

# Poems (1913)

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### **Source Text:**

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All quotation marks retained as data  
All unambiguous end-of-line hyphens have been removed, and the trailing  
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*Australian Etexts poetry 1910-1939 verse*

**Poems 1913**

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# **I: TOWARDS THE SOURCE**

**1894-1897**

## MDCCCXCIII : A PRELUDE

*Sweet days of breaking light,  
or yet the shadowy might  
and blaze of starry strife  
possess'd my life;*

sweet dawn of Beauty's day,  
first hint and smiling play  
of the compulsive force  
that since my course

across the years obeys;  
not tho' all earlier days  
in me were buried, not  
were ye forgot. —

The northern kingdom's dream,  
prison'd in crystal gleam,  
heard the pale flutes of spring,  
her thin bells ring;

the tranced maiden's eyes  
open'd, a far surmise,  
and heaven and meadows grew  
a tender blue

of petal-hearts that keep  
thro' their dark winter-sleep  
true memory of delight,  
a hidden light.

Then by her well Romance  
waiting the fabled chance  
dream'd all the forest-scene  
in shifting green;

and Melusina's gaze  
lurk'd in the shadow'd glaze  
of waters gliding still,  
a witching ill;

or lost Undine wept  
where the hid streamlet crept,  
to the dusk murmuring low  
her silvery woe.

Dim breaths in the dim shade  
of the romantic glade

told of the timid pain  
that hearken'd, fain,

how Beauty came to save  
the prison'd life and wave  
above the famish'd lands  
her healing hands

(Beauty, in hidden ways  
walking, a leafy maze  
with magic odour dim,  
far on life's rim;

Beauty, sweet pain to kiss,  
Beauty, sharp pain to miss,  
in sorrow or in joy  
a dear annoy;

Beauty, with waiting years  
that bind the fount of tears  
well-won if once her light  
shine, before night).

Then the shy heart of youth  
dared know its weening sooth,  
then first thy godhead, Sun,  
it's life's light one,

what time the hour outroll'd  
its banner's blazon'd gold  
and all the honey'd time  
rang rich with rhyme —

rhyme, and the liquid laugh  
of girlish spring, to quaff  
granted each heart, and shed  
about each head

a sound of harping blown  
and airs of elfin tone  
and gipsy waifs of song,  
a dancing throng.

The yellow meads of May  
acclaim'd the louder lay,  
more rapturously athirst  
for that fierce burst

of Summer's clarioning,  
what time his fulgent wing  
should cleave the crystal spell

his hot eyes tell

each charm beneath the veil  
his eager hands assail  
and his red lips be prest  
against her breast,

filling her every vein  
with the diviner pain  
of life beyond all dream  
burning, supreme —

(O natural ecstasy!  
O highest grace, to be,  
in every pulse to know  
the Sungod's glow!)

Thence the exulting strain  
sped onward as a rain  
of golden-linked notes  
from unseen throats,

till the mad heart, adust,  
of August's aching lust  
to do her beauty wrong  
broke, and the song;

and in her popped fate  
keen life, grown all too great,  
illumed with grateful breath  
the lips of death. —

But these deep fibres hold  
the season's mortal gold,  
by silent alchemy  
of soul set free,

and woven in vision'd shower  
as each most secret hour  
sheds the continuing bliss  
in song or kiss. —

O poets I have loved  
when in my soul first moved  
desire to breathe in one  
love, song and sun,

your pages that I turn,  
your jewelled phrases burn  
richly behind a haze  
of golden days. —

And, O, ye golden days,  
tho' since on stranger ways,  
to some undying war  
the fatal star

of unseen Beauty draw  
this soul, to occult law  
obedient ever, not  
are ye forgot.

## [We sat entwined an hour or two together . .]

We sat entwined an hour or two together  
(how long I know not) underneath pine-trees  
that rustled ever in the soft spring weather  
stirr'd by the sole suggestion of the breeze:

we sat and dreamt that strange hour out together  
fill'd with the Sundering silence of the seas:  
the trees moan'd for us in the tender weather  
we found no word to speak beneath those trees

but listen'd wondering to their dreamy dirges  
sunder'd even then in voiceless misery;  
heard in their boughs the murmur of the surges  
saw the far sky as curv'd above the sea.

That noon seem'd some forgotten afternoon,  
cast out from Life, where Time might scarcely be:  
our old love was but remember'd as some swoon;  
Sweet, I scarce thought of you nor you of me

but, lost in the vast, we watched the minutes hasting  
into the deep that sunders friend from friend;  
spake not nor stirr'd but heard the murmurs wasting  
into the silent distance without end:

so, whelm'd in that silence, seem'd to us as one  
our hearts and all their desolate reverie,  
the irresistible melancholy of the sun  
the irresistible sadness of the sea.

## [Sweet silence after bells! . .]

Sweet silence after bells!  
deep in the enamour'd ear  
soft incantation dwells.

Filling the rapt still sphere  
a liquid crystal swims,  
precarious yet clear.

Those metal quiring hymns  
shaped ether so succinct:  
a while, or it dislimns,

the silence, wanly printk  
with forms of lingering notes,  
inhabits, close, distinct;

and night, the angel, floats  
on wings of blessing spread  
o'er all the gather'd cotes

where meditation, wed  
with love, in gold-lit cells,  
absorbs the heaven that shed

sweet silence after bells.

## **[Autumn: the year breathes dully towards its death, . .]**

Autumn: the year breathes dully towards its death,  
beside its dying sacrificial fire;  
the dim world's middle-age of vain desire  
is strangely troubled, waiting for the breath  
that speaks the winter's welcome malison  
to fix it in the unremembering sleep:  
the silent woods brood o'er an anxious deep,  
and in the faded sorrow of the sun,  
I see my dreams' dead colours, one by one,  
forth-conjur'd from their smouldering palaces,  
fade slowly with the sigh of the passing year.  
They wander not nor wring their hands nor weep,  
discrown'd belated dreams! but in the drear  
and lingering world we sit among the trees  
and bow our heads as they, with frozen mouth,  
looking, in ashen reverie, towards the clear  
sad splendour of the winter of the far south.

## [Where star-cold and the dread of space . .]

Where star-cold and the dread of space  
in icy silence bind the main  
I feel but vastness on my face,  
I sit, a mere incurious brain,

under some outcast satellite,  
some Thule of the universe,  
upon the utter verge of night  
frozen by some forgotten curse.

The ways are hidden from mine eyes  
that brought me to this ghastly shore:  
no embers in their depths arise  
of suns I may have known of yore.

Somewhere I dream of tremulous flowers  
and meadows fervent with appeal  
far among fever'd human hours  
whose pulses here I never feel:

that on my careless name afar  
a voice is calling ever again  
beneath some other wounded star  
removed for ever from my ken:

vain fictions! silence fills my ear,  
the deep my gaze: I reckon of nought,  
as I have sat for ages here,  
concentred in my brooding thought.

## [Dies Dominica! the sunshine burns . .]

Dies Dominica! the sunshine burns  
strong incense on the breathing fields of morn:  
lucid, intense, all colour towards it yearns  
that souls of flowers on the air are born.

What claustral joy to-day is on the air  
— expanding now and one with the celebrant sun —  
and fills with pointed flame all things aware,  
all flowers and souls that sing — and I am one!

Dies Dominica! the passion yearns,  
and the whole world and singer is but one flower  
from out whose luminous chalice odour burns  
intenser toward the blue thro' this keen hour:

— this hour is my eternity! the soul  
rises, expanding ever, with the sight,  
thro' flowers and colours, and the visible whole  
of beauty mingled in one dream of light.

## [The grand cortège of glory and youth is gone . .]

The grand cortège of glory and youth is gone  
flaunt standards, and the flood of brazen tone:  
I alone linger, a regretful guest,  
here where the hostelry has crumbled down,  
emptied of warmth and life, and the little town  
lies cold and ruin'd, all its bravery done,  
wind-blown, wind-blown, where not even dust may rest.  
No cymbal-clash warms the chill air: the way  
lies stretch'd beneath a slanting afternoon,  
the which no piled pyres of the slaughter'd sun,  
no silver sheen of eve shall follow: Day,  
ta'en at the throat and choked, in the huge slum  
o' the common world, shall fall across the coast,  
yellow and bloodless, not a wound to boast.  
But if this bare-blown waste refuse me home  
and if the skies wither my vesper-flight,  
'twere well to creep, or ever livid night  
wrap the disquiet earth in horror, back  
where the old church stands on our morning's track,  
and in the iron-entrellis'd choir, among  
rust tombs and blazons, where an isle of light  
is bosom'd in the friendly gloom, devise  
proud anthems in a long forgotten tongue:  
so cozening youth's despair o'er joy that dies.

## Epigraph

Black on the depths of blackest skies  
whence even the levin seems withdrawn,  
the cities threaten: burning eyes  
ask what dread hand hath slain the dawn.

## **[Under a sky of uncreated mud . .]**

Under a sky of uncreated mud  
or sunk beneath the accursed streets, my life  
is added up of cupboard-musty weeks  
and ring'd about with walls of ugliness:  
some narrow world of ever-streaming air.

My days of azure have forgotten me.

Nought stirs, in garret-chambers of my brain,  
except the squirming brood of miseries  
older than memory, while, far out of sight  
behind the dun blind of the rain, my dreams  
of sun on leaves and waters drip thro' years  
nor stir the slumbers of some sullen well,  
beneath whose corpse-fed weeds I too shall sink.

## [The yellow gas is fired from street to street . .]

### I

The yellow gas is fired from street to street  
past rows of heartless homes and hearths unlit,  
dead churches, and the unending pavement beat  
by crowds — say rather, haggard shades that flit

round nightly haunts of their delusive dream,  
where'er our paradisaal instinct starves:—  
till on the utmost post, its sinuous gleam  
crawls in the oily water of the wharves;

where Homer's sea loses his keen breath, hemm'd  
what place rebellious piles were driven down —  
the priestlike waters to this task condemn'd  
to wash the roots of the inhuman town! —

where fat and strange-eyed fish that never saw  
the outer deep, broad halls of sapphire light,  
glut in the city's draught each nameless maw:  
— and there, wide-eyed unto the soulless night,

methinks a drown'd maid's face might fitly show  
what we have slain, a life that had been free,  
clean, large, nor thus tormented — even so  
as are the skies, the salt winds and the sea.

Ay, we have saved our days and kept them whole,  
to whom no part in our old joy remains,  
had felt those bright winds sweeping thro' our soul  
and all the keen sea tumbling in our veins,

had thrill'd to harps of sunrise, when the height  
whitens, and dawn dissolves in virgin tears,  
or caught, across the hush'd ambrosial night,  
the choral music of the swinging spheres,

or drunk the silence if nought else — But no!  
and from each rotting soul distil in dreams  
a poison, o'er the old earth creeping slow,  
that kills the flowers and curdles the live streams,

that taints the fresh breath of re-risen day  
and reeks across the pale bewilder'd moon:  
— shall we be cleans'd and how? I only pray,  
red flame or deluge, may that end be soon!

## II

Ah, who will give us back our long-lost innocence  
and tremulous blue within the garden, else untrod  
save by the angels' feet, where joys of childish sense  
and twin-born hearts went up like morning-praise to God!

where we were one with all the glad sun-woven hours  
and rapture of golden morn thrill'd thro' our blood and nerve:  
— our souls knew nothing more than knew the unheeding flowers  
nor their own beauty's law, nor what it was to serve.

But that dark lust to learn and suffer drove us forth:  
we wearied of the light, of life unvaried, whole;  
and seeking have we wandered, south and west and north,  
some darker fire to fuse the full-grown sense with soul.

And see! for ages have we dragg'd our long disease  
o'er many a hideous street and mouldering sepulchres,  
till not a capital of towers and blacken'd trees  
but reeks with taint of us, drips with our blood and tears.

London or Tarshish, Rome and Paris our delights  
have gilded and thereon have soil'd them: first and last,  
flush'd with our wine and song, has shudder'd at our nights,  
and cast us, lepers, out into the ancient waste.

Where grinning deserts hide unhid your skeleton stones,  
Tadmor or Nineveh, our pomp has enter'd in:  
the Dead Sea rolls more bitter above our blasted bones  
and spews upon its shore the unwasted scurf of sin.

And what have we at last of all our wandering?  
the sadness of the flesh, the languor of the soil,  
and this — hard eyes, scarr'd cheeks, lips that forget to sing:  
— ah! we could lay us down and let the deluge roll

our corpses into Lethe's pit — but that a breeze  
has blown upon our eyes with tidings of the blue  
still somewhere: let us bend this once our penitent knees,  
then rise and seek for aye the garden that we knew.

Ay, let the cities pile themselves in the red mud,  
and flare into the night that hides the offended heaven,  
and belch their sodden dream of empire, lust and blood,  
working in dread ferment of the old hellish leaven,

Psyche! our feet are set towards the eastern star,  
our eyes upon the spaces of the morning air;  
what tho' the garden goal shine o'er sad seas afar,

tho' young hope guide us not, our soul shall not despair.

Enough, we shall have dream'd that solitary emprise,  
enough, we shall have been true to our austere thought,  
that, if we ne'er behold with longing human eyes  
our paradise of yore, sister, we shall have sought.

### III

Let us go down, the long dead night is done,  
the dolorous incantation has been wrought;  
soul, let us go, the saving word is won,  
down from the tower of our hermetic thought.

See — for the wonder glimmers in the gates,  
eager to burst the soundless bars and grace  
the wistful earth, that still in blindness waits,  
perfect with suffering for her Lord's embrace.

The spaces of the waters of the dawn  
are spiritual with our transfigured gaze;  
the intenser heights of morning, far withdrawn,  
expect our dream to shine along their ways.

But speak the word! and o'er the adoring whole  
straight from the marge of the perfected hours  
sudden, large music through the vast, shall roll  
a sea of light foaming with seedless flowers;

lilies that form on some ethereal wave,  
still generate of the most ancient blue,  
burst roses, rootless, knowing not the grave  
nor yet the charnel thought by which they grew.

So we shall move at last, untortured powers,  
and in white silence hear, as souls unborn,  
our hymn given back by the eternal hours  
singing together in the eternal morn

## [I saw my life as whitest flame . .]

*I saw my life as whitest flame  
light-leaping in a crystal sky,  
and virgin colour where it came  
pass'd to its heart, in love to die.*

It wrapped the world in tender harm  
rose-flower'd with one ecstatic pang:  
God walk'd amid the hush'd alarm,  
and all the trembling region rang

music, whose silver veils dispart  
around the carven silences  
Memnonian in the hidden heart —  
now blithe, effulgorant majesties.

