* am sick with time as these with ebb and flow,  
And by the yearning in my veins I know  
The yearning sound of waters; and mine eyes  
Burn as that beamless fire which fills the skies  
With troubled stars and travailing things of flame;  
And in my heart the grief consuming them  
Labours, and in my veins the thirst of these,  
And all the summer travail of the trees  
And all the winter sickness; and the earth,  
Filled full with deadly works of death and birth,  
Sore spent with hungry lusts of birth and death,  
Has pain like mine in her divided breath;  
Her spring of leaves is barren, and her fruit  
Ashes; her boughs are burdened, and her root  
Fibrous and gnarled with poison; underneath  
Serpents have gnawn it through with tortuous teeth  
Made sharp upon the bones of all the dead,  
And wild birds rend her branches overhead.  
These, woven as raiment for his word and thought,  
These hath God made, and me as these, and wrought  
Song, and hath lit it at my lips; and me  
Earth shall not gather though she feed on thee.  
As a shed tear shalt thou be shed; but I—  
Lo, earth may labour, men live long and die,

Years change and stars, and the high God devise  
 New things, and old things wane before his eyes  
 Who yields and wrecks them, being more strong than  
 they—

But, having made me, me he shall not slay.  
 Nor slay nor satiate, like those herds of his  
 Who laugh and live a little, and their kiss  
 Contents them, and their loves are swift and sweet,  
 And sure death grasps and gains them with slow feet,  
 Love they or hate they, strive or bow their knees—  
 And all these end; he hath his will of these.  
 Yea, but albeit he slay me, hating me—  
 Albeit he hide me in the deep dear sea  
 And cover me with cool wan foam, and ease  
 This soul of mine as any soul of these,  
 And give me water and great sweet waves, and make  
 The very sea's name lordlier for my sake,  
 The whole sea sweeter—albeit I die indeed  
 And hide myself and sleep and no man heed,  
 Of me the high God hath not all his will.  
 Blossom of branches, and on each high hill  
 Clear air and wind, and under in clamorous vales  
 Fierce noises of the fiery nightingales,  
 Buds burning in the sudden spring like fire,  
 The wan washed sand and the waves' vain desire,  
 Sails seen like blown white flowers at sea, and words  
 That bring tears swiftest, and long notes of birds  
 Violently singing till the whole world sings—  
 I Sappho shall be one with all these things,  
 With all high things for ever; and my face  
 Seen once, my songs once heard in a strange place,  
 Cleave to men's lives, and waste the days thereof  
 With gladness and much sadness and long love.  
 Yea, they shall say, earth's womb has borne in vain  
 New things, and never this best thing again;  
 Borne days and men, borne fruits and wars and wine,  
 Seasons and songs, but no song more like mine.  
 And they shall know me as ye who have known me here,  
 Last year when I loved Atthis, and this year  
 When I love thee; and they shall praise me, and say  
 "She hath all time as all we have our day,  
 Shall she not live and have her will"—even I?  
 Yea, though thou diest, I say I shall not die.

For these shall give me of their souls, shall give  
Life, and the days and loves wherewith I live,  
Shall quicken me with loving, fill with breath,  
Save me and serve me, strive for me with death.  
Alas, that neither moon nor snow nor dew  
Nor all cold things can purge me wholly through,  
Assuage me nor allay me nor appease,  
Till supreme sleep shall bring me bloodless ease;  
Till time wax faint in all his periods;  
Till fate undo the bondage of the gods,  
And lay, to slake and satiate me all through,  
Lotus and Lethe on my lips like dew,  
And shed around and over and under me  
Thick darkness and the insuperable sea.

## *DOLORES*

*(NotreDam des Sept Douleurs)*

COLD eyelids that hide like a jewel  
Hard eyes that grow soft for an hour;  
The heavy white limbs, and the cruel  
Red mouth like a venomous flower; '  
When these are gone by with their glories,'  
What shall rest of thee then, what remain,  
O mystic and sombre Dolores.,  
Our Lady of Pain? ,

Seven sorrows the priests give their Virgin;  
But thy sins, which are seventy times seven,  
Seven ages would fail thee to purge in,  
And then they would haunt thee in heaven:  
Fierce midnights and famishing morrows,  
And the loves that complete and control  
All the joys of the flesh, all the sorrows  
That wear out the soul.

O garment not golden but gilded,  
O garden where all men may dwell,  
O tower not of ivory, but builded  
By hands that reach heaven from hell;  
O mystical rose of the mire,  
O house not of gold but of gain,  
O house of unquenchable fire,  
Our Lady of Pain!

O lips full of lust and of laughter,  
Curled snakes that are fed from my breast  
Bite hard, lest remembrance come after  
And press with new lips where you pressed.  
For my heart too springs up at the pressure,  
Mine eyelids too moisten and burn;  
Ah, feed me and fill me with pleasure,  
Ere pain come in turn.

In yesterday's reach and tomorrow's,  
 Out of sight though they lie of today,  
 There have been and there yet shall be sorrows  
 That smite not and bite not in play.  
 The life and the love thou despisest,  
 These hurt us indeed, and in vain,  
 O wise among women, and wisest,  
 Our Lady of Pain.

Who gave thee thy wisdom? what stories  
 That stung thee, what visions that smote?  
 Wert thou pure and a maiden, Dolores,  
 When desire took thee first by the throat?  
 What bud was the shell of a blossom  
 That all men may smell to and pluck?  
 What milk fed thee first at what bosom?  
 What sins gave thee suck?

We shift and bedeck and bedrape us,  
 Thou art noble and nude and antique;  
 Libitina thy mother, Priapus  
 Thy father, a Tuscan and Greek.  
 We play with light loves in the portal,  
 And wince and relent and refrain;  
 Loves die, and we know thee immortal,  
 Our Lady of Pain.

Fruits fail and love dies and time ranges;  
 Thou art fed with perpetual breath,  
 And alive after infinite changes,  
 And fresh from the kisses of death;  
 Of languors rekindled and rallied,  
 Of barren delights and unclean,  
 Things monstrous and fruitless, a pallid  
 And poisonous queen.

Could you hurt me, sweet lips, though I hurt you?  
 Men touch them, and change in a trice  
 The lilies and languors of virtue  
 For the raptures and roses of vice;  
 Those lie where thy foot on the floor is,  
 These crown and caress thee and chain,  
 O splendid and sterile Dolores,  
 Our Lady of Pain.

There are sins it may be to discover,  
 There are deeds it may be to delight.  
 What new work wilt thou find for thy lover,  
 What new passions for daytime or night?  
 What spells that they know not a word of  
 Whose lives are as leaves overblown?  
 What tortures undreamt of, unheard of,  
 Unwritten, unknown?

Ah beautiful passionate body  
 That never has ached with a heart!  
 On thy mouth though the kisses are bloody,  
 Though they sting till it shudder and'smart,  
 More kind than the love we adore is,  
 They hurt not the heart or the brain,  
 O bitter and tender Dolores,  
 Our Lady of Pain.

As our kisses relax and redouble,  
 From the lips and the foam and the fangs  
 Shall no new sin be born for men's trouble,  
 No dream of impossible pangs?  
 With the sweet of the sins of old ages  
 Wilt thou satiate thy soul as of yore?  
 Too sweet is the rind, say the sages,  
 Too bitter the core.

Hast thou told all thy secrets the last time,  
 And bared all thy beauties to one?  
 Ah, where shall we go then for pastime,  
 If the worst that can be has been done?  
 But sweet as the rind was the core is;  
 We are fain of thee still, we are fain,  
 O sanguine and subtle Dolores,  
 Our Lady of Pain.

By the hunger of change and emotion,  
 By the thirst of unbearable things,  
 By despair, the twinborn of devotion,  
 By the pleasure that winces and stings,  
 The delight that consumes the desire,  
 The desire that outruns the delight,  
 By the cruelty deaf as a fire  
 And blind as the night,

By the ravenous teeth that have smitten  
 Through the kisses that blossom and bud,  
 By the lips intertwined and bitten  
 Till the foam has a savour of blood,  
 By the pulse as it rises and falters,  
 By the hands as they slacken and strain,  
 I adjure thee, respond from thine altars,  
 Our Lady of Pain.

Wilt thou smile as a woman disdain  
 The light fire in the veins of a boy?  
 But he comes to thee sad, without feigning,  
 Who has wearied of sorrow and joy;  
 Less careful of labour and glory  
 Than the elders whose hair has uncurled;  
 And young, but with fancies as hoary  
 And grey as the world.

I have passed from the outermost portal  
 To the shrine where a sin is a prayer;  
 What care though the service be mortal?  
 O our Lady of Torture, what care?  
 All thine the last wine that I pour is,  
 The last in the chalice we drain,  
 O fierce and luxurious Dolores,  
 Our Lady of Pain.

All thine the new wine of desire,  
 The fruit of four lips as they clung  
 Till the hair and the eyelids took fire,  
 The foam of a serpentine tongue,  
 The froth of the serpents of pleasure,  
 More salt than the foam of the sea,  
 Now felt as a flame, now at leisure  
 As wine shed for me.

Ah thy people, thy children, thy chosen,  
 Marked cross from the womb and perverse!  
 They have found out the secret to cozen  
 The gods that constrain us and curse;  
 They alone, they are wise, and none other;  
 Give me place, even me, in their train,  
 O my sister, my spouse, and my mother,  
 Our Lady of Pain.

For the crown of our life as it closes  
 Is darkness, the fruit thereof dust;  
 No thorns go as deep as a rose's,  
 And love is more cruel than lust.  
 Time turns the old days to derision,  
 Our loves into corpses or wives;  
 And marriage and death and division  
 Make barren our lives.

And pale from the past we draw nigh thee,  
 And satiate with comfortless hours;  
 And we know thee, how all men belie thee,  
 And we gather the fruit of thy flowers;  
 The passion that slays and recovers,  
 The pangs and the kisses that rain  
 On the lips and the limbs of thy lovers,  
 Our Lady of Pain.

The desire of thy furious embraces  
 Is more than the wisdom of years,  
 On the blossom though blood lie in traces,  
 Though the foliage be sodden with tears.  
 For the lords in whose keeping the door is  
 That opens on all who draw breath  
 Gave the cypress to love, my Dolores,  
 The myrtle to death.

And they laughed, changing hands in the measure,  
 And they mixed and made peace after strife;  
 Pain melted in tears, and was pleasure;  
 Death tingled with blood, and was life.  
 Like lovers they melted and tingled,  
 In the dusk of thine innermost fane;  
 In the darkness they murmured and mingled,  
 Our Lady of Pain.

In a twilight where virtues are vices,  
 In thy chapels, unknown of the sun,  
 To a tune that enthralls and entices,  
 They were wed, and the twain were as one.  
 For the tune from thine altar hath sounded  
 Since God bade the world's work begin,  
 And the fume of thine incense abounded,  
 To sweeten the sin.

Love listens, and paler than ashes,  
 Through his curls as the crown on them slips,  
 Lifts languid wet eyelids and lashes,  
 And laughs with insatiable lips.  
 Thou shalt hush him with heavy caresses,  
 With music that scares the profane;  
 Thou shalt darken his eyes with thy tresses,  
 Our Lady of Pain.

Thou shalt blind his bright eyes though he wrestle,  
 Thou shalt chain his light limbs though he strive;  
 In his lips all thy serpents shall nestle,  
 In his hands all thy cruelties thrive.  
 In the daytime thy voice shall go through him,  
 In his dreams he shall feel thee and ache;  
 Thou shalt kindle by night and subdue him  
 Asleep and awake.

Thou shalt touch and made redder his roses  
 With juice not of fruit nor of bud;  
 When the sense in the spirit reposes,  
 Thou shalt quicken the soul through the blood.  
 Thine, thine the one grace we implore is,  
 Who would live and not languish or feign,  
 O sleepless and deadly Dolores,  
 Our Lady of Pain.

Dost thou dream, in a respite of slumber,  
 In a lull of the fires of thy life,  
 Of the days without name, without number,  
 When thy will stung the world into strife;  
 When, a goddess, the pulse of thy passion  
 Smote kings as they revelled in Rome;  
 And they hailed thee rerisen, O Thalassian,  
 Foamwhite, from the foam?

When thy lips had such lovers to flatter;  
 When the city lay red from thy rods,  
 And thine hands were as arrows to scatter  
 The children of change and their gods;  
 When the blood of thy foemen made fervent  
 A sand never moist from the main,  
 As one smote them, their lord and thy servant,  
 Our Lady of Pain.

On sands by the storm never shaken,  
Nor wet from the washing of tides;  
Nor by foam of the waves overtaken,  
Nor winds that the thunder bestrides;  
But red from the print of thy paces,  
Made smooth for the world and its lords,  
Ringed round with a flame of fair faces,  
And splendid with swords.

There the gladiator, pale for thy pleasure,  
Drew bitter and perilous breath;  
There torments laid hold on the treasure  
Of limbs too delicious for death;  
When thy gardens were lit with live torches;  
When the world was a steed for thy rein;  
When the nations lay prone in thy porches,  
Our Lady of Pain.

When, with flame all around him aspirant,  
Stood flushed, as a harpplayer stands,  
The implacable beautiful tyrant,  
Rosecrowned, having death in his hands;  
And a sound as the sound of loud water  
Smote far through the flight of the fires,  
And mixed with the lightning of slaughter  
A thunder of lyres.

Dost thou dream of what was and no more is,  
The old kingdoms of earth and the kings?  
Dost thou hunger for these things, Dolores,  
For these, in a world of new things?  
But thy bosom no fasts could emaciate,  
No hunger compel to complain  
Those lips that no bloodshed could satiate,  
Our Lady of Pain.

As of old when the world's heart was lighter,  
Through thy garments the grace of thee glows,  
The white wealth of thy body made whiter  
By the blushes of amorous blows,  
And seamed with sharp lips and fierce fingers,  
And branded by kisses that bruise;  
When all shall be gone that now lingers,  
Ah, what shall we lose?

Thou wert fair in the fearless old fashion,  
 And thy limbs are as melodies yet,  
 And move to the music of passion  
 With lithe and lascivious regret.  
 What ailed us, O gods, to desert you  
 For creeds that refuse and restrain?  
 Come down and redeem us from virtue,  
 Our Lady of Pain.

All shrines that were Vestal are flameless,  
 But the flame has not fallen from this;  
 Though obscure be the god, and though nameless  
 The eyes and the hair that we kiss;  
 Low fires that love sits by and forges  
 Fresh heads for his arrows and thine;  
 Hair loosened and soiled in mid orgies  
 With kisses and wine.

Thy skin changes country and colour,  
 And shrivels or swells to a snake's.  
 Let it brighten and bloat and grow duller,  
 We know it, the flames and the flakes,  
 Red brands on it smitten and bitten,  
 Round skies where a star is a stain,  
 And the leaves with thy litanies written,  
 Our Lady of Pain.

On thy bosom though many a kiss be,  
 There are none such as knew it of old.  
 Was it Alciphron once or Arisbe,  
 Male ringlets or feminine gold,  
 That thy lips met with under the statue,  
 Whence a look shot out sharp after thieves  
 From the eyes of the gardengod at you  
 Across the figleaves?

Then still, through dry seasons and moister,  
 One god had a wreath to his shrine;  
 Then love was the pearl of his oyster,  
 And Venus rose red out of wine.

Nam te prsecipue in suis urbibus colit ora  
 Hcllespontia, aeteris ostreosior oris.

CATULL, *Carm.* xviii.

We have all done amiss, choosing rather  
 Such loves as the wise gods disdain;  
 Intercede for us thou with thy father,  
 Our Lady of Pain.

In spring he had crowns of his garden,  
 Red corn in the heat of the year,  
 Then hoary green olives that harden  
 When the grapeblossom freezes with fear;  
 And milk-budded myrtles with Venus  
 And vineleaves with Bacchus he trod;  
 And ye said, "We have seen, he hath seen us,  
 A visible God."

What broke off the garlands that girt you?  
 What Sundered you spirit and clay?  
 Weak sins yet alive are as virtue  
 To the strength of the sins of that day.  
 For dried is the blood of thy lover,  
 Ipsithilla, contracted the vein;  
 Cry aloud, "Will he rise and recover,  
 Our Lady of Pain?"

Cry aloud; for the old world is broken:  
 Cry out; for the Phrygian is priest,  
 And rears not the bountiful token  
 And spreads not the fatherly feast.  
 From the midmost of Ida, from shady  
 Recesses that murmur at morn,  
 They have brought and baptized her, Our Lady,  
 A goddess newborn.

And the chaplets of old are above us,  
 And the oysterbed teems out of reach;  
 Old poets outsing and outlove us,  
 And Catullus makes mouths at our speech.  
 Who shall kiss, in thy father's own city,  
 With such lips as he sang with, again?  
 Intercede for us all of thy pity,  
 Our Lady of Pain.

Out of Dindymus heavily laden  
 Her lions draw bound and unfed

A mother, a mortal, a maiden,  
 A queen over death and the dead.  
 She is cold, and her habit is lowly,  
 Her temple of branches and sods;  
 Most fruitful and virginal, holy,  
 A mother of gods.

She hath wasted with fire thine high places,  
 She hath hidden and marred and made sad  
 The fair limbs of the Loves, the fair faces  
 Of gods that were goodly and glad.  
 She slays, and her hands are not bloody;  
 She moves as a moon in the wane,  
 Whiterobed, and thy raiment is ruddy,  
 Our Lady of Pain.

They shall pass and their places be taken,  
 The gods and the priests that are pure.  
 They shall pass, and shalt thou not be shaken?  
 They shall perish, and shalt thou endure?  
 Death laughs, breathing close and relentless  
 In the nostrils and eyelids of lust,  
 With a pinch in his fingers of scentless  
 And delicate dust.

But the worm shall revive thee with kisses;  
 Thou shalt change and transmute as a god,  
 As the rod to a serpent that hisses,  
 As the serpent again to a rod.  
 Thy life shall not cease though thou doff it;  
 Though shalt live until evil be slain,  
 And good shall die first, said thy prophet,  
 Our Lady of Pain.

Did he lie? did he laugh? does he know it,  
 Now he lies out of reach, out of breath,  
 Thy prophet, thy preacher, thy poet,  
 Sin's child by incestuous Death?  
 Did he find out in fire at his waking,  
 Or discern as his eyelids lost light,  
 When the bands of the body were breaking  
 And all came in sight?

