

**TEXT FLY WITHIN
THE BOOK ONLY**

UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY

OU_210765

UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY

GARDENERS AND ASTRONOMERS

GARDENERS
AND
ASTRONOMERS

BY

EDITH SITWELL

HON DLITT (Leeds) HON DLITI (Durham)
HON D LITI (Oxford)

LONDON
MACMILLAN & CO. LTD

19 5 3

*This book is copyright in all countries which
are signatories to the Berne Convention*

MACMILLAN AND COMPANY LIMITED
London Bombay Calcutta Madras Melbourne

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY OF CANADA LIMITED
Toronto

ST MARTIN'S PRESS INC
New York

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

MY thanks are due to the Editors of *The Times Literary Supplement*, the *Listener*, the *Atlantic Monthly*, *New World Writing*, and the *New Statesman and Nation*, for permission to include certain of these poems.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
BAGATELLE	I
GARDENERS AND ASTRONOMERS	3
THE ROAD TO THEBES : THREE POEMS ON A THEME :	
I.	6
II. Interlude	11
III. The Night Wind	13
THREE SONGS :	
I.	16
II. The Song of the Beggar Maid to King Cophetua	16
III. A Bird's Song	17
BUTTERFLY-WEATHER	19
THE BLINDED SONG-BIRD NEAR THE BATTLE-FIELD	21
THE STONE-BREAKERS : A Prison-Song	22
OUT OF SCHOOL	24
THE WIND OF EARLY SPRING	28
SAILOR, WHAT OF THE ISLES	32
A LOVE SONG	35
THE APRIL RAIN	57
Two SONGS :	
I. Prometheus' Song	39
II. The Queen of Scotland's Reply to a Reproof from John Knox	40
A SONG OF THE DUST	41
NOTES	45

Bagatelle

FOR JOHN GIELGUD

UPON the soil - - (crushed rubies ? Or the pomegranate's
garnet seeds ?)
And ridged with mounds like graves
Of giants and earth-worms, two Noachian survivors
contemplate
Their glories of the past, their future state.

The small red Worm, rubied with dews of Death,
declared :
'My redness is from Adam. I, the coral-plant,
Built by a million lives, endeavours, toils, loves, glories,
Am the first and last Democracy. The sun
Is not more universal in its love. And I have brothers
Who live in the flesh of Negroes, and are thick
As lute-strings, and as powerful. I have others
Who sing the praise of Death with a sweet tongue —

Great venomous serpents in the unknown Africa ; they
carry
A gold bell on their tails, which ever ringeth
As they proceed, and like an angel singeth.'

Then said her enemy the Hen — the musty, dusty density,
The entity of primal, flightless, winged Stupidity :
° See how the Eagle falls like thunder from his height
And tears that continent of raging fire,
The heart, from the Tiger roaring like the sea,

And bears it to his nest
Wherein the huge eggs rest
From whence will break the young, the unfledged
Murders :
(So, young ambitions lie in the heart of Man).

O you into whose maw
The heart of Man will fall
As you will fall to mine:
I am more powerful than the father of those Murders,

It was no Eagle, but a fusty Hen
That pecked the fire-seeds from Prometheus' heart, a
crazy chilling
Hen-coop Laughter, the first Criticism, killing
The fire he brought to men,
As Age kills young Desire.'

The Worm said, 'I am small, my redness is from Adam.
But conquerors tall
Come to my embrace as I were Venus. I
Am the paramour in the last bed of love, and mine, the
kiss
That gives Eternity.
I am Princess of Darkness. Yet the huge gold world, ,
With all plantations, powers of gold growth that shall be
the bread of men,
Arise from the toil of the small, the mighty Worm beneath
the earth —
The blind, all-seeing Power at her great work of death
and of rebirth.'

Gardeners and Astronomers

TO J. M. AND AUDREY COHEN

WHERE the green airs seem fanning palms and the green
psalms
Of greater waters, where the orange hangs huge as Orion,
and day-long great gauds and lauds of light

Pierce their gold through the seeds, behold their secrets,
And the weight of the warm air
Shapes the exquisite corolla to a world of gold rain
Closed in thick gold armour like a King's,

Old men, dark-gold with earth and toil,
Praise their green heavens. 'Who would look dangerously
high in air
At planets, who may safely watch the earth
For the lesser solar system of the plants,
And for the spring's rebirth ?

Then why are we less than the astronomers ?
Than Hipparchus, who saw a comet that foretold
The birth of Mithridates and began
To form his catalogue of stars that are no more
Than the long-leaved planets in our garden-shed.

And men of emeralds walking through the night
Of early Chinese annals, Emperor Hwan-Te
Whose pleasure-dome was an observatory, Chien-Ke
Who shook a branch and all the stars together glittered
bright:
Now are they but the dust of lilies on our garden-bed.

And why are we less than these ?
Does not each dark root hold a world of gold ?
And was not Aristophanes,
Who gave the world green laughter, son of the garden-
goddess ?'

As no more than the planets in green heavens of the
gardens.

And in the gardens the airs sing of growth :
The orange-tree still sighs,
'I am the Dark that changed to water and to air,
The Water and the air that changed to gold —
The gold that turned into a plant. From the cool wave
of the air grows a smooth
Stem, and from this the gold, cold orange-tree.'

And happy as the Sun, the gardeners
See all miasmas from the human filth but as the dung
In which to sow great flowers,
Tall moons and mornings, seeds, and sires, and suns.

The Road to Thebes: Three Poems on a Theme

TO HUMPHREY AND GILLEN SEARLE

Is the road from Thebes to Athens and the
road from Athens to Thebes the same ?

