

Eidola

Frederic Manning

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EIDOLA

BY FREDERIC MANNING

σκιάς είδωλου
ÆSCHYLUS

LONDON
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET, W.

1917

BY FREDERIC MANNING

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TO

THE COUNTESS OF ANCASTER

CONTENTS

	PAGE
THE CHOOSERS	<u>1</u>
SACRIFICE	<u>3</u>
RELIEVED	<u>5</u>
REACTION	<u>6</u>
THE OLD CALVARY	<u>9</u>
THE GUNS	<u>10</u>
THE SIGN	<u>12</u>
A SHELL	<u>14</u>
THE FACE	<u>15</u>
WIND	<u>16</u>
BOIS DE MAMETZ	<u>18</u>
THE TRENCHES	<u>22</u>
LEAVES	<u>25</u>
TRANSPORT	<u>27</u>
αὐτάρκεια	<u>29</u>
EPIGRAM, R. B.	<u>31</u>
NOW	<u>32</u>
GROTESQUE	<u>35</u>
DESIRE	<u>36</u>
BLUE AND GOLD	<u>38</u>
GANHARDINE'S SONG	<u>39</u>
THE SOUL'S ANSWER	<u>41</u>
WINTER	<u>42</u>
THE FAUN	<u>43</u>
THE CUP	<u>44</u>
PAROLES SANS MUSIQUE	<u>45</u>
DANAE	<u>47</u>
WORSHIP	<u>49</u>

TO A GIRL	50
EROS ATHANATOS	52
DEMETER MOURNING	54
THE LOST ANGEL	57
THE MOCKING SONG	59
THE MOTHER	63
MEDITATION	65
THE HONEY GATHERER	67
CROCUS SONG	70
THE IMAGE SELLER	72
SIMAETHA	74
TO THE UNKNOWN GODDESS	76
HURLEYWAYNE	78
TO SÀĬ	80
THE SHEPHERDS' CAROL OF BETHLEHEM	82
PAST	85
THE BELOVED	86



EIDOLA

THE CHOOSERS

O ye! Fragile, tremulous
Haunters of the deep glades,
Whose fingers part the leaves
Of beech and aspen ere ye slip thro',
Shall I see ye again?

Men have said unto me:
These are but flying lights and shadows,
Light on the beech-boles, clouds shadowing the corn-fields,
The wind in the flame of birches in autumn,
Wind shadowing the clear pools.
But ye cried, laughing, down the wind:
Men are but shadows, but a vain breath!

So here cometh unto me
That cry from the rejoicing air:
Men are but shadows! And prone about me
I see them, hushed and sleeping in the hut,
Made solemn and holy by the night,
In the dead light o' the moon:
Shadowy, swathed in their blankets,
As sleep, in hewn sepulchral caves,
Egypt's and Asia's kings.
While between them are the footsteps
Of glittering presences, who say: Lo, one
To be a sword upon my thigh!
And the sleepers stir restlessly and murmur
As between them pass
The bright-mailed choosers of the dead.

Shall I see ye again, O flying feet
O' the forest-haunters, while I couch silent,
In a wet brake o' blossom,
Dark ivy wreathing your whiteness;

Ere I am torn from the scabbard:
(Lo, one
To be a sword upon my thigh!)
Knowing no longer that earth
Lieth in the dews, shining and sacred?



SACRIFICE

Love suffereth all things.
And we,
Out of the travail and pain of our striving,
Bring unto thee the perfect prayer:
For the heart of no man uttereth love,
Suffering even for love's sake.

For us no splendid apparel of pageantry,
Burnished breast-plates, scarlet banners and trumpets
Sounding exultantly.
But the mean things of the earth hast thou chosen,
Decked them with suffering,
Made them beautiful with the passion for rightness,
Strong with the pride of love.

Yea, tho' our praise of thee slayeth us,
Yet love shall exalt us beside thee triumphant,
Dying, that these live:
And the earth again be beautiful with orchards,
Yellow with wheatfields,
And the lips of others praise thee, tho' our lips
Be stopped with earth, and songless.

But we shall have brought thee their praises,
Brought unto thee the perfect prayer:
For the lips of no man uttereth love,
Suffering even for love's sake.

O God of sorrows,
Whose feet come softly thro' the dews,
Stoop thou unto us,
For we die so thou livest,
Our hearts the cups of thy vintage:
And the lips of no man uttereth love,

Suffering even for love's sake.



RELIEVED

FOR S. J. KIMM

We are weary and silent,
There is only the rhythm of marching feet;
Tho' we move tranced, we keep it
As clock-work toys.

But each man is alone in this multitude;
We know not the world in which we move,
Seeing not the dawn, earth pale and shadowy,
Level lands of tenuous grays and greens;
For our eye-balls have been seared with fire.

Only we have our secret thoughts,
Our sense floats out from us, delicately apprehensive,
To the very fringes of our being,
Where light drowns.

REACTION

What make you here, Aphrodite,
Lady of the Golden Cymbals,
Would you dance to awaken earth again
As of old on Ida?
Here are no threshing-floors....

