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THE SHIP OF DEATH
AND OTHER POEMS

THE SHIP OF DEATH

and other poems

by

D.H.LAWRENCE

Faber and Faber

24 Russell Square
London

FIRST PUBLISHED IN MAY MCMXLI
BY FABER AND FABER LIMITED
24 RUSSELL SQUARE, LONDON, W.C.1
PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY
WESTERN PRINTING SERVICES LTD., BRISTOL
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SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

David Herbert Lawrence, born 1885, died 1930.

Collected Poems, 1928.

PROSE

The White Peacock, 1911. *Sons and Lovers*, 1913. *The Rainbow*, 1915. *Aaron's Rod*, 1922. *Kangaroo*, 1923. *The Plumed Serpent*, 1926.

The publishers are grateful to Mrs. Frieda Lawrence and Messrs, William Heinemann for permission to include in this volume a selection from the work of D. H. Lawrence.

CONTENTS

From POEMS, I and II

1. Love on the Farm	<i>page 9</i>
2. The Best of School	12
3. End of Another Home Holiday	14
4. Last Words to Miriam	17
5. Twofold	18
6. She Looks Back	19
7. On the Balcony	23
8. Sinners	24
9. Wedlock	25
10. Song of a Man who has Come Through	30
11. Grapes	31
12. Sicilian Cyclamens	35
13. Saint Matthew	38
14. Bat	43
15. Snake	46
16. Tortoises—Lui et Elle	50
17. Tortoise Shout	55
18. Kangaroo	60
19. Middle of the World	64
20. Demiurge	65

21. Bavarian Gentians	<i>page</i> 66
22. The Hands of God	68
23. The Ship of Death	70

From PANSIES

24. The Mosquito Knows	76
25. Money-Madness	76
26. Peace and War	78
27. Glory	79
28. Young Fathers	80

LOVE ON THE FARM

What large, dark hands are those at the window
Grasping in the golden light
Which weaves its way through the evening wind
At my heart's delight?

Ah, only the leaves! But in the west
I see a redness suddenly come
Into the evening's anxious breast—
'Tis the wound of love goes home!

The woodbine creeps abroad
Calling low to her lover:
The sun-lit flirt who all the day
Has poised above her lips in play
And stolen kisses, shallow and gay
Of pollen, now has gone away—
She woos the moth with her sweet, low word;
And when above her his moth-wings hover
Then her bright breast she will uncover
And yield her honey-drop to her lover.

Into the yellow, evening glow
Saunters a man from the farm below;
Leans, and looks in at the low-built shed
Where the swallow has bung her marriage bed.

The bird lies warm against the wall.
She glances quick her startled eyes
Towards him, then she turns away
Her small head, making warm display
Of red upon the throat. Her terrors sway
Her out of the nest's warm, busy ball,
Whose plaintive cry is heard as she flies
In one blue stoop from out the sties
Into the twilight's empty hall.

Oh, water-hen, beside the rushes
Hide your quaintly scarlet blushes,
Still your quick tail, lie still as dead,
Till the distance folds over his ominous tread!

The rabbit presses back her ears,
Turns back her liquid, anguished eyes
And crouches low; then with wild spring
Spurts from the terror of *his* oncoming;
To be choked back, the wire ring
Her frantic effort throttling:

Piteous brown ball of quivering fears!
Ah, soon in his large, hard hands she dies,
And swings all loose from the swing of his walk!
Yet calm and kindly are his eyes
And ready to open in brown surprise
Should I not answer to his talk
Or should he my tears surmise.
I hear his hand on the latch, and rise from my chair

Watching the door open; he flashes bare
His strong teeth in a smile, and flashes his eyes
In a smile like triumph upon me; then careless-wise
He flings the rabbit soft on the table board
And comes towards me: ah! the uplifted sword
Of his hand against my bosom! and oh, the broad
Blade of his glance that asks me to applaud
His coming! With his hand he turns my face to him
And caresses me with his fingers that still smell grim
Of the rabbit's fur! God, I am caught in a snare!
I know not what fine wire is round my throat;
I only know I let him finger there
My pulse of life, and let him nose like a stoat
Who sniffs with joy before he drinks the blood.

And down his mouth comes to my mouth! and down
His bright dark eyes come over me, like a hood
Upon my mind! his lips meet mine, and a flood
Of sweet fire sweeps across me, so I drown
Against him, die, and find death good.

2

THE BEST OF SCHOOL

The blinds are drawn because of the sun,
And the boys and the room in a colourless gloom
Of underwater float: bright ripples run
Across the walls as the blinds are blown
To let the sunlight in; and I,
As I sit on the shores of the class, alone,
Watch the boys in their summer blouses
As they write, their round heads busily bowed:
And one after another rouses
His face to look at me,
To ponder very quietly,
As seeing, he does not see.

And then he turns again, with a little, glad
Thrill of his work he turns again from me,
Having found what he wanted, having got what was to
be had.

And very sweet it is, while the sunlight waves
In the ripening morning, to sit alone with the class
And feel the stream of awakening ripple and pass
From me to the boys, whose brightening souls it laves
For this little hour.

This morning, sweet it is
To feel the lads' looks light on me,

Then back in a swift, bright flutter to work;
Each one darting away with his
Discovery, like birds that steal and flee.

Touch after touch I feel on me
As their eyes glance at me for the grain
Of rigour they taste delightedly.
As tendrils reach out yearningly,
Slowly rotate till they touch the tree
That they cleave unto, and up which they climb
Up to their lives—so they to me,

I feel them cling and cleave to me
As vines going eagerly up; they twine
My life with other leaves, my time
Is hidden in theirs, their thrills are mine.

3

END OF ANOTHER HOME HOLIDAY

When shall I see the half-moon sink again
Behind the black sycamore at the end of the garden?
When will the scent of the dim white phlox
Creep up the wall to me, and in at my open window?

Why is it, the long, slow stroke of the midnight bell
 (Will it never finish the twelve?)
Falls again and again on my heart with a heavy reproach?

The moon-mist is over the village, out of the mist speaks
 the bell,
And all the little roofs of the village bow low, pitiful, be-
 seaching, resigned.
—Speak, you my home! what is it I don't do well?

Ah home, suddenly I love you
As I hear the sharp clean trot of a pony down the road.
Succeeding sharp little sounds dropping into silence
Clear upon the long-drawn hoarseness of a train across
 the valley.

.

The light has gone out, from under my mother's door.
 That she should love me so!—
 She, so lonely, greying now!
 And I leaving her,
 Bent on my pursuits!

Love is the great Asker.
The sun and the rain do not ask the secret
Of the time when the grain struggles down in the
dark.
The moon walks her lonely way without anguish,
Because no-one grieves over her departure.