Who has known all the evil before us,  
Or the tyrannous secrets of time?  
Though we match not the dead men that bore us  
At a song, at a kiss, at a crime—  
Though the heathen outface and outlive us,  
And our lives and our longings are twain—  
Ah, forgive us our virtues, forgive us,  
Our Lady of Pain.

Who are we that embalm and embrace thee  
With spices and savours of song?  
What is time, that his children should face thee?  
What am I, that my lips do thee wrong?  
I could hurt thee—but pain would delight thee;  
Or caress thee—but love would repel;  
And the lovers whose lips would excite thee  
Are serpents in hell.

Who now shall content thee as they did,  
Thy lovers, when temples were built  
And the hair of the sacrifice braided  
And the blood of the sacrifice spilt,  
In Lampsacus fervent with faces,  
In Aphaca red from thy reign,  
Who embraced thee with awful embraces,  
Our Lady of Pain?

Where are they, Cotytto or Venus,  
Astarte or Ashtaroth, where?  
Do their hands as we touch come between us?  
Is the breath of them hot in thy hair?  
From their lips have thy lips taken fever,  
With the blood of their bodies grown red?  
Hast thou left upon earth a believer  
If these men are dead?

They were purple of raiment and golden,  
Filled full of thee, fiery with wine,  
Thy lovers, in haunts un beholden,  
In marvellous chambers of thine.  
They are fled, and their footprints escape us,  
Who appraise thee, adore, and abstain,  
O daughter of Death and Priapus,  
Our Lady of Pain,

What ails us to fear overmeasure,  
To praise thee with timorous breath,  
O mistress and mother of pleasure,  
The "one thing as certain as death?  
We shall change as the things that we cherish,  
Shall fade as they faded before,  
As foam upon water shall perish,  
As sand upon shore.

We shall know what the darkness discovers  
If the gravepit be shallow or deep;  
And our fathers of old, and our lovers,  
We shall know if they sleep not or sleep.  
We shall see whether hell be not heaven,  
Find out whether tares be not grain,  
And the joys of thee seventy times seven,  
Our Lady of Pain.

We played at bondsman and at queen;  
But as the days change men change too;  
I find the grey sea's notes of green,  
The green sea's fervent flakes of blue,  
More fair than you.

Your beauty is not overfair  
Now in mine eyes, who am grown up wise.  
The smell of flowers in all your hair  
Allures not now; no sigh replies  
If your heart sighs.

But you sigh seldom, you sleep sound,  
You find love's new name good enough.  
Less sweet I find it than I found  
The sweetest name that ever love  
Grew weary of.

My snake with bright bland eyes, my snake  
Grown tame and glad to be caressed,  
With lips athirst for mine to slake  
Their tender fever! who had guessed  
You loved me best?

I had died for this last year, to know  
You loved me. Who shall turn on fate?  
I care not if love come or go  
Now, though your love seek mine for mate.  
It is too late.

The dust of many strange desires  
Lies deep between us; in our eyes  
Dead smoke of perishable fires  
Flickers, a fume in air and skies,  
A steam of sighs.

You loved me and you loved me not;  
A little, much, and overmuch.  
Will you forget as I forgot?  
Let all dead things lie dead; none such  
Are soft to touch.

I love you and I do not love,  
 Too much, a little, not at all;  
 Too much, and never yet enough.  
 Birds quick to fledge and fly at call  
 Are quick to fall.

And these love longer now than men,  
 And larger loves than ours are these.  
 No diver brings up love again  
 Dropped once, my beautiful Misc,  
 In such cold seas.

Gone deeper than all plummets sound,  
 Where in the dim green dayless day  
 The life of such dead things lies bound  
 As the sea feeds on, wreck and stray  
 And castaway.

Can I forget? yea, that can I,  
 And that can all men; so will you,  
 Alive, or later, when you die.  
 Ah, but the love you plead was true?  
 Was mine not too?

I loved you for that name of yours  
 Long ere we met, and long enough.  
 Now that one thing of all endures—  
 The sweetest name that ever love  
 Waxed weary of.

Like colours in the sea, like flowers,  
 Like a cat's splendid circled eyes  
 That wax and wane with love for hours,  
 Green as green flame, bluegrey like skies  
 And soft like sighs—

And all these only like your name,  
 And your name full of all of these.  
 I say it, and it sounds the same—  
 Save that I say it now at ease,  
 Your name, Fdlise.

I said "she must be swift and white,  
And subtly warm, and half perverse,  
And sweet like sharp soft fruit to bite,  
And like a snake's love lithe and fierce."  
Men have guessed worse.

What was the song I made of you  
Here where the grass forgets our feet  
As afternoon forgets the dew?  
Ah that such sweet things should be fleet,  
Such fleet things sweet!

As afternoon forgets the dew,  
As time in time forgets all men,  
As our old place forgets us two,  
Who might have turned to one thing then,  
But not again.

O lips that mine have grown into  
Like April's kissing May,  
O fervent eyelids letting through  
Those eyes the greenest of things blue,  
The bluest of things grey,

If you were I and I were you,  
How could I love you, say?  
How could the roseleaf love the rue,  
The day love nightfall and her dew,  
Though night may love the day?

You loved it may be more than I;  
We know not; love is hard to seize,  
And all things are not good to try;  
And lifelong loves the worst of these  
For us, Felise.

Ah, take the season and have done,  
Love well the hour and let it go:  
Two sods may sleep and wake up one,  
Or dream they wake and find it so,  
And then—you know.

Kiss me once hard as though a flame  
Lay on my lips and made them fire;  
The same lips now, and not the same;  
What breath shall fill and reinspire  
A dead desire?

The old song sounds hollower in mine ear  
Than thin keen sounds of dead men's speech —  
A noise one hears and would not hear;  
Too strong to die, too weak to reach  
From wave to beach.

We stand on either side the sea,  
Stretch hands, blow kisses, laugh and lean  
I toward you, you toward me;  
But what hears either save the keen  
Grey sea between?

A year divides us, love from love,  
Though you love now, though I loved then.  
The gulf is strait, but deep enough;  
Who shall recross, who among men  
Shall cross again?

Love was a jest last year, you said,  
And what lives surely, surely dies.  
Even so; but now that love is dead,  
Shall love rekindle from wet eyes,  
From subtle sighs?

For many loves are good to see;  
Mutable loves, and loves perverse;  
But there is nothing, nor shall be,  
So sweet, so wicked, but my verse  
Can dream of worse.

For we that sing and you that love  
Know that which man may, only we.  
The rest live under us; above,  
Live the great gods in heaven, and see  
What things shall be.

So this thing is and must be so;  
 For man dies, and love also dies.  
 Though yet love's ghost moves to and fro  
 The seagreen mirrors of your eyes,  
 And laughs, and lies.

Eyes coloured like a waterflower,  
 And deeper than the green sea's glass:  
 Eyes that remember one sweet hour—  
 In vain we swore it should not pass;  
 In vain, alas!

Ah my Fdlise, if love or sin,  
 If shame or fear could hold it fast,  
 Should we not hold it? Love wears thin,  
 And they laugh well who laugh the last.  
 Is it not past?

The gods, the gods are stronger; time  
 Falls down before them, all men's knees  
 Bow, all men's prayers and sorrows climb  
 Like incense towards them; yea, for these  
 Are gods, Felise.

Immortal are they, clothed with powers,  
 Not to be comforted at all;  
 Lords over all the fruitless hours;  
 Too great to appease, too high to appal,  
 Too far to call

For none shall move the most high gods,  
 Who are most sad, being cruel; none  
 Shall break or take away the rods  
 Wherewith they scourge us, not as one  
 That smites a son.

By many a name of many a creed  
 We have called upon them, since the sands  
 Fell through time's hourglass first, a seed  
 Of life; and out of many lands  
 Have we stretched hands.

When have they heard us? who hath known  
 Their faces, climbed unto their feet,  
 Felt them and found them? Laugh or groan,  
 Doth heaven remurmur and repeat  
 Sad sounds or sweet?

Do the stars answer? in the night  
 Have ye found comfort? or by day  
 Have ye seen gods? What hope, what light,  
 Falls from the farthest starriest way  
 On you that pray?

Are the skies wet because we weep,  
 Or fair because of any mirth?  
 Cry out; they are gods; perchance they sleep;  
 Cry; thou shalt know what prayers are worth,  
 Thou dust and earth.

O earth, thou art fair; O dust, thou art great;  
 O laughing lips and lips that mourn,  
 Pray, till ye feel the exceeding weight  
 Of God's intolerable scorn,  
 Not to be borne.

Behold, there is no grief like this;  
 The barren blossom of thy prayer,  
 Thou shalt find out how sweet it is.  
 O fools and blind, what seek ye there  
 High up in the air?

Ye must have gods, the friends of men,  
 Merciful gods, compassionate,  
 And these shall answer you again.  
 Will ye beat always at the gate,  
 Ye fools of fate?

Ye fools and blind; for this is sure,  
 That all ye shall not live, but die.  
 Lo, what thing have ye found endure?  
 Or what thing have ye found on high  
 Past the blind sky?

The ghosts of words and dusty dreams,  
Old memories, faiths infirm and dead.  
Ye fools; for which among you deems  
His prayer can alter green to red  
Or stones to bread?

Why should ye bear with hopes and fears  
Till all these things be drawn in one,  
The sound of ironfooted years,  
And all the oppression that is done  
Under the sun?

Ye might end surely, surely pass  
Out of the multitude of things,  
Under the dust, beneath the grass,  
Deep in dim death, where no thought stings,  
No record clings.

No memory more of love or hate,  
No trouble, nothing that aspires,  
No sleepless labour thwarting fate,  
And thwarted; where no travail tires,  
Where no faith fires.

All passes, nought that has been is,  
Things good and evil have one end.  
Can anything be otherwise  
Though all men swear all things would mend  
With God to friend?

Can ye beat off one wave with prayer,  
Can ye move mountains? bid the flower  
Take flight and turn to a bird in the air?  
Can ye hold fast for shine or shower  
One wingless hour?

Ah sweet, and we too, can we bring  
One sigh back, bid one smile revive?  
Can God restore one ruined thing,  
Or he who slays our souls alive  
Make dead things thrive?

Two gifts perforce he has given us yet,  
Though sad things stay and glad things fly;  
Two gifts he has given us, to forget  
All glad and sad things that go by,  
And then to die.

We know not whether death be good,  
But life at least it will not be:  
Men will stand saddening as we stood,  
Watch the same fields and skies as we  
And the same sea.

Let this be said between us here,  
One love grows green when one turns grey;  
This year knows nothing of last year;  
Tomorrow has no more to say  
To yesterday.

Live and let live, as I will do,  
Love and let love, and so will I.  
But, sweet, for me no more with you:  
Not while I live, not though I die.  
Goodnight, goodbye.

SWINBURNE: SELECTED POEMS

1867—1872



## PRELUDE

TO

### SONGS BEFORE SUNRISE

BETWEEN the green bud and the red  
Youth sat and sang by Time, and shed  
    From eyes and tresses flowers and tears,  
    From heart and spirit hopes and fears,  
Upon the hollow stream whose bed  
    Is channelled by the foamless years;  
And with the white the goldhaired head  
    Mixed running locks, and in Time's ears  
Youth's dreams hung singing, and Time's truth  
Was half not harsh in the ears of Youth.

Between the bud and the blown flower  
Youth talked with joy and grief an hour,  
    With footless joy and wingless grief  
    And twinborn faith and disbelief  
Who share the seasons to devour;  
    And long ere these made up their sheaf  
Felt the winds round him shake and shower  
    The rosered and the bloodred leaf,  
Delight whose germ grew never grain,  
And passion dyed in its own pain.

Then he stood up, and trod to dust  
Fear and desire, mistrust and trust,  
    And dreams of bitter sleep and sweet,  
    And bound for sandals on his feet  
Knowledge and patience of what must  
    And what things may be, in the heat  
And cold of years that rot and rust  
    And alter; and his spirit's meat  
Was freedom, and his staff was wrought  
Of strength, and his cloak woven of thought.

For what has he whose will sees clear  
 To do with doubt and faith and fear,  
     Swift hopes and slow despondencies?  
 His heart is equal with the sea's  
 And with the seawind's, and his ear  
 Is level to the speech of these,  
 And his soul communes and takes cheer  
     With the actual earth's equalities,  
 Air, light, and night, hills, winds, and streams,  
 And seeks not strength from strengthless dreams.

His soul is even with the sun  
 Whose spirit and whose eye are one,  
     Who seeks not stars by day, nor light  
     And heavy heat of day by night.  
 Him can no God cast down, whom none  
 Can lift in hope beyond the height  
 Of fate and nature and things done  
     By the calm rule of might and right  
 That bids men be and bear and do,  
 And die beneath blind skies or blue.

To him the lights of even and morn  
 Speak no vain things of love or scorn,  
     Fancies and passions miscreate  
     By man in things dispassionate.  
 Nor holds he fellowship forlorn  
     With souls that pray and hope and hate,  
 And doubt they had better not been born,  
     And fain would lure or scare off fate  
 And charm their doomsman from their doom  
 And make fear dig its own false tomb.

He builds not half of doubts and half  
 Of dreams his own soul's cenotaph,  
     Whence hopes and fears with helpless eyes,  
     Wrapt loose in castoff cerecloths, rise  
 And dance and wring their hands and laugh,  
     And weep thin tears and sigh light sighs,  
 And without living lips would quaff  
     The living spring in man that lies,  
 And drain his soul of faith and strength  
 It might have lived on a life's length.

He hath given himself and hath not sold  
 To God for heaven or man for gold,  
     Or grief for comfort that it gives,  
     Or joy for grief's restoratives.  
 He hath given himself to time, whose fold  
     Shuts in the mortal flock that lives  
 On its plain pasture's heat and cold  
     And the equal year's alternatives.  
 Earth, heaven, and time, death, life, and he,  
 Endure while they shall be to be.

"Yet between death and life are hours  
 To flush with love and hide in flowers;  
     What profit save in these?" men cry:  
     "Ah, see, Between soft earth and sky,  
 What only good things here are ours!"  
     They say, "what better wouldst thou try,  
 What sweeter sing of? or what powers  
     Serve, that will give thee ere thou die  
 More joy to sing and be less sad,  
 More heart to play and grow more glad?"

Play then and sing; we too have played,  
 We likewise, in that subtle shade.  
     We too have twisted through our hair  
     Such tendrils as the wild Loves wear,  
 And heard what mirth the Maenads made,  
     Till the wind blew our garlands bare  
 And left their roses disarrayed,  
     And smote the summer with strange air,  
 And disengirdled and discrowned  
 The limbs and locks that vinewreaths bound.

We too have tracked by starproof trees  
 The tempest of the Thyiades  
     Scare the loud night on hills that hid  
     The bloodfeasts of the Bassarid,  
 Heard their song's iron cadences  
     Fright the wolf hungering from the kid,  
 Outroar the lionthroated seas,  
     Outchide the northwind if it chid,  
 And hush the torrenttongued ravines  
 With thunders of their tambourines.

But the fierce flute whose notes acclaim  
 Dim goddesses of fiery fame,  
     Cymbal and clamorous kettledrum,  
     Timbrels and tabrets, all are dumb  
 That turned the high chill air to flame;  
 The singing tongues of fire are numb  
 That called on Cotys by her name  
     Edonian, till they felt her come  
 And maddened, and her mystic face  
 Lightened along the streams of Thrace.

For Pleasure slumberless and pale,  
 And Passion with rejected veil,  
     Pass, and the tempestfooted throng  
     Of hours that follow them with song  
 Till their feet flag and voices fail,  
     And lips that were so loud so long  
 Learn silence, or a wearier wail;  
     So keen is change, and time so strong,  
 To weave the robes of life and rend  
 And weave again till life have end.

But weak is change, but strengthless time,  
 To take the light from heaven, or climb  
     The hills of heaven with wasting feet.  
     Songs they can stop that earth found meet,  
 But the stars keep their ageless rhyme;  
     Flowers they can slay that spring thought sweet,  
 But the stars keep their spring sublime;  
     Passions and pleasures can defeat,  
 Actions and agonies control,  
 And life and death, but not the soul.

Because man's soul is man's God still,  
 What wind soever waft his will  
     Across the waves of day and night  
     To port or shipwreck, left or right,  
 By shores and shoals of good and ill;  
     And still its flame at mainmast height  
 Through the rent air that foamflakes fill  
     Sustains the indomitable light  
 Whence only man hath strength to steer  
 Or helm to handle without fear.

Save his own soul's light overhead,  
 None leads him, and none ever led,  
     Across birth's hidden harbourbar,  
 Past youth where shoreward shallows are,  
 Through age that drives on toward the red  
     Vast Void of sunset hailed from far,  
 To the equal waters of the dead;  
 Save his own soul he hath no star,  
 And sinks, except his own soul guide,  
 Helmless in middle turn of tide.

No blast of air or fire of sun  
 Puts out the light whereby we run  
     With girded loins our lamplit race,  
 And each from each takes heart of grace  
 And spirit till his turn be done,  
 And light of face from each man's face  
 In whom the light of trust is one;  
 Since only souls that keep their place  
 By their own light, and watch things roll,  
 Aiid stand, have light for any soul.

A little time we gain from time  
 To set our seasons in some chime,  
     For harsh or sweet or loud or low,  
 With seasons played out long ago  
 And souls that in their time and prime  
     Took part with summer or with snow,  
 Lived abject lives out or sublime,  
 And had their chance of seed to sow  
 For service or disservice done  
 To those days dead and this their son.

A little time that we may fill  
 Or with such good works or such ill  
     As loose the bonds or make them strong  
 Wherein all manhood suffers wrong.  
 By rosehung river and lightfoot rill  
     There are who rest not; who think long  
 Till they discern as from a hill  
 At the sun's hour of morning song,  
 Known of souls only, and those souls free,  
 The sacred spaces of the sea.

## SIENA

INSIDE this northern summer's fold  
The fields are full of naked gold,  
Broadcast from heaven on lands it loves;  
The green veiled air is full of doves;  
Soft leaves that sift the sunbeams let  
Light on the small warm grasses wet  
Fall in short broken kisses sweet,  
And break again like waves that beat  
Round the sun's feet.

But I, for all this English mirth  
Of goldenshod and dancing days,  
And the old greengirt sweethearted earth,  
Desire what here no spells can raise.  
Far hence, with holier heavens above,  
The lovely city of my love  
Bathes deep in the sunsatiated air  
That flows round no fair thing more fair  
Her beauty bare.