Men call you delicate, a lover of softness:
Making thine images of ivory, stained with sanguine;
Strewing frail petals of roses before you;
Bringing you soft stuffs of sea-dyes,
Vermilion and saffron sandals,
Floating wimples of filmy webs, that veil you,
As clear water the glittering limbs
Of a nymph beloved of Pan.

But you come among us,
With sleepy eyelids, and a sleep-soft smile,
Ere we have scraped our boots of the mud
That is half human....
You come, tho' we are killing the lice in our shirts,
To fill our eyes with the wine of your vision,
Tho' we are weary, and our hearts
Emptied of the old jests.

Satia te sanguine
You come among men; laughing
At the ramp of the strange beasts
Roaring our songs in estaminets,
With our hands hungry for life again.
You are come curious of our crude intoxications,
The savage pleasures and the gross lusts,
Being weary of the veiled lights, the whispers,
The languid colours, and rare spiced meats
That of old delighted you

In Paphos.

You would couch with us in the golden straw
Of these great Gothic barns,
With curious curved beams arching, as in shadowy aisles;
While through the broken mud-wall
Light rays,
Like the golden dust
On Danae poured.

And we turn from the harshness of swords,
Hungering for you....
And know not that your breasts,
Carven delicately of ivory and gold,
The lips, red and subtile,
Are born of the bitter sea-foam and bright blood.

THE OLD CALVARY

TO THE REV. D. L. PROSSER

It is propped in a corner of the yard,
Where vines wreath it
With leaves and delicate tendrils;
A mutilated trunk,
Worn, and gray with weather stains;
Lichens cling to its flesh as a leprosy.

But for a moment I stood in adoration,
Reverent, as the sun-rays
Struck between the glistening leaves;
Lighting the frail, lean form,
The shrunken flanks,
That knew more suffering than held
The agonies of Laocoon.

For the memory of many prayers clung to it,
Tenderly, and glistening,
Even as the delicate vine
To the sacred flesh.



THE GUNS

Menace, hidden, but pulsing in the air of night:
Then a throbbing thunder, split and seared
With the scarlet flashes of innumerable shells,
And against it, suddenly, a shell, closer;
A purr that changes to a whine
Like a beast of prey that has missed its kill,
And again, closer.

But even in the thunder of the guns
There is a silence: and the soul groweth still.
Yea, it is cloaked in stillness:
And it is not fear.

But the torn and screaming air
Trembles under the onset of warring angels
With terrible and beautiful faces;
And the soul is stilled, knowing these awful shapes,
That burden the night with oppression,
To be but the creatures of its own lusts.

THE SIGN

We are here in a wood of little beeches:
And the leaves are like black lace
Against a sky of nacre.

One bough of clear promise
Across the moon.

It is in this wise that God speaketh unto me.
He layeth hands of healing upon my flesh,
Stilling it in an eternal peace.
Until my soul reaches out myriad and infinite hands
Toward him;
And is eased of its hunger.

And I know that this passes:
This implacable fury and torment of men,
As a thing insensate and vain:
And the stillness hath said unto me,
Over the tumult of sounds and shaken flame,
Out of the terrible beauty of wrath,
I alone am eternal.

One bough of clear promise
Across the moon.

A SHELL

Here we are all, naked as Greeks,
Killing the lice in our shirts:
Suddenly the air is torn asunder,
Ripped as coarse silk,
Then a dull thud....
We are all squatting.



THE FACE

Out of the smoke of men's wrath,
The red mist of anger,
Suddenly,
As a wraith of sleep,
A boy's face, white and tense,
Convulsed with terror and hate,
The lips trembling....

Then a red smear, falling....
I thrust aside the cloud, as it were tangible,
Blinded with a mist of blood.
The face cometh again
As a wraith of sleep:
A boy's face delicate and blonde,
The very mask of God,
Broken.

WIND

Blow, wind! Strip the great trees
That are like ebony against a sky of jade,
Ebony fretted and contorted.
Blow, hunt the piled clouds that lash the earth with rain;
Roar among the swayed branches; sing shrilly in the grass,
Burdening the pines with the music of pain;
For mine eyes desire the stars.

Drown the senseless thunder of the guns,
Stream on the ways of air hurrying before thee
The yellow leaves, and the tawny, and scarlet,
Till my soul dance with them,
Dance delightedly as a child or a kitten
Catching at the gay leaves laughingly,
For I would forget, I would forget and laugh again.

Sing, thou great wind; smite the harp of the wood,
For in thee the souls of slain men are singing exultant,
Now free of the air, feather-footed! Yea, they swim therein
Toward the green twilight, surging
Naked and beautiful with playing muscles,
Yea, even the naked souls of men
Whose beauty is a fierce thing, and slayeth us
Like the terrible majesty of the gods;
Blow, thou great wind, scatter the yellowing leaves.

BOIS DE MAMETZ

FOR H. L.

Men have marred thee, O Mother:
Autumn hath now no tawny and gilded leaves;
Nor murmuring among sleepy boughs;
But stark and writhen as a woman ravished,
With twisted tortured limbs,
Are Mametz' woods.