Forever, ever by my shoulder pitiful love will linger,
Crouching as little houses crouch under the mist when I
turn,
Forever, out of the mist, the church lifts up a reproach-
ful finger,
Pointing my eyes in wretched defiance where love hides
her face to mourn.

Oh! but the rain creeps down to wet the grain
That struggles alone in the dark,
And asking nothing, patiently steals back again!
The moon sets forth o' nights
To walk the lonely, dusky heights
Serenely, with steps unswerving;
Pursued by no sigh of bereavement,
No tears of love unnerving
Her constant tread:
While ever at my side,
Frail and sad, with grey, bowed head,
The beggar-woman, the yearning-eyed
Inexorable love goes lagging.

The wild young heifer, glancing distraught,
With a strange new knocking of life at her side
Runs seeking a loneliness.
The little grain draws down the earth, to hide.
Nay, even the slumberous egg, as it labours under
the shell
Patiently to divide and self-divide,
Asks to be hidden, and wishes nothing to tell.

But when I draw the scanty cloak of silence over my
eyes
Piteous love comes peering under the hood;
Touches the clasp with trembling fingers, and tries
To put her ear to the painful sob of my blood;
While her tears soak through to my breast,
Where they burn and cauterize.

.

The moon lies back and reddens.
In the valley a corncrake calls
Monotonously,
With a plaintive, unalterable voice, that deadens
My confident activity;
With a hoarse, insistent request that falls
Unweariedly, unweariedly,
Asking something more of me,
Yet more of me.

4

LAST WORDS TO MIRIAM

Yours is the sullen sorrow,
 The disgrace is also mine;
Your love was intense and thorough,
Mine was the love of a growing flower
 For the sunshine.

You had the power to explore me,
 Blossom me stalk by stalk;
You woke my spirit, you bore me
To consciousness, you gave me the dour
 Awareness—then I suffered a balk.

Body to body I could not
 Love you, although I would.
We kissed, we kissed though we should not.
You yielded, we threw the last cast,
 And it was no good.

You only endured, and it broke
 My craftsman's nerve.
No flesh responded to my stroke;
So I failed to give you the last
 Fine torture you did deserve.

You are shapely, you are adorned
 But opaque and null in the flesh;
Who, had I but pierced with the thorned
Full anguish, perhaps had been cast
 In a lovely illumined mesh

Like a painted window; the best
Fire passed through your flesh,
Undrossed it, and left it blest
In clean new awareness. But now
Who shall take you afresh?

Now who will burn you free
From your body's deadness and dross?
Since the fire has failed in me,
What man will stoop in your flesh to plough
The shrieking cross?

A mute, nearly beautiful thing
Is your face, that fills me with shame
As I see it hardening;
I should have been cruel enough to bring
You through the flame.

5

TWOFOLD

How gorgeous that shock of red lilies, and larkspur
cleaving
All with a flash of blue!—when will she be leaving
Her room, where the night still hangs like a half-folded
bat,
And passion unbearable seethes in the darkness, like
must in a vat.

6

SHE LOOKS BACK

The pale bubbles,
The lovely pale-gold bubbles of the globe-flowers,
In a great swarm clotted and single
Went rolling in the dusk towards the river
To where the sunset hung its wan gold cloths;
And you stood alone, watching them go,
And that mother-love like a demon drew you from me
Towards England.

Along the road, after nightfall,
Along the glamorous birch-tree avenue
Across the river levels
We went in silence, and you staring to England.

So then there shone within the jungle darkness
Of the long, lush under-grass, a glow-worm's sudden
Green lantern of pure light, a little, intense, fusing triumph,
White and haloed with fire-mist, down in the tangled
darkness.
Then you put your hand in mine again, kissed me, and
we struggled to be together.
And the little electric flashes went with us, in the grass,
Tiny lighthouses, little souls of lanterns, courage burst
into an explosion of green light

Everywhere down in the grass, where darkness was
ravelled in darkness.

Still, the kiss was a touch of bitterness on my mouth
Like salt, burning in.

And my hand withered in your hand.

For you were straining with a wild heart, back, back
again,

Back to those children you had left behind, to all the
æons of the past.

And I was here in the under-dusk of the Isar.

At home, we leaned in the bedroom window

Of the old Bavarian Gasthaus,

And the frogs in the pool beyond thrilled with exuber-
ance,

Like a boiling pot the pond crackled with happiness,

Like a rattle a child spins round for joy, the night rattled

With the extravagance of the frogs,

And you leaned your cheek on mine,

And I suffered it, wanting to sympathise.

At last, as you stood, your white gown falling from your
breasts,

You looked into my eyes, and said: 'But this is joy!'

I acquiesced again.

But the shadow of lying was in your eyes.

The mother in you, fierce as a murderess, glaring to Eng-
land,

Yearning towards England, towards your young children,
Insisting upon your motherhood, devastating.

Still, the joy was there also, you spoke truly,
The joy was not to be driven off so easily;
Stronger than fear or destructive mother-love, it stood
flickering;
The frogs helped also, whirring away.
Yet how I have learned to know that look in your eyes
Of horrid sorrow!
How I know that glitter of salt,—dry, sterile, sharp,
corrosive salt!
Not tears, but white sharp brine
Making hideous your eyes.

I have seen it, felt it in my mouth, my throat, my chest,
my belly,
Burning of powerful salt, burning, eating through my
defenceless nakedness.
I have been thrust into white, sharp crystals,
Writhing, twisting, superpenetrated.

Ah, Lot's Wife, Lot's Wife!
The pillar of salt, the whirling, horrible column of salt,
like a waterspout
That has enveloped me!
Snow of salt, white, burning, eating salt
In which I have writhed.

Lot's Wife!—Not Wife, but Mother.
I have learned to curse your motherhood,
You pillar of salt accursed.
I have cursed motherhood because of you,
Accursed, base motherhood!

I long for the time to come, when the curse against you
will have gone out of my freart.
But it has not gone yet.
Nevertheless, once, the frogs, the globe-flowers of
Bavaria, the glow-worms
Gave me sweet lymph against the salt-burns,
There is a kindness in the very rain.

Therefore, even in the hour of my deepest, passionate
malediction
I try to remember it is also well between us.
That you are with me in the end.
That you never look quite back; nine-tenths, ah, more,
You look round over your shoulder;
But never quite back.