There the utter sky is holier, there  
More pure the intense white height of air,  
More clear men's eyes that mine would meet,  
And the sweet springs of things more sweet.  
There for this one warm note of doves  
A clamour of a thousand loves  
Storms the night's ear, the day's assails,  
From the tempestuous nightingales,  
And fills, and fails.

O gracious city wellbeloved,  
Italian, and a maiden crowned,  
Siena, my feet are no more moved  
Toward thy strangeshapen mountainbound:  
But my heart in me turns and moves,  
O lady loveliest of my loves,  
Toward thee, to lie before thy feet  
And gaze from thy fair fountainseat  
Up the sheer street;

And the house midway hanging see  
That saw Saint Catherine bodily,  
Felt on its floors her sweet feet move,  
And the live light of fiery love  
Burn from her beautiful strange face,  
As in the sanguine sacred place  
Where in pure hands she took the head  
Severed, and with pure lips still red  
Kissed the lips dead.

For years through, sweetest of the saints,  
In quiet without cease she wrought,  
Till cries of men and fierce complaints  
From outward moved her maiden thought;  
And prayers she heard and sighs toward France,  
"God, send us back deliverance,  
Send back thy servant, lest we die!"  
With an exceeding bitter cry  
They smote the sky.

Then in her sacred saving hands  
She took the sorrows of the lands,  
With maiden palms she lifted up  
The sick time's bloodembittered cup,  
And in her virgin garment furled  
The faint limbs of a wounded world.  
Clothed with calm love and clear desire,  
She went forth in her soul's attire,  
A missive fire.

Across the might of men that strove  
It shone, and over heads of kings;  
And molten in red flames of love  
Were swords and many monstrous things;  
And shields were lowered, and snapt were spears,  
And sweetertuned the clamorous years;  
And faith came back, and peace, that were  
Fled; for she bade, saying, "Thou, God's heir,  
Hast thou no care?"

"Lo, men lay waste thine heritage  
Still, and much heathen people rage

Against thee, and devise vain things.  
What comfort in the face of kings,  
What counsel is there? Turn thine eyes  
And thine heart from them in like wise;  
Turn thee unto thine holy place  
To help us that of God for grace  
Require thy face.

"For who shall hear us if not thou  
In a strange land? what doest thou there?  
Thy sheep are spoiled, and the ploughers plough  
Upon us; why hast thou no care  
For all this, and beyond strange hills  
Liest unregardful what snow chills  
Thy foldless flock, or what rains beat?  
Lo, in thine ears, before thy feet,  
Thy lost sheep bleat.

"And strange men feed on faultless lives,  
And there is blood, and men put knives,  
Shepherd, unto the young lamb's throat;  
And one hath eaten, and one smote,  
And one had hunger and is fed  
Full of the flesh of these, and red  
With blood of these as who drinks wine.  
And God knoweth, who hath sent thee a sign,  
If these were thine."

But the Pope's heart within him burned,  
So that he rose up, seeing the sign,  
And came among them; but she turned  
Back to her daily way divine,  
And fed her faith with silent things,  
And lived her life with curbed white wings,  
And mixed herself with heaven and died:  
And now on the sheer cityside  
Smiles like a bride.

You see her in the fresh clear gloom,  
Where walls shut out the flame and bloom  
Of fullbreathed summer, and the roof  
Keeps the keen ardent air aloof

And sweet weight of the violent sky:  
There bodily beheld on high,  
She seems as one hearing in tune  
Heaven within heaven, at heaven's full noon,  
In sacred swoon:

A solemn swoon of sense that aches  
With imminent blind heat of heaven,  
While all the wideeyed spirit wakes,  
Vigilant of the supreme Seven,  
Whose choral flames in God's sight move,  
Made unendurable with love,  
That without wind or blast of breath  
Compels all things through life and death  
Whither God saith.

There on the dim sidechapel wall  
Thy mighty touch memorial,  
Razzi, raised up, for ages dead,  
And fixed for us her heavenly head:  
And, rent with plaited thorn and rod,  
Bared the live likeness of her God  
To men's eyes turning from strange lands,  
Where, pale from thine immortal hands,  
Christ wounded stands;

And the blood blots his holy hair  
And white brows over hungering eyes  
That plead against us, and the fair  
Mute lips forlorn of words or sighs  
In the great torment that bends down  
His bruised head with the bloomless crown,  
White as the unfruitful thornflower,  
A God beheld in dreams that were  
Beheld of her.

In vain on all these sins and years  
Falls the sad blood, fall the slow tears;  
In vain poured forth as watersprings,  
Priests, on your altars, and ye, kings,  
About your seats of sanguine gold;  
Still your God, spat upon and sold,

Bleeds at your hands; but now is gone  
 All his flock from him saving one;  
 Judas alone.

Surely your race it was that he,  
 O men signed backward with his name,  
 Beholding in Gethsemane  
 Bled the red bitter sweat of shame,  
 Knowing how the word of Christian should  
 Mean to men evil and not good,  
 Seem to men shameful for your sake,  
 Whose lips, for all the prayers they make,  
 Man's blood must slake.

But blood nor tears ye love not, you  
 That my love leads my longing to,  
 Fair as the world's old faith of flowers,  
 O golden goddesses of ours!  
 From what Idalian rosepleasance  
 Hath Aphrodite bidden glance  
 The lovelier lightnings of your feet?  
 From what sweet Paphian sward or seat  
 Led you more sweet?

O white three sisters, three as one,  
 With flowerlike arms for flowery bands  
 Your linked limbs glitter like the sun,  
 And time lies beaten at your hands.  
 Time and wild years and wars and men  
 Pass, and ye care not whence or when;  
 With calm lips oversweet for scorn,  
 Ye watch night pass, O children born  
 Of the oldworld morn.

Ah, in this strange and shrineless place,  
 What doth a goddess, what a Grace,  
 Where no Greek worships her shrined limbs  
 With wreaths and Cytherean hymns?  
 Where no lute makes luxurious  
 The adoring airs in Amathus,  
 Till the maid, knowing her mother near,  
 Sobs with love, aching with sweet fear?  
 What do ye here?

For the outer land is sad, and wears  
 A raiment of a flaming fire;  
 And the fierce fruitless mountain stairs  
 Climb, yet seem wroth and loth to aspire,  
 Climb, and break, and are broken down,  
 And through their clefts and crests the town  
 Looks west and sees the dead sun lie,  
 In sanguine death that stains the sky  
 With angry dye.

And from the warworn wastes without  
 In twilight, in the time of doubt,  
 One sound comes of one whisper, where  
 Moved with low motions of slow air  
 The great trees nigh the castle swing  
 In the sad coloured evening;  
*"Ricorditi di me, che son  
 La Pia"*—that small sweet word alone  
 Is not yet gone.

*"Ricorditi di me"*—the sound  
 Sole out of deep dumb days remote  
 Across the fiery and fatal ground  
 Comes tender as a hurt bird's note  
 To where, a ghost with empty hands,  
 A woeworn ghost, her palace stands  
 In the mid city, where the strong  
 Bells turn the sunset air to song,  
 And the towers throng.

With other face, with speech the same,  
 A mightier maiden's likeness came  
 Late among mourning men that slept,  
 A sacred ghost that went and wept,  
 White as the passionwounded Lamb,  
 Saying, "Ah, remember me, that am  
 Italia." (From deep sea to sea  
 Earth heard, earth knew her, that this was she.)  
*"Ricorditi.*

"Love made me of all things fairest thing,  
 And Hate unmade me; this knows he  
 Who with God's sacerdotal ring  
 Enrinded mine hand, espousing me."

Yea, in thy myriadmooded woe,  
 Yea, Mother, hast thou not said so?  
 Have not our hearts within us stirred,  
 O thou most holiest, at thy word?  
 Have we not heard?

As this dead tragic land that she  
 Found deadly, such was time to thee;  
 Years passed thee withering in the red  
 Maremma, years that deemed thee dead,  
 Ages that sorrowed or that scorned;  
 And all this while though all they mourned  
 Thou sawest the end of things unclean,  
 And the unborn that should see thee a queen.  
 Have we not seen?

The weary poet, thy sad son,  
     Upon thy soil, under thy skies,  
 Saw all Italian things save one—  
     Italia; this thing missed his eyes;  
 The old mothermight, the breast, the face,  
 That reared, that lit the Roman race;  
 This not Leopardi saw; but we,  
 What is it, Mother, that we see,  
 What if not thee?

Look thou from Siena southward home,  
 Where the priests pall hangs rent on Rome,  
 And through the red rent swaddlingbands  
 Towards thine she strains her labouring hands.  
 Look thou and listen, and let be  
 All the dead quick, all the bond free;  
 In the blind eyes let there be sight;  
 In the eighteen centuries of the night  
 Let there be light.

Bow down the beauty of thine head,  
     Sweet, and with lips of living breath  
 Kiss thy sons sleeping and thy dead,  
     That there be no more sleep or death.  
 Give us thy light, thy might, thy love,  
 Whom thy face seen afar above

Drew to thy feet; and when, being free,  
 Thou hast blest thy children born to these,  
 Bless also me.

Me that when others played or slept  
 Sat still under thy cross and wept;  
 Me who so early and unaware  
 Felt fall on bent bared brows and hair  
 (Thin drops of the overflowing flood!)  
 The bitter blessing of thy blood;  
 The sacred shadow of thy pain,  
 Thine, the true maidenmother, slain  
 And raised again.

Me consecrated, if I might,  
 To praise thee, or to love at least,  
 O mother of all men's dear delight,  
 Thou madest a choralsouled boypriest,  
 Before my lips had leave to sing,  
 Or my hands hardly strength to cling  
 About the intolerable tree  
 Whereto they had nailed my heart and thee  
 And said, "Let be."

For to thee too the high Fates gave  
 Grace to be sacrificed and save,  
 That being arisen, in the equal sun,  
 God and the People should be one;  
 By those red roads thy footprints trod,  
 Man more divine, more human God,  
 Saviour; that where no light was known  
 But darkness, and a daytime flown,  
 Light should be shown.

Let there be light, O Italy!  
 For our feet falter in the night.  
 O lamp of living years to be,  
 O light of God, let there be light!  
 Fill with a love keener than flame  
 Men sealed in spirit with thy name,  
 The cities and the Roman skies,  
 Where men with other than man's eyes  
 Saw thy sun rise.

For theirs thou wast and thine were they  
Whose names outshine thy very day;  
For they are thine and theirs thou art  
Whose blood beats living in man's heart,  
Remembering ages fled and dead  
Wherein for thy sake these men bled;  
They that saw Trebia, they that see  
Mentana, they in years to be  
That shall see thee.

For thine are all of us, and ours  
Thou; till the seasons bring to birth  
A perfect people, and all the powers  
Be with them that bear fruit on earth;  
Till the inner heart of man be one  
With freedom, and the sovereign sun;  
And Time, in likeness of a guide,  
Lead the Republic as a bride  
Up to God's side.

*MATER TRIUMPHALIS*

MOTHER of man's timetravelling generations,  
Breath of his nostrils, heartblood of his heart,  
God above all Gods worshipped of all nations,  
Light above light, law beyond law, thou art.

Thy face is as a sword smiting in sunder  
Shadows and chains and dreams and iron things;  
The sea is dumb before thy face, the thunder  
Silent, the skies are narrower than thy wings.

Angels and Gods, spirit and sense, thou takest  
In thy right hand as drops of dust or dew;  
The temples and the towers of time thou breakest,  
His thoughts and words and works, to make them new.

All we have wandered from thy ways, have hidden  
Eyes from thy glory and ears from calls they heard;  
Called of thy trumpets vainly, called and chidden,  
Scourged of thy speech and wounded of thy word.

We have known thee and have not known thee; stood beside  
Felt thy lips breathe, set foot where thy feet trod, [thee,  
Loved and renounced and worshipped and denied thee,  
As though thou wert but as another God.

"One hour for sleep," we said, "and yet one other;  
All day we served her, and who shall serve by night?"  
Not knowing of thee, thy face not knowing, O mother,  
O light wherethrough the darkness is as light.

Men that forsook thee hast thou not forsaken,  
Races of men that knew not hast thou known;  
Nations that slept thou hast doubted not to waken,  
Worshippers of strange Gods to make thine own.

All old grey histories hiding thy clear features,  
O secret spirit and sovereign, all men's tales,  
Creeds woven of men thy children and thy creatures,  
They have woven for vestures of thee and for veils.

Thine hands, without election or exemption,  
Feed all men fainting from false peace or strife,  
O thou, the resurrection and redemption,  
The godhead and the manhood and the life.

Thy wings shadow the waters; thine eyes lighten  
The horror of the hollows of the night;  
The depths of the earth and the dark places brighten  
Under thy feet, whiter than fire is white.

Death is subdued to thee, and hell's bands broken;  
Where thou art only is heaven; who hears not thee,  
Time shall not hear him; when men's names are spoken,  
A nameless sign of death shall his name be.

Deathless shall be the death, the name be nameless;  
Sterile of stars his twilight time of breath;  
With fire of hell shall shame consume him shameless,  
And dying, all the night darken his death.

The years are as thy garments, the world's ages  
As sandals bound and loosed from thy swift feet;  
Time serves before thee, as one that hath for wages  
Praise or shame only, bitter words or sweet.

Thou sayest "Well done," and all a century kindles;  
Again thou sayest "Depart from sight of me,"  
And all the light of face of all men dwindles,  
And the age is as the broken glass of thee.

The night is as a seal set on men's faces,  
On faces fallen of men that take no light,  
Nor give light in the deeps of the dark places,  
Blind things, incorporate with the body of night.

Their souls are serpents winterbound and frozen,  
Their shame is as a tame beast, at their feet  
Couched; their cold lips deride thee and thy chosen,  
Their lying lips made grey with dust for meat.

Then when their time is full and days run over,  
The splendour of thy sudden brow made bare  
Darkens the morning; thy bared hands uncover  
The veils of light and night and the awful air.

And the world naked as a newborn maiden  
Stands virginal and splendid as at birth,  
With all thine heaven of all its light unladen,  
Of all its love unburdened all thine earth.

For the utter earth and the utter air of heaven  
And the extreme depth is thine and the extreme height;  
Shadows of things and veils of ages riven  
Are as men's kings unkingdomed in thy sight.

Through the iron years, the centuries brazengated,  
By the ages' barred impenetrable doors,  
From the evening to the morning have we waited,  
Should thy foot haply sound on the awful floors.

The floors untrodden of the sun's feet glimmer,  
The starunstricken pavements of the night;  
Do the lights burn inside? the lights wax dimmer  
On festal faces withering out of sight.

The crowned heads lose the light on them; it may be  
Dawn is at hand to smite the loud feast dumb;  
To blind the torchlit centuries till the day be,  
The feasting kingdoms till thy kingdom come.

Shall it not come? deny they or dissemble,  
Is it not even as lightning from on high  
Now? and though many a soul close eyes and tremble,  
How should they tremble at all who love thee as I?

I am thine harp between thine hands, O mother!  
All my strong chords are strained with love of thee.  
We grapple in love and wrestle, as each with other  
Wrestle the wind and the unreluctant sea.

I am no courtier of thee sobersuited,  
Who loves a little for a little pay.  
Me not thy winds and storms nor thrones disrooted  
Nor molten crowns nor thine own sins dismay.

Sinned hast thou sometime, therefore art thou sinless;  
Stained hast thou been, who art therefore without stain;  
Even as man's soul is kin to thee, but kinless  
Thou, in whose womb Time sows the allvarious grain.

I do not bid thee spare me, O dreadful mother!  
I pray thee that thou spare not, of thy grace.  
How were it with me then, if ever another  
Should come to stand before thee in this my place?

I am the trumpet at thy lips, thy clarion  
Full of thy cry, sonorous with thy breath;  
The graves of souls born worms and creeds grown carrion  
Thy blast of judgment fills with fires of death.

Thou art the player whose organkeys are thunders,  
And I beneath thy foot the pedal prest;  
Thou art the ray whereat the rent night sunders,  
And I the cloudlet borne upon thy breast.

I shall burn up before thee, pass and perish,  
As haze in sunrise on the red sealine;  
But thou from dawn to sunsett shalt cherish  
The thoughts that led and souls that lighted mine.

Reared between night and noon and truth and error,  
Each twilighttravelling bird that trills and screams  
Sickens at midday, nor can face for terror  
The imperious heaven's inevitable extremes.

I have no spirit of skill with equal fingers  
At sign to sharpen or to slacken strings;  
I keep no time of song with goldperched singers  
And chirp of linnets on the wrists of kings.

I am thy stormthrush of the days that darken,  
Thy petrel in the foam that bears thy bark  
To port through night and tempest; if thou hearken,  
My voice is in thy heaven before the lark.

My song is in the mist that hides thy morning,  
My cry is up before the day for thee;  
I have heard thee and beheld thee and give warning,  
Before thy wheels divide the sky and sea.

Birds shall wake with thee voiced and feathered fairer,  
To see in summer what I see in spring;  
I have eyes and heart to endure thee, O thunderbearer,  
And they shall be whp shall have tongues to sing.

I have love at least, and have not fear, and part not  
From thine unnavigable and wingless way;  
Thou tarriest, and I have not said thou art not,  
Nor all thy night long have denied thy day.

Darkness to daylight shall lift up thy paeon,  
Hill to hill thunder, vale cry back to vale,  
With windnotes as of eagles Eschylean,  
And Sappho singing in the nightingale.

Sung to by mighty sons of dawn and daughters,  
Of this night's songs thine ear shall keep but one;  
That supreme song which shook the channelled waters,  
And called thee skyward as God calls the sun.

Come, though all heaven again be fire above thee;  
Though death before thee come to clear thy sky;  
Let us but see in his thy face who love thee;  
Yes, though thou slay us, arise and let us die.

*"NON DOLET"*

IT does not hurt. She looked along the knife  
Smiling, and watched the thick drops mix and run  
Down the sheer blade; not that which had been done  
Could hurt the sweet sense of the Roman wife,  
But that which was to do yet ere the strife  
Could end for each for ever, and the sun:  
Nor was the palm yet nor was peace yet won  
While pain had power upon her husband's life.

It does not hurt, Italia. Thou art more  
Than bride to bridegroom; how shalt thou not take  
The gift love's blood has reddened for thy sake?  
Was not thy lifeblood given for us before?  
And if love's heartblood can avail thy need,  
And thou not die, how should it hurt indeed?