## EPIGRAPH

*A memory droops among the trees  
and grasses ponder a vanished trace:  
the dream that wanders on the breeze  
wafts incense towards a hidden face.*

## [Where the poppy-banners flow . .]

*Where the poppy-banners flow  
in and out amongst the corn,  
spotless morn  
ever saw us come and go*

hand in hand, as girl and boy  
warming fast to youth and maid,  
half-afraid  
at the hint of passionate joy

hid in summer's rose unblown:  
yet we heard nor knew a fear,  
strong and clear,  
summer's eager clarion blown,

from the sunrise to the set:  
now our feet are far away,  
night and day,  
do the old known spots forget?

Sweet, I wonder if those hours  
breathe of us now parted thence,  
if a sense  
of our love-birth thrill their flowers:

poppies flush all tremulous;  
has our love grown into them,  
root and stem,  
are the red blooms red with us?

Summer's banner is unroll'd;  
other lovers wander slow;  
I would know  
if the morn is that of old.

Here our days bloom fuller yet,  
and our love is all our task;  
still I ask:  
can those olden days forget?

## **[Deep mists of longing blur the land . .]**

Deep mists of longing blur the land  
as in your late October eve:  
almost I think your hand might leave  
its old caress upon my hand —

for sure this floating world of dream  
hath touch'd that far reality  
of memory's heaven; nor would I deem  
the chance a strange one, if to thee

my feet should stray ere fall the night,  
or, reaching to that lucent shore,  
these eyes should wake on tenderer light  
to greet the spring and thee once more.

## **[When Summer comes in her glory and brave the whole earth blows, . .]**

When Summer comes in her glory and brave the whole earth blows,  
when colours burn and perfumes impassion the gladden'd air  
then methinks thy laughter seeks me on every breeze that goes  
and I feel thy breathing warmth about me everywhere.

Or in the dreamy eve, when our soul is spread in the skies,  
when Life for an hour is hush'd, and the gaze is wide to behold  
what day may not show nor night, then sure it were no surprise  
to find thee beside me sitting, the pitying eyes of old.

But ah, when the winter rains drive hard on the blacken'd pane  
and the grief of the lonely wind is lost in the waste outside,  
when the room is high and chill and I seek my place in vain,  
I know that seas plash cold in the night and the world is wide.

## [And shall the living waters heed . .]

And shall the living waters heed  
our vain desire, insensate Art!  
and fill the common dust I knead  
upgather'd from the trodden mart?

As well might they forsake their clime  
of virgin green and blue, to creep  
in cities where our tears are slime,  
where our unquicken'd bodies sleep.

— But thou, O soul, hast stood for sure  
in the far paradisa! bower,  
there where our passion sparkles pure  
beneath the eternal morning hour.

and oft, in twilights listening,  
my sleeping memories are stirr'd  
by lavings of the unstaunched spring  
upwelling in a sudden word.

Why shouldst thou come to squander here  
the treasure of those deeps on me?  
nay, where our fount is free and clear  
stay there, and let me come to thee!

**[And does she still perceive, her curtain drawn, . . .]**

And does she still perceive, her curtain drawn,  
white fields, where maiden Dawn  
is anguish'd with the untold approach of joy?  
or in the wooing forenoon softly pass  
where of our little friends  
that knew us, girl and boy,  
the delicate feather-pinks, each dainty greeting bends  
before her step, amid the pale sweet grass?  
or warmer flush  
our poppies with her blush  
as the long day of love grows bold for the red kiss  
and dreams of bliss  
dizzy the brain and awe the youthful blood?  
Surely her longing gaze hath call'd them forth  
the bashful blue-eyed flower-births of the North,  
forget-me-nots and violets of the wood,  
those maids that slept beneath the snow, and every gracious thing  
that glads the spring!  
— Ah sweet! but dream me in thy landscape there  
as I have pictured thee  
and I shall rest the long day at thy knee  
beneath thy hair:  
and Thou and I unconscious of surprise  
but innocently quiet and gravely glad  
and just a little sad  
with longing long repress'd,  
shall fill with grace each other's welcome eyes  
till the shy evening rise  
and the streaming lilac-bloom enchant the drowsed air,  
hushing it soft and warm round pillows press'd  
by happy lovers' rest  
lost in that timeless hour when breast is joined to breast.

## [Of old, on her terrace at evening . .]

Of old, on her terrace at evening  
— not here — in some long-gone kingdom  
oh, folded close to her breast!

Our gaze dwelt wide on the blackness  
(was it trees? or a shadowy passion  
the pain of an old-world longing  
that it sobb'd, that it swell'd, that it shrank?)  
— the gloom of the forest  
blurr'd soft on the skirt of the night-skies  
that shut in our lonely world.

Not here — in some long-gone world...

Close-lock'd in that passionate arm-clasp  
no word did we utter, we stirr'd not:  
the silence of Death, or of Love.  
Only, round and over us,  
that tearless infinite yearning,  
and the Night with her spread wings rustling,  
folding us with the stars.

Not here - in some long-gone kingdom  
of old, on her terrace at evening,  
oh, folded close to her heart!

## **[Was it the sun that broke my dream . .**

Was it the sun that broke my dream  
or was't the dazzle of thy hair  
caught where our olden meadows seem  
themselves again and yet more fair?

Ah, sun that woke me, limpid stream,  
then in spring-mornings' rapture of air!  
Was it the sun that broke my dream  
or was 't the dazzle of thy hair?

And didst not thou beside me gleam,  
brought hither by a tender care  
at least my slumbering grief to share?  
Are only the cold seas supreme?  
Was it the sun that broke my dream?

## **[When the spring mornings grew more long . .]**

When the spring mornings grew more long  
early I woke from dream that told  
of dreaded parting and the cold  
of the gray dawns when I should long

to see once more that clear light fall  
upon my hands and know that near  
the yellow meadows shone with dear  
small flowers and hear thy laughter fall

— as now I long only to wake  
once in that quiet shine of spring  
and dream an hour the hour will bring  
thy laughing call that bids me wake

**[An hour's respite; once more the heart may dream: . .]**

An hour's respite; once more the heart may dream:  
the thunderwheels of passion thro' the eve,  
distantly musical, vaporously agleam,  
about my old pain leave  
nought but a soft enchantment, vesper fable.

Sweet hour of dream! from the tense height of life  
given back to this dear grass and perfumed shade,  
across the golden darkness  
I feel the simple flowerets where we stray'd  
in the clear eyes unmix'd with starry strife.

Ah! wilt thou not even now arise,  
low-laughing child haunting my old spring ways  
and blossom freshly on my freshen'd gaze,  
sororal in this hour of tenderness,  
an hour of happy hands and clinging eyes —  
on silent heartstrings  
sweet memory fades in sweet forgetfulness.

## [Spring-ripple of green along the way, . .]

Spring-ripple of green along the way,  
keen splash of aery waves that play,  
and in my heart  
thy dreamy smart, O distant day!

Oh whisper hidden in the spring  
of days when soul and song took wing  
beneath her eyes,  
twin smiling skies bent listening.

Oh cruel spell the season weaves!  
heart-piercing smell of smoky eves,  
all, all is old!  
ironic gold that but deceives!

Strange spring, wilt only make me mourn?  
Ah, for thy grace is overworn!  
we are the ghost  
of spring-tides lost and singing morn!

## [I am shut out of mine own heart . .]

I am shut out of mine own heart  
because my love is far from me,  
nor in the wonders have I part  
that fill its hidden empery:

the wildwood of adventurous thought  
and lands of dawn my dream had won,  
the riches out of Faery brought  
are buried with our bridal sun.

And I am in a narrow place,  
and all its little streets are cold,  
because the absence of her face  
has robb'd the sullen air of gold.

My home is in a broader day:  
at times I catch it glistening  
thro' the dull gate, a flower'd play  
and odour of undying spring:

the long days that I lived alone,  
sweet madness of the springs I miss'd,  
are shed beyond, and thro' them blown  
clear laughter, and my lips are kiss'd:

- and here, from mine own joy apart,  
I wait the turning of the key:—  
I am shut out of mine own heart  
because my love is far from me.

## Spring breezes over the blue, . .]

Spring breezes over the blue,  
now lightly frolicking in some tropic bay,  
go forth to meet her way,  
for here the spell hath won and dream is true.

O happy wind, thou that in her warm hair  
mayst rest and play!  
could I but breathe all longing into thee,  
so were thy viewless wing  
as flame or thought, hastening her shining way.

And now I bid thee bring  
tenderly hither over a subject sea  
that golden one whose grace hath made me king,  
and, soon to glad my gaze at shut of day,  
loosen'd in happy air  
her charmed hair.

## [White dawn, that tak'st the heaven with sweet surprise . .]

White dawn, that tak'st the heaven with sweet surprise  
of amorous artifice,  
art thou the bearer of my perfect hour  
divine, untrod,  
from some forgotten window of Paradise  
by mighty winds of God  
blown down the world, before my haunted eyes  
at length to flower?  
Nay, virgin dawn, yet art thou all too known,  
too crowded light  
to take my boundless hour of flaming peace:  
thou common dayspring cease;  
and be there only night, the only night,  
more than all other lone:  
be the sole secret world  
one rose unfurl'd,  
and nought disturb its blossom'd peace intense,  
that fills the living deep beyond all dreams of sense  
enmesh'd in errorous multiplicity:  
— let be  
nought but her coming there:  
what else were fair?  
It asks no golden web, no censer-fire  
to tell the dense incarnate mystery  
where one delight is wed with one desire.  
No leaves bestrow  
that passage to the rose of all fulfill'd delight;  
no silver trumpets blow  
majestic rite,  
but silence that is sigh'd from faery lands,  
or wraps the feet of Beauty where she treads  
dim fields of fading stars,  
be round our meeting heads,  
and seeking hands:  
draw near, ye heavens, and be our chamber-bars;  
and thou, maternal heart of holy night,  
close watch, what hush'd and sacramental tide  
a soul goes forth wide-eyed,  
to meet the archangel-sword of loneliest delight

## [Four springtimes lost: and in the fifth we stand, . .]

Four springtimes lost: and in the fifth we stand,  
here in this quiet hour of glory, still,  
while o'er the bridal land  
the westering sun dwells in untroubled gold,  
a bridegroom proud of his permitted will,  
whom grateful rapture suffers not be bold,  
but tender now and bland  
his amber locks and bended gaze are shed,  
brimming, above the couch'd and happy clime:  
all is content and ripe delight, full-fed.  
And as your fingers brush my hand  
so too the winning time  
would charm me from regretful reverie  
that keeps me somewhat sad, remembering —  
not the old woodland days, for thou art near  
and hold'st them safely hid  
to rise and shine again, when waning skies shall bid —  
but later dawns o' the year, away from thee  
liv'd thro', even here,  
and golden embraces of the light-hearted time  
when I was sad at heart, remembering  
the clear enchantments of our single year,  
our woodland prime of love, its violet-budded vow,  
receding ever now  
farther and farther down the past, a gleam  
that turns to softest pearl the luminous haze  
drifting between in from the golden days  
when I was sad at inmost heart, remembering  
thee and the woodland season of bright laughter: —  
so in my perverse and most loitering dream  
(O fading, fading days!)  
each season claims the homage due, long after  
its glory has faded to an outcast thing.

## [Old wonder flush'd the east anew . .]

Old wonder flush'd the east anew  
and shed the golden air, and wing  
of song that summon'd, from the dew  
and rapture of the fields of spring,

old wonder blossom'd in my heart:  
because the threatening dream of old,  
that nightly wont to bid us part,  
now changing, gave me to behold

thy rosy maidenhood that pass'd  
and greeted me with stranger grace,  
who knew that meeting for our last  
and far from mine thy biding-place.

And I have thank'd the threat of sleep,  
because the secret heart that flow'd  
with phantom wound was proven to keep  
beneath its living springs bestow'd

the pang that seven years since was felt  
keen thro' my life yet soft dispersed  
along all veins that thrill or melt —  
old wonder, blossom'd, not inhears'd:

and eyes perchance made dull and slow  
by the long days' subtle dusty mesh  
waked gladly from their fear, to know  
old wonder, old and ever fresh.

## [The winter eve is clear and chill:]

*The winter eve is clear and chill:  
the world of air is folded still;  
the quiet hour expects the moon;  
and yon my home awaits me soon  
behind the panes that come and go  
with dusk and firelight wavering low:  
and I must bid the prompting cease  
that bids me, in this charmed peace,  
— as tho' the hour would last my will —  
follow the roads and follow still  
the dream that holds my heart in trance  
and lures it to the fabled chance  
to find, beyond these evening ways,  
the morning and the woodland days  
and meadows clear with gold, and you  
as once, ere I might dare to woo.*

## **II: THE FOREST OF NIGHT**

1898-1902

# D.M. STÉPHANE MALLARMÉ

## DEAD IN VALVINS

9. IX. 1898

*Red autumn in Valvins around thy bed  
was watchful flame or yet thy spirit induced  
might vanish away in magic gold diffused  
and kingdom o'er the dreaming forest shed.*

What god now claims thee priest, O chosen head,  
most humble here that wast, for that thou knew'st  
thro' what waste nights thy lucid gaze was used  
to spell our glory in blazon'd ether spread?

Silence alone, that o'er the lonely song  
impends, old night, or, known to thee and near,  
long autumn afternoon o'er stirless leaves

suspended fulgent haze, the smouldering throng  
staying its rapt assumption-pyre to hear  
what strain the faun's enamour'd leisure weaves.

## LIMINARY

The hollow crystal of my winter dream  
and silences, where thought for worship, white,  
shimmer'd within the icy mirror-gleam,  
vanishes down the flood of broader light.

The royal weft of arduous device  
and starr'd with strangest gems, my shadowy pride  
and ritual of illusive artifice  
is shed away, leaving the naked side.

No more is set within the secret shrine  
a wonder wherein day nor night has part;  
my passing makes the ways of earth divine  
with the wild splendours of a mortal heart.

A whisper thrills the living fringe of green  
on my retreat; tiptoe the silence stands;  
the breathless morn waits till her step be seen,  
my summer bride, new life from nuptial lands.

The hidden places of her beauty hold  
the savours shed o'er wastes of island air,  
and her crown'd body's wealth of torrid gold  
burns dusky in her summer-storm of hair.