Hath not thy child, Persephone, tall men,
Yea, even all the children of the earth,
Bringing her tribute?
But the reapers sing not in thy wheatfields:
Tall sheaves wait ungarnered,
Though swallows are shrilling in the skies.

We are reaped, who were thy reapers, and slain our songs;
We are torn as Iason, beloved of thee, Mother:
Heavy the clay upon our lips,
The gray rats fear us not, but pass quickly, sated,
Over prone trunks, rent limbs, dead faces,
That are ashen under the moon.

Love, who begat us, shall Love slay us utterly?
Shall we not mingle with earth, as with sleep,
Dream into grasses, leafage, flowers,
Such being our very flesh; and shudder
In the glitter of thin shivering poplars,
That tremble like slim girls shaken
At a caress,
Bowed in a clear, keen wind?

Lo, in us the glory of a new being,
A wonder, a terror, an exultation,

Even in the filth of our shambles,
Loosened as lightnings upon us, devouring us;
Till we be but a shaken wrath of flames,
A many-tongued music of thunder,
Beyond the thunder of guns.
And we fail beneath it,
Sink into our ashes, cower as dogs;
While the glory of many shaken flames
Drowns in the gray of thy dawns,
That reveal unto us
Earth wasted and riven with iron and fire.
Desolate!

Thou hast turned from us....
Even so thou art lovely,
As a woman grown old in sorrows,
With patient kindly eyes,
From whom hath passed the shadow of desire;
And her ears keep the whispers of many lovers,
As things heard in sleep.
But thou heed'st not our prayers, our strivings,
The moans of our anguish,
Our mute agonies;
Though thy loins bare us in travail,
Though thou art the bride of our desiring,
Yea, and the child of our desire,
In triple deity;
Knowing things past, and things to come, when both
Meet on the instant, rounding to a who
This intense keen edge of flame
Consuming our poor dust.

Sit'st thou thus wisely silent,
With subtile and inviolate eyes,
Knowing us but the shadow of thy substance,
As transitory as the leaves?

Wiselier even....
Knowing us from the matter of our lives:

Not the sweet leaves the wind stirs,
But the wind,
Whose passage the leaves shadoweth.

There are no leaves now in thy woods, Mametz.



THE TRENCHES

Endless lanes sunken in the clay,
Bays, and traverses, fringed with wasted herbage,
Seed-pods of blue scabious, and some lingering blooms;
And the sky, seen as from a well,
Brilliant with frosty stars.
We stumble, cursing, on the slippery duck-boards,
Goaded like the damned by some invisible wrath,
A will stronger than weariness, stronger than animal fear,
Implacable and monotonous.

Here a shaft, slanting, and below
A dusty and flickering light from one feeble candle
And prone figures sleeping uneasily,
Murmuring,
And men who cannot sleep,
With faces impassive as masks,
Bright, feverish eyes, and drawn lips,
Sad, pitiless, terrible faces,
Each an incarnate curse.

Here in a bay, a helmeted sentry
Silent and motionless, watching while two sleep,
And he sees before him
With indifferent eyes the blasted and torn land
Peopled with stiff prone forms, stupidly rigid,
As tho' they had not been men.

Dead are the lips where love laughed or sang,
The hands of youth eager to lay hold of life,
Eyes that have laughed to eyes,
And these were begotten,
O love, and lived lightly, and burnt
With the lust of a man's first strength: ere they were rent,
Almost at unawares, savagely; and strewn

In bloody fragments, to be the carrion
Of rats and crows.

And the sentry moves not, searching
Night for menace with weary eyes.



LEAVES

A frail and tenuous mist lingers on baffled and intricate branches;
Little gilt leaves are still, for quietness holds every bough;
Pools in the muddy road slumber, reflecting indifferent stars;
Steeped in the loveliness of moonlight is earth, and the valleys,
Brimmed up with quiet shadow, with a mist of sleep.

But afar on the horizon rise great pulses of light,
The hammering of guns, wrestling, locked in conflict
Like brute, stone gods of old struggling confusedly;
Then overhead purrs a shell, and our heavies
Answer, with sudden clapping bruits of sound,
Loosening our shells that stream whining and whimpering precipitately,
Hounding through air athirst for blood.

And the little gilt leaves
Flicker in falling, like waifs and flakes of flame.

TRANSPORT

The moon swims in milkiness,
The road glimmers curving down into the wooded valley
And with a clashing and creaking of tackle and axles
The train of limbers passes me, and the mules
Splash me with mud, thrusting me from the road into puddles,
Straining at the tackle with a bitter patience,
Passing me....
And into a patch of moonlight,
With beautiful curved necks and manes,
Heads reined back, and nostrils dilated,
Impatient of restraint,
Pass two gray stallions,
Such as Oenetia bred;
Beautiful as the horses of Hippolytus
Carven on some antique frieze.
And my heart rejoices seeing their strength in play,
The mere animal life of them,
Lusting,
As a thing passionate and proud.

Then again the limbers and grotesque mules.

αὐτάρκεια

I am alone: even ranked with multitudes:
And they alone, each man.

So are we free.