## *HYMN OF MAN*

*(During the Session in Rome of the  
Ecumenical Council)*

IN the grey beginning of years, in the twilight of  
things that began,  
The word of the earth in the ears of the world, was  
it God? was it man?  
The word of the earth to the spheres her sisters, the  
note of her song,  
The sound of her speech in the ears of the starry  
and sisterly throng,  
Was it praise or passion or prayer, was it love or  
devotion or dread,  
When the veils of the shining air first wrapt her  
jubilant head?  
When her eyes newborn of the night saw yet no  
star out of reach;  
When her maiden mouth was alight with the flame  
of musical speech;  
When her virgin feet were set on the terrible  
heavenly way,  
And her virginal lids were wet with the dew of the  
birth of the day:  
Eyes that had looked not on time, and ears that had  
heard not of death;  
Lips that had learnt not the rhyme of change and  
passionate breath,  
The rhythmic anguish of growth, and the motion  
of mutable things,  
Of love that longs and is loth, and plumeplucked  
hope without wings,  
Passions and pains without number, and life that  
runs and is lame,  
From slumber again to slumber, the same race set  
for the same,  
Where the runners outwear each other, but run  
ning with lampless hands  
No man takes light from his brother till blind at  
the goal he stands:

Ah, did they know, did they dream of it, counting  
the cost and the worth?  
The ways of her days, did they seem then good to  
the newsouled earth?  
Did her heart rejoice, and the might of her spirit  
exult in her then,  
Child yet no child of the night, and motherless  
mother of men?  
Was it Love brake forth flowerfashion, a bird with  
gold on his wings,  
Lovely, her firstborn passion, and impulse of first  
born things?  
Was Love that nestling indeed that under the  
plumes of the night  
Was hatched and hidden as seed in the furrow, and  
brought forth bright?  
Was it Love lay shut in the shell worldshaped,  
having over him there  
Black worldwide wings that impel the might of the  
night through air?  
And bursting his shell as a bird, night shook  
through her sailstretched vans,  
And her heart as a water was stirred, and its heat  
was the firstborn man's.  
For the waste of the dead void air took form of a  
world at birth,  
And the waters and firmaments were, and light, and  
the lifegiving earth.  
The beautiful bird unbegotten that night brought  
forth without pain  
In the fathomless years forgotten whereover the  
dead gods reign,  
Was it love, life, godhead, or fate? we say the  
spirit is one  
That moved on the dark to create out of darkness  
the stars and the sun.  
Before the growth was the grower, and the seed  
ere the plant was sown;  
But what was seed of the sower? and the grain of  
him, whence was it grown?  
Foot after foot ye go back and travail and make  
yourselves mad;

Blind feet that feel for the track where highway is  
none to be had.  
Therefore the God that ye make you is grievous,  
and gives not aid,  
Because it is but for your sake that the God of  
your making is made.  
Thou and I and he are not gods made men for  
a span,  
But God, if a God there be, is the substance of  
men which is man.  
Our lives are as pulses or pores of his manifold  
body and breath;  
As waves of his sea on the shores where birth is  
the beacon of death.  
We men, the multiform features of man, whatso  
ever we be,  
Recreate him of whom we are creatures, and all  
we only are he.  
Not each man of all men is God, but God is the  
fruit of the whole;  
Indivisible spirit and blood, indiscernible body  
from soul.  
Not men's but man's is the glory of godhead, the  
kingdom of time,  
The mountainous ages made hoary with snows for  
the spirit to climb.  
A God with the world inwound whose clay to his  
footsole clings;  
A manifold God fastbound as with iron of adverse  
things.  
A soul that labours and lives, an emotion, a strenu  
ous breath,  
From the flame that its own mouth gives re  
illumed, and refreshed with death.  
In the sea whereof centuries are waves the live  
God plunges and swims;  
His bed is in all men's graves, but the worm hath  
not hold on his limbs.  
Night puts out not his eyes, nor time sheds change  
on his head;  
With such fire as the stars of the skies are the roots  
of his heart are fed.

Men are the thoughts passing through it, the veins  
 that fulfil it with blood,  
 With spirit of sense to renew it as springs fulfil  
 ling a flood.  
 Men are the heartbeats of man, the plumes that  
 feather his wings,  
 Stormworn, since being began, with the wind  
 and thunder of things.  
 Things are cruel and blind; their strength detains  
 and deforms:  
 And the wearying wings of the mind still beat up  
 the stream of their storms.  
 Still, as one swimming up stream, they strike out  
 blind in the blast  
 In thunders of vision and dream, and lightnings of  
 future and past.  
 We are baffled and caught in the current and  
 bruised upon edges of shoals;  
 As weeds or as reeds in the torrent of things are  
 the windshaken souls.  
 Spirit by spirit goes under, a foambell's bubble  
 of breath,  
 That blows and opens in sunder and blurs not the  
 mirror of death.  
 For a worm or a thorn in his path is a man's soul  
 quenched as a flame;  
 For his lust of an hour or his wrath shall the worm  
 and the man be the same.  
 O God sore stricken of things! they have wrought  
 him a raiment of pain;  
 Can a God shut eyelids and wings at a touch on  
 the nerves of the brain?  
 O shamed and sorrowful God, whose force goes  
 out at a blow!  
 What world shall shake at his nod? at his coming  
 what wilderness glow?  
 What help in the work of his hands? what light in  
 the track of his feet?  
 His days are snowflakes or sands, with cold to con  
 sume him and heat.  
 He is servant with Change for lord, and for wages  
 he hath to his hire

Folly and force, and a sword that devours, and a  
ravening fire.  
From the bed of his birth to his grave he is driven  
as a wind at their will;  
Lest Change bow down as his slave, and the storm  
and the sword be still;  
Lest earth spread open her wings to the sunward,  
and sing with the spheres;  
Lest man be master of things, to prevail on their  
forces and fears.  
By the spirit are things overcome; they are stark,  
and the spirit hath breath;  
It hath speech, and their forces are dumb; it is  
living, and things are of death.  
But they know not the spirit for master, they feel  
not force from above,  
While man makes love to disaster, and woos desola-  
tion with love.  
Yea, himself too hath made himself chains, and his  
own hands plucked out his eyes;  
For his own soul only constrains him, his own  
mouth only denies.  
The herds of kings and their hosts and the flocks  
of the high priests bow  
To a master whose face is a ghost's; O thou that  
wast God, is it thou?  
Thou madest man in the garden; thou temptedst  
man, and he fell;  
Thou gavest him poison and pardon for blood and  
burntoffering to sell.  
Thou hast sealed thine elect to salvation, fast locked  
with faith for the key;  
Make now for thyself expiation, and be thine  
atonement for thee.  
Ah, thou that darkenest heaven—ah, thou that  
bringest a sword—  
By the crimes of thine hands unforgiven they  
beseech thee to hear them, O Lord.  
By the balefires of ages that burn for thine incense,  
by creed and by rood,  
By the famine and passion that yearn and that  
hunger to find of thee food,

By the children that asked at thy throne of the  
 priests that were fat with thine hire  
 For bread, and thou gavest a stone; for light, and  
 thou madest them fire;  
 By the kiss of thy peace like a snake's kiss, that  
 leaves the soul rotten at root;  
 By the savours of gibbets and stakes thou hast  
 planted to bear to thee fruit;  
 By torture and terror and treason, that make to  
 thee weapons and wings;  
 By thy power upon men for a season, made out of  
 the malice of things;  
 O thou that hast built thee a shrine of the madness  
 of man and his shame,  
 And hast hung in the midst for a sign of his wor-  
 ship the lamp of thy name;  
 Thou hast shown him for heaven in a vision a void  
 world's shadow and shell  
 And hast fed thy delight and derision with fire of  
 belief as of hell;  
 Thou hast fleshed on the souls that believe thee the  
 fang of the deathworm fear,  
 With anguish of dreams to deceive them whose  
 faith cries out in thine ear;  
 By the face of the spirit confounded before thee  
 and humbled in dust,  
 By the dread wherewith life was astounded and  
 shamed out of sense of its trust,  
 By the scourges of doubt and repentance that fell  
 on the soul at thy nod,  
 Thou art judged, O judge, and the sentence is  
 gone forth against thee, O God.  
 Thy slave that slept is awake; thy slave but slept  
 for a span;  
 Yea, man thy slave shall unmake thee, who made  
 thee lord over man.  
 For his face is set to the east, his feet on the past  
 and its dead;  
 The sun rearsen is his priest, and the heat thereof  
 hallows his head.  
 His eyes take part in the morning; his spirit out  
 sounding the sea

Asks no more witness or warning from temple or  
tripod or tree.  
He hath set the centuries at union; the night is  
afraid at his name;  
Equal with life, in communion with death, he hath  
found them the same.  
Past the wall unsurmounted that bars out our  
vision with iron and fire  
He hath sent forth his soul for the stars to comply  
with the suns to conspire.  
His thought takes flight for the centre where  
through it hath part in the whole;  
The abysses forbid it not enter: the stars make  
room for the soul.  
Space is the soul's to inherit; the night is hers as  
the day;  
Lo, saith man, this is my spirit; how shall not the  
worlds make way?  
Space is thought's, and the wonders thereof, and  
the secret of space;  
Is thought not more than the thunders and light  
nings? shall thought give place?  
Is the body not more than the vesture, the life not  
more than the meat?  
The will than the word or the gesture, the heart  
than the hands or the feet?  
Is the tongue not more than the speech is? the head  
not more than the crown?  
And if higher than is heaven be the reach of the  
soul, shall not heaven bow down?  
Time, father of life, and more great than the life  
it begat and began,  
Earth's keeper and heaven's and their fate, lives,  
thinks, and hath substance in man.  
Time's motion that throbs in his blood is the  
thought that gives heart to the skies,  
And the springs of the fire that is food to the sun  
beams are light to his eyes.  
The minutes that beat with his heart are the words  
to which worlds keep chime,  
And the thought in his pulses is part of the blood  
and the spirit of time.

He saith **to** the ages, Give; and his soul forgoes  
not her share;  
Who are ye that forbid him to live, and would feed  
him with heavenlier air?  
Will ye feed him with poisonous dust, and restore  
him with hemlock for drink,  
Till he yield you his soul up in trust, and have  
heart not to know or to think?  
He hath stirred him, and found out the flaw in his  
fetters, and cast them behind;  
His soul to his soul is a law, and his mind is a light  
to his mind.  
The seal of his knowledge is sure, the truth and his  
spirit are wed;  
Men perish, but man shall endure; lives die, but  
the life is not dead.  
He hath sight of the secrets of season, the roots of  
the years and the fruits;  
His soul is at one with the reason of things that is  
sap to the roots.  
He can hear in their changes a sound as the con-  
science of consonant spheres;  
He can see through the years flowing round him  
the law lying under the years.  
Who are ye that would bind him with curses and  
blind him with vapour of prayer?  
Your might is as night that disperses when light  
is alive in the air.  
The bow of your godhead is broken, the arm of  
your conquest is stayed;  
Though ye call down God to bear token, for fear  
of you none is afraid.  
Will ye turn back times, and the courses of stars,  
and the season of souls?  
Shall God's breath dry up the sources that feed time  
full as it rolls?  
Nay, cry on him then till he show you a sign, till  
he lift up a rod;  
Hath he made not the nations to know him of old  
if indeed he be God?  
Is no heat of him left in the ashes of thousands  
burnt up for his sake?

Can prayer not rekindle the flashes that shone in  
his face from the stake?  
Cry aloud; for your God is a God and a Saviour;  
cry, make yourselves lean;  
Is he drunk or asleep, that the rod of his wrath is  
unfelt and unseen?  
Is the fire of his old lovingkindness gone out, that  
his pyres are acold?  
Hath he gazed on himself unto blindness, who  
made men blind to behold?  
Cry out, for his kingdom is shaken; cry out, for  
the people blaspheme;  
Cry aloud till his godhead awaken; what doth he  
to sleep and to dream?  
Cry, cut yourselves, gash you with knives and with  
scourges, heap on to you dust;  
Is his life but as other gods' lives? is not this the  
Lord God of your trust?  
Is not this the great God of your sires, that with  
souls and with bodies was fed,  
And the world was on flame with his fires? O  
fools, he was God, and is dead.  
He will hear not again the strong crying of earth  
in his ears as before,  
And the fume of his multitudes dying shall flatter  
his nostrils no more.  
By the spirit he ruled as his slave is he slain who  
was mighty to slay,  
And the stone that is sealed on his grave he shall  
rise not and roll not away.  
Yea, weep to him, lift up your hands; be your eyes  
as a fountain of tears;  
Where he stood there is nothing that stands; if he  
call, there is no man that hears.  
He hath doffed his king's raiment of lies now the  
wane of his kingdom is come;  
Ears hath he, and hears not; and eyes, and he sees  
not; and mouth, and is dumb.  
His red king's raiment is ripped from him naked,  
his staff broken down;  
And the signs of his empire are stripped from him  
shuddering; and where is his crown?

And in vain by the wellsprings refrozen ye cry for  
the warmth of his sun—  
O God, the Lord God of thy chosen, thy will in  
thy kingdom be done.  
Kingdom and will hath he none in him left him,  
nor warmth in his breath;  
Till his corpse be cast out of the sun will ye know  
not the truth of his death?  
Surely, ye say, he is strong, though the times be  
against him and men;  
Yet a little, ye say, and how long, till he come to  
show judgment again?  
Shall God then die as the beasts die? who is it hath  
broken his rod?  
O God, Lord God of thy priests, rise up now and  
show thyself God.  
They cry out, thine elect, thine aspirants to heaven  
ward, whose faith is as flame;  
O thou the Lord God of our tyrants, they call thee,  
their God, by thy name.  
By thy name that in hellfire was written, and  
burned at the point of thy sword,  
Thou art smitten, thou God, thou art smitten; thy  
death is upon thee, O Lord.  
And the lovesong of earth as thou diest resounds  
through the wind of her wings—  
Glory to Man in the highest! for Man is the master  
of things.

## GENESIS

IN the outer world that was before this earth,  
That was before all shape or space was born,  
Before the blind first hour of time had birth,  
Before night knew the moonlight or the morn;

Yea, before any world had any light,  
Or anything called God or man drew breath,  
Slowly the strong sides of the heaving night  
Moved, and brought forth the strength of life and death.

And the sad shapeless horror increate  
That was all things and one thing, without fruit,  
Limit, or law; where love was none, nor hate,  
Where no leaf came to blossom from no root;

The very darkness that time knew not of,  
Nor God laid hand on, nor was man found there,  
Ceased, and was cloven in several shapes; above  
Light, and night under, and fire, earth, water, and air.

Sunbeams and starbeams, and all coloured things,  
All forms and all similitudes began;  
And death, the shadow cast by life's wide wings,  
And God, the shade cast by the soul of man.

Then between shadow and substance, night and light,  
Then between birth and death, and deeds and days,  
The illimitable embrace and the amorous fight  
That of itself begets, bears, rears, and slays,

The immortal war of mortal things, that is  
Labour and life and growth and good and ill,  
The mild antiphonies that melt and kiss,  
The violent symphonies that meet and kill,

All nature of all things began to be.  
But chiefliest in the spirit (beast or man,  
Planet of heaven or blossom of earth or sea)  
The divine contraries of life began.

For the great labour of growth, being many, is one;  
One thing the white death and the ruddy birth;  
The invisible air and the allbeholden sun,  
And barren water and manychilded earth.

And these things are made manifest in men  
From the beginning forth unto this day:  
Time writes and life records them, and again  
Death seals them lest the record pass away.

For if death were not, then should growth not be,  
Change, nor the life of good nor evil things;  
Nor were there night at all nor light to see,  
Nor water of sweet nor water of bitter springs.

For in each man and each year that is born  
Are sown the twin seeds of the strong twin powers;  
The white seed of the fruitful helpful morn,  
The black seed of the barren hurtful hours.

And he that of the black seed eateth fruit,  
To him the savour as honey shall be sweet;  
And he in whom the white seed hath struck root,  
He shall have sorrow and trouble and tears for meat.

And him whose lips the sweet fruit hath made red  
In the end men loathe and make his name a rod;  
And him whose mouth on the unsweet fruit hath fed  
In the end men follow and know for very God.

And of these twain, the black seed and the white,  
All things come forth, endured of men and done;  
And still the day is great with child of night,  
And still the black night labours with the sun.

And each man and each year that lives on earth  
Turns hither or thither, and hence or thence is fed;  
And as a man before was from his birth,  
So shall a man be after among the dead.

## HERTHA

I AM that which began;  
    Out of me the years roll;  
    Out of me God and man;  
        I am equal and whole;  
God changes, and man, and the form of them bodily;  
    I am the soul.

    Before ever land was,  
    Before ever the sea,  
    Or soft hair of the grass,  
    Or fair limbs of the tree,  
Or the fleshcoloured fruit of my branches, I was, and  
    thy soul was in me.

    First life on my sources  
    First drifted and swam;  
    Out of me are the forces  
        That save it or damn;  
Out of me man and woman, and wildbeast and bird;  
    before God was, I am.

    Beside or above me  
    Nought is there to go;  
    Love or unlove me,  
    Unknow me or know,  
I am that which unloves me and loves; I am stricken,  
    and I am the blow.

    I the mark that is missed  
    And the arrows that miss,  
    I the mouth that is kissed  
    And the breath in the kiss,  
The search, and the sought, and the seeker, the soul  
    and the body that is.

I am that thing which blesses  
 My spirit elate;  
 That which caresses  
 With hands uncreate  
 My limbs unbegotten that measure the length of the  
 measure of fate.

But what thing dost thou now,  
 Looking Godward, to cry  
 "I am I, thou art thou,  
 I am low, thou art high"?  
 I am thou, whom thou seekest to find him; find thou  
 but thyself, thou art I.

I the grain and the furrow,  
 The ploughcloven clod  
 And the ploughshare drawn thorough,  
 The germ and the sod,  
 The deed and the doer, and seed and the sower, the  
 dust which is God.

Hast thou known how I fashioned thee,  
 Child, underground?  
 Fire that impassioned thee,  
 Iron that bound,  
 Dim changes of water, what thing of all these hast  
 thou known of or found?

Canst thou say in thine heart  
 Thou hast seen with thine eyes  
 With what cunning of art  
 Thou wast wrought in what wise,  
 By what force of what stuff thou wast shapen, and  
 shown on my breast to the skies?

Who hath given, who hath sold it thee,  
 Knowledge of me?  
 Hath the wilderness told it thee?  
 Hast thou learnt of the sea?  
 Hast thou communed in spirit with night? have the  
 winds taken counsel with thee?