Her breasts in baffling curves, an upward hope,  
strain towards the lips pain'd with too eager life,  
and the rich noons faint on each lustrous slope  
where thunder-hush in the ardent brake is rife.

I cannot tell what god is in her gaze,  
such depths of slumbrous passion drown my breath,  
but where the charmed shadow clings and stays  
Fate cowers before that high disdain of death.

Oh, take me to thy bosom's sultry beat,  
steep all my sense in thy long breath of flame,  
oppress me with thy summer's heavy heat,  
consume all me that wears an uncrown'd name;

burn this my flesh to a clear web of light,  
send thy keen airy spirit to search each vein,  
that the hard pulse may throb with strong delight,  
o'ermastering life and life's divinest pain.

Then, then we twain will seek each farthest way,  
mingled in radiance over cloud and lea,

our joy shall swell the exultant heart of day,  
our love shall tinge the rose of sky and sea.

And we shall know the steep pride of the hills  
and the dark meditation of the wood,  
or quench our rage where the red wine-god spills  
o'er glowing rocks the madness of his blood.

Our link'd approach shall flush the water-maid  
that dreams her limpid realm with wistful eyes,  
our noon-tide rest shall haunt her memory's shade,  
vexing her dim breast with unwonted sighs.

And where our fiercer joys have thrill'd the earth  
shall burst hard stalks and cruel cups that keep  
strong soul of seasons dead to fill the dearth  
of lesser lives whose dream is dull with sleep.

And gloriously our summer's reign shall end:  
in some dark pass that leads into the west,  
burnt incense-wise, each blood shall sweetly blend,  
exhaled in music from the love-slain breast,

some eve whose dragon-dying hides the sky  
and holds the hour on its empurpled wings,  
while pallid seers proclaim the doom-day nigh  
and shuddering nations watch the death of kings.

See now the time (O eve of smoky brown!)  
the morbid season of my close content,  
drown'd flame, broad swathes of vapour closing down  
round the clear gaze that pierces, vainly pent,

and knows how vain the hero-death that flung  
far flame against the craven face of dark  
(poor hero-heart the minstrel summer sung,  
O brooding hidden over a bitter cark!),

how vain! did not the hot strength of the earth  
exude in drifts of colour, dwindling  
to dimmer odour-wafts, a hearted worth  
the long-defeated tribes to altar bring.

The unslaked caravans of vast desire  
seeking in furnace-sands some fierier rose  
with deadly heart, the red crusades of ire  
following some dusky king of mighty woes

unto a nameless fall in distant fight  
(such only freedom from the daily mesh

spun by the crafty lord of wrong and right);  
the pride and splendour of rebellious flesh,

full-sated with wild honey of summer's heart,  
the golden lot of ignominy that cast  
and craved the honour of a menial part,  
to follow on bleeding feet, nor fell the last;

how high their pyre blazed with insensate will  
that the last word of their red tale be told,  
and o'er their darkening blood, a moment, still,  
hung on horizon-wings the spirit's gold,

the ghost of flame, in the vast crucible  
transmuted of some viewless Trismegist —  
haply the same whose touch, inaudible,  
dissolves the lingering leaf to evening mist.

Now with the lucid flower-cups in their hands  
that star the pale fields of Thulean spring,  
and silver from the moon-made table-lands  
of snow, the glimmering distance vanishing,

with opals that engeal the Boreal gleam  
and diamond-drip of ether's crystal thrill  
miraculous, the cortèges of dream  
over the hills of legend gathering, fill

the imaginary avenues of gloom  
up to the watching windows that betray  
the House of Contemplation, vaulted room  
soaring, with shade that broods above pale day;

pale day that wastes even since morning, drain'd  
by ambush'd mystery of its wanton breath:  
see now the time that rises, pale, unstain'd,  
the fixed light that charms the fields of death.

A little yet, a little — wait, O files  
obedient to my dumb command — the brow  
may waive its frigid lordliness, the wiles  
of the spent heart becloud it — wait; and thou,

dark presence, large above the passing world,  
biding the full hour of the fated stroke,  
ere in the sudden gust of truth be whirl'd  
the veils of kindly Maya, leaf or smoke,

let their suspense of smouldering glory be  
yet mirror'd in this mind's unruffled pool  
or e'er beneath the implacable certainty

of icy light and thought's untarnish'd rule

the vacant world stand rigid; let me yet  
this vesper ween I am not all alone,  
and ponder with luxurious regret  
over the singing golden morning flown:

soon, soon enough the spirit, unproved,  
shall on its proud predestin'd circle range,  
in dread indifferent solitude removed  
above the poignant pageantry of change,

and the broad brows whose curves are centuries  
arise of Isis' carven front supreme  
that bids the lucid soul in silence freeze,  
the glittering crystal of my winter dream.

1897-1898

# I. THE TWILIGHT OF DISQUIETUDE

## EPIGRAPH

*Scant majesty of stars prevails  
across the uncreated night,  
and fate is in the wind that wails  
or clamours on the lonely height.*

### **[The years that go to make me man . .]**

The years that go to make me man  
this day are told a score and six  
that should have set me magian  
o'er my half-souls that struggle and mix.

But wisdom still remains a star  
just hung within my aching ken,  
and common prudence dwells afar  
among contented homes of men.

In wide revolt and ruin tost  
against whatever is or seems  
my futile heart still wanders lost  
in the same vast and impotent dreams.

On either hand life hurries by  
its common joy, its common mirth;  
I reach vague hands of sympathy,  
a ghost upon this common earth.

1 xi 1896

### **[I said, And let horizons tempt . .]**

I said, And let horizons tempt  
and windy gates of eastern flame,  
henceforth my place is close and kempt  
who know their mockery the same.

Tho' nearer to my humble garth  
no star may win its law's release,  
patience shall tend my modest hearth  
and trim a golden flame of peace,

wherein, perchance, from near and far  
shall mingle boons right glad to wed,

the mild ray of the distant star  
and the mild oil earth's patience bred.

— No roof-tree join'd the unfinish'd walls;  
no lamp might shine, nor hearth-fire burn:  
only the wind — the wind that calls —  
may sing me welcome..who return.

### **[The pangs that guard the gates of joy]**

The pangs that guard the gates of joy  
the naked sword that will be kist,  
how distant seem'd they to the boy,  
white flashes in the rosy mist!

Ah, not where tender play was screen'd  
in the light heart of leafy mirth  
of that obdurate might we ween'd  
that shakes the sure repose of earth.

And sudden, 'twixt a sun and sun,  
the veil of dreaming is withdrawn:  
lo, our disrupt dominion  
and mountains solemn in the dawn;

hard paths that chase the dayspring's white,  
and glooms that hold the nether heat:  
oh, strange the world upheaved from night,  
oh, dread the life before our feet!

### **[My heart was wandering in the sands, . . .]**

My heart was wandering in the sands,  
a restless thing, a scorn apart;  
Love set his fire in my hands,  
I clasped the flame unto my heart.

Surely, I said, my heart shall turn  
one fierce delight of pointed flame;  
and in that holocaust shall burn  
its old unrest and scorn and shame:

surely my heart the heavens at last  
shall storm with fiery orisons,  
and know, enthroned in the vast,  
the fervid peace of molten suns.

The flame that feeds upon my heart  
fades or flares, by wild winds controll'd:

my heart still walks a thing apart,  
my heart is restless as of old.

### **[The banners of the king unfold . .]**

The banners of the king unfold  
to tend me on my evening way:  
my trumpets flood the air with gold;  
my pride uplifts the vanquish'd day.

The riches of my heart are bled  
to feed the passion of the west:  
the limpid springs of life are shed,  
and Beauty bares her secret breast.

Hasten, O night with nuptial breath!  
O hour remote from any face!  
vain-glories fade to sweetest death  
heart-whelm'd in her divine embrace.

### **[What of the battles I would win?]**

What of the battles I would win?  
alas! their glory is unheard:  
the wind of song wakes not their din  
wandering in shadowy glens unstirr'd.

— And the great sorrows that I dream'd?  
not all unscathed I thought to rise  
high in the dateless dawn, redeem'd,  
and bare before eternal eyes.

— And is it then the end of dream?  
O heart, that long'd for splendid woe,  
our shame to endure this dire extreme  
of joy we scorned so long ago!

### **[Disaster drives the shatter'd night]**

Disaster drives the shatter'd night  
before its coming thro' the deep:  
the soul is swept with monstrous flight  
of fears upstartled from their sleep.

Its silent heaven is rolled away,  
and shaken stars flit to and fro:  
the mother-face is livid grey  
with dumb apocalypse of woe.

The heart that knows its naked doom  
awaits the unspoken shock of fate:  
perchance, beyond these powers that loom  
its hidden god shall rise more great.

### **[The mother-deep, wise, yearning, bound, . . .]**

The mother-deep, wise, yearning, bound,  
I feel it press beneath my heart,  
the deep where I were free and crown'd  
o'er mine own realm, alone, apart.

It haunts, a grey unlit abysm,  
thro' solitary eyelet-slits  
pierced in the mean inflicted schism  
where day deludes my purblind wits.

But mighty hands have lock'd the keep  
and flung the key, long ages past:  
there lies no way into the deep  
that is myself, alone, aghast.

### **[What do I know? myself alone, . . .]**

What do I know? myself alone,  
a gulf of uncreated night,  
wherein no star may e'er be shown  
save I create it in my might.

What have I done? Oh foolish word,  
and foolish deed your question craves!  
think ye the sleeping depths are stirr'd  
tho' tempest hound the madden'd waves?

What do I seek? I seek the word  
that shall become the deed of might  
whereby the sullen gulfs are stirr'd  
and stars begotten on their night.

### **[This is the sea where good and evil merge.]**

This is the sea where good and evil merge.  
The night is black: we sail towards what sun  
or lurid star may flare below the verge.  
This is the night where good or bad is none.

O wandering soul upon this darkling surge,  
does it not pain thee for the days now done,  
the narrow days ere some dark god did urge

to seek some isle where life is whole and one!

Those days of sweetness and content are flown,  
tho' narrow, brimming — nor to sing their dirge  
beseems thee now, now any backward moan.

Out beyond good and evil are blown:  
then wait not that the dark One lift his scourge.  
Shake out the sail: somewhere his face is shown.

### **[The birds that fly out of the west . .]**

The birds that fly out of the west  
into the creeping violet shade,  
the birds that find no welcoming nest  
(O heart that wavers, what wings invade?),  
the birds that speed on desolate quest  
(O heart that scatters in gusty flight!),  
the birds that return not, lost wings of unrest,  
have carried my heart into the night.

### **[Peace were in the woods, perchance, . .]**

Peace were in the woods, perchance,  
where the kind paths of romance  
know a dear deserted hall:  
and the lands of legend call  
to the dim disquiet heart,  
ah, that once their mother-art  
fashion'd slow in tender ways  
where the long unnoticed days  
pale to dewy silver eyes  
in the wisdom of the leaves.

## INTERLUDE: THE HEARTH AND THE WINDOW

### [Thou cricket, that at dusk in the damp weeds,]

*Thou cricket, that at dusk in the damp weeds,  
all that, alack! my sickly garden breeds,  
silverest the brown air with thy liquid note  
now eve is sharp, I, hearkening, dream remote  
the home my exiled heart hath somewhere known  
far from these busy days that make me lone,  
in twilit past, where the soon autumn damp  
is gather'd black above the yellow lamp  
that guides my feet towards the rustic roof  
infrequent, on the forest edge, aloof,  
as I return, nor fail to greet the way  
(ah, when?) the witness of my childish play,  
and feel that soon the silver-piled snow  
will make the watches warm beside the glow  
that just reveals, amid the enfolding gloom,  
the smoky joists of the familiar room:  
and while thy supper-song is shrilling thro'  
that well-kept nook, my musing shall renew  
its kindred of romance, the friendly throng  
that haunts the winters when the nights are long.*

### [Dusk lowers in this uneasy pause of rain; . . .]

*Dusk lowers in this uneasy pause of rain;  
a blackness clings and thickens on the pane  
and damp grows; westward only, watery pale,  
two yellow streaks, wan glory, slowly fail:  
night shall be loud and thick with driving spears. —  
And this was also in the haunting years  
this life hath never known, nor this abode,  
when the lone window watch'd the lonely road  
winding into the exiled west, across  
the desolate plain, with, seldom on its fosse  
tipt black against grey gloom, a poplar spire;  
and I could know the sunset's broken fire  
burn'd sombrely in many a leaden glass  
whose look was dead amid the morbid grass  
where never a dancing foot of harvest came  
and ways were lost, a land of vanish'd name.*

## II. THE QUEST OF SILENCE

### SECRETA SILVARUM: PRELUDE

**[Oh yon, when Holda leaves her hill . .]**

Oh yon, when Holda leaves her hill  
of winter, on the quest of June,  
black oaks with emerald lamplets thrill  
that flicker forth to her magic tune.

At dawn the forest shivers whist  
and all the hidden glades awake;  
then sunshine gems the milk-white mist  
and the soft-swaying branches make

along its edge a woven sound  
of legends that allure and flit  
and horns wound towards the enchanted ground  
where, in the light moon-vapours lit,

all night, while the black woods in mass,  
serried, forbid with goblin fear,  
fay-revels gleam o'er the pale grass  
till shrill-throats ring the matins near.

Oh there, oh there in the sweet o' the year,  
adventurous in the witching green,  
last feal of the errant spear,  
to seek the eyes of lost Undine

clear blue above the blue cold stream  
that lingers till her plaint be done,  
oh, and perchance from that sad dream  
to woo her, laughing, to the sun

and that glad blue that seems to flow  
far up, where dipping branches lift  
sidelong their soft-throng'd frondage slow  
and slow the thin cloud-fleecelets drift.

Oh, there to drowse the summer thro'  
deep in some odorous twilit lair,  
swoon'd in delight of golden dew  
within the sylvan witches hair;

the while on half-veil'd eyes to feel  
the yellow sunshafts broken dim,

and seldom waftures moth-like steal  
and settle, on the bare-flung limb:

or under royal autumn, pall'd  
in smouldering magnificence,  
to feel the olden heart enthrall'd  
in wisdoms of forgotten sense,

and mad desire and pain that fill'd  
red August's heart of throbbing bloom  
in one grave hour of knowledge still'd  
where glory ponders o'er its doom:

and, when the boughs are sombre lace  
and silence chisels silver rime,  
o'er some old hearth, with dim-lit face,  
to dream the vanish'd forest prime,

the springtime's sweet and June's delight,  
more precious now that hard winds chill  
the dews that made their mornings bright,  
and Holda sleeps beneath her hill.