For some few friends of me, some earth of mine,
Some shrines, some dreams I dream, some hopes that emerge
From the rude stone of life vaguely, and tend
Toward form in me: the progeny of dreams
I father; even this England which is mine
Whereof no man has seen the loveliness
As with mine eyes: and even too, my God
Whom none have known as I: for these I fight,
For mine own self, that thus in giving self
Prodigally, as a mere breath in the air,
I may possess myself, and spend me so
Mingling with earth, and dreams, and God: and being
In them the master of all these in me,
Perfected thus.

Fight for your own dreams, you.

EPIGRAM, R. B.

Earth held thee not, whom now the gray seas hold,
By the blue Cyclades, and even the sea
Palls but the mortal, for men's hearts enfold,
Inviolatè, the untamèd youth of thee.

NOW

I praise ye for the noble and prodigal virtues,
That are spendthrift of all,
Giving and taking with a light hand;
For this moment only is ours:

Of old ye were provident, and frugal,
With the parsimony of peace.
Now ye will jeopard your lives for a song,
For a mere breath, the shadow of a desire;
Cloaking your valour with a jest,
Veiling its holiness,
Lest wisdom deem ye fools;
The vain wisdom of peace.

The old and hoary craft,
That seeth not the brightness of the sun,
That hideth in the earths of foxes,
That weigheth love, and delight, and laughter,
Against minted gold.
The wise ...
These but traffic in our gems,
They are but the merchants of our pleasure
Miserly!

Who shall hoard up life
As it were but a heap of golden discs?
For it hath the lightest of light feet,
This quarry of our chase:
As it were Proteus,
Flowing from shape to shape under our hands....
Who shall spread a net to entoil it
Or snare it as a bird?

Ye play with life as with a gamester,

Full of doubles and shifts,
And ye laugh at each turn of the game,
Your hearts hawking at a chance
With a keen-edged zest.
Ye know not what ye seek,
Having it always.

Ye have stolen of my riches;
But ye have given me of your dearth
The last fragment of your broken bread
And gone hungry yourselves:
Despising the matter of our lives,
The faults and incompleteness
Of the crude earth,
From which we are moulding,
With cunning and nimble fingers,
Images of desire.

Let us laugh and understand each other,
For how could I blame you, my friends,
When ye are so generous
With the fruit of your thefts?

Yea, this moment is sufficient:
And being artists, after our diverse manners,
When each white dawn cometh
Build we the earth anew:
Repenting not
Yesterdays now drowned in dark, nor desiring
The hastening to-morrows.

GROTESQUE

These are the damned circles Dante trod,
Terrible in hopelessness,
But even skulls have their humour,
An eyeless and sardonic mockery:
And we,
Sitting with streaming eyes in the acrid smoke,
That murks our foul, damp billet,
Chant bitterly, with raucous voices
As a choir of frogs
In hideous irony, our patriotic songs.



DESIRE

I would sing thy face
Sitting here in the firelight;
Mid the senseless noise of guns
Comes it as a flower between the flames.

Sea-blue thine eyes, and bright as hawk's are,
Yet frail thy face as an image in clear water
As a pearl lying there, hidden or plain, when light
Wavers upon it: mobile as thy moods are
Or faint as a star in the mist's milk:
And frail thine hands,
Delicate,
Hovering in infinite slow gesture, nigh speech
Hesitating, poised,
Fragile: they would not mar
Gray bloom on a ripe plum.

I would sing thy face
To forget this....
But thy face sings to me from the slim flames
And my praise is silence, and my prayer.

BLUE AND GOLD

Blue and gold are April days,
All the wealth of spring unrolled
Down the wet, bird-haunted ways
Blue and gold.
In their rapture uncontrolled,
From the trees the blackbirds raise
Songs of triumph, clear and bold:
And the distance is blue haze,
Where the hills the fields enfold,
Like still seas in sheltered bays
Blue and gold.

GANHARDINE'S SONG

When my lady climbs the stair,
From the wet, surf-beaten sands,
Loosening her cloak of hair,
With her slender, foam-white hands,
All my soul cries out in me:
What fair things God maketh be!

Praise her white, and red, and gold;
Praise her lips made sweet with mirth,
Her grave eyes, that dreaming hold
Tears, which tremble ere their birth!
Yet what song shall snare the feet
Of white dawn upon the wheat?

Surely earth's swift-changing grace,
Starry waters, starry skies
Fallen in some flower-loved place,
Speak such peace as speak her eyes;
There earth's sudden wonders are
Glassed, as waters glass a star.

When my lady climbs the stair,
Every wandering golden tress
Streams out, through the living air,
Like a flame for loveliness,
And my soul cries out in me:
What fair things God maketh be.



THE SOUL'S ANSWER

My soul said unto me: Yea, God is wise
With wisdom far too bright for our weak eyes.
I answered thus my soul: Yea, God is wise!

My soul said unto me: Yea, God is good
And maketh love to be our daily food.
I answered thus my soul: Yea, God is good!

I sent my soul from me that it might tell
The damned and make a Heaven where was Hell,
It smiled and said: Nay, fear not, all is well!



WINTER

To U. A. T.