Nevertheless the curse against you is still in my heart
Like a deep, deep burn.
The curse against all mothers.
All mothers who fortify themselves in motherhood, de-
vastating the vision.
They are accursed, and the curse is not taken off;
It burns within me like a deep, old burn,
And oh, I wish it was better. *Beuerberg.*

ON THE BALCONY

In front of the sombre mountains, a faint, lost ribbon of
rainbow;

And between us and it, the thunder;

And down below in the green wheat, the labourers
Stand like dark stumps, still in the green wheat.

You are near to me, and your naked feet in their sandals
And through the scent of the balcony's naked timber
I distinguish the scent of your hair: so now the limber
Lightning falls from heaven

Adown the pale-green glacier river floats
A dark boat through the gloom—and whither?
The thunder roars. But still we have each other!
The naked lightnings in the heavens dither
And disappear—what have we but each other?
The boat has gone.

Icking.

8

SINNERS

The big mountains sit still in the afternoon light,
 Shadows in their lap;
 The bees roll round in the wild-thyme with delight.

We sitting here among the cranberries
 So still in the gap
 Of rock, distilling our memories,

Are sinners! Strange! The bee that blunders
 Against me goes off with a laugh.
 A squirrel cocks his head on the fence, and wonders

What about sin?—For, it seems
 The mountains have
 No shadow of us on their snowy forehead of dreams
 As they ought to have. They rise above us
 Dreaming
 For ever. One even might think that they love us.

*Little red cranberries cheek to cheek,
 Two great dragon-flies wrestling;
 Yow, with your forehead nestling
 Against me, and bright peak shining to peak—*

There's a love-song for you!—Ah, if only
 There were no teeming
 Swarms of mankind in the world, and we were less lonely!

Mayrhofen.

9

WEDLOCK

I

Come, my little one, closer up against me,
Creep right up, with your round head pushed in my
breast.

How I love all of you! Do you feel me wrap you
Up with myself and my warmth, like a flame round the
wick?

And how I am not at all, except a flame that mounts off
you.
Where I touch you, I flame into being;—but is it me, or
you?

That round head pushed in my chest, like a nut in its
socket,
And I the swift bracts that sheathe it: those breasts,
those thighs and knees,

Those shoulders so warm and smooth: I feel that I
Am a sunlight upon them, that shines them into being.

But how lovely to be you! Creep closer in, that I am
more.
I spread over you! How lovely, your round head, your
arms,

Your breasts, your knees and feet! I feel that we
Are a bonfire of oneness, me flame flung leaping round
you,
You the core of the fire, crept into me.

II

And oh, my little one, you whom I enfold,
How quaveringly I depend on you, to keep me alive
Like a flame on a wick!

I, the man who enfolds you and holds you close,
How my soul cleaves to your bosom as I clasp you,
The very quick of my being!

Suppose you didn't want me! I should sink down
Like a light that has no sustenance
And sinks low.

Cherish me, my tiny one, cherish me who enfold you.
Nourish me, and endue me, I am only of you,
I am your issue.

How full and big like a robust, happy flame
When I enfold you, and you creep into me,
And my life is fierce at its quick
Where it comes off you!

III

My little one, my big one,
My bird, my brown sparrow in my breast

My squirrel clutching in to me;
My pigeon, my little one, so warm,
So close, breathing so still.

My little one, my big one,
I, who am so fierce and strong, enfolding you,
If you start away from my breast, and leave me,
How suddenly I shall go down into nothing
Like a flame that falls of a sudden.

And you will be before me, tall and towering,
And I shall be wavering uncertain
Like a sunken flame that grasps for support.

IV

But now I am full and strong and certain
With you there firm at the core of me
Keeping me.

How sure I feel, how warm and strong and happy
For the future! How sure the future is within me
I am like a seed with a perfect flower enclosed.

I wonder what it will be,
What will come forth of us.
What flower, my love?

No matter, I am so happy,
I feel like a firm, rich, healthy root,
Rejoicing in what is to come.

How I depend on you utterly,
My little one, my big one!
How everything that will be, will not be of me,
Nor of either of us,
But of both of us.

v

And think, there will something come forth from us,
We two, folded so small together,
There will something come forth from us.
Children, acts, utterance,
Perhaps only happiness.

Perhaps only happiness will come forth from us.
Old sorrow, and new happiness.
Only that -one newness.

But that is all I want.
And I am sure of that.
We are sure of that.

vi

And yet all the while you are you, you are not me.
And I am I, I am never you.
How awfully distinct and far off from each other's being
we are!

Yet I am glad.
I am so glad there is always you beyond my scope,

Something that stands over,
Something I shall never be,
That I shall always wonder over, and wait for,
Look for like the breath of life as long as I live,
Still waiting for you, however old you are, and I am,
I shall always wonder over you, and look for you.

And you will always be with me.
I shall never cease to be filled with newness,
Having you near me.

SONG OF A MAN WHO HAS COME THROUGH

Not I, not I, but the wind that blows through me!
 A fine wind is blowing the new direction of Time.
 If only I let it bear me, carry me, if only it carry me!
 If only I am sensitive, subtle, oh, delicate, a winged gift!
 If only, most lovely of all, I yield myself and am bor-
 rowed
 By the fine, fine wind that takes its course through the
 chaos of the world
 Like a fine, an exquisite chisel, a wedge-blade inserted;
 If only I am keen and hard like the sheer tip of a wedge
 Driven by invisible blows,
 The rock will split, we shall come at the wonder, we shall
 find the Hesperides.

Oh, for the wonder that bubbles into my soul,
 I would be a good fountain, a good well-head,
 Would blur no whisper, spoil no expression.

What is the knocking?
 What is the knocking at the door in the night?
 It is somebody wants to do us harm.

No, no, it is the three strange angels.
 Admit them, admit them.

11

GRAPES

So many fruits come from roses,
From the rose of all roses,
From the unfolded rose,
Rose of all the world.

Admit that apples and strawberries and peaches and
pears and blackberries
Are all Rosaceae,
Issue of the explicit rose,
The open-countenanced, skyward-smiling rose.

What then of the vine?
Oh, what of the tendrilled vine?

Ours is the universe of the unfolded rose,
The explicit
The candid revelation.

But long ago, oh, long ago
Before the rose began to simmer supreme,
Before the rose of all roses, rose of all the world, was even
in bud,
Before the glaciers were gathered up in a bunch out of
the unsettled seas and winds,
Or else before they had been let down again, in Noah's
flood,

There was another world, a dusky, flowerless, tendrilled
world

And creatures webbed and marshy,
And on the margin, men soft-footed and pristine,
Still, and sensitive, and active,
Audile, tactile sensitiveness as of a tendril which orien-
tates and reaches out,
Reaching out and grasping by an instinct more delicate
than the moon's as she feels for the tides.

Of which world, the vine was the invisible rose,
Before petals spread, before colour made its disturbance,
before eyes saw too much.