ARISTOTLE: *Physica*

I

BESIDE the yellow foam that sings of Lydian airs and of
the lyre —

And vines taut as the lyre, the earth seems of sardonyx
Where the hot juices fall like yellow planets — earth
striped like the lynx.

Along the road to Thebes
All polished speeds,
Men, horses, seeds,
Are blown by the bright wind, the young flute-player,
Who kindles every vine-bough, sharp
As shrill spring lightnings.

But what golden speed
Now lies beneath the earth, like the soul maimed
By the rough centaur-husk ? For in the Pliocene
Strata lies the Horse,
The Pliohippus and Hipparion
Whose skin shone like the Pleiades — once fleet as the
spring rain,

Or young desire, were they — as quickly gone.
Yet still the sound of waves and the long-dying
Airs and the great veils and veins and voices
Of vines are theirs,

The thunders of the bull-voiced mimes, unseen, unknown,
The thunders of saps rising, and of all things sown

In far-off gardens.

Ghosts rise from gold seeds

In the mist from vine-branches. "And were you
Agamemnon
Or the shrill ghost of a vine-tendrill ?' ' Should I know ?'

I only know my form
Is the great logic of the winter, the geometry
Of Death: the world began with these :
The numbers of Pythagoras,
The seeds of Anaxagoras ;
And the winter at my heart, whose Zero is
An infinite intensity, yet holds
The seeds and beginning of the fires of spring.

Now for the sound of wars, I hear bees among vine-
blooms
Singing of growth — they, yellow as the planets,
Like Capricornus, Lynx, and Taurus swarming.

The Dead Man, thin as water,
Or as a vine-tendrill, and shod with gold
As for a journey — (but upon what road ?) —

Answered the thunders of the saps rising
Under the dust that shines like the glittering skin
Of centaurs in horse-bearing Thessaly :

'Is your gold-sinewed body still a vine-branch
In the vineyards of great Venus ?' 'Shrunk to this
Poor span, I have returned to the likeness of the first and
fin? I Worm that is my brother :
For were we not born of the same holy mother —

Alike in holiness ? . . . Now black as earth.
Yet great queens found my mouth
As a dark leaf of nardus brought from Syria —
Or the gold door of the South.

Ah, who
Would kiss it now ?

And those queens' dust is but as
frost that shines like fire
Or the gilded dust of Venus in the spring,
Fertilizing the crocus.

As I went on my long road
From Birth to Death, I learned that Birth and Death,
The road to Thebes from Athens, and the road
From Thebes to Athens, coming and going, praise and
blame,
Are like the angry kings, the ghosts of gold
That hide from Man his sun : they are the same.

Upon my road from Birth to Death, to Thebes from
Athens,
I heaped gold dust in hills.

With the blind mole,
On my returning way, I heaped another mound
Of dust. And as I came

On my Night-Road, the four gigantic thunders sounded :
And the four worlds were gone : Earth, Water, Fire, and
Air.

With Death, in nakedness, I was alone :
But then heard the great thunders of saps rising and of all
things sown.

The four worlds came : Love, Hate, Belief, and Unbelief:
(The raging human dust, dull dust of brutes,
The groping dust of plants, the earth's blind dust)
On my Day Road, the four gigantic thunders sounded :
Those worlds fell from the living heart, were gone,
And I was alone with Life — the Naked Man.

The worlds went: I was a clod of earth
Blown by the wind along the road from Death to Birth.
The worlds came : I was clothed with a little dust,
And blown along the road from Birth to Death.

I cried at the light, as I had cried at the dark.
I found a little rest upon my way, a small child growing
Deep in the tomb, or in my mother's womb —
But still unknowing.

In my canicular days, I, the companion
Of the high Sun, could never dream of setting,
Or that I should not find the answer to the Question.'

There was no sign of the lion-bodied one
Between the vineyards and the heroic sea,
There was no glitter of her mane, strong as the wave,
Bright as the treasure on the ocean-floor,
And the glittering orange-tree. There was no sound

Where the lion-coloured dusts are numerous as Time's
sands,
Under the heavens masked with gold like Agamemnon,

And bordered with great vines whose solar system of the
grapes
Shines like the centaur's skin, hard as cornelian grains,
The hue of honey sarcophagising or of sard —
Holding small stars for seeds
And planets of noon-dew, and the long rains
And the cool sea-winds from the far horizons.

As I went my way from the cities of the living
Dead to cities of the dead Living, airs and prayers
Arose from the fertility of ^ines,
From rornucopias and corruptions, continents
Of growth, from where those seeds, the Dead, are sown
To be reborn, and germs of evil that exist in Matter
Are changed by holy earth, to the common good,

To usefulness, fertility. The breath
Of the Ardent Belief, of the cultivated earth

Drifts through the city streets, to kings turned dust-
worms,
To beggars and bugbears, dusty thunders, Cerberus
Changed to a dog, and Niobe to a stone lest she should
weep—

To palaces of Commerce, the machine, the revolutions
Rushing toward the vortices (gyrations
Of empty Light), and Man, like Ixion, bound
Upon that wheel, all in the conquering dust;
To palaces of Justice — a projection of the Darkness :
(Domitian, the mad Emperor, catching flies, and
Harcateus,
The King of Parthia, a blind mole-catcher) —

To Afternoon-Men, Giddy-heads, the chrysalides,
The Golden Outsides, drones, flies, and philosophers,
A world of busy sleep
Where the horse drives the man, the palace builds
The slave, the judge the criminal, and the sun gilds

Laughing and weeping, hatred, fear, and love, and lust
With royal robes, soon to be changed to dust.

Then comes the hour of consolation, and the evening,
Sighing all sighs and knowing all ambitions, walks like
the wave
To cities whose names are like the sound of waves,
Aomono,
Quezaltenango, Wawasee, Tandora,
London, and Paris.