Bare are the boughs where Love took cover,
Once in the spring:
Nor bird to bird, nor lover to lover,
Whisper or sing.

A low moon floodeth the level meadows
With frosty light:
Sheep come softly through mist as shadows,
Grey in the night.

And over pasture and plough and fallow
My dreams go,
For thy mouth to kiss and thine hands to hallow,
Thine heart to know.



THE FAUN

Kore, O Kore, where art thou fled,
Now that the spring blows white in the land?
Shake out the honeyed locks o' thine head;
Plunder the lilies that lie to thine hand,
Glistering saffron loved of the bees
Murmuring in them, till shadows grow long
With dew-dropping silence under the trees,
Ere break the voluptuous thrillings of song
From the brown-throated sweet harbourers there
Raptured and grieving under the stars....

THE CUP

Ye mock me, wantons, that I come among you
Drunken, bedecked with garlands
Like a white sacrificial bull.

Laugh then!

So Cypris laughing shakes one petal down
From her rose-braided hair,
Honeyed with kisses, to perfume
The glowing purple that brims up this gold.
Laugh then, and mock, but kiss me! For what man
Would come among you sober? Wise, I come
Borne on Silenus' ass to praise Eros.

PAROLES SANS MUSIQUE

FOR JELLY D'ARANYI

Ah, the night! The eyes!
You are white beneath the plum-blossoms,
As an oread beneath the shadow
Of flowering branches: immobile,
Among things fugitive and frail.
For God hath filled you with the memory
Of things forgotten by man; and your eyelids
Close upon lost splendours.
Yea! They are heavy with the secrets of time;
Troubled by the strangeness of beauty.
But mine heart knoweth the secret
Of your subtile lips and eyes: the silence
Wherein throng presently, with maddening cymbals,
With bright-tressed torches, the maenads,
Their cool flesh wreathed with dark vines.

Ah, the night! The eyes!
Honey pale are you, pallid as ivory:
An amber grape, whose sweetness will be wine
On some king's lip!

Here 'mid these golds and purples,
These dusked magnificences,
Amid strange faces
Only your face against the plum-blossom
Know I: remembering
Bright spear heads in the moonlight
By the still tents, the red embers,
The strings and flutes of pain....
And again the weariness of desiring.

Ah, the night! The eyes!



DANAE

Thou, whom the gray seas bare more fierce than they.
O bitter Love! Have pity on his weeping,
Smite me with pain; lo, I am all thy prey!
Sleep thou, my son, as all the world is sleeping;
Sleep thou, my babe; and sleep, thou bitter sea;
And sleep, O grief, within the heart of me.

Ashen thy fruit, O Love, thy crown is pain!
Sweet were thy words to me, thy soft caresses.
Child of my heart, O gain beyond all gain.
Sleep, while I shelter thee with arms and tresses!
Sleep thou, my babe, and sleep, thou bitter sea;
And sleep, O grief, within the heart of me.

Yea, I am thine, O Love. I am thy spoil!
Sleep thou, my son, sleep softly till the morrow!
Love, thou hast snared me in thy golden toil,
Still the loud seas though thou still not my sorrow!
Sleep thou, my babe; and sleep, thou bitter sea;
And sleep, O grief, within the heart of me.

WORSHIP

Earth, sea, and skies,
For me are in thine eyes,
Yea, thou for me
Holdest within thyself eternity.

As the dew's sphere
Encloses all the clear
Fires hung in the night,
The thin moon and the shaken seas delight.

And there the rose
Where seraphs throne them, glows
Quiring God's name,
With music that is sound of joy made flame.

God's very grace
Is perfect in thy face,
Mirrored such wise
That I mine own soul there imparadise.

TO A GIRL

(MISS E. F.)

Thy face, which love renews ever with loveliness,
Is known and strange as earth, from night each dawn is new:
Stirred with such restless beauty
As water that wind shadoweth.

How may love snare thy soul, or know the ways thereof?
Subtile as flame it is, and secret as the dews:
Even thus closely folded
Love hath thee not, but followeth.

From change to change, nor surfeiteth his ecstasy
That from so brief a joy desireth new delight,
As tho' the sweet life in thee
Were fugitive and bodiless.

Nay, love, in thee all change immortal is; nor dies,
Being the soul of thee that pastures on brief joy:
And this earth's shows mere seeming
In thy clear love's eternity.

EROS ATHANATOS

As a rose bends in rain
Your face is bowed into mine arms,
Spilling its golden drops there:
And the fragrance of wet roses
Is in my nostrils,
And the long bright tendrils of your hair
Upon me.

Under my hand you tremble as a reed
When wind ruffles the water;
Such great joy floweth beneath my fingers,
And the rain passes, and the wind strews
The ripples with crimson petals
Bright as blood upon their polished silver.

But my delight of you
Fragrant and humid in mine arms,
Of a white body convulsive, shaken
With the soul's passion; lips fierce, eager,
Passes not, but as a song, as a breath passes,
To hide it in a silence, a sleep,
Among cherishing dew, being music:
Nor the mere lute, nor the singer,
But the shaped passion of a god
Embodied in us,
Beyond us, eternal, exultant.