In a green, muddy, web-foot, unutterly songless world
The vine was rose of all roses.

There were no poppies or carnations,
Hardly a greenish lily, watery faint.
Green, dim, invisible flourishing of vines
Royally gesticulate.

Look now even now, how it keeps its power of invis-
ibility!
Look how black, how blue-black, how globed in Egyp-
tian darkness
Dropping among his leaves, hangs the dark grape!
See him there, the swart, so palpably invisible:
Whom shall we ask about him?

The negro might know a little.
When the vine was rose, Gods were dark-skinned.
Bacchus is a dream's dream.
Once God was all negroid, as now he is fair.
But it's so long ago, the ancient Bushman has forgotten
more utterly than we, who have never known.

For we are on the brink of re-remembrance.
Which, I suppose, is why America has gone dry.
Our pale day is sinking into twilight,
And if we sip the wine, we find dreams coming upon us
Out of the imminent night.
Nay, we find ourselves crossing the fern-scented fron-
tiers
Of the world before the floods, where man was dark and
evasive
And the tiny vine-flower rose of all roses, perfumed,
And all in naked communion communicating as now our
clothed vision can never communicate.
Vistas, down dark avenues,
As we sip the wine.

The grape is swart, the avenues dusky and tendrilled,
subtly prehensile,
But we, as we start awake, clutch at our vistas demo-
cratic, boulevards, tram-cars, policemen.
Give us our own back,
Let us go to the soda-fountain, to get sober.
Soberness, sobriety.

It is like the agonised perverseness of a child heavy with
sleep, yet fighting, fighting to keep awake;
Soberness, sobriety, with heavy eyes propped open.

Dusky are the avenues of wine,
And we must cross the frontiers, though we will not,
Of the lost, fern-scented world:
Take the fern-seed on our lips,
Close the eyes, and go
Down the tendrilled avenues of wine and the other-
world.

San Gervasio.

12

SICILIAN CYCLAMENS

When he pushed his bush of black hair off his brow:
When she lifted her mop from her eyes, and screwed it in
 a knob behind
 —O act of fearful temerity!
When they felt their foreheads bare, naked to heaven,
 their eyes revealed:
When they felt the light of heaven brandished like a
 knife at their defenceless eyes,
And the sea like a blade at their face,
Mediterranean savages:
When they came out, face-revealed, under heaven, from
 the shaggy undergrowth of their own hair
For the first time,
They saw tiny rose cyclamens between their toes, grow-
 ing
Where the slow toads sat brooding on the past.

Slow toads, and cyclamen leaves
Stickily glistening with eternal shadow
Keeping to earth.
Cyclamen leaves
Toad-filmy, earth-iridescent
Beautiful
Frost-filigreed
Spumed with mud

Snail-nacreous

Low down.

The shaking aspect of the sea
And man's defenceless bare face
And cyclamens putting their ears back.
Long, pensive, slim-muzzled greyhound buds
Dreamy, not yet present,
Drawn out of earth
At his toes.

Dawn-rose
Sub-delighted, stone-engendered
Cyclamens, young cyclamens
Arching
Waking, pricking their ears
Like delicate very-young greyhound bitches
Half-yawning at the open, inexperienced
Vista of day,
Folding back their soundless petalled ears.

Greyhound bitches
Bending their rosy muzzles pensive down,
And breathing soft, unwilling to wake to the new day
Yet sub-delighted.

Ah Mediterranean morning, when our world began!
Far-off Mediterranean mornings,
Pelagic faces uncovered,
And unbudding cyclamens.

The hare suddenly goes uphill
Laying back her long ears with unwinking bliss.

And up the pallid, sea-blenced Mediterranean stone-
slopes

Rose cyclamen, ecstatic fore-runner!

Cyclamens, ruddy-muzzled cyclamens

In little bunches like bunches of wild hares

Muzzles together, ears-aprick,

Whispering witchcraft.

Like women at a well, the dawn-fountain.

Greece, and the world's morning

Where all the Parthenon marbles still fostered the roots
of the cyclamen.

Violets

Pagan, rosy-muzzled violets

Autumnal

Dawn-pink,

Dawn-pale

Among squat toad-leaves sprinkling the unborn

Erechtheion marbles.

Taormina.

13

SAINT MATTHEW

They are not all beasts.
One is a man, for example, and one is a bird

I, Matthew, am a man.

'And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me'—

That is Jesus.

But then Jesus was not quite a man.

He was the Son of Man

Filius Mews, 0 remorseless logic

Out of His own mouth.

I, Matthew, being a man

Cannot be lifted up, the Paraclete

To draw all men unto me,

Seeing I am on a par with all men.

I, on the other hand,

Am drawn to the Uplifted, as all men are drawn,

To the Son of Man

Filius Meus.

Wilt thou lift me up, Son of Man?

How my heart beats!

I am man.

I am man, and therefore my heart beats, and throws the
dark blood from side to side
All the time I am lifted up.
Yes, even during my uplifting.

And if it ceased?
, If it ceased, I should be no longer man
As I am, if my heart in uplifting ceased to beat, to toss
the dark blood from side to side, causing my myriad
secret streams.

After the cessation
I might be a soul in bliss, an angel, approximating to the
Uplifted;
But that is another matter;
I am Matthew, the man,
And I am not that other angelic matter.

So I will be lifted up, Saviour,
But put me down again in time, Master,
Before my heart stops beating, and I become what I am
not.
Put me down again on the earth, Jesus, on the brown
soil
Where flowers sprout in the acrid humus, and fade into
humus again.
Where beasts drop their unlicked young, and pasture,
and drop their droppings among the turf.
Where the adder darts horizontal.

Down on the damp, unceasing ground, where my feet
belong
And even my heart, Lord, forever, after all uplifting:
The crumbling, damp, fresh land, life horizontal and
ceaseless.

Matthew I am, the man.
And I take the wings of the morning, to Thee, Crucified,
Glorified.
But while flowers club their petals at evening
And rabbits make pills among the short grass
And long snakes quickly glide into the dark hole in the
wall, hearing man approach,
I must be put down, Lord, in the afternoon,
And at evening I must leave off my wings of the spirit
As I leave off my braces.

And I must resume my nakedness like a fish, sinking
down the dark reversion of night
Like a fish seeking the bottom, Jesus,
IXOTΣ
Face downwards
Veering slowly
Down between the steep slopes of darkness, fucus-dark,
seaweed-fringed valleys of the waters under the sea.
Over the edge of the soundless cataract
Into the fathomless, bottomless pit
Where my soul falls in the last throes of bottomless con-
vulsion, and is fallen

Utterly beyond Thee, Dove of the Spirit;
Beyond everything, except itself.