## I

### **[What tho' the outer day be brazen rude . . ]**

What tho' the outer day be brazen rude  
not here the innocence of morn is fled:  
this green unbroken dusk attests it wed  
with freshness, where the shadowy breasts are nude,

hers guess'd, whose looks, felt dewy-cool, elude —  
save this reproach that smiles on foolish dread:  
wood-word, grave gladness in its heart, unsaid,  
knoweth the guarded name of Quietude.

Nor start, if satyr-shapes across the path  
tumble; it is but children: lo, the wrath  
couchant, heraldic, of her beasts that pierce

with ivory single horn whate'er misplaced  
outrageous nears, or whinny of the fierce  
Centaur, or mailed miscreant unchaste.

## II

### **[O friendly shades, where anciently I grew! . . ]**

O friendly shades, where anciently I grew!  
me entering at dawn a child ye knew,  
all little welcoming leaves, and jealous wove  
your roof of lucid emerald above,  
that scarce therethro' the envious sun might stray,  
save smiling dusk or, lure for idle play,  
such glancing finger your chance whim allows,  
all that long forenoon of the tuneful boughs;  
which growing on, the myriad small noise  
and flitting of the wood-life's busy joys,  
thro' tenuous weft of sound, had left, divined,  
the impending threat of silence, clear, behind:  
and, noon now past, that hush descended large  
in the wood's heart, and caught me in its marge  
of luminous foreboding widely flung;  
so hourlong I have stray'd, and tho' among  
the glimpsing lures of all green aisles delays  
that revelation of its wondrous gaze,  
yet am I glad to wander, glad to seek  
and find not, so the gather'd tufts bespeak,  
naked, reclined, its friendly neighbourhood —  
as in this hollow of the rarer wood  
where, listening, in the cool glen-shade, with me,  
white-bloom'd and quiet, stands a single tree;  
rich spilth of gold is on the eastward rise;  
westward the violet gloom eludes mine eyes.  
This is the house of Pan, not whom blind craze  
and babbling wood-wits tell, where bare flints blaze,  
noon-tide terrific with the single shout,  
but whom behind each bole sly-peering out  
the traveller knows, but turning, disappear'd  
with chuckle of laughter in his thicket-beard,  
and rustle of scurrying faun-feet where the ground  
each autumn deeper feels its yellow mound.  
Onward: and lo, at length, the secret glade,  
soft-gleaming grey, what time the grey trunks fade  
in the white vapours o'er its further rim.  
'Tis no more time to linger: now more dim  
the woods are throng'd to ward the haunted spot  
where, as I turn my homeward face, I wot  
the nymphs of twilight have resumed, unheard,  
their glimmering dance upon the glimmering sward.

### III

**[The point of noon is past, outside: light is asleep; . .]**

The point of noon is past, outside: light is asleep;  
brooding upon its perfect hour: the woods are deep  
and solemn, fill'd with unseen presences of light  
that glint, allure, and hide them; ever yet more bright  
(it seems) the turn of a path will show them: nay, but rest;  
seek not, and think not; dream, and know not; this is best:  
the hour is full; be lost: whispering, the woods are bent,  
*This is the only revelation; be content.*

### III

#### [The forest has its horrors, as the sea: . .]

The forest has its horrors, as the sea:  
and ye that enter from the staling lea  
into the early freshness kept around  
the waiting trunks that watch its rarer bound,  
after the glistening song that, sprinkled, leaves  
an innocence upon the glancing leaves;  
O ye that dream to find the morning yet  
secret and chaste, beside her mirror set,  
some glimmering source o'ershadow'd, where the light  
is coolness felt, whom filter'd glints invite  
thro' the slow-shifting green transparency;  
O ye that hearken towards pale mystery  
a rustle of hidden pinions, and obey  
the beckoning of each little leaf asway:  
return, return, or e'er to warn you back  
the shadow bend along your rearward track  
longer and longer from the brooding west;  
return, and evening shall bosom your rest  
in the warm gloom that wraps the blazing hearth:  
there hear from wither'd lips long wean'd of mirth  
the tale that lulls old watches; — How they rode,  
brave-glittering once, where the brave morning glow'd  
along the forest-edges, and were lost  
for ever, where the crossing trunks are most;  
and, far beyond the dim arcades of song,  
where moon-mist weaves a dancing elfin throng,  
and far beyond the luring glades that brood  
around a maiden thought of Quietude,  
the savage realm begins, of lonely dread,  
black branches from the fetid marish bred  
that lurks to trap the loyal careless foot,  
and gaping trunks protrude a snaky root  
o'er slinking paths that centre, where beneath  
a sudden rock on the short blasted heath,

bare-set, a cavern lurks and holds within  
its womb, obscene with some corroding sin,  
coil'd on itself and stirring, a squat shade  
before the entrance rusts a broken blade.

The forest hides its horrors, as the sea.

## V

### **[No emerald spring, no royal autumn-red, . . ]**

No emerald spring, no royal autumn-red,  
no glint of morn or sullen vanquish'd day  
might venture against this obscene horror's sway  
blackly from the witch-blasted branches shed.

No silver bells around the bridle-head  
ripple, and on no quest the pennons play:  
the path's romance is shuddering disarray,  
or eaten by the marsh: the knights are dead.

The Lady of the Forest was a tale:  
of the white unicorns that round her sleep  
gamboll'd, no turf retains a print; and man,

rare traveller, feels, athwart the knitted bale  
watching, now lord of loathly deaths that creep,  
maliciously the senile leer of Pan.

### **[Fire in the heavens, and fire along the hills, . . ]**

Fire in the heavens, and fire along the hills,  
and fire made solid in the flinty stone,  
thick-mass'd or scatter'd pebble, fire that fills  
the breathless hour that lives in fire alone.

This valley, long ago the patient bed  
of floods that carv'd its antient amplitude,  
in stillness of the Egyptian crypt outspread,  
endures to drown in noon-days tyrant mood.

Behind the veil of burning silence bound,  
vast life's innumerable busy littleness  
is hush'd in vague-conjectured blur of sound  
that dulls the brain with slumbrous weight, unless

some dazzling puncture let the stridence throng  
in the cicada's torture-point of song.

### **[Peace dwells in blessing o'er a place . .]**

Peace dwells in blessing o'er a place  
folded within the hills to keep  
and under dark boughs seawind-frayd:  
and the kind slopes where soothings creep,  
in the gold light or the green shade,  
wear evermore the ancient face  
of silence, and the eyes of sleep;  
because they are listening evermore  
unto the seawinds what they tell  
to the wise, nodding, indifferent trees  
high on the ridge that guard the dell,  
of wars on many a far grey shore  
and how the shores decay and fade  
before the obstinate old seas:  
and all their triumphing is made  
a tale that dwindles with the eves,  
while the soft dusk lingers, delay'd,  
and drifts between the indolent leaves.

### **[A gray and dusty daylight flows . .]**

A gray and dusty daylight flows  
athwart the shatter'd traceries,  
pale absence of the ruin'd rose.

Here once, on labour-harden'd knees,  
beneath the kindly vaulted gloom  
that gather'd them in quickening ease,

they saw the rose of heaven bloom,  
alone, in heights of musky air,  
with many an angel's painted plume.

So, shadowing forth their dim-felt prayer,  
the daedal glass compell'd to grace  
the outer days indifferent stare,

where now its disenhallow'd face  
beholds the petal-ribs enclose  
nought, in their web of shatter'd lace,

save this pale absence of the rose.

### **[Breaking the desert's tawny level ring . .]**

Breaking the desert's tawny level ring

three columns, an oasis; but no shade  
falls from the curl'd acanthus-leaves; no spring  
bubbles soft laughter for its leaning maid.

The cell is waste: where once the god abode  
a burning desolation furls its wing:  
enter, and lo! once more, the hopeless road  
world-wide, the tawny desert's level ring.

### **[Before she pass'd behind the glacier wall . .]**

Before she pass'd behind the glacier wall  
that hides her white eternal sorceries  
the northern witch, in clinging ermine pall,  
cast one last look along the shallow seas,

a look that held them in its numbing thrall  
and melted onward to the sandy leas  
where our lorn city lives its lingering fall  
and wistful summer shrinks in scant-clad trees.

Hence came one greyness over grass and stone:  
the silent-lapping waters fade and tone  
into the air and into them the land;

and all along our stagnant waterways  
a drown'd and dusky gleaming sleeps, unbann'd,  
the lurking twilight of her vanish'd gaze.

### **[Out of no quarter of the charted sky . .]**

Out of no quarter of the charted sky  
flung in the bitter wind intolerably,  
abrupt, the trump that sings behind the end  
exults alone. Here grass is none to bend:  
the stony plain blackens with rapid night  
that best reveals the land's inflicted blight  
since in the smitten hero-hand the sword  
broke, and the hope the long-dumb folk adored,  
and over all the north a tragic flare  
told Valhall perish'd and the void's despair  
to dwell as erst, all disinhabited,  
a vault above the heart its hungering led.

The strident clangour cuts; but space is whole,  
inert, absorb'd in dead regret. Here, sole,  
on the bare uplands, stands, vast thro' the gloom  
staring, to mark an irretrievable doom,  
the stranger stone, sphinx-couchant, thunder-hurl'd

from red star-ruin o'er the elder world.

### **[This night is not of gentle draperies . .]**

This night is not of gentle draperies  
or cluster'd banners where the star-breaths roam,  
nor hangs above the torch a lurching dome  
of purple shade that slips with phantom ease;

but, on our apathy encroaching, these,  
stable, whose smooth defiance none hath clomb,  
basalt and jade, a patience of the gnome,  
polish'd and shadow-brimm'd transparencies.

Far, where our oubliette is shut, above,  
we guess the ample lids that never move  
beneath her brows, each massive arch inert

hung high-contemptuous o'er the blatant wars  
we deem'd well waged for her, who may avert  
some Janus-face that smiles on hidden stars.

### **[Lightning: and, momentarily, the silhouette, . .]**

Lightning: and, momentarily, the silhouette,  
flat on the far horizon, comes and goes  
of that night-haunting city; minaret,  
dome, spire, all sharp while yet the levin glows.

Day knows it not; whether fierce noon-tide fuse  
earth's rim with sky in throbbing haze, or clear  
gray softness tinge afresh the enamell'd hues  
of mead and stream, it shows no tipping spear.

Night builds it: now upon the marbled plain  
a blur, discern'd lurking, ever more nigh;  
now close against the walls that hem my reign  
a leaguer-town, threatening my scope of sky.

So late I saw it; in a misty moon  
it bulk'd, all dusky and transparent, dumb  
as ever, fast in some prodigious swoon:  
its battlements deserted — who might come?

— ay, one! his eyes, 'neath the high turban's plume,  
watch'd mine, intent, behind the breast-high stone:  
his face drew mine across the milky gloom:  
a sudden moonbeam show'd it me, my own!

**[ONE! an iron core, shock'd and dispers'd . .]**

ONE! an iron core, shock'd and dispers'd  
in throbs of sound that ebb across the bay:  
I shudder: the one clang smites disarray  
thro' all my sense, that starts awake, inhears'd

in the whole lifeless world: and some accurs'd  
miasma steals, resumed from all decay,  
where the dead tide lies flat round the green quay,  
hinting what self-fordone despairs it nurs'd.

The corpse of time is stark upon the night:  
my soul is coffin'd, staring, grave-bedight,  
upon some dance of death that reels and feasts

around its living tomb, with vampire grin,  
inverted sacraments of Satan's priests —  
and, mask'd no more, the maniac face of sin.

[1896] 1913

**[There is a far-off thrill that troubles me: . .]**

There is a far-off thrill that troubles me:  
a faint thin ripple of shadow, momentarily,  
dies out across my lucid icy cell.  
I am betrayed by winter to the spell  
of morbid sleep, that somewhere rolls its waves  
insidiously, gather'd from unblest graves,  
to creep above each distant crumbled mole.  
When that assault is full against my soul,  
I must go down, thro' chapels black with mould,  
past ruin'd doors, whose arches, ridged with gold,  
catch, in their grooves, a gloom more blackly dript,  
some stairway winding hours-long towards the crypt  
where panic night lies stricken 'neath the curse  
exuding from the dense enormous hearse  
of some old vampire-god, whose bulk, within,  
lies gross and festering in his shroud of sin.

## INTERLUDE: THE WINDOW AND THE HEARTH

### [Twice now that lucid fiction of the pane . .]

*Twice now that lucid fiction of the pane  
dissolves, the sphere that winter's crystal bane  
still-charm'd to glass the sad metempsychose  
and futile ages of the suffering rose —  
what, in its halt, the weary mood might show.  
Earth stirs in me that stirs with roots below,  
and distant nerves shrink with the lilac mist  
of perfume blossom'd round the lure that, kist,  
is known hard burn o'erflaked and cruel sting.  
I would this old illusion of the spring  
might perish once with all her airs that fawn  
and traitor roses of the wooing dawn:  
for none hath known the magic dream of gold  
come sooth, since that first surge of light outroll'd  
heroic, broke the august and mother sleep  
and foam'd, and azure was the rearward deep;  
and Eden afloat among the virgin boughs  
fused, song-jewel sudden, and flesh was blithe with vows  
to tread, divine, under the naked air;  
nor knew, alas! self-doom'd thro' time to bear  
lewd summer's dusty mock and roses' fall,  
and cynic spring, returning, virginal.*

### [Chimaera writhes beside the tragic flame . .]

*Chimaera writhes beside the tragic flame  
of the old hearth: her starting jaws proclaim,  
a silent cry, the craven world's attainment.  
Her vans that beat against a hard constraint  
leaps, as the coals jet in a moment-spasm:  
yet their taut ribs hurt not the serpent chasm  
of shade, that slips swift to its absent den,  
to settle, grimlier, at her throat again.  
And, starward were their prison-roof increas'd,  
no sun that bathes him for a dewy east  
would light her mail, above the tainted air  
a meteor-dazzling gem, but the red flare  
kindle disastrous on our burning eyes  
from where the sullen embers agonize,  
once the heart's rose-flusht dream of living gold.  
Therefore her croup, thro' many a lapsing fold,*

*is bound into the iron's night, to check  
the frenzy that contorts her charging neck:  
her life is flitting with the fitful red  
splashing her flank as 'twere her courage bled  
to curdle with the void, whose metal-cold  
shall seal her gone, a block no art shall mould.  
And now the shining tongues that sprang to lick  
the obscene blackness in are tarnisht thick:  
insidiously thro' each blank pane the dark  
invades from space, vast cemetery: one spark  
flies up, the lessen'd ghost of flame: her flight  
stiffens, and is a settled piece of night.*

### III. THE SHADOW OF LILITH

#### [The tuberose thickens the air: a swoon . .]

The tuberose thickens the air: a swoon  
lies close on open'd calyx and slipt sheath  
thro' all the garden bosom-bound beneath  
dense night that hangs, her own perturbing moon:

no star: and heaven and earth, seeking their boon,  
meet in this troubled blood whereunder seethe  
cravings of darkling bliss whose fumes enwreath  
some rose of rare-reveal'd delight: oh, soon! —

Ay, surely near — the hour consents to bless! —  
and nearer yet, all ways of night converge  
in that delicious dark between her breasts

whom night and bloom and wayward blood confess,  
where all the world's desire is wild to merge  
its multitude of single suffering nests.