A sound drifts through the streets to
the homeward-going —
A golden dust — from the evening ? From the hives of
Midas ? From the Lion-gate ?
Or the sands of Time whence the Lion-bodied asks the
Question

On roads sacred to Man, who is great as a planet moving
On its gold tepdril, — small as a grain of dust.

II. *Interlude*

AFTER the intolerable weight of tyrant suns
(Caesars with masks of gold), wave after wave the early
evening

Comes with the sound of sea and siren cave
To continents and cities after the long heat,

And echoes in buried cities — the azoic azure
Calls to the sphinxes of the silence and the unburied
sapphires

Staring across the lion-breasted sands in the great deserts,

And to the azoic heart (where Time, that Medusa, reigns,
turns all to stone) —

To the orange-flower, the oragious hair of youth that cool
airs lift, the orb;

And the golden nodding nurse that we call Eve

And evening, sighed, 'The first and final Adam — he who
is one with the immense Ceres

And all day broke the gold body of the giantess as in love

And he who forsook her for that other giantess
The city, the vast continent of stone

Are homeward-going/

Soon night falls like fire, yet vine-dark.

In the cities

The girls with breasts like points of sun in the vine-dark
night

And gowns the colour of the thunder's reverberations
Among the forests, seek a love in which to sink like the
sea.

What do the seraphs and sapphires of air among the
branches
Hear as the voices pass ? 'Your hair is ringed as the
tendrils
Of the first plantations of the Vine after the Flood.'

'The vines of the Sun ? Or the vines of Darkness and of
all damnations —

The vines of Medusa's serpents ?' 'Ah, your kiss is the
light of the planets, burning among the leaves !'

'No. It was Lucifer,

Son of the Morning — then it changed to the Prince of
the Air, the brightness

That rules in Hell ! Grown cold ! I am Medusa — and
my other

Name is Time!

Come to my lips — the long horizon —
Cold with the serpents' buried wisdom, that has known
the azoic

Continents, the secrets and night-haunted jewels of the
catafalques !

Come ! I will seal your eyes that they no more shall
weep,

No more behold another. Once, at your grief,
The unfraught sea would swell, and the unsought
diamonds

Rise with your tears.

Now you shall faithless be
To the flesh of orange-blossom and arbutus honey-
hearted,

Seeing my lips cold as the unburied sapphires in the
desert air

Approach your own —

The one horizon — the azoic continent of night and
stone.'

III. *The Night Wind*

O HEART, great equinox of the Sun of Night
Where life and death are equal — Lion — or Sphinx !
What can you tell of Darkness
To the great continent of hungry stone ?

Reart, (Lion or Sphinx) what can you tell the city
Of breasts like Egypt where no lightning shines,
Because of their great heat ? This is the hour the night-
wind
Asks those born in Hell concerning their foredoom.

Now in the streets great airs the colour of the vines
Drift to the noctuas, veiled women, to the faceless ones,
the nameless ones —
To Lot's wife staring across the desert of her life.

Those airs of sapphire drift from violet vines —
Elixirs and saps of sapphire beloved of Saturn,
And planets of violet dew from vine-branches

Fall on the lips of fashionable women;
The abominable Koretto and Metro (cities buried
Under the sands of the Dead Sea : Adama and Gomorrah,
Segor,)
And cool the cheeks where the long fires of all Hell are
dyed;

Drifting to women like great vines: (what was the first
plantation since the Flood ?
The vines of Grief?
The first sin of the new world, and the last
Of the ancient civilisation ? You, the night-wind,
What was the first plantation since the Flood ?)

And to old Maenads of the city, where the far-off music,
Dying in public gardens, wraps their flesh —

That vast immundity from which the Flood receded,
Their hearts, those rocks from which no Moses could
strike tears,

With a little comfort; they, awhile forgetting
The mobilisation of the world's filth, the garrets, garners
Of Nothingness, and the sparse fire's infrequent garnets,
The ragpicker's great reign, their empty mouths like
Chaos ruined,
Speak for a moment with their other lives :

'What is it knocks at that tomb my heart ? Is it the
grave-digger,
The final Adam ? There was one knocked so :
He would not know me now. For all Time's filth, the
dress

I stole from the habitations of the Dead,
Hides me — a body cold as the wind-blown vines,
And the sad sapphire bone shrunk by Time's fires

To this small apeish thing.'

'Ah, what was I inferior to Death,
That you should be untrue ? Now, kindly Age,
My one companion, holds me close, so I
Forget your kiss. The fires in my heart are gone.
And yet, as if they had melted into rain,

The heart itself, my tears
Are faithful yet.'

'Is there another language of the
Dead?

Is that why those for whom we long return
No more ? For the small words of love they say —

How should we hear them through the Babel-clamour ?
They make no sound :
All the great movements of the world pass with no noise :
The golden boys,

The great Spring, turn to dust as to a lover —
The heart breaks with no sound.'

' And in the day, the empire of hatred and of hunger,
Even the Dog pities us ! "I would be destitute as Man,
So, cast from me my faithfulness, my one possession.
All day,' my throat must multiply its thunder
To the triple violence of Cerberus
To proclaim your misery and mine ! Why should the
 Beast and Reptile
Be imprisoned in their small empire of aggression —
The claw, fang, sting, the twining, the embrace ?"
Has Man no more than this ? Does not the lover say to
 lover :
"Is that your kiss ?

It is more cold than the python, the shining one, the
 viper;
Its venom is perfidy, outshining all the stars".'

Then where the suns of Night seek in the rock for unborn
 sapphires
And cornflowers like blue flames or water-drops from
 wells of blue fire
Deep as the heart of Man, from which to build the Day,

I went upon my road to Thebes from Athens, Death
 from Birth,
And to my heart, that last dark Night in which the long
 Styx weeps its woe,
Held close the world, my wound.