DEMETER MOURNING

I have seen her in sorrow, as one blind
With grief, across the furrows on soiled feet
Pass, as the cold gray dawn came with cold wind,
Gray as fine steel and keen with bitter sleet,
Beneath the white moon waning in the skies:
And I grew holy gazing in her eyes.

Then her voice came: Ah! but thou wert too fair
To seek among the dim realms of the dead
Love: and what hands will tremble in thine hair
Or lips faint on thy lips? The clear stars shed
All night their dew on me: and the wind's breath
Pierced; and my heart grew hungry too for death.

O flower! O clear pool mirroring the trees,
Whose sight was all my soul! O golden one,
Whose hair was like the corn, and rippling seas
Of new-sprung grasses where the light winds run!
O thou, whose breath was music, and whose mirth
Ran like bright water o'er the thirsting earth.

Surely now where the frail, dim shadows dwell
Thou hast sown all the marvel of Earth's flowers
And lit with wonder all the ways of Hell
And winged the feet of their slow-footed hours,
While I sit lonely by the water-springs
On the bare earth where not one linnet sings!

The dead leaves fluttered round her, and she sate
There by the well-side filmed with silver frost,
Like some old woman, stricken in her fate,
With no more heart to wail what she hath lost:
And silence grew about her, as though grief
Stilled the rude winds, and every withered leaf.



THE LOST ANGEL

Thy love is as clear rivers to a thirsty land,
Even as the rivers of earth bringing the wonder of boughs,
The rivers of thy love have filled up the channels of time.
Earth is a lure unto mine eyes. Lo! now I love
The fragile fleeting days, warm lips of women.
Delights that slip away as fish through water.
O, God, thou knowest what is in my heart.

Soiled am I now with dust, and frustrate glories
Wane, and are tarnished on my darkened brows;
Yea, all my love is for the joys that perish.
How may mine eyes behold my naked soul
No more arrayed in wings of my desire?
The cold rains smite me, and the winds of sorrow
Have driven me down the bitter ways of time.
O, God, thou knowest what is in my heart.

How shall I come again into my peace,
So heavy is the darkness on eyes and feet?
One sayeth: Lo, now, God's lost angel crowned
With broken hopes, and clothed with grief, and mute,
Sitting with his despair through the long starless night,
I, God's lost angel. Even thus I grow
Starry amid the solitudes, yea, crowned
With my despair, throned even in my fall,
O, God, thou knowest what is in my heart.

THE MOCKING SONG

Surely now in the spring-time shall I waken my singing
And song shall blossom out of my lips,
Glowing, as gloweth the golden crocus of Zeus.

For the soft white flakes of the winter have covered me over
With a deep stillness not to be told,
And my heart hath gathered honey of many dreams.

Now may they blossom as flames, tawny and eager,
Shaking out their bright hair on the wind.
The soft wind that streameth through the long green, rippling grasses.

Yea, like a bee, my heart hath fed on the honey of flowers
And is made drunken, and full of strength,
Full of the blood-red wine that is fierce and exultant.

But ye have turned your faces from song and from dreaming,
Ye stirred in the winter and wakened,
Your grain was garnered and threshed, yet a hunger filled you.

But the breasts of Earth had filled me, mine eyes had garnered
Many-coloured may, and sweet, red apples,
Through every sense had I drunk up her strength, and was sated.

What have ye, O wise ones? The corn ye reaped ye shall sow,
Ye shall watch for rains and tempests;
Only I hearing the hail on the roofs shall be gladdened.

Ye, being mockers, said: What profiteth him his singing?
Ye stored not the sweetness in your hearts,
Ye are bent double with the burden of the past, fearful of Time.

Ye go forth into the furrows, but who shall come to the reaping?
Lo, now the golden grain falleth to earth!
Though ye be rich in this wise, yet are ye desolate.

I have gleaned in the hedgerows and wild glades of the forest,
And that sweetness sufficeth to me:
For sweet it is to feel the rain upon face and hair.

Surely ye have this day: but the wise sweetness in my heart
Is the honey of all days which ye have not.
So shall my soul mock you, when dying, lo! ye are empty.

Even so when I hungered ye gave me bread,
With hard words ye gave it me.
So give I this song unto you with hard words in mockery.



THE MOTHER

She hath such quiet eyes,
That feed on all earth's wonders! She will sit
Here in the orchard, and the bewildering beauty
Of blossoming boughs lulls her as day grows late
And level sunlight streameth through the tree-stems
Lying as pale gold on the green fallows, and gilding the fleeces
Of the slow-feeding sheep in the pastures.
While in her there stirs,
A dream, a delight, a wonder her being knew not,
Yet now remembers, wistfully, as a thing long lost,
Sunken in dim, green, lucid sea-caves;
And her desire goeth out from her, toward God, through the twilight,
Lost, too, in the waters of unfathomable silence.

But the child, gazing upward,
Sees the glory of the apple-blossom suddenly scattered,
As a bird flies through the branches;
And he reaches toward the soft, white fluttering petals
That light upon his face, and laughs; and she
Stoops over him quickly with sudden, hot, passionate kisses,
Smiling for all her tears.