Have I set such a star  
 To show light on thy brow  
 That thou sawest from afar  
 What I show to thee now?  
 Have ye spoken as brethren together, the sun and the  
 mountains and thou?

What is here, dost thou know it?  
 What was, hast thou known?  
 Prophet nor poet  
 Nor tripod nor throne  
 Nor spirit nor flesh can make answer, but only thy  
 mother alone.

Mother, not maker,  
 Born, and not made;  
 Though her children forsake her,  
 Allured or afraid,  
 Praying prayers to the God of their fashion, she stirs  
 not for all that have prayed.

A creed is a rod,  
 And a crown is of night;  
 But this thing is God,  
 To be man with thy might,  
 To grow straight in the strength of thy spirit, and  
 live out of thy life as the light.

I am in thee to save thee,  
 As my soul in thee saith;  
 Give thou as I gave thee,  
 Thy lifeblood and breath,  
 Green leaves of thy labour, white flowers of thy thought,  
 and red fruit of thy death.

Be the ways of thy giving  
 As mine were to thee;  
 The free life of thy living,  
 Be the gift of it free;  
 Not as servant to lord, nor as master to slave, shalt  
 thou give thee to me.

O children of banishment,  
 Souls overcast,  
 Were the lights ye see vanish meant  
 Always to last,  
 Ye would know not the sun overshadowing the shadows  
 and stars overpast.

I that saw where ye trod  
 The dim paths of the night  
 Set the shadow called God  
 In your skies to give light;  
 But the morning of manhood is risen, and the shadow  
 less soul is in sight.

The tree manyrooted  
 That swells to the sky  
 With frondage redfructed,  
 The lifetree am I;  
 In the buds of your lives is the sap of my leaves: ye  
 shall live and not die.

But the Gods of your fashion  
 That take and that give,  
 In their pity and passion  
 That scourge and forgive,  
 They are worms that are bred in the bark that falls  
 off; they shall die and not live.

My own blood is what stanches  
 The wounds in my bark;  
 Stars caught in my branches  
 Make day of the dark,  
 And are worshipped as suns till the sunrise shall tread  
 out their fires as a spark.

Where dead ages hide under  
 The live roots of the tree,  
 In my darkness the thunder  
 Makes utterance of me;  
 In the clash of my boughs with each other ye hear  
 the waves sound of the sea.

That noise is of Time,  
 As his feathers are spread  
 And his feet set to climb  
 Through the boughs overhead,  
 And my foliage rings round him and rustles, and  
 branches are bent with his tread.

The stormwinds of ages  
 Blow through me and cease,  
 The warwind that rages,  
 The springwind of peace,  
 Ere the breath of them roughen my tresses, ere one  
 of my blossoms increase.

All sounds of all changes,  
 All shadows and lights  
 On the world's mountainranges  
 And streamriven heights,  
 Whose tongue is the wind's tongue and language of  
 stormclouds on earthshaking nights;

All forms of all faces,  
 All works of all hands  
 In unsearchable places  
 Of timestricken lands,  
 All death and all life, and all reigns and all ruins, drop  
 through me as sands.

Though sore be my burden  
 And more than ye know,  
 And my growth have no guerdon  
 But only to grow,  
 Yet I fail not of growing for lightnings above me or  
 deathworms below.

These too have their part in me,  
 As I too in these;  
 Such fire is at heart in me,  
 Such sap is this tree's,  
 Which hath in it all sounds and all secrets of infinite  
 lands and of seas.

In the springcoloured hours  
 When my mind was as May's,  
 There brake forth of me flowers  
 By centuries of days,  
 Strong blossoms with perfume of manhood, shot out  
 from my spirit as rays.

And the sound of them springing  
 And smell of their shoots  
 Were as warmth and sweet singing  
 And strength to my roots;  
 And the lives of my children made perfect with freedom  
 of soul were my fruits.

I bid you but be;  
 I have need not of prayer;  
 I have need of you free  
 As your mouths of mine air;  
 That my heart may be greater within me, beholding  
 the fruits of me fair.

More fair than strange fruit is  
 Of faiths ye espouse;  
 In me only the root is  
 That blooms in your boughs;  
 Behold now your God that ye made you, to feed him  
 with faith of your vows.

In the darkening and whitening  
 Abysses adored,  
 With dayspring and lightning  
 For lamp and for sword,  
 God thunders in heaven, and his angels are red with  
 the wrath of the Lord.

O my sons, O too dutiful  
 Toward Gods not of me,  
 Was not I enough beautiful?  
 Was it hard to be free?  
 For behold, I am with you, am in you and of you;  
 look forth now and see.

Lo, winged with world's wonders,  
With miracles shod,  
With the fires of his thunders  
For raiment and rod,  
God trembles in heaven, and his angels are white with  
the terror of God.

For his twilight is come on him,  
His anguish is here;  
And his spirits gaze dumb on him,  
Grown grey from his fear;  
And his hour taketh hold on him stricken, the last of  
his infinite year.

Thought made him and breaks him,  
Truth slays and forgives;  
But to you, as time takes him,  
This new thing it gives,  
Even love, the beloved Republic, that feeds upon  
freedom and lives.

For truth only is living,  
Truth only is whole,  
And the love of his giving  
Man's polestar and pole;  
Man, pulse of my centre, and fruit of my body, and  
seed of my soul

One birth of my bosom;  
One beam of mine eye;  
One topmost blossom  
That scales the sky;  
Man, equal and one with me, man that is made of me,  
man that is I.



SWINBURNE: SELECTED POEMS

18731878



## ERECHTHEUS

### CHORUS

WHO shall put a bridle in the mourner's lips to chasten them,  
Or seal up the fountains of his tears for shame?  
Song nor prayer nor prophecy shall slacken tears nor hasten them,  
Till grief be within him as a burntout flame;  
Till the passion be broken in his breast  
And the might thereof molten into rest,  
And the rain of eyes that weep be dry,  
And the breath be stilled of lips that sigh.  
Death at last for all men is a harbour; yet they flee from it,  
Set sails to the stormwind and again to sea;  
Yet for all their labour no whit further shall they be from it,  
Nor longer but wearier shall their life's work be.  
And with anguish of travail until night  
Shall they steer into shipwreck out of sight,  
And with oars that break and shrouds that strain  
Shall they drive whence no ship steers again.  
Bitter and strange is the word of the God most high,  
And steep the strait of his way.  
Through a pass rockrimmed and narrow the light that gleams  
On the faces of men falls faint as the dawn of dreams,  
The dayspring of death as a star in an under sky  
Where night is the dead men's day.  
As darkness and storm is his will that on earth is done,  
As a cloud is the face of his strength.  
King of kings, holiest of holies, and mightiest of might,  
Lord of the lords of thine heaven that are humble in thy sight,  
Hast thou set not an end for the path of the fires of the sun,  
To appoint him a rest at length?  
Hast thou told not by measure the waves of the waste wide sea,  
And the ways of the wind their master and thrall to thee?  
Hast thou filled not the furrows with fruit for the world's  
increase?  
Has thine ear not heard from of old or thine eye not read  
The thought and the deed of us living, the doom of us dead?  
Hast thou made not war upon earth, and again made peace?  
Therefore, O father, that seest us whose lives are a breath,  
Take off us thy burden, and give us not wholly to death.  
For lovely is life, and the law wherein all things live,

And gracious the season of each, and the hour of its kind,  
 And precious the seed of his life in a wise man's mind;  
     But all save life for his life will a base man give.  
 But a life that is given for the life of the whole live land,  
 From a heart unspotted a gift of a spotless hand,  
 Of pure will perfect and free, for the land's life's sake,  
 What man shall fear not to put forth his hand and take?  
 For the fruit of a sweet life plucked in its pure green prime  
 On his hand who plucks is as blood, on his soul as crime.  
 With cursing ye buy not blessing, nor peace with strife,  
 And the hand is hateful that chaffers with death for life.  
     Hast thou heard, O my heart, and endurest  
     The word that is said,  
     What a garland by sentence found surest  
     Is wrought for what head?  
 With what blossomless flowerage of seafoam and bloodcoloured  
 foliage inwound  
 It shall crown as a heifer's for slaughter the forehead for marriage  
 uncrowned?  
     How the veils and the wreaths that should cover  
     The brows of the bride  
     Shall be shed by the breath of what lover  
     And scattered aside?  
 With a blast of the mouth of what bridegroom the crowns shall be  
 cast from her hair,  
 And her head by what altar made humble be left of them naked and  
 bare?  
 At a shrine unbeloved of a God un beholden a gift shall be given  
 for the land,  
 That its ramparts though shaken with clamour and horror of mani  
 fold waters may stand:  
 That the crests of its citadels crowned and its turrets that thrust up  
 their heads to the sun  
 May behold him unblinded with darkness of waves overmastering  
 their bulwarks begun.  
 As a bride shall they bring her, a prey for the bridegroom, a flower  
 for the couch of her lord;  
 They shall muffle her mouth that she cry not or curse them, and  
 cover her eyes from the sword.  
 They shall fasten her lips as with bit and with bridle, and darken the  
 light of her face,  
 That the soul of the slayer may not falter, his heart be not molten,  
 his hand give not grace.

If she weep then, yet may none that hear take pity;  
 If she cry not, none should hearken though she cried.  
 Shall a virgin shield thine head for love, O city,  
 With a virgin's blood anointed as for pride?  
 Yet we held thee dear and hallowed of her favour,  
 Dear of all men held thy people to her heart;  
 Nought she loves the breath of blood, the sanguine savour,  
 'Who hath built with us her throne and chosen her part.

Bloodies are her works, and sweet  
 All the ways that feel her feet;  
 From the empire of her eyes  
 Light takes life and darkness flies;  
 From the harvest of her hands  
 Wealth strikes root in prosperous lands;  
 Wisdom of her word is made;  
 At her strength is strength afraid;  
 From the beam of her bright spear  
 War's fleet foot goes back for fear;  
 In her shrine she reared the birth  
 Firebegotten on live earth;  
 Glory from her helm was shed  
 On his oliveshadowed head;  
 By no hand but his shall she  
 Scourge the storms back of the sea,  
 To no fame but his shall give  
 Grace, being dead, with hers to live,  
 And in double name divine  
 Half the godhead of their shrine.

But now with what word, with what woe may we meet  
 The timeless passage of piteous feet,  
 Hither that bend to the last way's end  
 They shall walk upon earth?

What song be rolled for a bride blackstoled  
 And the mother whose hand of her hand hath hold?  
 For anguish of heart is my soul's strength broken  
 And the tongue sealed fast that would fain have spoken,  
 To behold thee, O child of so bitter a birth

That we counted so sweet,  
 What way thy steps to what bridefeast tend,  
 What gift he must give that shall wed thee for token  
 If the bridegroom be goodly to greet.

## IN *THE BAY*

### i

BEYOND the hollow sunset, ere a star  
Take heart in heaven from eastward, while the west,  
Fulfilled of watery resonance and rest,  
Is as a port with clouds for harbour bar  
To fold the fleet in of the winds from far  
That stir no plume now of the bland sea's breast:

### II

Above the soft sweep of the breathless bay  
Southwestward, far past flight of night and day,  
Lower than the sunken sunset sinks, and higher  
Than dawn can freak the front of heaven with fire,  
My thought with eyes and wings made wide makes way  
To find the place of souls that I desire.

### III

If any place for any soul there be,  
Disrobed and disentranced; if the might,  
The fire and force that filled with ardent light  
The souls whose shadow is half the light we see,  
Survive and be suppressed not of the night;  
This hour should show what all day hid from me.

### IV

Night knows not, neither is it shown to day,  
By sunlight nor by starlight is it shown,  
Nor to the full moon's eye nor footfall known,  
Their world's untrodden and unkindled way.  
Nor is the breath nor music of it blown  
With sounds of winter or with winds of May.

## V

But here, where light and darkness reconciled  
 Hold earth between them as a weanling child  
 Between the balanced hands of death and birth,  
 Even as they held the newborn shape of earth  
 When first life trembled in her limbs and smiled,  
 Here hope might think to find what hope were worth.

## VI

Past Hades, past Elysium, past the long  
 Slow smooth strong lapse of Lethe—past the toil  
 Wherein all souls are taken as a spoil,  
 The Stygian web of waters—if your song  
 Be quenched not, O our brethren, but be strong  
 As ere ye too shook off our temporal coil;

## VII

If yet these twain survive your worldly breath,  
 Joy trampling sorrow, life devouring death,  
 If perfect life possess your life all through  
 And like your words your souls be deathless too,  
 Tonight, of all whom night encompasseth,  
 My soul would commune with one soul of you.

## VIII

Above the sunset might I see thine eyes  
 That were above the sundawn in our skies,  
 Son of the songs of morning,—thine that were  
 First lights to lighten that rekindling air  
 Wherethrough men saw the front of England rise  
 And heard thine loudest of the lyrenotes there—

## IX

If yet thy fire have not one spark the less,  
 O Titan, born of her a Titaness,  
 Across the sunrise and the sunset's mark  
 Send of thy lyre one sound, thy fire one spark,  
 To change this face of our unworthiness,  
 Across this hour dividing light from dark.

## X

To change this face of our chill time, that hears  
 No song like thine of all that crowd its ears,  
 Of all its lights that lighten all day long  
 Sees none like thy most fleet and fiery sphere's  
 Outlightening Sirius—in its twilight throng  
 No thunder and no sunrise like thy song.

## XI

Hath not the seawind swept the sealine bare  
 To pave with stainless fire through stainless air  
 A passage for thine heavenlier feet to tread  
 Ungrieved of earthly floorwork? hath it spread  
 No covering splendid as the sungod's hair  
 To veil or to reveal thy lordlier head?

## XII

Hath not the sunset strewn across the sea  
 A way majestic enough for thee?  
 What hour save this should be thine hour—and mine,  
 If thou have care of any less divine  
 Than thine own soul; if thou take thought of me,  
 Marlowe, as all my soul takes thought of thine?

## XIII

Before the moon's face as before the sun  
 The morning star and evening star are one  
 For all men's lands as England. O, if night  
 Hang hard upon us,—ere our day take flight,  
 Shed thou some comfort from thy day long done  
 On us pale children of the latter light!

## XIV

For surely, brother and master and lord and king,  
 Where'er thy footfall and thy face make spring  
 In all souls' eyes that meet thee wheresoe'er,  
 And have thy soul for sunshine and sweet air—  
 Some late love of thine old live land should cling,  
 Some living love of England, round thee there.

## XV

Here from her shore across her sunniest sea  
 My soul makes question of the sun for thee,  
 And waves and beams make answer. When thy feet  
 Made her ways flowerier and their flowers more sweet  
 With childlike passage of a god to be,  
 Like spray these waves cast off her foemen's fleet.

## XVI

Like foam they flung it from her, and like weed  
 Its wrecks were washed from scornful shoal to shoal,  
 From rock to rock reverberate; and the whole  
 Sea laughed and lightened with a deathless deed  
 That sowed our enemies in her field for seed  
 And made her shores fit harbourage for thy soul.

## XVII

Then in her green south fields, a poor man's child,  
 Thou hadst thy short sweet fill of halfblown joy,  
 That ripens all of us for time to cloy  
 With fullblown pain and passion; ere the wild  
 World caught thee by the fiery heart, and smiled  
 To make so swift end of the godlike boy.

## XVIII

For thou, if ever godlike foot there trod  
 These fields of ours, wert surely like a god.  
 Who knows what splendour of strange dreams was shed  
 With sacred shadow and glimmer of gold and red  
 From hallowed windows, over stone and sod,  
 On thine unbowed bright insubmissive head?

## XIX

The shadow stayed not, but the splendour stays,  
 Our brother, till the last of English days.  
 No day nor night on English earth shall be  
 For ever, spring nor summer, Junes or Mays,  
 But somewhat as a sound or gleam of thee  
 Shall come on us like morning from the sea.

## XX

Like sunrise never wholly risen, nor yet  
 Quenched; or like sunset never wholly set,  
 A light to lighten as from living eyes  
 The cold unlit close lids of one that lies  
 Dead, or a ray returned from death's far skies  
 To fire us living lest our lives forget.

## XXI

For in that heaven what light of lights may be,  
 What splendour of whatstars, what spheres of flame  
 Sounding, that none may number nor may name,  
 We know not, even thy brethren; yea, not we  
 Whose eyes desire the light that lightened thee,  
 Whose ways and thine are one way and the same.

## XXII

But if the riddles that in sleep we read,  
 And trust them not, be flattering truth indeed,  
 As he that rose our mightiest called them,—he,  
 Much higher than thou as thou much higher than we—  
 There, might we say, all flower of all our seed,  
 All singing souls are as one sounding sea.

## XXIII

All those that here were of thy kind and kin,  
 Beside thee and below thee, full of love,  
 Fullsouled for song,—and one alone above  
 Whose only light folds all your glories in—  
 With all birds' notes from nightingale to dove  
 Fill the world whither we too fain would win.

## XXIV

The world that sees in heaven the sovereign light  
 Of sunlike Shakespeare, and the fiery night  
 Whose stars were watched of Webster; and beneath,  
 The twinsouled brethren of the single wreath,  
 Grown in kings' gardens, plucked from pastoral heath,  
 Wrought with all flowers for all men's heart's delight.

## XXV

And that fixed fervour, ironred like Mars,  
 In the mid moving tide of tenderer stars,  
 That burned on loves and deeds the darkest done,  
 Athwart the incestuous prisoner's bridehouse bars;  
 And thine, most highest of all their fires but one,  
 Our morning star, sole risen before the sun.

## XXVI

And one light risen since theirs to run such race  
 Thou hast seen, O Phosphor, from thy pride of place.  
 Thou hast seen Shelley, him that was to thee  
 As light to fire or dawn to lightning; me,  
 Me likewise, O our brother, shalt thou see,  
 And I behold thee, face to glorious face?

## XXVII

You twain the same swift year of manhood swept  
 Down the steep darkness, and our father wept.  
 And from the gleam of Apollonian tears  
 A holier aureole rounds your memories, kept  
 Most ferventfresh of all the singing spheres,  
 And Aprilcoloured through all months and years.

## XXVIII

You twain fate spared not half your fiery span;  
 The longer date fulfils the lesser man.  
 Ye from beyond the dark dividing date  
 Stand smiling, crowned as gods with foot on fate.  
 For stronger was your blessing than his ban,  
 And earliest whom he struck, he struck too late.