Three Songs

FOR ROY AND MARY CAMPBELL

I

You said, 'This is the time of the wild spring and the
mating of the tigers,
This is the first vintage of the heat like the budding of
wild vines —
The budding of emeralds and the emerald climate,

When flowers change into rainbows and young insects
Are happy, the people have heart-strings like the music
Of the great suns, oh never to be quenched by darkness.

But I am the water-carrier to the Damned, and dark as
water.

Only those nights, my eyes, have no more rain,
And dead are the merciful fountains
Since the world changed into a stone again.

I am the grave of the unpitied Sisyphus,
My heart, that rolled the universe, a stone
Changed to me, like your heart, up endless mountains.

II. *The Song of the Beggar Maid to King Copleua*

I SAW the Gold Man with the lion's head
Reflected deep
In the waters of the well when in the great heat
I went to draw their cold : he gave to me a flower
Petalled with gold and glittering beams and said,
'You must not tell
What you have seen reflected.'

(The King to whom my sister flower, the marigold,
Turns her bright head . . .)

But mine is another Sun. Come from the night,
Cophetua !

I will unclothe my corolla to my Sun —
Still wet with the tears of night, each golden beam
About my head ! But with your rising they are gone.

I am your Marigold, O royal star !

My birth was Darkness. But your light
Gave me the corolla of my bright flower
Like to your crown !

The Kings bow their bright shining heads adown —
Like flowers of the Sun, those marigolds !
But the Sun of Fate has beat on them till they grew faint
And flaccid, no more fit
To bear the corolla of a bright crown.

'Kings and bright lovers all must come to this.'
So sighed the dews of night that from the leaf
Fade and are gone.

Yet when in a thick and cloudy air none may espy
Your beauty, so obscured, I
Still turn to you the bright beams of my head, my golden
skin,
And close in your golden beams for my long night,
O royal star, for whom the poor Marigold must live and
die!

III. *A Bird's Song*

THE fire high up in air —
The Bird — cries, 'I am the seed of fire
From the Sun — although I wear

A bird-mask. Now I swoop
Down to the archipelago of suns on the orange-tree in a
dark sea of leaves.

O young Medea, fear
The sea in each fire that hangs upon your tree,
The cold in the heart of Man.
O guard that fleece of gold in your breast, your heart of
fire;
Too soon it stolen will be !

Between smooth leaves where still the drops of night
Lie, the gold cold water-drops, I take my flight,
Shaking down the water-drops like the dark, drowsy
bees.

Beneath the orange-tree the sleeper lies —
A bone of fire in a body of thin amber ; the umbrageous
tree
Has changed her to a bird of fire, feathered with shade,
like me.

And I, the seed of the Sun in a bird-mask,
Fly where from the perfumed stem and wind-smooth
fruits down-pour
Such amber tears as the rich Sun doth weep
In his deep noonday sleep.

In this deep night of leaves
And seas in a fire of gold,
If Man, the marauding faithless Jason, came, how should
he know
Which is the gilded fleece and which the long and
legendary Sea —
Which is the Sleeper's long and tangled hair and which
the water-cold gold orange-tree ?'

Butterfly-Weather

FOR BETSEY AND JOCK WHITNEY

WHAT were the sounds I heard through the begonia-
yellow music
(Spangled with gold as if by Sirius and his bright train)
In public gardens, in hot afternoons when old crones,
Featureless as the shores of Lethe, and the fashionable
women
(Aeons of emptiness and the long equinoxes
Where all is equal) lean together, talking ?

'I think but rarely of the past: it is a ghost.'
'What is a ghost ?' 'One who has gone away —
Or a belief that faded/

'And do you remember
Semiramis, who was bright as all September ? Gone is her
kiss,
And the golden racers, young winds from the shores of
our lost youth.'
'But look at the children chasing the butterflies V

I think we live now in the age of the terrible Furies
Changed into Butterflies, and of the Butterfly-weather,
gilding the hopeless heart

With the hues of false victories, of the fallen suns, fallen
Caesars and cities —
The brightness of air — the Nothing-country that has no
chart ,

Like our world that is drifting to Nowhere. Once the
astronomer
Kepler, in plague-time, foretold a pestilence ending Man,
Having seen on his hands and his feet the Stigmata. But
what were those signs of the Crucifixion ?
Only a little bright dust from a butterfly's wing !

Those moments of summer happiness, the sweet innocent
butterflies

Are bright as the apricot cheeks of the young girls chasing them,

And as their water-soft long yellow hair soft as bird-bosoms, soft as all Aprils —

Flashing among the dark woods, and their laughter. The butterflies'

Auburn air-thin glittering velvets and gauzes are flying — Holy with happiness, shining with Heaven's light. But of the Furies changed into butterflies —

What of that terrible lightness, ephemeral brightness — The Butterfly-pestilence ending the race of Man ?

The Blinded Song-Bird near the Battle-Field

TO C. W. MCCANN

HERE, in the terrible Butterfly-climate of this world
Where'the Stigmata is changed to the sign of the
Feather —

I sit within my cage, am blind as the world.
Once I was Daedalus
And flew too near the sun. But in my fall

Brought back a feather from those thunderous wings for
song —
To comfort my world's darkness, the world's wrong.
And now one goldfinch light
Sings <Happy are you that you have no sight!'

For as I flew, I saw upon the earth
One limbless, eyeless, as before his birth, —
And torn by all the nails upon Christ's Cross :
He bore the Stigmata of the sins of the whole world.