Nay, Son of Man, I have been lifted up.
To Thee I rose like a rocket ending in mid-heaven.
But even thou, Son of Man, canst not quaff out the dregs
 of terrestrial manhood!
They fall back from Thee.
They fall back, and like a dripping of quicksilver taking
 the downward track,
Break into drops, burn into drops of blood, and drop-
 ping, dropping take wing
Membraned, blood-veined wings.
On fans of unsuspected tissue, like bats
They thread and thrill and flicker ever downward
To the dark zenith of Thine antipodes
Jesus Uplifted.

Bat-winged heart of man,
Reversed flame
Shuddering a strange way down the bottomless pit
To the great depths of its reversed zenith.

Afterwards, afterwards
Morning comes, and I shake the dews of night from the
 wings of my spirit
And mount like a lark, Beloved.

But remember, Saviour,

That my heart which like a lark at heaven's gate singing,
 hovers morning-bright to Thee,
Throws still the dark blood back and forth
In the avenues where the bat hangs sleeping, upside-
 down
And to me undeniable, Jesus.

Listen, Paraclete.
I can no more deny the bat-wings of my fathom-flicker-
 ing spirit of darkness
Than the wings of the Morning and Thee, Thou Glorified.

I am Matthew, the Man:
It is understood.
And Thou art Jesus, Son of Man
Drawing all men unto Thee, but bound to release them
 when the hour strikes.

I have been, and I have returned.
I have mounted up on the wings of the morning, and I
 have dredged down to the zenith's reversal.
Which is my way, being man.
Gods may stay in mid-heaven, the Son of Man has
 climbed to the Whitsun zenith,
But I, Matthew, being a man
Am a traveller back and forth.

So be it.

14

BAT

At evening, sitting on this terrace,
When the sun from the west, beyond Pisa, beyond the
 mountains of Carrara
Departs, and the world is taken by surprise ...
When the tired flower of Florence is in gloom beneath
 the glowing
Brown hills surrounding ...

When under the arches of the Ponte Vecchio
A green light enters against stream, flush from the west,
Against the current of obscure Arno .. .

Look up, and you see things flying
Between the day and the night;
Swallows with spools of dark thread sewing the shadows
 together.

A circle swoop, and a quick parabola under the bridge
 arches
Where light pushes through;
A sudden turning upon itself of a thing in the air.
A dip to the water.

And you think:
'The swallows are flying so late!'

Swallows?

Dark air-life looping
Yet missing the pure loop . .
A twitch, a twitter, an elastic shudder in flight
And serrated wings against the sky,
Like a glove, a black glove thrown up at the light,
And falling back.

Never swallows!

Bats!

The swallows are gone.

At a wavering instant the swallows give way to bats
By the Ponte Vecchio .,.
Changing guard.

Bats, and an uneasy creeping in one's scalp
As the bats swoop overhead!
Flying madly.

Pipistrello!

Black piper on an infinitesimal pipe.
Little lumps that fly in air and have voices indefinite,
wildly vindictive;

Wings like bits of umbrella.

Bats!

Creatures that hang themselves up like an old rag, to
sleep;
And disgustingly upside down.
Hanging upside down like rows of disgusting old rags
And grinning in their sleep.
Bats!

In China the bat is symbol of happiness.

Not for me!

15

SNAKE

A snake came to my water-trough
On a hot, hot day, and I in pyjamas for the heat,
To drink there.

In the deep, strange-scented shade of the great dark
carob-tree
I came down the steps with my pitcher
And must wait, must stand and wait, for there he was at
the trough before me.

He reached down from a fissure in the earth-wall in the
gloom
And trailed his yellow-brown slackness soft-bellied
down, over the edge of the stone trough
And rested his throat upon the stone bottom,
And where the water had dripped from the tap, in a
small clearness,
He sipped with his straight mouth,
Softly drank through his straight gums, into his slack
long body,
Silently.

Someone was before me at my water-trough,
And I, like a second comer, waiting.

He lifted his head from his drinking, as cattle do,
And looked at me vaguely, as drinking cattle do,
And flickered his two-forked tongue from his lips, and
 mused a moment,
And stooped and drank a little more,
Being earth-brown, earth-golden from the burning
 bowels of the earth
On the day of Sicilian July, with Etna smoking.

The voice of my education said to me
He must be killed,
For in Sicily the black, black snakes are innocent, the
 gold are venomous.

And voices in me said, If you were a man
You would take a stick and break him now, and finish
 him off.

But must I confess how I liked him,
How glad I was he had come like a guest in quiet, to
 drink at my water-trough
And depart peaceful, pacified, and thankless,
Into the burning bowels of this earth?

Was it cowardice, that I dared not kill him?
Was it perversity, that I longed to talk to him?
Was it humility, to feel so honoured?
I felt so honoured.

And yet those voices:
If you were not afraid, you would kill him!

And truly I was afraid, I was most afraid,
But even so, honoured still more
That he should seek my hospitality
From out the dark door of the secret earth.

He drank enough
And lifted his head, dreamily, as one who has drunken,
And flickered his tongue like a forked night on the air,
 so black,
Seeming to lick his lips,
And looked around like a god, unseeing, into the air,
And slowly turned his head,
And slowly, very slowly, as if thrice adream,
Proceeded to draw his slow length curving round
And climb again the broken bank of my wall-face.

And as he put his head into that dreadful hole,
And as he slowly drew up, snake-easing his shoulders,
 and entered farther,
A sort of horror, a sort of protest against his withdrawing
 into that horrid black hole,
Deliberately going into the blackness, and slowly drawing
 himself after,
Overcame me now his back was turned.

I looked round, I put down my pitcher,
I picked up a clumsy log
And threw it at the water-trough with a clatter.

I think it did not hit him,
But suddenly that part of him that was left behind convulsed in undignified haste,
Writhed like lightning, and was gone
Into the black hole, the earth-lipped fissure in the wall-front,
At which, in the intense still noon, I stared with fascination.

And immediately I regretted it.
I thought how paltry, how vulgar, what a mean act!
I despised myself and the voices of my accursed human education.
And I thought of the albatross.
And I wished he would come back, my snake.

For he seemed to me again like a king,
Like a king in exile, uncrowned in the underworld,
Now due to be crowned again.

And so, I missed my chance with one of the lords
Of life.
And I have something to expiate;
A pettiness.

Taormina.

16

TORTOISES

LUI ET ELLE

She is large and matronly
And rather dirty,
A little sardonic-looking, as if domesticity had driven
her to it.

Though what she does, except lay four eggs at random
in the garden once a year
And put up with her husband,
I don't know.