## XXIX

Yet love and loathing, faith and unfaith yet  
 Bind less to greater souls in unison,  
 And one desire that makes three spirits as one  
 Takes great and small as in one spiritual net  
 Woven out of hope toward what shall yet be done  
 Ere hate or love remember or forget.

## XXX

Woven out of faith and hope and love too great  
 To bear the bonds of life and death and fate:  
 Woven out of love and hope and faith too dear  
 To take the print of doubt and change and fear:  
 And interwoven with lines of wrath and hate  
 Bloodred with soils of many a sanguine year.

## XXXI

Who cannot hate, can love not; if he grieve,  
 His tears are barren as the unfruitful rain  
 That rears no harvest from the green sea's plain,  
 And as thorns crackling this man's laugh is vain.  
 Nor can belief touch, kindle, smite, relieve  
 His heart who has not heart to disbelieve.

## XXXII

But you, most perfect in your hate and love,  
 Our great twinspirited brethren; you that stand  
 Head by head glittering, hand made fast in hand,  
 And underfoot the fangdrawn worm that strove  
 To wound you living; from so far above,  
 Look love, not scorn, on ours that was your land.

## XXXIII

For love we lack, and help and heat and light  
 To clothe us and to comfort us with might.  
 What help is ours to take or give? but ye—  
 O, more than sunrise to the blind cold sea,  
 That wailed aloud with all her waves all night,  
 Much more, being much more glorious, should you be.

## XXXIV

As fire to frost, as ease to toil, as dew  
 To flowerless fields, as sleep to slackening pain,  
 As hope to souls long weaned from hope again  
 Returning, or as blood revived anew  
 To drydrawn limbs and every pulseless vein,  
 Even so toward us should no man be but you.

## XXXV

One rose before the sunrise was, and one  
 Before the sunset, lovelier than the sun.  
 And now the heaven is dark and bright and loud  
 With wind and starry drift and moon and cloud.  
 And night's cry rings in straining sheet and shroud  
 What help is ours if hope like yours be none?

## XXXVI

O wellbeloved, our brethren, if ye be,  
 Then are we not forsaken. This kind earth  
 Made fragrant once for all time with your birth,  
 And bright for all men with your love, and worth  
 The clasp and kiss and wedlock of the sea,  
 Were not your mother if not your brethren we.

## XXXVII

Because the days were dark with gods and kings  
 And in time's hand the old hours of time as rods,  
 When force and fear set hope and faith at odds,  
 Ye failed not nor abased your plumeplucked wings;  
 And we that front not more disastrous things,  
 How should we fail in face of kings and gods?

## XXXVIII

For now the deep dense plumes of night are thinned  
 Surely with winnowing of the glimmering wind  
 Whose feet are fledged with morning; and the breath  
 Begins in heaven that sings the dark to death.  
 And all the night wherein men groaned and sinned  
 Sickens at heart to hear what sundawn saith.

## XXXIX

O firstborn sons of hope and fairest, ye  
 Whose prows first clove the thoughtunsounded sea  
 Whence all the dark dead centuries rose to bar  
 The spirit of man lest truth should make him free,  
 The sunrise and the sunset, seeing one star,  
 Take heart as we to know you that ye are.

## XL

Ye rise not and ye set not; we that say  
Ye rise and set like hopes that set and rise  
Look yet but seaward from a landlocked bay;  
But where at last the sea's line is the sky's  
And truth and hope one sunlight in your eyes,  
No sunrise and no sunset marks their day.

*A BALLAD OF FRANCOIS VILLON*

*Prince of all Mallardmakers*

BIRD of the bitter bright grey golden morn  
Scarce risen upon the dusk of dolorous years,  
First of us all and sweetest singer born  
Whose far shrill note the world of new men hears  
Cleave the cold shuddering shade as twilight clears;  
When song newborn put off the old world's attire  
And felt its tune on her changed lips expire,  
Writ foremost on the roll of them that came  
Fresh girt for service of the latter lyre,  
Villon, our sad bad glad mad brother's name!

Alas the joy, the sorrow, and the scorn,  
That clothed thy life with hopes and sins and fears,  
And gave thee stones for bread and tares for corn  
And plumeplucked gaolbirds for thy starveling peers  
Till death clipt close their flight with shameful shears;  
Till shifts came short and loves were hard to hire,  
When lilt of song nor twitch of twangling wire  
Could buy thee bread or kisses; when light fame  
Spurned like a ball and haled through brake and briar,  
Villon, our sad bad glad mad brother's name!

Poor splendid wings so frayed and soiled and torn!  
Poor kind wild eyes so dashed with light quick tears!  
Poor perfect voice, most blithe when most forlorn,  
That rings athwart the sea whence no man steers  
Like joybells crossed with deathbells in our ears!  
What far delight has cooled the fierce desire  
That like some ravenous bird was strong to tire  
On that frail flesh and soul consumed with flame,  
But left more sweet than roses to respire,  
Villon, our sad bad glad mad brother's name?

**ENVOI**

Prince of sweet songs made out of tears and fire,  
A harlot was thy nurse, a God thy sire;  
Shame soiled thy song, and song assoiled thy shame,  
But from thy feet now death has washed the mire,  
Love reads out first at head of all our quire,  
Villon, our sad bad glad mad brother's name.

A WASTED VIGIL,

I

COULDST thou not watch with me one hour? Behold  
Dawn skims the sea with flying feet of gold,  
With sudden feet that graze the gradual sea;  
    Couldst thou not watch with me?

II

What, not one hour? for star by star the night  
Falls, and her thousands world by world take flight;  
They die, and day survives, and what of thee?  
    Couldst thou not watch with me?

III

Lo, far in heaven the web of night undone,  
And on the sudden sea the gradual sun;  
Wave to wave answers, tree responds to tree;  
    Couldst thou not watch with me?

IV

Sunbeam by sunbeam creeps from line to line,  
Foam by foam quickens on the brightening brine;  
Sail by sail passes, flower by flower gets free;  
    Couldst thou not watch with me?

V

Last year, a brief while since, an age ago,  
A whole year past, with bud and bloom and snow,  
O moon that wast in heaven, what friends were wel  
    Couldst thou not watch with me?

VI

Old moons, and last year's flowers, and last year's snows  
Who now saith to thee, moon? or who saith, rose?  
O dust and ashes, once found fair to seel  
    Couldst thou not watch with me?

## VII

O dust and ashes, once thought sweet to smell!  
With me it is not, is it with thee well?  
O seadrift blown from windward back to lee!  
    Couldst thou not watch with me?

## VIII

The old year's hands are full of their dead flowers,  
The old days are full of dead old loves of ours,  
Born as a rose, and briefer born than she;  
    Couldst thou not watch with me?

## IX

Could two days livt again of that dead year,  
One would say, seeking us and passing here,  
*Where is she?* and one answering, *Where is he?*  
    Couldst thou not watch with me?

## X

Nay, those two lovers are not anywhere;  
If we were they, none knows us what we were,  
Nor aught of all their barren grief and glee.  
    Couldst thou not watch with me?

## XI

Half false, half fair, all feeble, be my verse  
Upon thee not for blessing nor for curse;  
For some must stand, and some must fall or flee;  
    Couldst thou not watch with me?

## XII

As a new moon above spent stars thou wast;  
But stars endure after the moon is past.  
Couldst thou not watch one hour, though I watch three?  
    Couldst thou not watch with me?

## XIII

What of the night? The night is full, the tide  
Storms inland, the most ancient rocks divide;  
Yet some endure, and bow nor head nor knee;  
    Couldst thou not watch with me?

## XIV

Since thou art not as these are, go thy ways;  
Thou hast no part in all my nights and days.  
Lie still, sleep on, be glad—as such things be;  
    Thou couldst not watch with me.

## A. BALLAD OF DREAMLAND

I HID my heart in a nest of roses,  
Out of the sun's way, hidden apart;  
In a softer bed than the soft white snow's is,  
Under the roses I hid my heart.  
Why would it sleep not? why should it start,  
When never a leaf of the rosetree stirred?  
What made sleep flutter his wings and part?  
Only the song of a secret bird.

Lie still, I said, for the wind's wing closes,  
And mild leaves muffle the keen sun's dart;  
Lie still, for the wind on the warm sea dozes,  
And the wind is unquieter yet than thou art.  
Does a thought in thee still as a thorn's wound smart?  
Does the fang still fret thee of hope deferred?  
What bids the lids of thy sleep dispart?  
Only the song of a secret bird.

The green land's name that a charm encloses,  
It never was writ in the traveller's chart,  
And sweet on its trees as the fruit that grows is,  
It never was sold in the merchant's mart.  
The swallows of dreams through its dim fields dart,  
And sleep's are the tunes in its treetops heard;  
No hound's note wakens the wildwood hart,  
Only the song of a secret bird.

### ENVOI

In the world of dreams I have chosen my part,  
To sleep for a season and hear no word  
Of true love's truth or of light love's art,  
Only the song of a secret bird.

*AT A MONTH'S END*

THE night last night was strange and shaken:  
More strange the change of you aAd me.  
Once more, for the old love's love forsaken,  
We went out once more toward the sea.

For the old love's lovesake dead and buried,  
One last time, one more and no more,  
We watched the waves set in, the serried  
Spears of the tide storming the shore.

Hardly we saw the high moon hanging,  
Heard hardly through the windy night  
Far waters ringing, low reefs clanging,  
Under wan skies and waste white light.

With chafe and change of surges chiming,  
The clashing channels rocked and rang  
Large music, wave to wild wave timing,  
And all the choral water sang.

Faint lights fell this way, that way floated,  
Quick sparks of seafire keen like eyes  
From the rolled surf that flashed, and noted  
Shores and faint cliffs and bays and skies.

The ghost of sea that shrank up sighing  
At the sand's edge, a short sad breath  
Trembling to touch the goal, and dying  
With weak heart heaved up once in death—

The rustling sand and shingle shaken  
With light sweet touches and small sound—  
These could not move us, could not waken  
Hearts to look forth, eyes to look round.

Silent we went an hour together,  
Under grey skies by waters white.  
Our hearts were full of windy weather,  
Clouds and blown stars and broken light.

Full of cold clouds and moonbeams drifted  
And streaming storms and straying fires,  
Our souls in us were stirred and shifted  
By doubts and dreams and foiled desires.

Across, aslant, a scudding seamew  
Swam, dipped, and dropped, and grazed the sea:  
And one with me I could not dream you;  
And one with you I could not be.

As the white wing the white wave's fringes  
Touched and slid over and flashed past—  
As a pale cloud a pale flame tinges  
From the moon's lowest light and last—

As a star feels the sun and falters,  
Touched to death by diviner eyes—  
As on the old gods' untended altars  
The old fire of withered worship dies—

(Once only, once the shrine relighted  
Sees the last fiery shadow shine,  
Last shadow of flame and faith benighted,  
Sees falter and flutter and fail the shrine)

So once with fiery breath and flying  
Your winged heart touched mine and went,  
And the swift spirits kissed, and sighing,  
Sundered and smiled and were content.

That only touch, that feeling only,  
Enough we found, we found too much;  
For the unlit shrine is hardly lonely  
As one the old fire forgets to touch.

Slight as the sea's sight of the seamew,  
Slight as the sun's sight of the star:  
Enough to show one must not deem you  
For love's sake other than you are.

Who snares and tames with fear and danger  
A bright beast of a fiery kin,  
Only to mar, only to change her  
Sleek supple soul and splendid skin?

Easy with blows to mar and maim her,  
Easy with bonds to bind and bruise;  
What profit, if she yield her tamer  
The limbs to mar, the soul to lose?

Best leave or take the perfect creature,  
Take all she is or leave complete;  
Transmute you will not form or feature,  
Change feet for wings or wings for feet.

Strange eyes, new limbs, can no man give her;  
Sweet is the sweet thing as it is.  
No soul she hath, we see, to outlive her;  
Hath she for that no lips to kiss?

So may one read his weird, and reason,  
And with vain drugs assuage no pain.  
For each man in his loving season  
Fools and is fooled of these in vain.

Charms that allay not any longing,  
Spells that appease not any grief,  
Time brings us all by handfuls, wronging  
All hurts with nothing of relief.

Ah, too soon shot, the fool's bolt misses!  
What help? the world is full of loves;  
Night after night of running kisses,  
Chirp after chirp of changing doves.

Should Love disown or disesteem you  
For loving one man more or less?  
You could not tame your light white seamew,  
Nor I my sleek black pantheress.

For a new soul let whoso please pray,  
We are what life made us, and shall be.  
For you the jungle and me the seaspray,  
And south for you and north for me.

But this one broken foamwhite feather  
I throw you off the hither wing,  
Splashed stiff with seascurf and salt weather,  
This song for sleep to learn and sing—

Sing in your ear when, daytime over,  
You, couched at long length on hot sand  
With some sleek sundiscoloured lover,  
Wince from his breath as from a brand:

Till the acrid hour aches out and ceases,  
And the sheathed eyeball sleepier swims,  
The deep flank smoothes its dimpling creases,  
And passion loosens all the limbs:

Till dreams of sharp grey northsea weather  
Fall faint upon your fiery sleep,  
As on strange sands a strayed bird's feather  
The wind may choose to lose or keep.

But I, who leave my queen of panthers,  
As a tired honeyheavy bee  
Gilt with sweet dust from goldgrained anthers  
Leaves the rosechalice, what for me?

From the ardours of the chalice centre,  
From the amorous anthers golden grime,  
That scorch and smutch all wings that enter,  
I fly forth hot from honeytime.

But as to a bee's gilt thighs and winglets  
The flowerdust with the flowersmell clings;  
As a snake's mobile rampant ringlets  
Leave the sand marked with print of rings;

So to my soul in surer fashion  
Your savage stamp and savour hangs;  
The print and perfume of old passion,  
The wildbeast mark of panther's fangs.

*AT PARTING*

FOR a day and a night Love sang to us, played with us,  
Folded us round from the dark and the light;  
And our hearts were fulfilled of the music he made  
with us,  
Made with our hearts and our lips while he stayed  
with us,  
Stayed in mid passage his pinions from flight  
For a day and a night.

From his foes that kept watch with his wings had he  
hidden us,  
Covered us close from the eyes that would smite,  
From the feet that had tracked and the tongues that  
had chidden us  
Sheltering in shade of the myrtles forbidden us  
Spirit and flesh growing one with delight  
For a day and a night.

But his wings will not rest and his feet will not stay  
for us:  
Morning is here in the joy of its might;  
With his breath has he sweetened a night and a day  
for us;  
Now let him pass, and the myrtles make way for us;  
Love can but last in us here at his height  
For a day and a night.

## A VISION OF SPRING IN WINTER

### I

O TENDER time that love thinks long to see,  
Sweet foot of spring that with her footfall sows  
Late snowlike flowery leavings of the snows,  
Be not too long irresolute to be;  
O mothermonth, where have they hidden thee?  
Out of the pale time of the flowerless rose  
I reach my heart out toward the springtime lands,  
I stretch my spirit forth to the fair hours,  
The purplest of the prime;  
I lean my soul down over them, with hands  
Made wide to take the ghostly growths of flowers;  
I send my love back to the lovely time.

### II

Where has the greenwood hid thy gracious head?  
Veiled with what visions while the grey world grieves,  
Or muffled with what shadows of green leaves,  
What warm intangible green shadows spread  
To sweeten the sweet twilight for thy bed?  
What sleep enchants thee? what delight deceives?  
Where the deep dreamlike dew before the dawn  
Feels not the fingers of the sunlight yet  
Its silver web unweave,  
Thy footless ghost on some unfooted lawn  
Whose air the unrisen sunbeams fear to fret  
Lives a ghost's life of daylong dawn and eve.

### III

Sunrise it sees not, neither set of star,  
Large nightfall, nor imperial plenilune,  
Nor strong sweet shape of the fullbreasted noon;  
But where the silversandalled shadows are,  
Too soft for arrows of the sun to mar,  
Moves with the mild gait of an ungrown moon:

Hard overhead the halflit crescent swims,  
 The tendercoloured night draws hardly breath,  
 The light is listening;  
 They watch the dawn of slendershaped limbs,  
 Virginal, born again of doubtful death,  
 Chill fosterfather of the weanling spring.

## IV

As sweet desire of day before the day,  
 As dreams of love before the true love born,  
 From the outer edge of winter overworn  
 The ghost arisen of May before the May  
 Takes through dim air her unawakened way,  
 The gracious ghost of morning risen ere morn.  
 With little unblown breasts and child-eyed looks  
 Following, the very maid, the girlchild spring,  
 Lifts windward her bright brows,  
 Dips her light feet in warm and moving brooks,  
 And kindles with her own mouth's colouring  
 The fearful firstlings of the plumeless boughs.

## V

I seek thee sleeping, and awhile I see,  
 Fair face that art not, how thy maiden breath  
 Shall put at last the deadly days to death  
 And fill the fields and fire the woods with thee  
 And seaward hollows where my feet would be  
 When heaven shall hear the word that April saith  
 To change the cold heart of the weary time,  
 To stir and soften all the time to tears,  
 Tears joyfuller than mirth;  
 As even to May's clear height the young days climb  
 With feet not swifter than those fair first years  
 Whose flowers revive not with thy flowers on earth.

## VI

I would not bid thee, though I might, give back  
 One good thing youth has given and borne away;  
 I crave not any comfort of the day  
 That is not, nor on time's retrodden track

Would turn to meet the whiterobed hours or black  
That long since left me on their mortal way;  
Nor light nor love that has been, nor the breath  
That comes with morning from the sun to be  
And sets light hope on fire;  
No fruit, no flower thought once too fair for death,  
No flower nor hour once fallen from life's green tree,  
No leaf once plucked or once fulfilled desire.

## VII

The morning song beneath the stars that fled  
With twilight through the moonless mountain air,  
While youth with burning lips and wreathless hair  
Sang toward the sun that was to crown his head,  
Rising; the hopes that triumphed and fell dead,  
The sweet swift eyes and songs of hours that were;  
These may'st thou not give back for ever; these,  
As at the sea's heart all her wrecks lie waste,  
Lie deeper than the sea;  
But flowers thou may'st, and winds, and hours of ease,  
And all its April to the world thou may'st  
Give back, and half my April back to me.

## EX-VOTO

WHEN their last hour shall rise  
Pale on these mortal eyes,  
Herself like one that dies.