And from the little span
Of his heart fell the blood — the sea of Galilee
Whereon Christ walked . . . that ghost of Abel whispers
o'er the world :
'Brother, I come.
I have no eyes
But my all-seeing wounds ; and I am dumb,
But yet fr/m all the open mouths of the world's wounds
I rise:
I come to testify.'

The Stone-Breakers

A. Prison-Song

(After a song of prisoners condemned to 99 years in the Chain-gang)

TO ZOSIA KOCHANSKA

Go down, red Sun, red Cain !
Or, if you rise again,
Bring us the last fires of the Judgment Day !

The red sea of the heat, the tide
Of all men's blood, divide
Us from our brother men : In all that Flood

There is no drop of mercy ! Red dews lie on flower and
heart
In this red Morning of the World — no other rain !

The dead men rise with Cain the Sun ;
They died on the chain, but rise to work again. '

Dead men, rise, and help me break the stone !
Dead men, rise, and help me break the heart!
Lies not some drop of mercy there ?

Among living men, in the Live Man's air
Our emperor brothers, the Low-Man Flea
And the Tyrant's Ghost, cast equal shades,
And the world yields them its heart and vein —
Bled white as innocence. But despair

And all the Furies in our hearts
Beat stripes that mark the prediluvian
Tiger . . . No flood washed away
That furious darkness, striped upon
A heart light as Hell's day.

Now, naked as the worm, unarmed
As when in our first Hell, the womb,
That shaped us for damnation, we,
The outcast Tee of Bone

On which our Christ is crucified,
Are fleshless as the skeleton
Of Adam, and have known
All deaths, from Adam's first sin to the resurrection
Of the testifying, the accusing Dead.

The stone we beat upon, O brothers, seals Christ's Tomb !
The red sea of the heat and heart will change. O, hear the
rolling
Back of that sea ! Another Sea rolls on
Across the world. And we from death on death shall
rise again

To testify against the heart of Man
That dreamed our darkness could present a dam
To the Sea that comes — the infinite Blood of Christ.

Out of School

TO JOSE GARCIA VILLA

THE gold, the wild-beast fires begin again upon the
fruit-boughs,
Running from branch to branch, and our gold veins
Catch fire. In the caverns where our blood begins
Sound the ancestral voices

That are not fire but fate, blind impulse and predestination
Foretelling doom.
And the fleece of Marsyas, the last melting snow upon
the branches,
Trembles no more at the flute-sound.
O heart, it is spring !

And the wild-beast fires (the furred-lynx fruit-buds) the
young winds,
And the young tendrils of the vines, the gold spring
rains,
Fall from the branches.

And from the hoarse voice of the stream freed from the
ice,
The animal laughters sound —
The neighings of the prophet horse arise
Who prophesied great evils once (and the spring thunders
run
Along the ground
From his foretelling hoof); the bray
Of the world of asses following Darius —
The sound that scattered the great Scythian hordes;
The sound of the crowd's onolatry, and after
The Ritual Laughter at the escape from death:
For this is the age of the destroying Laughter.

In the forest there are great emerald mists from which
the bird-songs

Fall, the Cassandra voices. Through green lightnings and
the emeralds
Fallen from the trees,
The young green sun of spring,
A laughing ghost, danced ; with a ghostly voice
Calls to the children, 'See ! New worlds and emeralds
and Fates begin.
Soon will my greenness fade and I shall wear my own
gold armour,
Fighting the mists.'

And the children run from school
To the sound of the planetary system in the veins,
The beat of the young rains,
And the thunder of the wild wood-lilies' growth beneath
the ground.

They flee the old man who all morning long,
Sifted a little dust through his dry hands
And boomed at the children : 'Once this dust was
Socrates,

The first spring sage, the satyr under the furred-lynx
fruit-buds
Tearing the tendrils of the young spring rains
And — where the sap like peridots and beryls
Rises in the budding fig-branches, — foretelling perils
Upon his flute that seemed like the young mist
Of spring, to the caverns where our blood begins.

Now is he but the emerald dust of lilies :
He is alone
With but the small equalities of dust.
And the green mist of spring will soon be gone, the Sun
in his gold armour,
Shout through the budding branches. Ere it is too late
You must discriminate

Between true gold and false, between the Sun that is the
ghost
Of your own heart, and the Sun the world has lost.
When to your Sun

Gilding the cheeks of lemons on the trees and the young
spring lemures,
The jonquils (rills of water born from rocks)
And veins of gold in rocks and hearts of men —

Arise the breath of the cultivated earth,
Gold mists from vines,
And all gold airs and prayers from cities, Man

Seeing his mirrored morning face, no more can find
The masks he wore (through centuries)
Of faith and hope. The gold corrosive of the hyper-
modern suns
Of unbelief have shone upon them, they are gone,
And only emptiness remains. This is the only good.
O fear that laughing ghost in his gold armour high in air
Who calls to you !

But the children run from school
To learn their wisdom from the great gold fool
Who is to the world of sight
What truth is to the invisible — life-giver of all voices
In sap and bud, life-giver of mankind.

He sees through the rough Ape-dust the gold fires
Of the spirit spring like the wild-beast fires upon the
branches;
The little and the great,
The shadow of the crooked and the straight
Complete each other, and the cripple's hump,
The curve of the mountain hiding veins of gold
As equal in their grandeur. Sees the common lump

Of the world hold the seed of the flower, the wisdom of
the Dark

Formed with an angel's innocence ; the old
And wrinkled nask of Pithecanthropus Erectus
Hide the great brow of Socrates ; the ass's ears
And the almond husk of the beast as no wise less
In grandeur than the long rivers and the almond-husk
Of that great sleepy animal, the world.