#### [Cloth'd now with dark alone, O rose and balm, . .]

Cloth'd now with dark alone, O rose and balm,  
whence unto world-sear'd youth is healing boon,  
what lures the tense dark round thy pulsing calm?

Or does that flood-tide of luxurious noon,  
richly distill'd for thy sweet nutriment,  
now traitor, hearken to some secret moon.

Eve's wifely guise, her dower that Eden lent,  
now limbeck where the enamour'd alchemist  
invokes the rarer rose, phantom descent;

thy dewy essence where the suns persist  
is alter'd by occult yet natural rite:  
among thy leaves it was the night we kiss'd.

Rare ooze of odour drowns our faint delight,  
some spilth of love that languishes unshared,  
a rose that bleeds unseen, the heart of night;

whose sweetness holds us, wondering, ensnared:  
for cunning she, the outcast, to entice  
to wake with her, remembering how she fared

in times before our time, when Paradise

shone once, the dew-gem in her heart, and base  
betrayal gave her to the malefice

that all thro' time afflicts her lonely face,  
and all the mournful widowhood of night  
closed round her, and the wilderness of space:

O bleeding rose, alone! O heart of night!

## LILITH

### ARGUMENT

**[This is of Lilith, by her Hebrew name . .]**

*This is of Lilith, by her Hebrew name  
Lady of Night: she, in the delicate frame  
that was of woman after, did unite  
herself with Adam in unblest delight;  
who, uncapacious of that dreadful love,  
begat on her not majesty, as Jove,  
but the worm-brood of terrors unconfest  
that chose henceforth, as their avoided nest,  
the mire-fed writhen thicket of the mind.  
She, monsterward from that embrace declined,  
could change her to Chimera and inspire  
doubt of his garden-state, exciting higher  
the arrowy impulse to dim descried  
o'erhuman bliss, as after, on the wide  
way of his travail, with enticing strain  
and hint of nameless things reveal'd, a bane  
haunted, the fabled siren, and was seen  
later as Lamia and Melusine,  
and whatsoe'er of serpent-wives is feign'd,  
or malice of the vampire-witch that drain'd  
fresh blood of fresh-born babes, a wicked blast:  
faces of fear, beheld along the past  
and in the folk's scant fireside lore misread,  
of her that is the august and only dread,  
close-dwelling, in the house of birth and death,  
and closer, in the secrets of our breath -  
or love occult, whose smile eludes our sight  
in her flung hair that is the starry night.*

### THE WATCH AT MIDNIGHT

**[Dead stars, beneath the midnight's granite cope . .]**

Dead stars, beneath the midnight's granite cope  
and round your dungeon-gulf that blindly grope  
and fall not, since no lower than any place  
needs when the wing is dash'd and foil'd the face:  
is this your shadow on the watcher's thought  
imposed, or rather hath his anguish taught  
the dumb and suffering dark to send you out,  
reptile, the doubles of his lurking doubt,  
in coasts of night that well might be supposed  
the exiled hall of chaos late-deposed,  
to haunt across this hour's desuetude,  
immense, that whelms in monumental mood  
the broad waste of his spirit, stonily  
strewn with the wreck of his eternity?

**[The plumes of night, unfurl'd . .]**

The plumes of night, unfurl'd  
and eyed with fire, are whirl'd  
slowly above this watch, funereal:  
the vast is wide, and yet  
no way lies open; set  
no bar, but the flat deep rises, a placid wall.

Some throne thou think'st to win  
or pride of thy far kin;  
this incomplete and dusty hour to achieve:  
know that the hour is one,  
eternally begun,  
eternally deferr'd, thy grasp a Danaid sieve.

O weary realm, O height  
the which exhausted flight  
familiar finds, home of its prompting ill!  
here, there, or there, or there,  
even the same despair;  
rest in thy place, O fool, the heart eludes thee still.

Rest — and a new abyss  
suddenly yawns, of this  
the moment sole, and yet the counterpart:  
and thou must house it, thou,  
within thy fleshy Now,  
thyself the abyss that shrinks, the unbounded hermit-heart:

the mightier heart untold  
whose paining depths enfold  
all loneliness, all height, all vision'd shores;  
and the abyss uncrown'd,

blank failure thro' each bound  
from the consummate point thy broken hope implores.

**[The trees that thro' the tuneful morn had made . .]**

*The trees that thro' the tuneful morn had made  
bride-dusk for beams that pierce the melting shade,  
or thro' the opulent afternoon had stood  
lordly, absorb'd in hieratic mood, —  
now stricken with misgiving of the night  
rise black and ominous, as who invite  
some fearful coming whose foreblown wind shall bow,  
convuls'd and shuddering, each dishevell'd brow:  
the garden that had sparkled thro' its sheen  
all day, a self-sufficing gem serene,  
hiding in emerald depths the vision'd white  
of limbs that follow their own clear delight,  
exhales towards the inaccessible skies,  
commencing, failing, broken, scents or sighs:*

**[O mother, only, . .]**

O mother, only,  
where that thou hidest thee,  
crown for the lonely brow,  
bosom for the spent wanderer,  
or balm for ache:  
O mother,  
nightly —  
undiscoverable —  
O heart too vast to find,  
whelming our little desire:  
we wander and fail —

*But on the zenith, mass'd, a glittering throng,  
the distant stars dropt a disdainful song:*

**[They said, because their parcel-thought . .]**

They said, because their parcel-thought  
might nor her shadowy vast embrace,  
nor be refurl'd within that nought  
which is the hid heart of all place,  
  
they said: She is not anywhere!  
have we not sought her and not seen?  
nor is there found in earth or air  
a sign to tell if she hath been!

— O fools and blind, not to have found!  
is her desire not as your own?  
stirs she not in the arms that round  
a hopeless clasp, lone with the lone!

And the tense lips towards her bliss  
in secret cells of anguish'd prayer  
might know her in the broken kiss  
she prompts nor, prompting, fails to share.

We drift from age to age nor waste  
our strenuous song's exultant tone,  
disdaining or to rest or haste:  
because each place is still our throne.

**[The anguish'd doubt broods over Eden; night . .]**

*The anguish'd doubt broods over Eden; night  
hangs her rent banners thro' the viewless height;  
trophies and glories whence a trouble streams  
of lamentable valour in old dreams:  
out of its blank the watcher's soul is stirr'd  
to take unto itself some olden word:*

**[O thou that achest, pulse o' the unwed vast, . .]**

O thou that achest, pulse o' the unwed vast,  
now in the distant centre of my brain  
dizzily narrow'd, now beyond the last  
calm circle widening of the starry plain,  
where, on the scatter'd edge of my surmise,  
the twilit dreams fail off and rule is spent  
vainly on vagrant bands the gulfs invite  
to break away to the dark: they, backward sent,  
tho' dumb, with dire infection in their eyes,  
startle the central seat: — O pulse of night,  
passing the hard throb of sun-smitten blood  
when the noon-world is fused in fire and blent  
with my then unattained hero-mood;  
what will with me the imperious instinct  
that hounds the gulfs together on that place  
vanishing utterly out of mortal trace,  
the citadel where I would seem distinct —  
if not thou ween'st a vanity, my deep  
unlighted still, the which thy refluent sweep  
intolerably dilates, a tide that draws  
with lunatic desire, distraught and fond,  
to some dark moon of vastness, hung beyond

our little limits of familiar cause,  
as tho' the tense and tortured voids should dash  
ruining amorously together, a clash  
portentous with some rose of thinnest flame,  
secret, exhaled in the annull'd abyss,  
that, with this soul, passes in that fell kiss  
and to the soft-sprung flush all sanctity  
surrenders, centring in the blossom'd Name,  
as the dark wings of silence lovingly  
hover above the adventurous song that fares  
forth to the void and finds no lip that shares  
its rapture, just the great wings spreading wide.  
O mother thou or sister or my bride,  
inevitable, whom this hour in me declares,  
were thine of old such rhythmic pangs that bore  
my shivering soul, wind-waif upon the shore  
that is a wavering twilight, thence astray  
beneath the empty plainness of the day?  
me thy first want conceived to some dim end,  
that my unwelcom'd love might henceward tend  
to the dumb home that draws it in thy breast  
and the veil'd couch of some divine incest,  
where thou didst wait some hour of sharp delight  
to wither up in splendour the stark night  
and haggard shame that ceremented thy dearth,  
with purest diamond-blaze, some overbirth  
of the dark fire thy foresight did enmesh  
within this hither and thither harried flesh?

Ay, yet obscurely stirs, a monstrous worm  
in the rear cavern of my dazzled thought,  
a memory that wavers, formless form  
of superhuman nuptials, clasp'd and caught  
unto the breast that is our loathed tomb:  
then, issuing from the violated womb,  
tremendous birth of dreadful prodigies  
begotten on the apocalyptic skies:  
one moment's hope, one thrill alone was given  
of pinions beating up the parting heaven;  
but straight thereon the spectral mirk was riven  
by shapes of snaky horror, grisly jaw,  
cold fear, and scaly fold, and endless maw.  
What terror clutch'd me, even as ecstasy  
smote dire across transfigured mystery?  
and whose the sin that doom'd thee to disgrace,  
to haunt the shapeless dark, a burning face,  
eyes that would cling to mine and lips that seek

some baffled kiss, some word they may not speak,  
condemn'd to yearn where the worn foam is hoar  
and vain against the unshaken nightly shore.

Nightly thy tempting comes, when the dark breeze  
scatters my thought among the unquiet trees  
and sweeps it, with dead leaves, o'er widow'd lands  
and kingdoms conquer'd by no human hands;  
nightly thou wouldst exalt me in the deep,  
crown'd with the morn that shines beyond our sleep,  
nightly renew those nuptials, and re-win  
virginity, and shed the doubtful sin:  
but I am born into dividual life  
and I have ta'en the woman for my wife,  
a flowery pasture fenced and soft with streams,  
fill'd with slow ease and fresh with eastern beams  
of coolest silver on the sliding wave:  
such refuge the derisive morning gave,  
shaped featly in thy similitude, to attract  
earthward the gusty soul thy temptings rack'd.  
I sicken with the long unsatisfied  
waiting: the sombre gulfs of night divide:  
no dawn is shown that keeps its grace nor soon  
degraded not to brutal fires of noon;  
and heavy on my soul the tyrant lays  
his hand, and dazzles with his common blaze  
eyes that are fain, when evening brings the dew,  
to cool them in the grasses: few, how few  
are now the hours that thou mayst claim as thine!  
— And shall I not take heart? if no divine  
revelment star me with the diadem  
hermetic, magian, alchemic gem,  
shall I not feel the earth with firmer tread  
if abdicating to the viewless dead  
the invaluable round of nothingness?  
Kingdom awaits me, homage, swords, liesse,  
battle, broad fame in fable, song: shall I  
confide all hope to scanty shapes that fly  
in dreams, whom even if they be all I know  
not, or fore-runners of the One? I go,  
shaking them from my spirit, to rule and mould  
in mine own shape the gods that shall be old.

— Nay, not thus lightly, heart the winds have mock'd!  
wings of fierce winds that o'er the star-strown height  
sweep, and adown the wide world-ways unlock'd  
feign for thy trouble a last conclusive fight:  
O heart wherethro' these insolent powers stray,

pass and repass, and thou dost foolish hold  
aught else inspires them than their cynic play,  
the aimless idle sport they plann'd of old  
to while the waste hours of their tedious state  
and shall pursue when thou art seal'd in dust,  
thou latest toy, framed for this silly fate,  
to watch their pastime turning, tremble and trust  
some deathless gain for thee should issue of it  
imblazed in stars on some thy kindred's brow;  
O thou, all laughable for thy short wit,  
not lightly thus shalt thou put off their slight  
and steady thee to build in their despite  
secure, some seat, and hold thy being safe,  
joying in this at last that thou art thou,  
distinct, no longer in wilful tides a waif:  
O heart the winds have emptied of all clear  
and natural impulse, O wasted brain  
and spirit expent with straining from thy sphere,  
turn thee to earth, if that be not a cheat,  
and, childlike, lay thee in her torpid lap,  
there to reflush these flaccid veins with sap  
from spilth of sleep, where herbs of drowsy bane  
spring in slow shade and death is sprinkled sweet,  
with promis'd coolness dark — perchance a lure..  
Thou sleep, at least, receive and wrap me sure  
in midmost of thy softness, that no flare,  
disastrous, from some rending of the veil,  
nor dawn from springs beyond thy precincts, rare  
with revelation, risen, or dewy-pale  
exhaled from fields of death, disturb that full  
absorption of robustness, and I wake  
in placid large content, replete and dull,  
fast-grown to earth, whom winds no longer shake.