    And kiss me dying  
The cold last kiss, and fold  
Close round my limbs her cold  
Soft shade as raiment rolled  
    And leave them lying,

If aught my soul would say  
Might move to hear me pray  
The birthgod of my day  
    That he might hearken,  
This grace my heart should crave,  
To find no landward grave  
That worldly springs make brave,  
    World's winters darken,

Nor grow through gradual hours  
The cold blind seed of flowers  
Made by new beams and showers  
    From limbs that moulder,  
Nor take my part with earth,  
But find her death's new birth  
A bed of larger girth,  
    More chaste and colder.

Not earth's for spring and fall,  
Not earth's at heart, not all  
Earth's making, though men call  
    Earth only mother,  
Not hers at heart she bare  
Me, but thy child, O fair  
Sea, and thy brother's care,  
    The wind thy brother.

Yours was I born, and ye,  
 The sea-wind and the sea,  
 Made all my soul in me  
     A song for ever,  
 A harp to string and smite  
 For love's sake of the bright  
 Wind and the sea's delight;  
     To fail them never:

Not while on this side death  
 I hear what either saith  
 And drink of cither's breath  
     With heart's thanksgiving  
 That in my veins like wine  
 Some sharp salt blood of thine,  
 Some springtide pulse of brine,  
     Yet leaps up living.

When thy salt lips wellnigh  
 Sucked in my mouth's last sigh,  
 Grudged I so much to die  
     This death as others?  
 Was it no ease to think  
 The chalice from whose brink  
 Fate gave me death to drink  
     Was thine—my mother's?

Thee too, the all-fostering earth,  
 Fair as thy fairest birth,  
 More than thy worthiest worth,  
     We call, we know thee,  
 More sweet and just and dread  
 Than live men highest of head  
 Or even thy holiest dead  
     Laid low below thee.

The sunbeam on the sheaf,  
 The dewfall on the leaf,  
 All joy, all grace, all grief,  
     Are thine for giving;

Of thee our loves are born,  
Our lives and loves, that mourn  
And triumph; tares with corn,  
Dead seed with living:

All good and ill things done  
In eyeshot of the sun  
At last in thee made one  
Rest well contented;  
All words of all man's breath  
And works he doth or saith,  
All wholly done to death,  
None long lamented.

A slave to sons of thee,  
Thou, seeming, yet art free;  
But who shall make the sea  
Serve even in seeming?  
What plough shall bid it bear  
Seed to the sun and the air,  
Fruit for thy strong sons' fare,  
Fresh wine's foam streaming?

What oldworld son of thine,  
Made drunk with death as wine,  
Hath drunk the bright sea's brine  
With lips of laughter?  
Thy blood they drink; but he  
Who hath drunken of the sea  
Once deeper than of thee  
Shall drink not after.

Of thee thy sons of men  
Drink deep, and thirst again;  
For wine in feasts, and then  
In fields for slaughter;  
But thirst shall touch not him  
Who hath felt with sense grown dim  
Rise, covering lip and limb,  
The wan sea's water.

All fire of thirst that aches  
The salt sea cools and slakes  
More than all springs or lakes,  
    Freshets or shallows;  
Wells where no beam can burn  
Through frondage of the fern  
That hidejS from hart and hern  
    The haunt it hallows.

Peace with all graves on earth  
For death or sleep or birth  
Be alway, one in worth  
    One with another;  
But when my time shall be,  
O mother, O my sea,  
Alive or dead, take me,  
    Me too, my mother.

## A FORSAKEN GARDEN

IN a coign of the cliff between lowland and highland,  
At the seadown's edge between windward and lee,  
Walled round with rocks as an inland island,  
The ghost of a garden fronts the sea.  
A girdle of brushwood and thorn encloses  
The steep square slope of the blossomless bed  
Where the weeds that grew green from the graves of its roses  
Now lie dead.

The fields fall southward, abrupt and broken,  
To the low last edge of the long lone laifd.  
If a step should sound or a word be spoken,  
Would a ghost not rise at the strange guest's hand?  
So long have the grey bare walks lain guestless,  
Through branches and briars if a man make way,  
He shall find no life but the seawind's, restless  
Night and day.

The dense hard passage is blind and stifled  
That crawls by a track none turn to climb  
To the strait waste place that the years have rifled  
Of all but the thorns that are touched not of time.  
The thorns he spares when the rose is taken;  
The rocks are left when he wastes the plain.  
The wind that wanders, the weeds windshaken,  
These remain.

Not a flower to be pressed of the foot that falls not;  
As the heart of a dead man the seedplots are dry;  
From the thicket of thorns whence the nightingale calls not,  
Could she call, there were never a rose to reply.  
Over the meadows that blossom and wither  
Rings but the note of a seabird's song;  
Only the sun and the rain come hither  
All year long.

The sun burns sere and the rain dishevels  
 One gaunt bleak blossom of scentless breath.  
 Only the wind here hovers and revels  
 In a round where life seems barren as death.  
 Here there was laughing of old, there was weeping,  
 Haply, of lovers none ever will know,  
 Whose eyes went seaward a hundred sleeping  
 Years ago.

Heart handfast in heart as they stood, "Look thither,"  
 Did he whisper? "look forth from the flowers to the sea;  
 For the foamflowers endure when the roseblossoms wither,  
 And men that love lightly may die—but we?"  
 And the same wind sang and the same waves whitened,  
 And or ever the garden's last petals were shed,  
 In the lips that had whispered, the eyes that had lightened,  
 Love was dead.

Or they loved their life through, and then went whither?  
 And were one to the end—but what end who knows?  
 Love deep as the sea as a rose must wither,  
 As the rosered seaweed that mocks the rose.  
 Shall the dead take thought for the dead to love them?  
 What love was ever as deep as a grave?  
 They are loveless now as the grass above them  
 Or the wave.

All are at one now, roses and lovers,  
 Not known of the cliffs and the fields of the sea.  
 Not a breath of the time that has been hovers  
 In the air now soft with a summer to be.  
 Not a breath shall there sweeten the seasons hereafter  
 Of the flowers or the lovers that laugh now or weep,  
 When as they that are free now of weeping and laughter  
 We shall sleep.

Here death may deal not again for ever;  
 Here change may come not till all change end.  
 From the graves they have made they shall rise up never,  
 Who have left nought living to ravage and rend.

Earth, stones, and thorns of the wild ground growing,  
While the sun and the rain live, these shall be;  
Till a last wind's breath upon all these blowing  
Roll the sea.

Till the slow sea rise and the sheer cliff crumble,  
Till terrace and meadow the deep gulfs drink,  
Till the strength of the waves of the high tides humble  
The fields that lessen, the rocks that shrink,  
Here now in his triumph where all things falter,  
Stretched out on the spoils that his own hand spread,  
As a god selfslain on his own strange altar,  
Death lies dead.

## RELICS

THIS flower that smells of honey and the sea,  
White laurustine, seems in my hand to be

A white star made of memory long ago  
Lit in the heaven of dear times dead to me.

A star out of the skies love used to know  
Here held in hand, a stray left yet to show

What flowers my heart was full of in the days  
That are long since gone down dead memory's flow.

Dead memory that revives on doubtful ways,  
Half hearkening what the buried season says

Out of the world of the unapparent dead  
Where the lost Aprils are, and the lost Mays.

Flower, once I knew thy starwhite brethren bred  
Nigh where the last of all the land made head

Against the sea, a keenfaced promontory,  
Flowers on salt wind and sprinkled seadews fed.

Their hearts were glad of the free place's glory;  
The wind that sang them all his stormy story

Had talked all winter to the sleepless spray,  
And as the sea's their hues were hard and hoary.

Like things born of the sea and the bright day,  
They laughed out at the years that could not slay,

Live sons and joyous of unquiet hours,  
And stronger than all storms that range for prey.

And in the close indomitable flowers  
A keenedged odour of the sun and showers

Was as the smell of the fresh honeycomb  
Made sweet for mouths of none but paramours.

Out of the hard green wall of leaves that clomb  
They showed like windfalls of the snowsoft foam,

Or feathers from the weary southwind's wing,  
Fair as the spray that it came shoreward from.

And thou, as white, what word hast thou to bring?  
 If my heart hearken, whereof wilt thou sing?  
 For some sign surely thou too hast to bear,  
 Some word far south was taught thee of the spring.

White like a white rose, not like these that were  
 Taught of the wind's mouth and the winter air,  
 Poor tender thing of soft Italian bloom,  
 Where once thou grewest, what else for me grew there?

Born in what spring and on what city's tomb,  
 By whose hand wast thou reached, and plucked for whom?  
 N There hangs about thee, could the soul's sense tell,  
 An odour as of love and of love's doom,

Of days more sweet than thou wast sweet to smell,  
 Of flowersoft thoughts that came to flower and fell,  
 Of loves that lived a lily's life and died,  
 Of dreams now dwelling where dead roses dwell.

O white birth of the golden mountainside  
 That for the sun's love makes its bosom wide  
 At sunrise, and with all its woods and flowers  
 Takes in the morning to its heart of pride!

Thou hast a word of that one land of ours,  
 And of the fair town called of the Fair Towers,  
 A word for me of my San Gimignano,  
 A word of April's greenestgirdled hours.

Of the old breached walls whereon the wallflowers ran  
 Called of Saint Fina, breachless now of man,  
 Though time with soft feet break them stone by stone,  
 Who breaks down hour by hour his own reign's span.

Of the old cliff overcome and overgrown  
 That all that flowerage clothed as flesh clothes bone,  
 That garment of acacias made for May,  
 Whereof here lies one witness overblown.

The fair brave trees with all their flowers at play,  
How kinglike they stood up into the day!  
How sweet the day was with them, and the night!  
Such words of message have dead flowers to say.

This that the winter and the wind made bright,  
And this that lived upon Italian light,  
Before I throw them and these words away,  
Who knows but I what memories too take flight?



SWINBURNE: SELECTED POEMS

18791909



## THALASSIUS

UPON the flowery forefront of the year,  
One wandering by the greygreen April sea  
Found on a reach of shingle and shallower sand  
Inlaid with starrier glimmering jewellery  
Left for the sun's love and the light wind's cheer  
Along the foamflowered strand  
Breezebrightened, something nearer sea than land  
Though the last shoreward blossomfringe was near,  
A babe asleep with flowersoft face that gleamed  
To sun and seaward as it laughed and dreamed,  
Too sure of either love for cither's fear,  
Albeit so birdlike slight and light, it seemed  
Nor man nor mortal child of man, but fair  
As even its twinborn tenderer sprayflowers were,  
That the wind scatters like an Oread's hair.

For when July strewed fire on earth and sea  
The last time ere that year,  
Out of the flame of morn Cymothoe  
Beheld one brighter than the sunbright sphere  
Move toward her from its fieriest heart, whence trod  
The live sun's very God,  
Across the foambright waterways that are  
As heavenlier heavens with star for answering star,  
And on her eyes and hair and maiden mouth  
Felt a kiss falling fierier than the South  
And heard above afar  
A noise of songs and windenamoured wings  
And lutes and lyres of milder and mightier strings,  
And round the resonant radiance of his car  
Where depth is one with height,  
Light heard as music, music seen as light.  
And with that second moondawn of the spring's  
That fosters the first rose,  
A sunchild whiter than the sunlit snows  
Was born out of the world of sunless things  
That round the round earth flows and ebbs and flows.

But he that found the seaflower by the sea  
 And took to foster like a graft of earth  
 Was born of man's most highest and heavenliest birth,  
 Freeborn as winds and stars and waves are free;  
 A warrior grey with glories more than years,  
 Though more of years than change the quick to dead  
 Had rained their light and darkness on his head;  
 A singer that in time's and memory's ears  
 Should leave such words to sing as all his peers  
 Might praise with hallowing heat of rapturous tears  
 Till all the days of human flight were fled.  
 And at his knees his fosterling was fed  
 Not with man's wine and bread  
 Nor mortal mothermilk of hopes and fears,  
 But food of deep memorial days long sped;  
 For bread with wisdom and with song for wine  
 Clear as the full calm's emerald hyaline.  
 And from his grave glad lips the boy would gather  
 Fine honey of songnotes goldener than gold,  
 More sweet than bees make of the breathing heather,  
 That he, as glad and bold,  
 Might drink as they, and keep his spirit from cold.  
 And the boy loved his laurelladen hair  
 As his own father's risen on the eastern air,  
 And that less white browbinding bay leaf bloom  
 More than all flowers his father's eyes relume;  
 And those high songs he heard,  
 More than all notes of any landward bird,  
 More than all sounds less free  
 Than the wind's quiring to the choral sea.

High things the high song taught him; how the breath  
 Too frail for life may be more strong than death;  
 And this poor flash of sense in life, that gleams  
 As a ghost's glory in dreams,  
 More stabile than the world's own heart's root seems,  
 By that strong faith of lordliest love which gives  
 To death's own sightlesseeming eyes a light  
 Clearer, to death's bare bones a verier might,  
 Than shines or strikes from any man that lives.  
 How he that loves life overmuch shall die  
 The dog's death, utterly:

And he that much less loves it than he hates  
 All wrongdoing that is done  
 Anywhere always underneath the sun  
 Shall live a mightier life than time's or fate's.  
 One fairer thing he shewed him, and in might  
 More strong than day and night  
 Whose strengths build up time's towering period:  
 Yea, one thing stronger and more high than God,  
 Which if man had not, then should God not be:  
 And that was Liberty.  
 And gladly should man die to gain, he said,  
 Freedom; and gladlier, having lost, lie dead.  
 For man's earth was not, nor the sweet seawaves  
 His, nor his own land, nor its very graves,  
 Except they bred not, bore not, hid not slaves:  
 But all of all that is,  
 Were one man free in body and soul, were his.

And the song softened, even as heaven by night  
 Softens, from sunnier down to starrier light,  
 And with its moonbright breath  
 Blessed life for death's sake, and for life's sake death.  
 Till as the moon's own beam and breath confuse  
 In one clear hueless haze of glimmering hues  
 The sea's line and the land's line and the sky's,  
 And light for love of darkness almost dies,  
 As darkness only lives for light's dear love,  
 Whose hands the web of night is woven of,  
 So in that heaven of wondrous words were life  
 And death brought out of strife;  
 Yea, by that strong spell of serene increase  
 Brought out of strife to peace.

And the song lightened, as the wind at morn  
 Flashes, and even with lightning of the wind  
 Night's thickspun web is thinned  
 And all its weft unwoven and overworn  
 Shrinks, as might love from scorn.  
 And as when wind and light on water and land  
 Leap as twin gods from heavenward hand in hand,  
 And with the sound and splendour of their leap  
 Strike darkness dead, and daunt the spirit of sleep,

And burn it up with fire;  
 So with the light that lightened from the lyre  
 Was all the bright heat in the child's heart stirred  
 And blown with blasts of music into flame  
 Till even his sense became  
 Fire, as the sense that fires the singing bird  
 Whose song calls night by name,  
 And in the soul within the sense began  
 The manlike passion of a godlike man,  
 And in the sense within the soul again  
 Thoughts that make men of gods and gods of men.

For love the high song taught him: love that turns  
 God's heart toward man as man's to Godward; love  
 That life and death and life are fashioned of,  
 From the first breath that burns  
 Half kindled on the flowerlike yeanling's lip,  
 So light and faint that life seems like to slip,  
 To that yet weaklier drawn  
 When sunset dies of night's devouring dawn.  
 But the man dying not wholly as all men dies  
 If aught be left of his in live men's eyes  
 Out of the dawnless dark of death to rise;  
 If aught of deed or word  
 Be seen for all time or of all time heard.  
 Love, that though body and soul were overthrown  
 Should live for love's sake of itself alone,  
 Though spirit and flesh were one thing doomed and dead,  
 Not wholly annihilated.  
 Seeing even the hoariest ash-flake that the pyre  
 Drops, and forgets the thing was once afire  
 And gave its heart to feed the pile's full flame  
 Till its own heart its own heat overcame,  
 Outlives its own life, though by scarce a span,  
 As such men dying outlive themselves in man,  
 Outlive themselves for ever; if the heat  
 Outburn the heart that kindled it, the sweet  
 Outlast the flower whose soul it was, and flit  
 Forth of the body of it  
 Into some new shape of a strange perfume  
 More potent than its light live spirit of bloom,  
 How shall not something of that soul relive,

That only soul that had such gifts to give  
 As lighten something even of all men's doom  
 Even from the labouring womb  
 Even to the seal set on the unopening tomb?  
 And these the loving light of song and love  
 Shall wrap and lap round and impend above,  
 Imperishable; and all springs born illumine  
 Their sleep with brighter thoughts than wake the dove  
 To music, when the hillside winds resume  
 The marriagesong of heatherflower and broom  
 And all the joy thereof.

And hate the song too taught him: hate of all  
 That brings or holds in thrall  
 Of spirit or flesh, freeborn ere God began,  
 The holy body and sacred soul of man.  
 And wheresoever a curse was or a chain,  
 A throne for torment or a crown for bane  
 Rose, moulded out of poor men's molten pain,  
 There, said he, should man's heaviest hate be set  
 Inexorably, to faint not or forget  
 Till the last warmth bled forth of the last vein  
 In flesh that none should call a king's again,  
 Seeing wolves and dogs and birds that plaguestrike air  
 Leave the last bone of all the carrion bare.

And hope the high song taught him: hope whose eyes  
 Can sound the seas unsoundable, the skies  
 Inaccessible of eyesight; that can see  
 What earth beholds not, hear what wind and sea  
 Hear not, and speak what all these crying in one  
 Can speak not to the sun.  
 For in her sovereign eyelight all things are  
 Clear as the closest seen and kindlier star  
 That marries morn and even and winter and spring  
 With one love's golden ring.  
 For she can see the days of man, the birth  
 Of good and death of evil things on earth  
 Inevitable and infinite, and sure  
 As present pain is, or herself is pure.  
 Yea, she can hear and see, beyond all things  
 That lighten from before Time's thunderous wings

Through the awful circle of wheelwinged periods,  
 The tempest of the twilight of all Gods:  
 And higher than all the circling course they ran  
 The sundawn of the spirit that was man.