She likes to eat.
She hurries up, striding reared on long uncanny legs
When food is going.
Oh yes, she can make haste when she likes.

She snaps the soft bread from my hand in great mouth-
fuls,
Opening her rather pretty wedge of an iron, pristine face
Into an enormously wide-beaked mouth
Like sudden curved scissors,
And gulping at more than she can swallow, and working
her thick, soft tongue,
And having the bread hanging over her chin.

O Mistress, Mistress,
Reptile mistress,
Your eye is very dark, very bright,
And it never softens
Although you watch.

She knows,
She knows well enough to come for food,
Yet she sees me not;
Her bright eye sees, but not me, not anything,
Sightful, sightless, seeing and visionless,
Reptile mistress.

Taking bread in her curved, gaping, toothless mouth,
She has no qualm when she catches my finger in her steel
 overlapping gums,
But she hangs on, and my shout and my shrinking are
 nothing to her.
She does not even know she is nipping me with her
 curved beak.
Snake-like she draws at my finger, while I drag it in
 horror away.

Mistress, reptile mistress,
You are almost too large, I am almost frightened.

He is much smaller,
Dapper beside her,
And ridiculously small.

Her laconic eye has an earthy, materialistic look,
His, poor darling, is almost fiery.

His wimple, his blunt-prowed face,
His low forehead, his skinny neck, his long, scaled, striving legs,
So striving, striving,
Are all more delicate than she,
And he has a cruel scar on his shell.

Poor darling, biting at her feet,
Running beside her like a dog, biting her earthy, splay feet,
Nipping her ankles,
Which she drags apathetic away, though without retreating into her shell.

Agelessly silent,
And with a grim, reptile determination,
Cold, voiceless age-after-age behind him, serpents' long obstinacy
Of horizontal persistence.

Little old man
Scuffling beside her, bending down, catching his opportunity,
Parting his steel-trap face, so suddenly, and seizing her scaly ankle,
And hanging grimly on,

Letting go at last as she drags away,
And closing his steel-trap face.

His steel-trap, stoic, ageless, handsome face.
Alas, what a fool he looks in this scuffle.
And how he feels it!
The lonely rambler, the stoic, dignified stalker through
chaos,
The immune, the animate,
Enveloped in isolation,
Fore-runner.
Now look at him!

Alas, the spear is through the side of his isolation.
His adolescence saw him crucified into sex,
Doomed, in the long crucifixion of desire, to seek his con-
summation beyond himself.
Divided into passionate duality,
He, so finished and immune, now broken into desirous
fragmentariness,
Doomed to make an intolerable fool of himself
In his effort toward completion again.

Poor little earthy house-inhabiting Osiris,
The mysterious bull tore him at adolescence into
pieces,
And he must struggle after reconstruction, ignomini-
ously.

And so behold him following the tail
Of that mud-hovel of his slowly rambling spouse,
Like some unhappy bull at the tail of a cow,
But with more than bovine, grim, earth-dank persistence.

Suddenly seizing the ugly ankle as she stretches out to
walk,
Roaming over the sods,
Or, if it happen to show, at her pointed, heavy tail
Beneath the low-dropping back-board of her shell.
Their two shells like domed boats bumping,
Hers huge, his small;
Their splay feet rambling and rowing like paddles,
And stumbling mixed up in one another,
In the race of love—
Two tortoises,
She huge, he small.

She seems earthily apathetic,
And he has a reptile's awful persistence.

I heard a woman pitying her, pitying the Mere Tortue.
While I, I pity Monsieur.
'He pesters her and torments her,' said the woman.
How much more is *he* pestered and tormented, say I.

What can he do?
He is dumb, he is visionless,

Conceptionless.

His black, sad-lidded eye sees but beholds not
As her earthen mound moves on,
But he catches the folds of vulnerable, leathery skin,
Nail-studded, that shake beneath her shell,
And drags at these with his beak,
Drags and drags and bites,
While she pulls herself free, and rows her dull mound
along.

17

TORTOISE SHOUT

I thought he was dumb,
I said he was dumb,
Yet I've heard him cry.

First faint scream,
Out of life's unfathomable dawn,
Far off, so far, like a madness, under the horizon's dawn-
ing rim,
Far, far off, far scream.

Tortoise *in extremis*.

Why were we crucified into sex?
Why were we not left rounded off, and finished in our-
selves,

As we began,
As he certainly began, so perfectly alone?

A far, was-it-audible scream,
Or did it sound on the plasm direct?

Worse than the cry of the new-born,
A scream,
A yell,
A shout,
A paeon,
A death-agony,
A birth-cry,
A submission,
All tiny, tiny, far away, reptile under the first dawn.

War-cry, triumph, acute-delight, death-scream repti-
lian,

Why was the veil torn?
The silken shriek of the soul's torn membrane?
The male soul's membrane
Torn with a shriek half music, half horror.

Crucifixion.

Male tortoise, cleaving behind the hovel-wall of that
dense female,
Mounted and tense, spread-eagle, out-reaching out of
the shell
In tortoise-nakedness,
Long neck, and long vulnerable limbs extruded, spread-
eagle over her house-roof,

And the deep, secret, all-penetrating tail curved beneath
her walls,
Reaching and gripping tense, more reaching anguish in
uttermost tension
Till suddenly, in the spasm of coition, tugging like a
jerking leap, and oh!
Opening its clenched face from his outstretched neck
And giving that fragile yell, that scream,
Super-audible,
From his pink, cleft, old-man's mouth,
Giving up the ghost,
Or screaming in Pentecost, receiving the ghost.

His scream, and his moment's subsidence,
The moment of eternal silence,
Yet unreleased, and after the moment, the sudden, start-
ling jerk of coition, and at once
The inexpressible faint yell—
And so on, till the last plasm of my body was melted
back
To the primeval rudiments of life, and the secret.

So he tups, and screams
Time after time that frail, torn scream
After each jerk, the longish interval,
The tortoise eternity,
Age-long, reptilian persistence,
Heart-throb, slow heart-throb, persistent for the next
spasm.

I remember, when I was a boy,
I heard the scream of a frog, which was caught with his
 foot in the mouth of an up-starting snake;
I remember when I first heard bull-frogs break into
 sound in the spring;
I remember hearing a wild goose out of the throat of
 night
Cry loudly, beyond the lake of waters;
I remember the first time, out of a bush in the darkness,
 a nightingale's piercing cries and gurgles startled
 the depths of my soul;
I remember the scream of a rabbit as I went through a
 wood at midnight;
I remember the heifer in her heat, blorting and blorting
 through the hours, persistent and irrepressible;
I remember my first terror hearing the howl of weird
 amorous cats;
I remember the scream of a terrified, injured horse, the
 sheet-lightning,
And running away from the sound of a woman in labour,
 something like an owl whooping,
And listening inwardly to the first bleat of a lamb,
The first wail of an infant,
And my mother singing to herself,
And the first tenor singing of the passionate throat of a
 young collier, who has long since drunk himself to
 death,
The first elements of foreign speech
On wild dark lips.