**[Thick sleep, with error of the tangled wood, . .]**

*Thick sleep, with error of the tangled wood,  
and vapour from the evening marsh of sense,  
and smoothness of the glide of Lethe, would  
inaugurate his dullard innocence,  
cool'd of his calenture, elaborate brute:  
but, all deceitful of his craven hope,  
the devious and covert ways of dream  
shall lead him out upon no temper'd beam  
or thick-grass'd ease, where herbs of soothing shoot  
in asphodel, but on the shuddering scope  
and the chill touch of endless distances*

*still thronging on the wingless soul that flees  
along the self-pursuing path, to find  
the naked night before it and behind.*

What night is this, made denser, in his breast  
or round him, suddenly or first confest  
after its gradual thickening complete?  
as tho' the mighty current, bearing fleet  
the unresting stars, had here devolved its lees,  
stagnant, contempt, on recreant destinies;  
as tho' a settling of tremendous pens,  
above the desolate dream, had shed immense  
addition to the incumbence of despair  
downward, across this crypt of stirless air,  
from some henceforth infrangible attitude,  
upon his breast, that knows no dawn renew'd,  
buildd enormously, each brazen stage,  
with rigor of his hope in hopeless age  
mummied, and look that turns his thew to stone:  
even hers, that is his strangling sphinx, made known  
with, on her breast, his fore-erected tomb,  
engraven deep, the letters of his doom.

Terrible, if he will not have me else,  
I lurk to seize and strangle, in the cells  
where he hath made a dusk round his delight:  
whether he woo the bride's incarnate bright  
and natural rose to shimmer thro' the dense  
of odour-motes whereby the brooding sense  
flows forth beyond its aching bounds and lies,  
full-brimm'd and sombre, around her clear disguise  
that saturates the dusk with secret gold;  
or the miraculous rose of Heaven to unfold  
out from its heart of ruby fire and rain  
unceasing drift of petals, and maintain  
a tabernacle about the little hour  
where his eternity hath phantom power:  
and terrible I am moulded in the stone  
that clamps for ever, rigid, stark, alone,  
round nought but absence of the man he was,  
some cell of that cold space against whose laws  
he seeks a refuge in his inner deep  
of love, and soften'd fire, and quicken'd sleep,  
tho' knowing that I, the bride his sin dethroned  
and exiled to the wastes that lie disown'd,  
can bring that icy want even to the heart  
of his most secret bliss, that he shall start  
aghast, to see its burning centre fade

and know his hope, the impious, vain, unmade.

Lo now, beneath the watch of knitted boughs  
he lies, close-folded to his newer spouse,  
creature of morn, that hath ordain'd its fresh  
dew and cool glimmer in her crystal flesh  
sweetly be mix'd, with quicken'd breath of leaves  
and the still charm the spotless dawning weaves.  
But I have set my hand upon his soul  
and moulded it to my unseen control;  
and he hath slept within my shadowy hair  
and guards a memory how in my far lair  
the forces of tremendous passion stir:  
my spectral face shall come between his eyes  
and the soft face of her, my name shall rise,  
unutter'd, in each thought that goes to her;  
and in the quiet waters of her gaze  
shall lurk a siren-lure that beckons him  
down halls of death and sinful chambers dim:  
he shall not know her nor her gentle ways  
nor rest, content, by her sufficing source,  
but, under stress of the veil'd stars, shall force  
her simple bloom to perilous delight  
adulterate with pain, some nameless night  
stain'd with miasm of flesh become a tomb:  
then baffled hope, some torch o' the blood to illumine  
and flush the jewel hid beyond all height,  
and sombre rage that burst the holy bourne  
of garden-joy, murdering innocence,  
and the distraught desire to bring a kiss  
unto the fleeting centre of the abyss,  
discovering the eternal lack, shall spurn  
even that sun-god's garden of pure sense,  
not wisely wasted with insensate will.

I am his bride and was and shall be still,  
tho' infamous as devil's dam, a fear  
to wives that watch the cradle-side and hear  
how I devour the newling flesh, and none  
shall void my claim upon his latest son,  
because the father fell beneath my harm,  
not god invented late, nor anxious charm;  
tho' with the chemic mind he holds in trust  
to show me gem, he celebrate the dust;  
dumb earth, in garb of borrow'd beauty dight  
by the fond day that curtains him in light;  
green pleasaunces, whose smiling would attest  
his heart true-born of her untroubled breast

and leaves that beckon on the woodland ways  
of the stream-side, where expectation strays  
of water-brides, swift blight to them that see,  
because the waters are to mirror me:—  
of these his hunted thought, seeking retreat  
in narrow light, and some sure bosom-heat  
to cherish him, and friendly face of kin,  
shall mould him fancied ancestors, to win  
some certitude that he is in his home  
rescued from any doom that bids him roam,  
and him the blossom of the day presume,  
unheeding that its roots are in my womb  
nor song may breathe a magic unconfest  
of the anterior silence of my breast:  
but I shall lurk within the sightless stare  
of his impassive idols, housing there  
an unknown that allures and makes him fain  
to perish for his creatures' fancied gain;  
and they shall gaze and see not while his brood  
befouls their stony presence with much blood,  
their children's, and their captive enemies',  
stretch'd out, exenterate, on those callous knees,  
and, last, their own, ere some ill-fortuned field  
drink all of it, since faith forbids them yield  
and brings to learn in full, the fool's just trade,  
the gratitude of gods themselves have made.

Last, since a pinch of dust may quench the eyes  
that took the azure curve of stainless skies  
and still the fiercest heart, he seeks to whelm  
infinite yearning with a little realm,  
beating together with ungentle hands,  
enslaved, the trembling spawn of generous lands,  
whom he shall force, a busy swarm, to raise,  
last bulwarks of his whelming discontent,  
heaven-threatening Babels, iron Ninevehs  
square-thought with rigid will, a monument  
of stony rage in high defiant stones  
eternized with blasphemous intent,  
and carve the mountain-cone to hide his bones,  
a wonder to blank tribes of shrunken days:  
but in that cave before his upstart gates  
where elder night endures unshaken, waits  
that foe of settled peace, the smiling sphinx,  
or foul Echidna's mass'd insidious links,  
reminding him that all is vanities;  
and when, at last, o'er his nine roods he lies,

stretch'd in the sarcophage wherever grief  
makes way before one huge gust of relief,  
not the wing-blast of his vain shade shall drive  
his wizen'd captives from their dungeon-hive,  
and make a solitude about his bed;  
nor the chill thought petrific his low head  
exudes in rays of darkness, that beyond  
this perturb'd sphere congeal, an orb of dread:  
I, Lilith, on his tomb immensely throned,  
with viewless face and viewless vans outspread;  
in the wide waste of his unhallow'd work,  
calm coils of fear, my serpent-brood shall lurk;  
and I shall muse above the little dust  
that was the flesh that held my word in trust.

Warrior and prince and poet, thou that fain  
over some tract of lapsing years wouldst reign  
nor know'st the crown that all thy wants confess  
is Lilith's own, the round of nothingness:  
warrior, whose witless game is but to feel  
thyself authentic thro' the wielded steel  
and give thy ghost assurance that thou art,  
what aimless endless wars shall make thy heart  
arena for the wheeling of their play!  
king, that wast mighty in the easy way  
of thy desire, what time these thews were young,  
how bitter is the wisdom on thy tongue  
in the late season, when a westering sun  
shows thee thy work, that it is evil done!  
O priest and poet, thou that makest God,  
woe, when the path of thine illusion, trod  
even to the end, reveals thee thy worn face,  
eternal hermit of the unhallow'd place!  
O man, the coward hope of thy despair  
to be confounded with the driven air,  
the grass that grows and knows not, the kind herds  
that are not wrought with dreams nor any words,  
to hollow out some refuge sunk as deep  
as that was high thou hadst not sense to keep,  
and here thy vexing shade to obliterate  
ensuring that it rise not, soon or late,  
thou knowing I claim thee whole when that thou art dead.

Go forth: be great, O nothing. I have said.

**[Thus in her hour of wrath, o'er Adam's head . .]**

*Thus in her hour of wrath, o'er Adam's head*

*Lilith, then first reveal'd, a name of dread,  
thus in her hour of sorrow: and the rage,  
that drove the giant-hunters in that age  
since whelm'd beneath the weltering cataclysm,  
was the mad flight from her instant abyss  
and iron sadness and unsatisfied  
despair of kings that by Euphrates' side  
rein the wing'd steer or grasp the stony mane  
of lions dared, if so they might obtain  
surcease of lingering unnamed distress.  
And if she kept the word forgetfulness  
absorb'd, sole ear of sunken sleep, it is  
to them that wander thro' Persepolis,  
Ekbatan, or where else o'er arrow'd bricks  
her snakes make the dry noise of trodden sticks,  
known and well-known how that revolt was dash'd  
and cruel keeps with lustral silence wash'd.  
A name of dread reveal'd: and tho' forgot  
in strenuous times to whom the lyre was not,  
yet, when her hour awoke, the peoples heard  
her coming and the winds no more deferr'd  
that sweep along the expected day of wrath,  
and rear'd the soaring aisles along her path  
to house the massive gloom where she might dwell,  
conjectured, hovering, impenetrable,  
while o'er the mortal terror crouch'd beneath  
the shuddering organ pour'd black wave of death;  
when man withheld his hand from life, in fear  
to find her, temptress, in the flesh most dear  
or on the lowliest ways of simple peace —  
vain-weeping he that thus their feud might cease:  
ay, and the cynic days that thought them blest  
to know this earth a plunder-ground confest  
and calm within them of the gluttoned beast  
knew her, the emptiness that, when the feast  
hath quench'd its lamps, makes, in the invaded hall,  
stray'd steps, reverberated from the wall,  
sound on the ear like some portentous stride,  
companion's fixt, to mock our tread, beside,  
nor near and show his apprehended guise  
familiar, ease to our intended eyes.  
Lilith, a name of dread: yet was her pain  
and loving to her chosen ones not vain  
hinted, who know what weight of gelid tears  
afflicts the widow'd uplands of the spheres,  
and whence the enrapturing breaths are sent that bring  
a perfume of the secular flowering*

*of the far-bleeding rose of Paradise,  
that mortal hearts in censer-fume arise  
unto the heart that were an ardent peace,  
and whence the sibyl-hints of song, that cease  
in pale and thrilling silence, lest they wrong  
her beauty, whose love bade live their fleeting throng,  
even hers, who is the silence of our thought,  
as he that sleeps in hush'd Valvins hath taught.*

**[She is the night: all horror is of her . .]**

She is the night: all horror is of her  
heap'd, shapeless, on the unclaim'd chaotic marsh  
or huddled on the looming sepulchre  
where the incult and scanty herb is harsh.

She is the night: all terror is of her  
when the distemper'd dark begins to boil  
with wavering face of larve and oily blur  
of pallor on her suffocating coil.

Or majesty is hers, when marble gloom  
supports her, calm, with glittering signs severe  
and grandeur of metallic roof of doom,  
far in the windows of our broken sphere.

Or she can be all pale, under no moon  
or star, with veiling of the glamour cloud,  
all pale, as were the fainting secret soon  
to be exhaled, bride-robed in clinging shroud.

For she is night, and knows each wooing mood:  
and her warm breasts are near in the charm'd air  
of summer eve, and lovingly delude  
the aching brow that craves their tender care.

The wooing night: all nuptials are of her;  
and she the musky golden cloud that hangs  
on maiden blood that burns, a boding stir  
shot thro' with flashes of alluring pangs,

far off, in creeks that slept unvisited  
or moved so smoothly that no ripple creas'd  
their mirror'd slip of blue, till that sweet dread  
melted the air and soft sighs stole, releas'd;

and she the shame of brides, veiling the white  
of bosoms that for sharp fulfilment yearn;  
she is the obscure centre of delight  
and steals the kiss, the kiss she would return

deepen'd with all the abysm that under speech  
moves shudderingly, or as that gulf is known  
to set the astonied spouses each from each  
across the futile sea of sighs, alone.

All mystery, and all love, beyond our ken,  
she woos us, mournful till we find her fair:  
and gods and stars and songs and souls of men  
are the sparse jewels in her scatter'd hair.

1898-1899

*LILITH*

*EXPLICIT*

**[This rose, the lips that kiss, and the young breast . .]**

This rose, the lips that kiss, and the young breast  
they kindle, flush'd throughout its waking snows;  
and this, that tremulous on the morning blows,  
heart's youth some golden dew of dream hath blest;

auroras, grace and sooth! no tragic west  
shed splendid the red anger of your close:  
how soon within this wandering barrow grows  
the canker'd heap of petals once caress'd!

Old odours of the rose are sickening; night,  
hasten above the corpse of old delight,  
if in decay the heart cherish some heat,

to breed new spice within the charnel-mould,  
that eyes unseal'd with living dew may greet  
the morning of the deathless rose of gold.

## INTERLUDE: THE CASEMENT

### [Once, when the sun-burst flew . .]

*Once, when the sun-burst flew  
its banner above broad seas and eastern hills,  
my casement knew  
that morning in her wondrous isle of youth distils*

perpetual balm, and tidings trumpeted  
of Eden air  
winsome and quick, round many a wilding grace, unwed,  
clad only in glad hair,

bade fancy soar  
far and aloft along that limitless ecstasy  
of crystal, towards some shore  
where life were crown'd amidst a halcyon sea.

Now — desolate, despairful (lamentable retreat!  
wreck'd wheels and spars!),  
streaming from irresistible defeat  
the broken field of stars:

and all our hope they bore, the appointed word  
and that unbroken song  
that should resolve our suffering dark in peace, deferr'd  
— how long?

### [The window is wide and lo! beyond its bars . .]

*The window is wide and lo! beyond its bars  
dim fields of fading stars  
and cavern tracts, whence the great store of tears  
that Beauty all the years  
hath wept in wanderings of the eyeless dark,  
remembering the long cark  
whereunder we, her care, are silent bow'd,  
invades with numbing shroud  
this dwindling realm of listless avatars.  
Dim fields of fading stars,  
and shall yet ye with amaranth rapture burn  
and maiden grace return  
sprung soft and sudden on the fainting night,  
rose passioning to white;  
or must our task remain and hopeless art  
that sickeneth the heart*

*from yon dull embers to evoke the ghost  
of the first garden lost,  
sad necromancers we? Then let the blast,  
that waked you ancient, cast  
into the deeps your useless lagging dearth,  
O blazon'd shame of Earth,  
who then might hail the last oblivion,  
knowing you doomward blown  
before the advance of night's relentless cars,  
dim fields of fading stars!*

### III. THE LABOUR OF NIGHT

[What gems chill glitter yon, thrice dipt . .]

What gems chill glitter yon, thrice dipt  
in dusky Styx, or tears unshed  
the spheres, in icy exile stript,  
congeal in midnight's gaze of lead?

O thou crown'd caitiff, o'er our head  
whereon thine agelong wounds have dript  
the dark arms of thy passion spread  
dwarf the vast vault to a hard crypt.