MEDITATION

Even tho' I descend into the darkness of deep valleys,
Yet have mine eyes beheld the light,
And my heart treasureth it.

One, seeing thy face, loseth it not in dreams.
It shall abide with him through all the days;
And his heart treasureth it.

Earth dieth in the darkness, but when dawn cometh
Slowly the trees and hills grow into the light....
The heart of darkness cherisheth the dawn.

Who shall forget thee having seen thy face?
I have dreamed in my sleep of thee, as a man dreameth of a maiden.
Yea! the silence and darkness held thee as a dream.
Lo! I have seen thee. How shall I forget?

Thy beauty is treasured up in my heart.

THE HONEY GATHERER

I would drink of the honeyed wine that is heavy with poppies
Until my trembling eyelids close, and only the murmur
Of Life I should know: as the murmur of seas to one sleeping.
Glide now the soft, slim feet
Of white dreams that are lovely and fugitive
To whom thy sorrow is alien, my beloved!
Sweetly their feet stir the young grasses, they lie coiled
In clear dark waters, or couched in the thickets,
Their whiteness dappled with shadow,
So might I forget again the sword of thy beauty
And the desire that looked out from thine eyes, until mine heart leapt
Forth to meet it, and was seared in the flame.
Life was as a net about me, and mine hands might not rend it,
But I lay in fear among the toils, and afar
Mine ears strained to catch the footsteps of the hunter.

Honey and poppies!
Until desire is drowned within me, until sleep
Hath builded a world that is gateless,
A world of beautiful luminous waters
Through which the white dreams slip and swim,
Pearled with fine spray, their bright hair floating,
To whom love and desire and sorrow are foolishness
And thy beauty a shadow, that the wind breaketh.
And thy body but dust for the wind's pasture
And thy sorrow but a murmur of waters....
There are they, the exultant, the swan-throated;
Through the night cometh the sound of their trumpets,
Until mine heart is drunken with their wine.

Honey and poppies!
Until sleep is heavy upon me as a garment,
Until the winged joys come.
But even then, O my beloved! is desire and a grieving;

Even in the deep waters my soul remembereth
How it hath been troubled by thy hands.



CROCUS SONG

FOR M. C.

The first flame, the first spear of the spring,
A thing perfected of the dews and fire,
Saffron in hoar-frost, brightened as with wine:
Thou blossoming in the heart of me!

Ah, golden

Is she whose love hath led me through the world
A thing of dews and fire, of wine and saffron!
Gray willows veiling my beloved
Bend above her,
As though you would love her,
Now clear water shadoweth her whiteness.

Ere brown bees go abroad murmuring,
One saffron crocus hath made glad desire,
To follow on swift feet slim feet of thine;
Love wakening for joy of thee,

Beholden

As golden petals of one flower unfurled,
Brimmed up with dews and fire, with wine and saffron.
Clear waters shadowing her whiteness
Flow beside her,
As tho' you would hide her,
Jealous that mine eyes have my beloved.

THE IMAGE SELLER

I would bring them again unto you,
The gods with broad and placid brows;
And for you have I wrought their images
Of carven ivory and gold;
That your lips may be shaped to praise them,
And your praises be laughter and all delights of the body,
Dancing and exultation, a dance of torches
In scarlet sandals, with burnished targes:
A dance of boys by the wine-press
Naked, with must-stained purple thighs:
Of young girls by the river in saffron vesture
Dancing to smitten strings and reed flutes.
Praise then mine images: Helios; Artemis,
With a leash of straining hounds: and the Foam-born.

Turning from love to sleep, drowsy and smiling,
With the fluttering of doves and dreams about her
And, softer than silk, Hephaistos' golden net.
Lo, Bacchus and his painted beasts!
Praise ye mine images!
A dryad whom clinging ivy holds while laughs
The swarthy centaur pursuing; and a troop
Of small Pans delicate and deformed.
Yet your lips praise not,
Crying: We too would be deathless as these are,
We, the hunted! But dance and adore them,
Praise my sweet grave gods of the blue, and the earth-born!
Praise their strong grace and swiftness!
For in these gods mine hands have wrought,
In these alone are ye deathless.

SIMAETHA

FOR D. S. D.

Thou art wine, Simaetha! When mine eyes drink thee
My blood flames with the golden joy thou art,
Bewildering me, until thy loveliness
Is veiled in its own light: nor know I then
Pure brows, and placid lips and eyes, and hair
With wind and sunlight glorious: but all
Are mingled in one flame. O thou, in me,
Art shrined, as none hath seen thee, as gods live
Whom Time shall not consume; nor rusts thy gold
Ever, so hath my soul enclosed thee round
With its divine air. Yea, thy very life,
Which flows through all the guises of thy moods,
Escaping as they die, and laughs and weeps
And builds again its beauty, have I set
Beyond the jeopards of rough time: yea! all
Thine ivory, imperilled loveliness,
And winey sanguine where the cheek's curve takes
Light as a bloom upon it, not to pass
So there be God.