And more than all these,
And less than all these,
This last,
Strange, faint coition yell
Of the male tortoise at extremity,
Tiny from under the very edge of the farthest far-off
horizon of life.

The cross,
The wheel on which our silence first is broken,
Sex, which breaks up our integrity, our single inviolability, our deep silence,
Tearing a cry from us.
Sex, which breaks us into voice, sets us calling across the
deeps, calling, calling for the complement,
Singing, and calling, and singing again, being answered,
having found.

Torn, to become whole again, after long seeking for what
is lost,
The same cry from the tortoise as from Christ, the Osiris-cry of abandonment,
That which is whole, torn asunder,
That which is in part, finding its whole again throughout
the universe.

18

KANGAROO

In the northern hemisphere
Life seems to leap at the air, or skim under the wind
Like stags on rocky ground, or pawing horses, or springy
scut-tailed rabbits.

Or else rush horizontal to charge at the sky's horizon,
Like bulls or bison or wild pigs.

Or slip like water slippery towards its ends,
As foxes, stoats, and wolves, and prairie dogs.

Only mice, and moles, and rats, and badgers, and
beavers, and perhaps bears
Seem belly-plumbed to the earth's mid-navel.
Or frogs that when they leap come flop, and flop to the
centre of the earth.

But the yellow antipodal Kangaroo, when she sits up,
Who can unseat her, like a liquid drop that is heavy, and
just touches earth.

The downward drip
The down-urge.
So much denser than cold-blooded frogs.

Delicate mother Kangaroo

Sitting up there rabbit-wise, but huge, plump-weighted,
And lifting her beautiful slender face, oh! so much more
gently and finely lined than a rabbit's, or than a
hare's,

Lifting her face to nibble at a round white peppermint
drop which she loves, sensitive mother Kangaroo.

Her sensitive, long, pure-bred face.

Her full antipodal eyes, so dark,

So big and quiet and remote, having watched so many
empty dawns in silent Australia.

Her little loose hands, and drooping Victorian shoulders.

And then her great weight below the waist, her vast
pale belly

With a thin young yellow little paw hanging out, and
straggle of a long thin ear, like ribbon,

Like a funny trimming to the middle of her belly, thin
little dangle of an immature paw, and one thin ear.

Her belly, her big haunches

And, in addition, the great muscular python-stretch of
her tail.

There, she shan't have any more peppermint drops.

So she wistfully, sensitively sniffs the air, and then turns,
goes off in slow sad leaps

On the long flat skis of her legs,
Steered and propelled by that steel-strong snake of a
tail.
Stops again, half turns, inquisitive to look back.
While something stirs quickly in her belly, and a lean
little face comes out, as from a window,
Peaked and a bit dismayed,
Only to disappear again quickly away from the sight of
the world, to snuggle down in the warmth,
Leaving the trail of a different paw hanging out.

Still she watches with eternal, cocked wistfulness!
How full her eyes are, like the full, fathomless, shining
eyes of an Australian black-boy
Who has been lost so many centuries on the margins of
existence!
She watches with insatiable wistfulness.
Untold centuries of watching for something to come,
For a new signal from life, in that silent lost land of the
South.

Where nothing bites but insects and snakes and the sun,
small life.
Where no bull roared, no cow ever lowed, no stag cried,
no leopard screeched, no lion coughed, no dog
barked,
But all was silent save for parrots occasionally, in the
haunted blue bush.

Wistfully watching, with wonderful liquid eyes.
And all her weight, all her blood, dripping sack-wise
 down towards the earth's centre,
And the live little-one taking in its paw at the door of her
 belly.

Leap then, and come down on the line that draws to
 the earth's deep, heavy centre.

Sydney.

19

MIDDLE OF THE WORLD

This sea will never die, neither will it ever grow old
nor cease to be blue, nor in the dawn
cease to lift up its hills
and let the slim black ship of Dionysos come sailing in
with grape-vines up the mast, and dolphins leaping.

What do I care if the smoking ships
of the P. & O. and the Orient Line and all the other
stinkers
cross like clock-work the Minoan distance!
They only cross, the distance never changes.

And now that the moon who gives men glistening bodies
is in her exaltation, and can look down on the sun
I see descending from the ships at dawn
slim naked men from Cnossos, smiling the archaic smile
of those that will without fail come back again,
and kindling little fires upon the shores
and crouching, and speaking the music of lost languages.

And the Minoan Gods, and the Gods of Tiryns
are heard softly laughing and chatting, as ever;
and Dionysos, young, and a stranger
leans listening on the gate, in all respect,

20

DEMIURGE

They say that reality exists only in the spirit
that corporal existence is a kind of death
that pure being is bodiless
that the idea of the form precedes the form substantial.

But what nonsense it is!
as if any Mind could have imagined a lobster
dozing the under-deeps, then reaching out a savage and
iron claw!

Even the mind of God can only imagine
those things that have become themselves:
bodies and presences, here and now, creatures with a
foothold in creation
even if it is only a lobster on tiptoe.

Religion knows better than philosophy
Religion knows that Jesus never was Jesus
till he was born from a womb, and ate soup and bread
and grew up, and became, in the wonder of creation,
Jesus,
with a body and with needs, and a lovely spirit.

21

BAVARIAN GENTIAN

Not every man has gentians in his house
in Soft September, at slow, Sad Michaelmas.

Bavarian gentians, big and dark, only dark
darkening the day-time torch-like with the smoking
 blueness of Pluto's gloom,
ribbed and torch-like, with their blaze of darkness
 spread blue
down flattening into points, flattened under the sweep of
 white day
torch-flower of the blue-smoking darkness, Pluto's dark-
 blue daze,
black lamps from the halls of Dio, burning dark blue,
giving off darkness, blue darkness, as Demeter's pale
 lamps give off light,
lead me then, lead me the way.

Reach me a gentian, give me a torch
let me guide myself with the blue, forked torch of this
 flower
down the darker and darker stairs, where blue is dark-
 ened on blueness.
even where Persephone goes, just now, from the frosted
 September

to the sightless realm where darkness is awake upon the
dark
and Persephone herself is but a voice
or a darkness invisible enfolded in the deeper dark
of the arms of Plutonic, and pierced with the passion of
dense gloom,
among the splendour of torches of darkness, shedding
darkness on the lost bride and her groom.