Round thine eternal hour of woe  
the abyss urges, a rigid throe,  
whose woeful dark sees nought emerge,

save these, their consolation vain  
and frozen on the helpless verge,  
lonely, ecstatic fires of pain.

### WISDOM

#### I

Northward, he dream'd, in Judah's vine-clad hills,  
of gold and gems, earth's jealous-hoarded flower,  
garner'd within Jehovah's temple-sills:  
and sterile wisdom crown'd his brow with power.

Where burnt Arabia, named the Happy, spills  
above the silken seas that gird her bower  
rich heat of spice her chymic sun distils,  
she dwelt, and lonely beauty was her dower.

The desert lay between them; yet they knew  
each one of each, and love and longing grew:  
she came: and desert blossom'd where she came.

And now their tale beguiles a wandering race  
where, parch'd by the hard sun's indifferent flame,  
one yellow desert billows o'er their place.

#### II.

Because he felt against his hundred years

the beating of the wings of Azrael,  
the Master, he that watch'd o'er Afrit fears  
building the Temple incorruptible,

palm-propt on guile of cedarn wands, uprears  
his dreadful stature in the crystal cell  
that thence, tho' death unsaint their magian spheres,  
erect, his eyes might dwell, implacable.

So, when at last the worm-pierc'd cedar snapt  
and, at the sound of his great fall, the Jinn  
sail'd clamorously towards Eblis, disabused,

long since his temple-tomb stood builded apt  
where we might feel the night that haunts our sin  
vaster, that once a mighty spirit mused.

### III

Where Soliman-ben-Daoud sleeps, unshown  
to mortal eye, the vaulted bay of gloom  
stagnates, aloft, into the pendent stone,  
his Temple's roots, long wither'd in his tomb.

Chin-high against his flaming sword, alone,  
brooding far hence in heaven's untarnish'd bloom,  
a seraph bars all passage to the throne  
where, priestly dight, the Master bides the doom.

Dully his mitre blazes o'er his brow  
whereunder the dead eyes, wide-set, avow  
the terror of the day that he awaits:

and, o'er his mitre's peak, his word of might,  
figured in solid fire, irradiates  
its sterile secret into oblivious night.

### III

In Eblis' ward now fall'n, where wisdom rose,  
beyond the East and past the fane-strown sands,  
are jasper caverns hewn of Afrit hands,  
whereover Caf hath hung its huge repose.

There, in the limpid pave, a cloudy rose  
mirrors eternal agony, in bands  
of saddening purple shed from shrouded strands  
where the snared sun a fix'd disaster glows.

A ruby of harden'd flame, an ice-bound woe,

burns in their crystal breast whose wizard brow  
was gemm'd with name of Soliman long before

him shaped that pluck'd the golden apple low:  
they royal with this only magic now  
that, dying, they die not for evermore.

## **TWILIGHTS OF THE GODS AND THE FOLK**

### **I**

We nameless, that have labour'd in the dumb  
patience of more than thousand years, whose task  
what harvest claim'd our faith stay'd not to ask,  
must all we perish ere the sabbath come?

The dawn was chill about our going forth  
each morn, and black the earth in that damp hour  
with presage of a ne'er-vouchsafed flower,  
and bitter in our eyes the sleety north.

Harsh mother, thou hast drunk our soul unborn;  
take now this outworn flesh and our despair:  
within thy lap at least we shall not care

if here no grove of pillar'd arches warn  
some wanderer above our moulder'd bones  
how once we dream'd beside these uncouth stones.

### **II**

Are ye indeed gone forth, and is your place  
emptied of all that might whereby we held  
our fields and home and faith derived of eld,  
and whither now is turn'd your alter'd face?

The hearth-flame shakes and dies that once we bore  
hither from altars of our happier sires;  
now the young foe sows wide his ruin-fires:  
the land is changed to know us never more.

The sword is vain, perish'd in age-long rust;  
cover each head and wait by the dead flame  
the ending of our tale upon this earth:

whom gather'd virtue of our darkling trust  
hung stars, now war against their cherish'd name,  
that this night's pyre release their phoenix-birth.

### III

In that last fight upon the western hill  
against the shifting face of elder ill  
whence yet the horizon's daily passing bleeds,  
hero, our hope that not in dusty needs  
the breath should choke entrusted us to speak  
some god in time, we watch'd thee strive and wreak  
the deed of light, we trembling where we held  
our humble tilths, and thee, that bulk compell'd,  
high in the golden limbeck of the west  
as whom the hour should momentarily invest  
Hesperian, flesh exempt from blight and frost:  
and the mount smoked and trembled, and thou wert lost.  
Hero, alas, what traitor wind of fear  
or mortal weariness of that dread sphere  
touch'd thee and took, that we have never seen  
thy glory, and our wintry musings ween  
how somewhere lone thou art laid, untended, stark,  
a naked corpse under the triumphing dark.

### III

Night has resumed our hope: the fight is done,  
and fall'n once more the high heart that dared to assume  
a god for us; and few beside the tomb  
we bend, of all the folk his love made one,

questioning the deep mind if fame, to have won,  
had made so sacred evermore their doom  
as night herself hath wed intemperate, whom  
she spared the crown that brands the victor Hun.

She knows, the night with whom they lie, she knows:  
and earth remembers when our unfaith grows;  
each autumn of her dolorous year shall have

lost winds that sweep the obscure storm of our griefs  
where drear hills hide the little folks, once brave,  
and rain in the dark on mounds of all foil'd chiefs.

### V

An iron folk, with iron hand, and hate  
our welcome where we come; driven o'er the earth  
in storm of conquest; venturing the salt firth;  
homeless, the sword our bride, insatiate:

nor yet that we had sought to make us great  
who had dwelt right fain in vales of love and mirth;  
but thy dire hest summon'd us at our birth,  
thy ministers of evil, consecrate:

thou torturer! to us no gentler god  
than we were masters to those slaves; thy rod  
was in our hands, but in our hearts the curse

rung back, this night, in mockery of our pangs  
where o'er the void dismantled universe  
the iron chamber of thine absence hangs.

## VI

O sunk in surge of purple, it is told  
how thy hot hand was heavy o'er the world,  
belying the fair troth of thy impearl'd  
Orient, and thy gracious van of gold:

and thee, once Moloch infamous or old  
Kronos, who knows if ever, radiant-curl'd,  
thou didst abash the chaos, seeing thee hurl'd  
by crouching hate to join the sullen mould.

Now is the shrouded hour, and the gray mood  
o'er the all-pervasive and vain grave may brood,  
or yet again the circling torch begin,

if all the ends of hope in dawning eyes  
be this, prestige of undecipher'd sin,  
his grisly shade, gaunt upon vacant skies.

## VII

O vanish'd star, fall'n flower, O god deceas'd  
and deep in marble night sepulchred, where  
rises the might that sank, disastrous flare,  
in the agonizing dream thy latest priest?

Far hence in the awful vault another East  
blossoms ecstatic rose and Eden air  
is sweet on singing flesh that knows no share  
in thy void grave whence all the springs have ceas'd.

Stars that with all our glory laden shift  
aimless, what term is set unto this drift?  
All dawns are spilt along the hopeless way,  
and far the white hour when our darkling prayer

must be consumed and wrathful love shall slay:  
— Ye are but jewels in her scatter'd hair.

## THE WOMB OF NIGHT

### I

How long delays the miracle blossoming,  
vermeil and gold, soft fire, flush of the dark,  
aurora, and ravish of night's mother ark  
still hallow'd 'neath her present cherishing!

The sides of night are anguish'd with this thing,  
unnatural, a fear, a rending: hark,  
dim mutterings; the gulfs are strain'd and stark:  
dark stress, delay, distress, and vanishing.

O womb, dark womb that darkenest, what art  
shall set thee free, and us? or must our heart  
yet sleep in squalid snowdrifts of the dust?

Oh that all ends of the world were come on us,  
and fire were close beneath earth's stubborn crust,  
and all our days were crumbling, ruinous!

### II

Because this curse is on the dawn, to yield  
her secrecy distill'd of nuptial tears,  
and day dismantles, casual, nor reveres  
whate'er august our brooding dream'd reveal'd;

because that night to whom we next appeal'd,  
no more gestation of inviolate spheres,  
shameless, is mimic of the day, nor fears  
the scant occurrence of her stars repeal'd:

Therefore, if never in some awful heart  
a gather'd peace, impregnable, apart,  
cherish us in that shrine of steadfast fire,

be these alone our care, excluding hence  
some form undesecrate of all desire,  
the wings of silence, adamant, dense.

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### III: THE WANDERER

1902—

*Quoniam cor secretum concupivi  
factus sum vagus inter stellas huius revelationis:  
Atque annus peregrinationis meae  
quasi annus ventorum invisibilium.*

## **[When window-lamps had dwindled, then I rose . .]**

When window-lamps had dwindled, then I rose  
and left the town behind me; and on my way  
passing a certain door I stopt, remembering  
how once I stood on its threshold, and my life  
was offer'd to me, a road how different  
from that of the years since gone! and I had but  
to rejoin an olden path, once dear, since left.  
All night I have walk'd and my heart was deep awake,  
remembering ways I dream'd and that I chose,  
remembering lucidly, and was not sad,  
being brimm'd with all the liquid and clear dark  
of the night that was not stirr'd with any tide;  
for leaves were silent and the road gleam'd pale,  
following the ridge, and I was alone with night.  
But now I am come among the rougher hills  
and grow aware of the sea that somewhere near  
is restless; and the flood of night is thinn'd  
and stars are whitening. O, what horrible dawn  
will bare me the way and crude lumps of the hills  
and the homeless concave of the day, and bare  
the ever-restless, ever-complaining sea?

## **[Each day I see the long ships coming into port . .]**

Each day I see the long ships coming into port  
and the people crowding to their rail, glad of the shore:  
because to have been alone with the sea and not to have known  
of anything happening in any crowded way,  
and to have heard no other voice than the crooning sea's  
has charmed away the old rancours, and the great winds  
have search'd and swept their hearts of the old irksome thoughts:  
so, to their freshen'd gaze, each land smiles a good home.  
Why envy I, seeing them made gay to greet the shore?  
Surely I do not foolishly desire to go  
hither and thither upon the earth and grow weary  
with seeing many lands and peoples and the sea:  
but if I might, some day, landing I reckon not where  
have heart to find a welcome and perchance a rest,  
I would spread the sail to any wandering wind of the air  
this night, when waves are hard and rain blots out the land.

## **[I am driven everywhere from a clinging home, . .]**

I am driven everywhere from a clinging home,  
O autumn eves! and I ween'd that you would yet  
have made, when your smouldering dwindled to odorous fume,  
close room for my heart, where I might crouch and dream  
of days and ways I had trod, and look with regret  
on the darkening homes of men and the window-gleam,  
and forget the morrows that threat and the unknown way.  
But a bitter wind came out of the yellow-pale west  
and my heart is shaken and fill'd with its triumphing cry:  
You shall find neither home nor rest; for ever you roam  
with stars as they drift and wilful fates of the sky!

## **[O tame heart, and why are you weary and cannot rest? . .]**

O tame heart, and why are you weary and cannot rest?  
here is the hearth with its glow and the roof that forbids the rain,  
a swept and a garnish'd quiet, a peace: and were you not fain  
to be gather'd in dusk and comfort and barter away the rest?

And is your dream now of riding away from a stricken field  
on a lost and baleful eve, when the world went out in rain,  
one of some few that rode evermore by the bridle-rein  
of a great beloved chief, with high heart never to yield?

Was that you? and you ween you are back in your life of old  
when you dealt as your pride allow'd and reck'd not of other rein?  
Nay, tame heart, be not idle: it is but the ancient rain  
that minds you of manhood forgone and the perilous joy of the bold.

## **[Once I could sit by the fire hurlong when the dripping eaves . .]**

Once I could sit by the fire hurlong when the dripping eaves  
sang cheer to the shelter'd, and listen, and know that the woods drank full,  
and think of the morn that was coming and how the freshen'd leaves  
would glint in the sun and the dusk beneath would be bright and cool.

Now, when I hear, I am cold within: for my mind drifts wide  
where the blessing is shed for naught on the salt waste of the sea,  
on the valleys that hold no rest and the hills that may not abide:  
and the fire loses its warmth and my home is far from me.

## **[How old is my heart, how old is my heart, . . ]**

How old is my heart, how old is my heart,  
and did I ever go forth with song when the morn was new?  
I seem to have trod on many ways: I seem to have left  
I know not how many homes; and to leave each  
was still to leave a portion of mine own heart,  
of my old heart whose life I had spent to make that home  
and all I had was regret, and a memory.  
So I sit and muse in this wayside harbour and wait  
till I hear the gathering cry of the ancient winds and again  
I must up and out and leave the embers of the hearth  
to crumble silently into white ash and dust,  
and see the road stretch bare and pale before me: again  
my garment and my home shall be the enveloping winds  
and my heart be fill'd wholly with their old pitiless cry.

**[I sorrow for youth — ah, not for its wildness (would that were dead!) . .]**

I sorrow for youth — ah, not for its wildness (would that were dead!)  
but for those soft nests of time that enticed the maiden bloom  
of delight and tenderness to break in delicate air  
— O her eyes in the rosy face that bent over our first babe!  
but all that was, and is gone, and shall be all forgotten;  
it fades and wanes even now: and who is there cares but I?  
and I grieve for my heart that is old and cannot cease from regret.  
Ay, might our harms be haven'd in some deathless heart:  
but where have I felt its over-brooding luminous tent  
save in those eyes of delight land (and ah! that they must change)  
and of yore in her eyes to whom we ran with our childish joy?  
O brother! if such there were and each of us might lead each  
to lean above the little pools where all our heart  
lies spilt and clear and shining along the dusky way,  
and dream of one that could save it all and salve our ache!

## **[You, at whose table I have sat, some distant eve . .]**

You, at whose table I have sat, some distant eve  
beside the road, and eaten and you pitied me  
to be driven an aimless way before the pitiless winds,  
how much ye have given and knew not, pitying foolishly!  
For not alone the bread I broke, but I tasted too  
all your unwitting lives and knew the narrow soul  
that bodies it in the landmarks of your fields,  
and broods dumbly within your little seasons' round,  
where, after sowing, comes the short-lived summer's mirth,  
and, after harvesting, the winter's lingering dream,  
half memory and regret, half hope, crouching beside  
the hearth that is your only centre of life and dream.  
And knowing the world how limitless and the way how long,  
and the home of man how feeble and builded on the winds,  
I have lived your life, that eve, as you might never live  
knowing, and pity you, if you should come to know.