He sees the gold blood in the veins of plants and men
Has the beat of the gold planetary system ; sees
The, plant, a beast retarded by the dark
(Whose root had once been gold, but changed by growth),
The beast, a plant that blossoms, freed by light,
Devoid of root like the planets, (those bright bees
That move in heaven about their honeycomb of light,)
And are forms of Time that imitate the eternal — made
That from their unerring courses we might learn
From the intelligence in the wide heavens,
And the perturbed might learn from the unperturbed,
Set right the inharmonious errors of our lives,

And fear not change or Time and darkness, but behold
The elements are but as qualities
That change for ever, like all things that have known
generation, like a gold
Image taking a new form for ever, — mutable
As the child who is innocence and oblivion, acceptance,
A new beginning, primal motion, a self-moving game that
changes
Like the heart of forgetful spring.

The Wind of Early Spring

TO EVELYN SHRIFTE

THE ass-voiced wind of early spring brays over the wide
plain —

The lynx-furred and lynx-purring plain of snow where
branches of red coral
Hum of the spring to come. Not yet is there a fire
Of jacynth or of pyrope — first buds bursting through
the apple-branch.
Only the lynx-furred and lynx-purring snow is over all.

What does the wind say ? 'In the plain, far away,
The fleece of Marsyas hangs upon a fruit-bough
(The fading snow) and trembles at the flute-sound,'

Was Marsyas a satyr or silenus ?
Was his the bray
That could foretell the spring, the wild-beast fire,
And imitate the cold wind of the spring ?

Apollonane the ass-god had a bray
Was thought to be an oracle . . . the crowd's onolatries
Echo that laughter. Yet was he burned to dust
As if by a sudden red spark on the apple-twigs,
And asses now are sacrificed to Apollo.

And Midas, the King who had an ass's ears
Was grey as earth, or moss on the apple-trees —
Was half ass and half god. The spring by which
He caught Silenus, forced him to reveal
His secret that lies hidden in the thunders
Of spring beneath the earth, had for a name,
Mule: Ninna — Ninnus.

Blown by the cold wind of spring
From the very fact of the long years
Of the sage we see the long ears of the ass growing.

Where in the fruit-trees shrill sap rises bright
And clear as jacinth, pyrope, chrysolite,

An old man plays a flute —
A sound of two dimensions, like the beast-world's
Consciousness, or the cold wind of spring.

But the cold, like Time, has only one dimension —
A line, extending from the infinite past
Into a future that is infinite. . . . To this,
Only one point is known, the rest is Zero.

And all that is seen and touched will only seem
A budding out of Time, and then the flight
Of those buds to the Nothing that is all the world : (all
forms and beings
Are only buddings from that line to the Infinite) :

But the gardener as he plays the flute has changed
The line and Zero of the Cold to curve and number,
Like the first budding of the small red satyr-hairy leaves
upon the fruit-boughs ;
He shakes down from the branches a few tears
Brought by the wind from lost Persephone.

And what does the wind of spring, what does the flute
Tell of the beast-philosopher in the orchard —
Long silent from the cold ?¹

Does the flute fire the spark

Upon the branch ? Does it speak to the Chthonian
dwellings, bring reply ?

'O think how your thin girl must feel the cold
Beneath the earth, who, in the nights of spring,
Once lay, a fire in your arms ?

Ah, long ago ! When I was your living lass
My lips seemed the red fire upon the apple-branch,
The brand of rubies in the fire of spring —

Now quenched by the long cold
At the root of the sweet apple-tree. The Dust, grey
glittering King,
Forced your bright-burning girl and made me one with
him.
Yet am I not untrue !

For when green lightnings fall among the trees,
And I shall hear the strange bird-augur who is King
Picus, the guardian of the trees and Kings, the bird-
magician,
In the green mists, my lips would burn again
With all the fires of spring, to hear you pass !'

This is the sound the cold wind blew from the Chthonian
dwellings
In the early spring that makes the dead and living, one —
The beast-fire and the soul-fire.

And the flute said :
'There is much to be learned in early spring from the
wild-beastfires,
The centaur-red furred fruit-buds,— beast-fur shielding
the clear sap
As the body shields the soul.

And from the philosopher Ammonias
Who took an almond-furred ass,
Grey as the fruit-trees, for his pupil. Why ? Mayhap

From his two see-saw-syllables
All language rose. The human race began
With but a single word/

This is the sound

The gardener plays upon his sap-clear flute,
To bring red satyr-hairy fruit-buds to perfection.

Then came the words the cold wind brought our springs
And sprigs of blood : 'The past and present are as one —
Accordant and discordant, youth and age,
And death and birth. For out of one came all —
From all comes one.'

Sailor, What of the Isles

TO MILLICENT HUDDLESTON ROGERS

'SAILOR, what of the isles —
The green worlds grown
From a little seed ? What of the islands known and those
unknown ?'

*I have returned over the long and lonely sea ;
And only human need
For the world of men is mine ; I have forgot Immensity.

The rustling sea was a green world of leaves ;
The isle of Hispaniola in its form
Was like the leaf of a chestnut tree in June.
And there is the gold region — the gold falls like rain
with a long and leafy tune.

An old man bore us lumps of gold . . . the small,
Like walnuts husked with earth ; the great,
As large as oranges, and leafy earth
Still clung to them. And when you thought that fireflies
lit the night,
These were but nuggets, lying on the dark earth, burning
bright/

'Sailor, what of the maps of the known world ?' 'The
old Chinese,
Whose talk was like the sound of June leaves drinking
rain,
Constructed maps of the known world — the few
Islands and two countries that they knew.

They thought the heavens were round,
The earth square, and their empire at the earth's
centre . . .
just as you
And I believe we are the world's centre and the stars

Are grown from us as the bright seas in a rind of gold
Are grown from the smooth stem of the orange-tree.