22

THE HANDS OF GOD

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living
God.

But it is a much more fearful thing to fall out of
them.

Did Lucifer fall through knowledge?
oh then, pity him, pity him that plunge!

Save me, O God, from falling into the ungodly know-
ledge
of myself as I am without God.

Let me never know, O God
let me never know what I am or should be
when I have fallen out of your hands, the hands of the
living God.

That awful and sickening endless sinking, sinking
through the slow, corruptive levels of disintegrative
knowledge
when the self has fallen from the hands of God
and sinks, seething and sinking, corrupt
and sinking still, in depth after depth of disintegrative
consciousness

sinking in the endless undoing, the awful katabolism
into the abyss!
even of the soul, fallen from the hands of God!

Save me from that, O God!
Let me never know myself apart from the living God!

23

THE SHIP OF DEATH

I

Now it is autumn and the falling fruit
and the long journey towards oblivion.

The apples falling like great drops of dew
to bruise themselves an exit from themselves.

And it is time to go, to bid farewell
to one's own self, and find an exit
from the fallen self.

II

Have you built your ship of death, O have you?
O build your ship of death, for you will need it.

The grim frost is at hand, when the apples will fall
thick, almost thundrous, on the hardened earth.

And death is on the air like a smell of ashes!
Ah! can't you smell it?
And in the bruised body, the frightened soul
finds itself shrinking, wincing from the cold
that blows upon it through the orifices.

in

And can a man his own quietus make

with a bare bodkin?

With daggers, bodkins, bullets, man can make
a bruise or break of exit for his life;
but is that a quietus, O tell me, is it quietus?

Surely not so! for how could murder, even self-murder
ever a quietus make?

IV

O let us talk of quiet that we know,
that we can know, the deep and lovely quiet
of a strong heart at peace!

How can we this, our own quietus, make?

V

Build then the ship of death, for you must take
the longest journey, to oblivion.

And die the death, the long and painful death
that lies between the old self and the new.

Already our bodies are fallen, bruised, badly bruised,
already our souls are oozing through the exit
of the cruel bruise.

Already the dark and endless ocean of the end
is washing in through the breaches of our wounds,
already the flood is upon us.

Oh build your ship of death, your little ark
and furnish it with food, with little cakes, and wine
for the dark flight down oblivion.

VI

Piecemeal the body dies, and the timid soul
has her footing washed away, as the dark flood rises.

We are dying, we are dying, we are all of us dying
and nothing will stay the death-flood rising within us
and soon it will rise on the world, on the outside world.

We are dying, we are dying, piecemeal our bodies are
dying
and our strength leaves us,
and our soul cowers naked in the dark rain over the flood,
cowering in the last branches of the tree of our life.

VII

We are dying, we are dying, so all we can do
is now to be willing to die, and to build the ship
of death to carry the soul on the longest journey.

A little ship, with oars and food
and little dishes, and all accoutrements
fitting and ready for the departing soul.

Now launch the small ship, now as the body dies

and life departs, launch out, the fragile soul
in the fragile ship of courage, the ark of faith
with its store of food and little cooking pans
and change of clothes,
upon the flood's black waste
upon the waters of the end
upon the sea of death, where still we sail
darkly, for we cannot steer, and have no port.

There is no port, there is nowhere to go
only the deepening blackness darkening still
blacker upon the soundless, ungurgling flood
darkness at one with darkness, up and down
and sideways utterly dark, so there is no direction any
more
and the little ship is there; yet she is gone.
She is not seen, for there is nothing to see her by.
She is gone! gone! and yet
somewhere she is there.
Nowhere!

VIII

And everything is gone, the body is gone
completely under, gone, entirely gone.
The upper darkness is heavy as the lower,
between them the little ship
is gone.

It is the end, it is oblivion.

IX

And yet out of eternity a thread
 separates itself on the blackness,
 a horizontal thread
 that fumes a little with pallor upon the dark.

Is it illusion? or does the pallor fume
 A little higher?
 Ah wait, wait, for there's the dawn,
 the cruel dawn of coming back to life
 out of oblivion.

Wait, wait, the little ship
 drifting, beneath the deathly ashy grey
 of a flood-dawn.

Wait, wait! even so, a flush of yellow
 and strangely, O chilled wan soul, a flush of rose.

A flush of rose, and the whole thing starts again.

X

The flood subsides, and the body, like a worn sea-shell
 emerges strange and lovely.
 And the little ship wings home, faltering and lapsing
 on the pink flood,
 and the frail soul steps out, into the house again
 filling the heart with peace.

Swings the heart renewed with peace
even of oblivion.

Oh build your ship of death. Oh build it!
for you will need it.
For the voyage of oblivion awaits you.

24

THE MOSQUITO KNOWS

The mosquito knows full well, small as he is
he's a beast of prey.

But after all
he only takes his bellyful,
he doesn't put my blood in the bank.

25

MONEY-MADNESS

Money is our madness, our vast collective madness.

And of course, if the multitude is mad
the individual carries his own grain of insanity around
with him.

I doubt if any man living hands out a pound note with-
out a pang;
and a real tremor, if he hands out a ten-pound note.

We quail, money makes us quail.
It has got us down, we grovel before it in strange terror.
And no wonder, for money has a fearful cruel power
among men.

But it is not money we are so terrified of,
it is the collective money-madness of mankind.
For mankind says with one voice: How much is he
worth?
Has he no money? Then let him eat dirt, and go cold.—

And if I have no money, they will give me a little bread
so I do not die,
but they will make me eat dirt with it.
I shall have to eat dirt, I shall have to eat dirt
if I have no money.

It is that that I am frightened of.
And that fear can become a delirium.
It is fear of my money-mad fellow-men.

We must have some money
to save us from eating dirt.

And this is all wrong.

Bread should be free,
shelter should be free,
fire should be free
to all and anybody, all and anybody, all over the world.

We must regain our sanity about money
before we start killing one another about it.
It's one thing or the other.

26

PEACE AND WAR

People always make war when they say they love peace.
The loud love of peace makes one quiver more than any
battle-cry.

Why should one love peace? it is so obviously vile to ,
make war.

Loud peace propaganda makes war seem imminent.
It is a form of war, even, self-assertion and being wise
for other people.

Let people be wise for themselves. And anyhow
nobody can be wise except on rare occasions, like getting
married or dying.

It's bad taste to be wise all the time, like being at a per-
petual funeral.

For everyday use, give me somebody whimsical, with
not too much purpose in life,
then we shan't have war, and we needn't talk about
peace.