## **[I cry to you as I pass your windows in the dusk; . .]**

I cry to you as I pass your windows in the dusk;

Ye have built you unmysterious homes and ways in the wood  
where of old ye went with sudden eyes to the right and left;  
and your going was now made safe and your staying comforted,  
for the forest edge itself, holding old savagery  
in unsearch'd glooms, was your houses' friendly barrier.  
And now that the year goes winterward, ye thought to hide  
behind your gleaming panes, and where the hearth sings merrily  
make cheer with meat and wine, and sleep in the long night,  
and the uncared wastes might be a crying unhappiness.  
But I, who have come from the outer night, I say to you  
the winds are up and terribly will they shake the dry wood:  
the woods shall awake, hearing them, shall awake to be toss'd and riven,  
and make a cry and a parting in your sleep all night  
as the wither'd leaves go whirling all night along all ways.  
And when ye come forth at dawn, uncomforted by sleep,  
ye shall stand at amaze, beholding all the ways over-hidden  
with worthless drift of the dead and all your broken world:  
and ye shall not know whence the winds have come, nor shall ye know  
whither the yesterdays have fled, or if they were.

## **[Come out, come out, ye souls that serve, why will ye die? . .]**

Come out, come out, ye souls that serve, why will ye die?  
or will ye sit and stifle in your prison-homes  
dreaming of some master that holds the winds in leash  
and the waves of darkness yonder in the gaunt hollow of night?  
nay, there is none that rules: all is a strife of the winds  
and the night shall billow in storm full oft ere all be done.  
For this is the hard doom that is laid on all of you,  
to be that whereof ye dream, dreaming against your will.  
But first ye must travel the many ways, and your close-wrapt souls  
must be blown thro' with the rain that comes from the homeless dark:  
for until ye have had care of the wastes there shall be no truce  
for them nor you, nor home, but ever the ancient feud;  
and the soul of man must house the cry of the darkling waves  
as he follows the ridge above the waters shuddering to-wards night,  
and the rains and the winds that roam an hunger'd for some heart's warmth.  
Go: tho' ye find it bitter, yet must ye be bare  
to the wind and the sea and the night and the wail of birds in the sky;  
go: tho' the going be hard and the goal blinded with rain  
yet the staying is a death that is never soften'd with sleep.

## **[Dawns of the world, how I have known you all, . .]**

Dawns of the world, how I have known you all,  
so many, and so varied, and the same!  
dawns o'er the timid plains, or in the folds  
of the arm'd hills, or by the unsleeping shore;  
a chill touch on the chill flesh of the dark  
that, shuddering, shrinks from its couch, and leaves  
a homeless light, staring, disconsolate,  
on the drear world it knows too well, the world  
it fled and finds again, its wistful hope  
unmet by any miracle of night,  
that mocks it rather, with its shreds that hang  
about the woods and huddled bulks of gloom  
that crouch, malicious, in the broken combs,  
witness to foulnesses else unreveal'd  
that visit earth and violate her dreams  
in the lone hours when only evil wakes.

**[What is there with you and me, that I may not forget .  
.]**

What is there with you and me, that I may not forget  
but your white shapes come crowding noiselessly in my nights,  
making my sleep a flight from a thousand beckoning hands?  
Was it not enough that your cry dwelt in my waking ears  
that now, seeking oblivion, I must yet be haunted  
by each black maw of hunger that yawns despairingly  
a moment ere its whitening frenzy bury it?  
O waves of all the seas, would I could give you peace  
and find my peace again: for all my peace is fled  
and broken and blown along your white delirious crests!

## **[O desolate eves along the way, how oft, . . .]**

O desolate eves along the way, how oft,  
despite your bitterness, was I warm at heart!  
not with the glow of remember'd hearths, but warm  
with the solitary unquenchable fire that burns  
a flameless heat deep in his heart who has come  
where the formless winds plunge and exult for aye  
among the naked spaces of the world,  
far past the circle of the ruddy hearths  
and all their memories. Desperate eves,  
when the wind-bitten hills turn'd violet  
along their rims, and the earth huddled her heat  
within her niggard bosom, and the dead stones  
lay battle-strewn before the iron wind  
that, blowing from the chill west, made all its way  
a loneliness to yield its triumph room;  
yet in that wind a clamour of trumpets rang,  
old trumpets, resolute, stark, undauntable,  
singing to battle against the eternal foe,  
the wronger of this world, and all his powers  
in some last fight, foredoom'd disastrous,  
upon the final ridges of the world:  
a war-worn note, stern fire in the stricken eve,  
and fire thro' all my ancient heart, that sprang  
towards that last hope of a glory won in defeat,  
whence, knowing not sure if such high grace befall  
at the end, yet I draw courage to front the way.

## [The land I came thro' last was dumb with night, . .]

The land I came thro' last was dumb with night,  
a limbo of defeated glory, a ghost:  
for wreck of constellations flicker'd perishing  
scarce sustain'd in the mortuary air,  
and on the ground and out of livid pools  
wreck of old swords and crowns glimmer'd at whiles;  
I seem'd at home in some old dream of kingship:  
now it is clear grey day and the road is plain,  
I am the wanderer of many years  
who cannot tell if ever he was king  
or if ever kingdoms were: I know I am  
the wanderer of the ways of all the worlds,  
to whom the sunshine and the rain are one  
and one to stay or hasten, because he knows  
no ending of the way, no home, no goal,  
and phantom night and the grey day alike  
withhold the heart where all my dreams and days  
might faint in soft fire and delicious death:  
and saying this to myself as a simple thing  
I feel a peace fall in the heart of the winds  
and a clear dusk settle, somewhere, far in me.

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## **III PAUCA MEA**

**[This night first have I learn'd to prize thy boon, . .]**

This night first have I learn'd to prize thy boon,  
I stranger and thou stranger, widow'd moon:  
this night we have met, wandering, and thou couldst charm  
sick brain and heart from all their burning harm;  
white Lethe drown'd the world of dusty woe.  
And I might feel that somewhere past its flow,  
Eden, not all unmindful of my days,  
had changed, an hour, to quiet hanging sprays  
and uncrush'd beds of blossom, dusky-white,  
that ooze with sleep and healing on the night.

JAN. 1905

## **[O white wind, numbing the world . .]**

O white wind, numbing the world  
to a mask of suffering hate!  
and thy goblin pipes have skirl'd  
all night, at my broken gate.

O heart, be hidden and kept  
in a half-light colour'd and warm,  
and call on thy dreams that have slept  
to charm thee from hate and harm.

They are gone, for I might not keep;  
my sense is beaten and dinn'd:  
there is no peace but a gray sleep  
in the pause of the wind.

## [Droop'st thou and fail'st? but these have never tired. .]

Droop'st thou and fail'st? but these have never tired;  
winds of the region, free, they shine and sing,  
unurged, unguerdon'd: hast thou then desired  
to be with them and trail'st a useless wing?

Self-pity hath thee in her clinging damp,  
and makes a siren-music of thy woes  
to lure thy feet into that reptile-swamp  
where rancour's muddy stream, festering, throes.

Cunning is her condolence with the snarl  
of canker'd memory or the soft tear  
for vanisht sweetness: come, an honest parle,  
air for thy ailment! make these wrongs appear.

Ay, this hath spat at thee, and that hath flung  
his native mud, and that with bilious guile  
most plausible — what! hast thou loved and sung  
as was in thee, and need'st do else than smile?

(Heed not that subtle demon that would prompt  
to measure thee by them; so humbled yet  
thou art not, nor so beggar'd thine accompt:  
what thou art, that thou hast, and know'st thy debt.)

And in thy house of love the venom'd dart  
was thrust within thy side — Even so! must then  
the gather'd ripeness of thy mind and heart  
be turn'd to flies? that is no way for men.

Who said, and rid himself of usual awe,  
I prize not man, save as his metal rings  
of god or hero? Hast thou made a law,  
live by thy law: 'tis carrion hath no wings.

## [I said, This misery must end: . .]

I said, This misery must end:  
Shall I, that am a man and know  
that sky and wind are yet my friend,  
sit huddled under any blow?  
so speaking left the dismal room  
and stept into the mother-night  
all fill'd with sacred quickening gloom  
where the few stars burn'd low and bright,  
and darkling on my darkling hill  
heard thro' the beaches' sullen boom  
heroic note of living will  
rung trumpet-clear against the fight;  
so stood and heard, and rais'd my eyes  
erect, that they might drink of space,  
and took the night upon my face,  
till time and trouble fell away  
and all my soul sprang up to feel  
as one among the stars that reel  
in rhyme on their rejoicing way,  
breaking the elder dark, nor stay  
but speed beyond each tramelling gyre,  
till time and sorrow fall away  
and night be wither'd up, and fire  
consume the sickness of desire.

## **V: EPILOGUES**

## 1897

Deep in my hidden country stands a peak,  
and none hath known its name  
and none, save I, hath even skill to seek:  
thence my wild spirit came.

Thither I turn, when the day's garish world  
too long hath vex'd my sight,  
and bare my limbs where the great winds are whirl'd  
and life's undreaded might.

For there I know the pools of clearest blue,  
glad wells of simple sooth,  
there, steep'd in strength of glacier springs, renew  
the lucid body of youth,

there I alone may know the joy of quest  
and keen delight of cold,  
or rest, what time the night with naked breast  
and shaken hair of gold,

folds me so close, that her great breath would seem  
to fill the darkling heart  
with solemn certainty of ancient dream  
or whisperingly to impart

aeonian life, larger than seas of light,  
more limpid than the dawn:  
there, when my foot hath touch'd the topmost height,  
the fire from heaven is drawn.

If any murmur that my 'sdainful hand  
withholds its sacrifice  
where ranged unto the Law the peoples stand,  
let this blown word suffice:

The gift of self is self's most sacred right:  
only where none hath trod,  
only upon my secret starry height  
I abdicate to God.

## 1908

The droning tram swings westward: shrill  
the wire sings overhead, and chill  
midwinter draughts rattle the glass  
that shows the dusking way I pass  
to yon four-turreted square tower  
that still exalts the golden hour  
where youth, initiate once, endears  
a treasure richer with the years.

Dim-seen, the upper stories fleet  
along the twisting shabby street;  
beneath, the shop-fronts' cover'd ways  
bask in their lampions' orange blaze,  
or stare phantasmal, weirdly new,  
in the electrics' ghastly blue:  
and, up and down, I see them go,  
along the windows pleas'd and slow  
but hurrying where the darkness falls,  
the city's drift of pavement thralls  
whom the poor pleasures of the street  
lure from their niggard homes, to meet  
and mix, unknown, and feel the bright  
banality 'twixt them and night:  
so, in my youth, I saw them flit  
where their delusive dream was lit;  
so now I see them, and can read  
the urge of their unwitting need  
one with my own, however dark,  
and questing towards one mother-ark.

But, past the gin-shop's ochrous flare,  
sudden, a gap of quiet air  
and gather'd dark, where, set a pace  
beyond the pavement's coiling race  
and mask'd by bulk of sober leaves,  
the plain obtruncate chancel heaves,  
whose lancet-windows faintly show  
suffusion of a ruddy glow,  
the lamp of adoration, dim  
and rich with unction kept for Him  
whom Bethlehem's manger first made warm,  
the sweetest god in human form,  
love's prisoner in the Eucharist,  
man's pleading, patient amorist:

and there the sacring laver stands  
where I was brought in pious hands,  
a chrisom-child, that I might be  
accepted of that company  
who, thro' their journeying, behold  
beyond the apparent heavens, controll'd  
to likeness of a candid rose,  
ascending where the gold heart glows,  
cirque within cirque, the blessed host,  
their kin, their comfort, and their boast.

With them I walk'd in love and awe  
till I was ware of that grim maw  
and lazar-pit that reek'd beneath:  
what outcast howlings these? what teeth  
gnashing in vain? and was that bliss  
whose counter-hemisphere was this?  
and could it be, when times fulfill'd  
had made the tally of either guild,  
that this mid-world, dredg'd clean in both,  
should no more bar their gruesome troth?  
So from beneath that choiring tent  
I stepp'd, and tho' my spirit's bent  
was dark to me as yet, I sought  
a sphere appeas'd and undistraught;  
and found viaticum and goal  
in that hard atom of the soul,  
that final grain of deathless mind,  
which Satan's watch-fiends shall not find  
nor the seven mills of darkness bruise,  
for all permission to abuse;  
stubborn, yet, if one seek aright,  
translucent all within and bright  
with sheen that hath no paradigm,  
not where our proud Golcondas brim,  
tho' sky and sea and leaf and flower,  
in each rare mood of virtual power,  
sleep in their gems' excepted day:  
and so, nor long, the guarded ray  
broke on my eagerness, who brought  
the lucid diamond-probe of thought  
and, driving it behind, the extreme  
blind vehemence of travailing dream  
against the inhibitory shell:  
and found, no grim eternal cell  
and presence of the shrouded Norn,  
but Eden, clad in nuptial morn,

young, fair, and radiant with delight  
remorse nor sickness shall requite.

Yes, Eden was my own, my bride;  
whatever malices denied,  
faithful and found again, nor long  
absent from aura of wooing song:  
but promis'd only, while the sun  
must travel yet thro' times undone;  
and life must guard the prize of youth,  
and thought must steward into truth  
the mines of magian ore divined  
in rich Cipangos of the mind:  
and I, that made my high attempt  
no bliss whence any were exempt,  
their fellow-pilgrim, I must greet  
these listless captives of the street,  
these fragments of an orphan'd drift  
whose dower was our mother's thrift,  
and, tho' they know it not, have care  
of what would be their loving prayer  
if skill bestow'd might help them heed  
their craving for the simple meed  
to be together in the light  
when loneliness and dark incite:  
long is the way till we are met  
when Eden pays her hoarded debt  
and we are orb'd in her, and she  
hath still'd her hungering to be,  
with plenitude beyond impeach,  
single, distinct, and whole in each:  
and many an evening hour shall bring  
the dark crowd's dreary loitering  
to me who pass and see the tale  
of all my striving, bliss or bale,  
dated from either spire that strives  
clear of the shoal of shiftless lives,  
and promise, in all years' despite,  
fidelity to old delight.

*EXPLICIT*

*15.xii.1913*

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