Those maps of the Yellow Empire then were drawn,
As we think, upside down :
Tongking was placed
Where usually the North stands, and Mongolia graced
The South. The names, too, were writ upside down.
For how is it possible, in this flat world, to know
Why South should be below, the North above —
Why man should hold creeds high one moment, the next
moment low ?'

'Sailor, what of the maps of skies ? Is that Orion ?'
'No, the sight
Is of a far island. What you see
Is where they are gathering carbuncles, garnets, diamonds
bright
As fireflies with a gardener's rake under the spice-trees
and the orange-trees.'

'Sailor, what do you know of this world, my Self . . . a
child
Standing before you ? — Or an isle
To which no sail has crossed over the long and lonely
sea ?
What do you know of this island, of the soil
In which all sainthood or insanity, murder or mockery
grows — a leafy tree ?'

'No mor~ than the gardeners and astronomers who make
Their catalogues of stars for heavens and seeds for garden
beds
Know of their green worlds ; or the soil, of the great
beasts
Whose skin shines like gold fire or fireflies, and whose
nostrils snort great stars —

The beasts — huge flowers grown from the stem of the
green darkness; each beast holds .

The entire world of plants,

All elements and all the planetary system in

Itself (while the flower holds only the plant-world)

And freed from its stem by light, like the flowers in air: —

No more than the father knows of the child, or the sailor
of chartless isles.'

A Love Song

IT was the time when the Day cried to me, 'Show me
your heart, Medusa,
That I may be changed into stone,
And no more bear the grief of the all-seeing Sun !

Ah, stare with your eyes that are lidless as mine, are
sleepless,
At the place where my heart was ! Change to immutable
stone
The small equalities, reigned over now by the swift-
winged

Scarlet Dust, brother of the three Furies — seeing all in
its equilibrium :
The tides of the ocean, the temperature of the royal vein,
the basilica, soon to be porphyry,
From whence grew the empery of the conquering rose.'

But I replied not. My eyes that are sleepless and lidless
As Day's see one sight alone.

For once it was Spring. And I with the other amaryl-
lidious girls of burning
Gold walked under the boughs and listened to the sweet
chattering
Procne, and love began in the heart like the first wild
spark in the almond
Tree, but the heart of the Spring has been burned away.

Yet though the kingly vermilion Dust, the brother of
the Erinyes,
Lies on my breast, and is my only lover, I yet am winged.
No more shall you escape me than the Sun
His heaven. I am blackened by my fires like the nights of
the great Spring,

Yet am wii*gfð like the nightingale, like the Erinyes,
I, the spring night that lies on your breast like fire, the
day that enfolds you,
The fire that springs up in your tears !

In the nights of spring I will clothe you with fire, like the
nightingale.
In your veins I will run like the blood that is fire and is
Fate, the blind impulse,
Predestination and Doom, crying to sins old as the
Spring!

Why, lovely swallow, weary me with thy sweet chatter-
ing?
What dost thou hope to find in my heart ? The warmth
of the Spring ?
In the great azure are flaming the almond bough and the
almandine flower of the clear rose,
And my heart sheds its fire.

For once it was Spring. But now there is neither honey
nor bee for me —
Neither the sting nor the sweetness.
Not mine the warm heart of Aprils and apricots, apricus,
Sunny, all gold within like the heart of the honeycomb,
Neither the honey-winged swarms of the gold thoughts of
summer
Shall be mine again !

The April Ram

TO CONNIE GUION

Boy to Girl:

TROM the sly mocking innocence of the azure
Where the amaryllid stars are not yet breaking
Out of their sapphire soil the air, a few raindrops are
falling—

Shining and falling.

Such is our world, my love —
A bright swift raindrop falling.

The sapphire dew's sing like a star ; bird-breasted dew
Lies like a bird and flies

In the singing wood and is blown by the bright air
Upon your wood-wild April-soft long hair
That seems the rising of spring constellations —
Aldebaran, Procyon, Sirius
And Cygnus who gave you all his bright swan-plumage.
You—

The young Rainbow, risen from the spring, the sap, and
singing
Of this old world — see the bright raindrops falling

On the blue flames of honey, water-drops of sapphire,
The bluebells (the blue fires of deepest air).

Such ar* the wisdoms of the world — Heraclitus
Who fell a-weeping, and Democritus
Who fell a-laughing, Pyrrho who arose
From Nothing, and ended in believing Nothing — fools,
And falling soon:
Only the April rain, my dear,
Only the April rain !

That fool-begotten wise despair
Dies like the raindrop on the leaf
Fading like young joy, old grief,
And soon is gone —

Forgot by the brightness of the air;
But still are your lips the warm heart of all springs,
And all the lost Aprils of the world shine in your hair."

The red noon of the lovers' Judgment Day.
But then, a stick upon Time's shore
And broken by its wave —
Not even a spark to warm my hands
That dead stick gave.'

II. *The Queen of Scotland's Reply to a Reproof from John Knox*

SAID the bitter Man of Thorns to me, the White
Rose-Tree :

'That wonted love of yours is but an ass's bray —
The beast who called to beast
And kicked the world away ! *
(All the wisdom of great Solomon
Held in an ass's bray.)

When body to body, soul to soul
Were bare in the fire of night
As body to grave, as spirit to Heaven or Hell,
What did we say ?

° Ah, too soon we shall be air —
No pleasure, anguish, will be possible.
Hold back the day !'

For in this moment of the ass-furred night
You called the hour of the Beast, was born
All the wisdom of great Solomon
From the despised clay !
All the wisdom of Solomon
Held in an ass's bray.