And fear the song too taught him; fear to be  
 Worthless the dear love of the wind and sea  
 That bred him fearless, like a seamew reared  
 In rocks of man's foot feared,  
 Where nought of wingless life may sing or shine.  
 Fear to wax worthless of that heaven he had  
 When all the life in all his limbs was glad  
 And all the drops in all his veins were wine  
 And all the pulses music; when his heart,  
 Singing, bade heaven and wind and sea bear part  
 In one live song's reiteration, and they bore:  
 Fear to go crownless of the flower he wore  
 When the winds loved him and the waters knew,  
 The blithest life that clove their blithe life through  
 With living limbs exultant, or held strife  
 More amorous than all dalliance eye anew  
 With the bright breath and strength of their large life,  
 With all strong wrath of all sheer winds that blew,  
 All glories of all storms of the air that fell  
 Prone, ineluctable,  
 With roar from heaven of revel, and with hue  
 As of a heaven turned hell.  
 For when the red blast of their breath had made  
 All heaven aflush with light more dire than shade,  
 He felt it in his blood and eyes and hair  
 Burn as if all the fires of the earth and air  
 Had laid strong hold upon his flesh, and stung  
 The soul behind it as with serpent's tongue,  
 Forked like the loveliest lightnings: nor could bear  
 But hardly, half distraught with strong delight,  
 The joy that like a garment wrapped him round  
 And lapped him over and under  
 With raiment of great light  
 And rapture of great sound  
 At every loud leap earthward of the thunder  
 From heaven's most furthest bound:  
 So seemed all heaven in hearing and in sight,

Alive and mad with glory and angry joy,  
That something of its marvellous mirth and might  
Moved even to madness, fledged as even for flight,  
The blood and spirit of one but mortal boy.

So, clothed with love and fear that love makes great,  
And armed with hope and hate,  
He set first foot upon the springflowered ways  
That all feet pass and praise.  
And one dim dawn between the winter and spring,  
In the sharp harsh wind harrying heaven and earth  
To put back April that had borne his birth  
From sunward on her sunniest showerstruck wing,  
With tears and laughter for the dewdropt thing,  
Slight as indeed a dewdrop, by the sea  
One met him lovelier than all men may be,  
Godfeatured, with god's eyes; and in their might  
Somewhat that drew men's own to mar their sight,  
Even of all eyes drawn toward him: and his mouth  
Was as the very rose of all men's youth,  
One rose of all the rosebeds in the world:  
But round his brows the curls were snakes that curled,  
And like his tongue a serpent's; and his voice  
Speaks death, and bids rejoice.  
Yet then he spake no word, seeming as dumb,  
A dumb thing mild and hurtless; nor at first  
From his bowed eyes seemed any light to come,  
Nor his meek lips for blood or tears to thirst:  
But as one blind and mute in mild sweet wise  
Pleading for pity of piteous lips and eyes,  
He strayed with faint bare lilylovely feet  
Helpless, and flowerlike sweet:  
Nor might man see, not having word hereof,  
That this of all gods was the great god Love.

And seeing him lovely and like a little child  
That wellnigh wept for wonder that it smiled  
And was so feeble and fearful, with soft speech  
The youth bespake him softly; but there fell  
From the sweet lips no sweet word audible  
That ear or thought might reach:  
No sound to make the dim cold silence glad,

No breath to thaw the hard harsh air with heat;  
 Only the saddest smile of all things sweet,  
 Only the sweetest smile of all things sad.

And so they went together one green way  
 Till April dying made free the world for May;  
 And on his guide suddenly Love's face turned,  
 And in his blind eyes burned  
 Hard light and heat of laughter; and like flame  
 That opens in a mountain's ravening mouth  
 To blear and sear the sunlight from the south,  
 His mute mouth opened, and his first word came:  
 "Knowest thou me now by name?"  
 And all his stature waxed immeasurable,  
 As of one shadowing heaven and lightening hell;  
 And statelier stood he than a tower that stands  
 And darkens with its darkness far off sands  
 Whereon the sky leans red;  
 And with a voice that stilled the winds he said:  
 "I am he that was thy lord before thy birth,  
 I am he that is thy lord till thou turn earth:  
 I make the night more dark, and all the morrow  
 Dark as the night whose darkness was my breath:  
 O fool, my name is sorrow;  
 Thou fool, my name is death."

And he that heard spake not, and looked right on  
 Again, and Love was gone.

Through many a night toward many a wearier day  
 His spirit bore his body down its way.  
 Through many a day toward many a wearier night  
 His soul sustained his sorrows in her sight.  
 And earth was bitter, and heaven, and even the sea  
 Sorrowful even as he.  
 And the wind helped not, and the sun was dumb;  
 And with too long strong stress of grief to be  
 His heart grew sere and numb.

And one bright eve ere summer in autumn sank  
 At stardawn standing on a grey seabank

He felt the wind fitfully shift and heave  
 As towards a stormier eve;  
 And all the wan wide sea shuddered; and earth  
 Shook underfoot as toward some timeless birth,  
 Intolerable and inevitable; and all  
 Heaven, darkling, trembled like a stricken thrall.  
 And far out of the quivering east, and far  
 From past the moonrise and its guiding star,  
 Began a noise of tempest and a light  
 That was not of the lightning; and a sound  
 Rang with it round and round  
 That was not of the thunder; and a flight  
 As of blown clouds by night,  
 That was not of them; and with songs and cries  
 That sang and shrieked their soul out at the skies  
 A shapeless earthly storm of shapes began  
 From all ways round to move in on the man,  
 Clamorous against him silent; and their feet  
 Were as the wind's are fleet,  
 And their shrill songs were as wild birds' are sweet.

And as when all the world of earth was wronged  
 And all the host of all men driven afoam  
 By the red hand of Rome,  
 Round some fierce amphitheatre overthronged  
 With fair clear faces full of bloodier lust  
 Than swells and stings the tiger when his mood  
 Is fieriest after blood  
 And drunk with trampling of the murderous must  
 That soaks and stains the tortuous closecoiled wood  
 Made monstrous with its myriad-mustering brood,  
 Face by face panted and gleamed and pressed,  
 And breast by passionate breast  
 Heaved hot with ravenous rapture, as they quaffed  
 The red ripe full fume of the deep live draught,  
 The sharp quick reek of keen fresh bloodshed, blown  
 Through the dense deep drift up to the emperor's throne  
 From the under steaming sands  
 With clamour of allapplausive throats and hands,  
 Mingling in mirthful time  
 With shrill blithe mockeries of the lithelimbed. mime:  
 So from somewhence far forth of the un beholden,  
 Dreadfully driven from over and after and under,

Fierce, blown through fifes of brazen blast and golden,  
 With sound of chiming waves that drown the thunder  
 Or thunder that strikes dumb the sea's own chimes,  
 Began the bellowing of the bullvoiced mimes,  
 Terrible; firs bowed down as briars or palms  
 Even at the breathless blast as of a breeze  
 Fulfilled with clamour and clangour and storms of psalms;  
 Red hands rent up the roots of oldworld trees,  
 Thick flames of torches tossed as tumbling seas  
 Made mad the moonless and infuriate air  
 That, ravening, revelled in the riotous hair  
 And raiment of the furred Bassarides.

So came all those in on him; and his heart,  
 As out of sleep suddenly struck astart,  
 Danced, and his flesh took fire of theirs, and grief  
 Was as a last year's leaf  
 Blown dead far down the wind's way; and he set  
 His pale mouth to the brightest mouth it met  
 That laughed for love against his lips, and bade  
 Follow; and in following all his blood grew glad  
 And as again a seabird's; for the wind  
 Took him to bathe him deep round breast and brow  
 Not as it takes a dead leaf drained and thinned,  
 But as the brightest bayflower blown on bough,  
 Set springing toward it singing: and they rode  
 By many a vineleaved, many a rosehung road,  
 Exalt with exultation; many a night  
 Set all its stars upon them as for spies  
 On many a moonbewildering mountainheight  
 Where he rode only by the fierier light  
 Of his dread lady's hot sweet hungering eyes.  
 For the moon wandered witless of her way,  
 Spellstricken by strong magic in such wise  
 As wizards use to set the stars astray.  
 And in his ears the music that makes mad  
 Beat always; and what way the music bade,  
 That alway rode he; nor was any sleep  
 His, nor from height nor deep.  
 But heaven was as red iron, slumberless,  
     had no heart to bless;  
 And earth lay sere and darkling as distraught,  
 And help in her was nought.

Then many a midnight, many a morn and even,  
His mother, passing forth of her fair heaven,  
With goodlier gifts than all save gods can give  
From earth or from the heaven where seathings live,  
With shine of seaflowers through the bayleaf braid  
Woven for a crown her foamwhite hands had made  
To crown him with land's laurel and seadew,  
Sought the seabird that was her boy: but he  
Sat pantherthroned beside Erigone,  
Riding the red ways of the revel through  
Midmost of palemouthed passion's crownless crew.  
Till on some winter's dawn of some dim year  
He let the vinebit on the panther's lip  
Slide, and the green rein slip,  
And set his eyes to seaward, nor gave ear  
If sound from landward hailed him, dire or dear;  
And passing forth of all those fair fierce ranks  
Back to the grey seabanks,  
Against a searock lying, aslant the steep,  
Fell after many sleepless dreams on sleep.

And in his sleep the dun green light was shed  
Heavily round his head  
That through the veil of sea falls fathomdeep,  
Blurred like a lamp's that when the night drops dead  
Dies; and his eyes gat grace of sleep to see  
The deep divine dark dayshinc of the sea,  
Dense waterwalls and clear dusk waterways,  
Broadcased, or branching as a seaflower sprays  
That side or this dividing; and anew  
The glory of all her glories that he knew.  
And in sharp rapture of recovering tears  
He woke on fire with yearnings of old years,  
Pure as one purged of pain that passion bore,  
Ill child of bitter mother; for his own  
Looked laughing toward him from her midsea throne,  
Up toward him there ashore.

Thence in his heart the great same joy began,  
Of child that made him man:  
And turned again from all hearts else on quest,  
He communed with his own heart, and had rest.

And like seawinds upon loud waters ran  
 His days and dreams together, till the joy  
 Burned in him of the boy.  
 Till the earth's great comfort and the sweet sea's breath  
 Breathed and blew life in where was heartless death,  
 Death spiritstricken of soulsick days, where strife  
 Of thought and flesh made mock of death and life.  
 And grace returned upon him of his birth  
 Where heaven was mixed with heavenlike sea and earth;  
 And song shot forth strong wings that took the sun  
 From inward, fledged with might of sorrow and mirth  
 And father's fire made mortal in his son.  
 Nor was not spirit of strength in blast and breeze  
 To exalt again the sun's child and the sea's;  
 For as wild mares in Thessaly grow great  
 With child of ravishing winds, that violate  
 Their leaping length of limb with manes like fire  
 And eyes outburning heaven's  
 With fires more violent than the lightning levin's  
 And breath drained out and desperate of desire,  
 Even so the spirit in him, when winds grew strong,  
 Grew great with child of song.  
 Nor less than when his veins first leapt for joy  
 To draw delight in such as burns a boy,  
 Now too the soul of all his senses felt  
 The passionate pride of deep seapulses dealt  
 Through nerve and jubilant vein  
 As from the love and largess of old time,  
 And with his heart again  
 The tidal throb of all the tides keep rhyme  
 And charm him from his own soul's separate sense  
 With infinite and invasive influence  
 That made strength sweet in him and sweetness strong,  
 Being now no more a singer, but a song.

Till one clear day when brighter seawind blew  
 And louder seashine lightened, for the waves  
 Were full of godhead and the light that saves,  
 His father's, and their spirit had pierced him through,  
 He felt strange breath and light all round him shed  
 That bowed him down with rapture; and he knew  
 His father's hand, hallowing his humbled head,  
 And the old great voice of the old good time, that said:

"Child of my sunlight and the sea, from birth  
A fosterling and fugitive on earth;  
Sleepless of soul as wind or wave or fire,  
A manchild with an ungrown God's desire;  
Because thou hast loved nought mortal more than me,  
Thy father, and thy motherhearted sea;  
Because thou hast set thine heart to sing, and sold  
Life and life's love for song, God's living gold;  
Because thou hast given thy flower and fire of youth  
To feed men's hearts with visions, truer than truth;  
Because thou hast kept in those worldwandering eyes  
The light that makes me music of the skies;  
Because thou hast heard with worldunwearied ears  
The music that puts light into the spheres;  
Have therefore in thine heart and in thy mouth  
The sound of song that mingles north and south,  
The song of all the winds that sing of me,  
And in thy soul the sense of all the sea."

## TO A SEAMEW

WHEN I had wings, my brother,  
Such wings were mine as thine:  
Such hfe my heart remembers  
In all as wild Septembers  
As this when life seems other,  
Though sweet, than once was mine;  
When I had wings, my brother,  
Such wings were mine as thine.

Such life as thrills and quickens  
The silence of thy flight,  
Or fills thy note's elation  
With lordlier exultation  
Than man's, whose faint heart sickens  
With hopes and fears that blight  
Such life as thrills and quickens  
The silence of thy flight.

Thy cry from windward clanging  
Makes all the cliffs rejoice;  
Though storm clothe seas with sorrow,  
Thy call salutes the morrow;  
While shades of pain seem hanging  
Round earth's most rapturous voice,  
Thy cry from windward clanging  
Makes all the cliffs rejoice.

We, sons and sires of seamen,  
Whose home is all the sea,  
What place man may, we claim it;  
But thine—whose thought may name it?  
Free birds live higher than freemen,  
And gladlier ye than we—  
We, sons and sires of seamen,  
Whose home is all the sea.

For you the storm sounds only  
More notes of more delight

Than earth's in sunniest weather:  
When heaven and sea together  
Join strengths against the lonely  
Lost bark borne down by night,  
For you the storm sounds only  
More notes of more delight.

With wider wing, and louder  
Long clarioncall of joy,  
Thy tribe salutes the terror  
Of darkness, wild as error,  
But sure as truth, and prouder  
Than waves with man for toy;  
With wider wing, and louder  
Long clarioncall of joy.

The wave's wing spreads and flutters,  
The wave's heart swells and breaks;  
One moment's passion thrills it,  
One pulse of power fulfils it  
And ends the pride it utters  
When, loud with life that quakes,  
The wave's wing spreads and flutters,  
The wave's heart swells and breaks.

But thine and thou, my brother,  
Keep heart and wing more high  
Than aught may scare or sunder;  
The waves whose throats are thunder  
Fall hurtling each on other,  
And triumph as they die;  
But thine and thou, my brother,  
Keep heart and wing more high.

More high than wrath or anguish,  
More strong than pride or fear,  
The sense or soul half hidden  
In thee, for us forbidden,  
Bids thee nor change nor languish,  
But live thy life as here,  
More high than wrath or anguish,  
More strong than pride or fear.

We are fallen, even we, whose passion  
 On earth is nearest thine;  
 Who sing, and cease from flying;  
 Who live, and dream of dying:  
 Grey time, in time's grey fashion,  
 Bids wingless creatures pine:  
 We are fallen, even we, whose passion  
 On earth is nearest thine.

The lark knows no such rapture,  
 Such joy no nightingale,  
 As sways the songless measure  
 Wherein thy wings take pleasure:  
 Thy love may no man capture,  
 Thy pride may no man quail;  
 The lark knows such no rapture,  
 Such joy no nightingale.

And we, whom dreams embolden,  
 We can but creep and sing  
 And watch through heaven's waste hollow  
 The flight no sight may follow  
 To the utter bourne beholden  
 Of none that lack thy wing:  
 And we, whom dreams embolden,  
 We can but creep and sing.

Our dreams have wings that falter,  
 Our hearts bear hopes that die;  
 For thee no dream could better  
 A life no fears may fetter,  
 A pride no care can alter,  
 That wots not whence or why  
 Our dreams have wings that falter,  
 Our hearts bear hopes that die.

With joy more fierce and sweeter  
 Than joys we deem divine  
 Their lives, by time untarnished,  
 Are girt about and garnished,  
 Who match the wave's full metre  
 And drink the wind's wild wine  
 With joy more fierce and sweeter  
 Than joys we deem divine.

Ah, well were I for ever,  
    Wouldst thou change lives with me,  
And take my song's wild honey,  
And give me back thy sunny  
Wide eyes that weary never,  
    And wings that search the sea;  
Ah, well were I for ever,  
    Wouldst thou change lives with me.

*Beachy Head: September 1886.*



## SWINBURNE: SELECTED POEMS

The poems in this selection are taken from the volumes quoted:

Dirge from THE UNHAPPY REVENGE (M.S. in the British Museum)

Song from ROSAMOND. (*Rosamond*, Act II)

Mary Beaton's Song from CHASTELARD. (*Chastelard*, Act I, Scene II)

AFTER DEATH (*Poems and Eallads*, First Series)

THE BLOODY SON " " " " "

THE SEA SWALLOWS " " " " "

A SONG IN TIME OF ORDER " " " " "

A SONG IN TIME OF REVOLUTION " " " " "

SAPPHICS " " " " "

HENDECASYLLABICS " " " " "

A LEAVETAKING " " " " "

HERMAPHRODITUS " " " " "

THE GARDEN OF PROSERPINE " " " " "

ITYLUS " " " " "

A BALLAD OF LIFE " " " " "

A BALLAD OF DEATH " " " " ?

LES NOYADES " " " " "

A CAMEO " " " " "

A LITANY " " " " "

AVE ATQUE VALE " " " " Second Series

LAUSVENERIS " " " " First Series

FAUSTINE " " " " "

THE TRIUMPH OF TIME " " " " "

ANACRORIA " " " " "

DOLORES " " " " "

PARADOS (*Atalanta in Calydon*)

STASIMON I " " " "

STASIMON II " " " "

STASIMON III " " " "

STASIMON IV, Kommos and Exodos " " " "

FELISE	<i>(Poems and Ballads, First Series)</i>				
PRELUDE	<i>(Songs before Sunrise)</i>				
SIENA	»	»	»		
MASTER TRIUMPHALIS	»	»	»		
"NoN DOLET"	»	»	»		
HYMN OF MEN	»	»	»		
GENESIS	»	»	»		
HERTHA	»	»	»		
CHORUS	<i>(Erechtheus)</i>				
IN THE BAY	<i>(Poems and Ballads, Second Series)</i>				
BALLAD TO FRANCOIS VILLON	»	»	»	»	»
A WASTED VIGIL	»	»	»	»	»
A BALLAD OF DREAMLAND	»	»	»	»	»
AT A MONTH'S END	»	»	»	»	»
AT PARTING	»	»	»	»	»
A VISION OF SPRING IN WINTER	»	»	»	»	»
EXVOTO	»	»	»	»	»
A FORSAKEN GARDEN	»	»	»	»	»
RELICS	»	»	»	»	»
THALASSIUS	<i>(Songs of the Sprmgttdes)</i>				
To A SEAMEW	<i>(Poems and Ballads, Third Series)</i>				