A Song of the Dust

TO JACK AND ANN LINDSAY

THE raging Dust said: * See ! I come from the tomb of
the three Furies,
Only to climate, or to ghost, your heart —
In the great guise of Love. No Iris comes
With saffron wings from any clime of hope.

Only her sisters, harpy winds, black-winged like flies,
Aello,
Ocypete, Celaeno, from the Harpies' tomb in Zanthus, far
in Libia,
Proclaim their divinations from the Dust:
Which shall be king, which beggar, planet, plant,

Or the Arachnoian in the city office
Who spins gold webs to lead us from the Labyrinth
But taught the Minotaur Dark, born of the seed of the
Sun,
New ways to kill.

'All things/ they say, 'are equal in this night —
The gilded dust of Jezebel, gilded dust
Of Dives, these that shone like fire by night
Are now at one
With the yellow jasmine, and the boughs of the trembling
yellow stars/

Who Lnows which dust is Dives, which black dust
Is Lazarus, changed into garden loam
To a\va't the fertile universal will ?

For does not the dust of the common world hold the
dark seed
Of a humble plant that grows
Beyond its morning wisdom — changed, one side, to
gold,

And, on one side, to beast —
From which grows Pithecanthropus Erectus. What is
Man
But a hybrid between beast and plant and God ?

Who knows which dust is Silence, and which Thunder ? .
All the dynasties
Of darkness rolling onward . . . phantoms, Pharaohs
Of dust whose crowns are comets of an awe-inspiring
blackness
Foretelling doom . . .

Or the silence that foretells the
spring . . .
The change in the spark upon the almond bough
Like the change in the word from smaragdum to
smeraldo,
From emeraude to emerald. . . . So the first spark in the
great silence of the earliest spring begins.

Who knows the history of Silence, or of Thunder ? Did
the wave
Tell its long secret to Pythagoras who all night lay
Face downward to the sea, wreathed in black wool,
That he might learn from those depths like the violet
heart of forests
Before the spring, the thunder's nature ? What did the
wave say —

The black wave rearing like a horse, tall as the Manes,
And with a horse's mane, in the subsiding thundex,
A Delphic deluge presaging disaster ?

Only the night-wind sighs
Like the Oracle of Delphos: From the wave of the Night
grows
A smooth stem; from the orageous
Stem of darkness grows the orange-tree, the aurantum,
The hidden gold.'

And on the great roads of Night
The unseen suns are singing of their triumph.

All things lie in the clime of Man's forgiveness.
O tell me not we are face to face with our own dust —
That Judas creeps, night-long, from each crevice like the
 spring,
Only to meet Judas, and again Judas!
There is Another Who has shed all but the thunder's
 glory,
All but the heart of dust.

And I, whose heart is formed of the dust of the three
 Furies
Where still the fires are ! I, who was once the nightin-
 gale—
I who burned my heart that was the blind nightingale
Whose song was a fire in the darkness . . . I who ate my
 heart, the flesh of the wakeful nightingale —
And now am awake for ever! —

This was the song I heard

When eastern light ripens the precious dew
In the bare rock and barren heart, and men pluck and bring
 home in stillness the great sapphire grape-clusters :

Beyond the ripening stillness
I heard the thunder of the growth of vines
And the great thunders in the veins of youth.

And now the amethyst stats of the night dew
That fal^l upon our hair lifted like vines
By the wind of night, hold all tomorrow's heat
And the violet heart of oceans in each sun,

And morning comes to the heart and the heart's warmth,
 its fevers,
Rapacity and grandeur — comes to the dress

Of flesh inconstant as the splendours and the rubies
Of the day's heat, the pity and glory of the rainbow.

And still the uncombatable song rose to the light
From all the heights of Being, and from the depth of the
last abyss :

'If every grain of my dust should be a Satan —
If every atom of my heart were Lucifer —
If every drop of my blood were an Abaddon,
— Yet should I love/

NOTES

GARDENERS AND ASTRONOMERS

Verse 9, line 3. Fritz Werfel, quoted by Richard Hertz in *Chance and Symbol*.

THE ROAD TO THEBES

Part I.—Verses 15 and 16 bear reference to the Tibetan Book of the Dead.

Verse 27, lines i and 2. *The Anatomy of Melancholy*.

Part II.—Verse 6, lines 3 and 4 are founded on lines in Andre Breton's *Un Homme et une femme tout blancs*.

Part III.—Final line inspired by a line from 'Altarwise by Owl-light', by Dylan Thomas:

'The world's my wound, God's Mary in her grief.'

THE STONE-BREAKERS

Verse II, lines 2 and 3. An adaptation of a phrase from a sermon by John Donne.

OUT OF SCHOOL

Verse 13, lines 2, 3, and 4. Adaptation of a passage in *Chance and Symbol*: Richard Hertz.

Verse 14, lines 3 and 4. The Emperor Julian.

Verse 16, lines 3, 4, and 5. Founded on a passage in Lorenz Ohens' *Elements of Physiophilosophy*. Lines 8, 9, 10, u, and 12. Founded on a passage in Plato's *Timaeus Dialogue*.

Verse 17, lines 2, 3, 4, *ibid.*; lines 5, 6—*Thus Spake Zarathustra* Nietzsche.

THE WIND OF EARLY SPRING

Last-verse, lines 2, 3, 4, and 5. Heraclitus.

A LOVE SONG

[*Note.*—This was previously published as 'Medusa's Love Song' but has been re-written.]

Verse 8, line i. Sappho.

Verse 9, line i, 'neither honey nor bee for me'. Sappho.

A SONG OF THE DUST

Verse 6, line 6. An adaptation of a phrase by Nietzsche.

Verse 10, line 4. An adaptation of a phrase by Maeterlinck.

Verse 15. 'Eastern light ripens the precious dew': John Dryden.

THE END