Thy praise hath made speech song
And song from lip to lip flies, and black ships
Bear it from sea to sea; and on some quay
Where rise tall masts, and gay booths flank the ways
A tumbler sings it; and an alien air
Trembles with thee, while strange men wonder, dumb
To see thee pass: thou being all my song.

TO THE UNKNOWN GODDESS

Gross, sensual faces herded; and then you
With magical wide eyes came. Eyes that kept
The mirth of dews at dawn in them, and slept
To the tumult of the street. They held the blue,
Sweet, flowering spaces under pines; and knew
Cropped lawns, where naked dryads dancing leapt
To the clash of golden cymbals, while there crept
Furtively on white bellies through the dew,
To glut on grace, ambiguous fauns, whose eyes
Burned glittering with desire: until the horn
Of the moon turned ashen; and through the still trees
The lithe shapes feed: and dawn brimmed up the skies
With winey gold, and walked upon the corn;
And murmuring through the vines came gleaming bees.

HURLEYWAYNE

FOR M. S.

Such cool peace as fills
Green solitudes with trembling light at eve,
Fresh after summer thunder: and thin leaves
Stir gleaming, and grow still; then the green light
Alone moves, pulsing in pooled air, that shakes
No more with sound. Quiet brims full; then break
As dropping rain hurrying elfin feet,
A silvery foam of sound blown as white spray,
Sparkling with great bright bubbles: no sound to sense,
Bright foam upon blue pools of quiet tossed:
And a sight of waven manes that gleam
Shaken in the twilight under luminous leaves;
And challenging fairy horns that invite to the chace
Gay, light o' heart. And the galloping host,
Winding their horns, rush by as wind in the grass,
Shimmering; and the horns from afar ring out,
Farther and farther away.

TO SÀI

You chase the blue butterflies,
The shining dew is shaken by your feet,
That are white in the young grasses;
Swift, you hesitate, poised;
And they elude you; fluttering
In the windless gold.

Sài is small,
But a little child,
With little sorrows;
Yet her tears shine with laughter,
Her face comes and goes between the wet leaves,
As a face in sleep
Comes and goes between green shadows,
As moving lights hide and shine in the marshes.

I shall not look at her,
Lest she should hide from mine eyes
In the shadow.
I bring her pale honey in a comb, apples
Sweet and smelling; and leave them beside me;
Then comes she softly.
There is a bee in the willow-weed,
From flower to flower it climbs, and I watch it
Till the honey and apples are eaten.
Sài is quite close to me; now she has gone
She has forgotten me.

Sài is small,
But a little child.

THE SHEPHERDS' CAROL OF BETHLEHEM

A golden star hangs in the night,
Heigh-ho, the bitter winds blow!
And all the fields are clad in white:
I saw three shepherds out in the snow.

What maketh Mary's face so pale?
Heigh-ho, the bitter winds blow!
It is the hour of her travail:
I saw three shepherds out in the snow.

She lies between an ass and beast,
Heigh-ho, the bitter winds blow!
Three kings come riding from the east:
I saw three shepherds out in the snow.

Caspar, Melchior, Balthazar,
Heigh-ho, the bitter winds blow!
They have ridden out of the lands afar:
I saw three shepherds out in the snow.

In ermine furs and cramasie,
Heigh-ho, the bitter winds blow!
A duffle cloak will shelter me:
I saw three shepherds out in the snow.

The kings have stooped to Mary's hem,
Heigh-ho, the bitter winds blow!
But her eyes travel away from them:
I saw three shepherds out in the snow.

What gifts have we to bring the Lord?
Heigh-ho, the bitter winds blow!
Neither a sceptre, nor a sword:

I saw three shepherds out in the snow.

We bring no gifts but milk and cheese:
Heigh-ho, the bitter winds blow!
And a fleece of wool for Mary's knees:
I saw three shepherds out in the snow.

Nor myrrh, nor frankincense, nor gold:
Heigh-ho, the bitter winds blow!
But a fleece to shield Him from the cold:
I saw three shepherds out in the snow.

Down miry ways, tho' storms be wild,
Heigh-ho, the bitter winds blow!
A warm soft fleece for a naked child:
I saw three shepherds out in the snow.

Now Mary turns her face to sleep:
Heigh-ho, the bitter winds blow!
While we go back to tend our sheep:
I saw three shepherds out in the snow.

The sparks fly from the crackling thorn,
Heigh-ho, the bitter winds blow!
Our God was in a stable born:
I saw three shepherds out in the snow.

Tho' three wise kings rode from the east,
Heigh-ho, the bitter winds blow!
He was born between an ass and beast:
I saw three shepherds out in the snow.

I saw no trail of starry light,
Heigh-ho, the bitter winds blow!
I heard a child wail in the night:
I saw three shepherds out in the snow!



PAST

We played in this garden, long ago,
Long ago! Wind stirs the young grasses;
Petals drift from the apple-boughs,
Like snow, that covers up everything,
Everything!



THE BELOVED

(TO THE COUNTESS OF KINTORE)

Love, when they told me you were dead, I replied not; I smiled, and they thought
me mad.

They wept anointing thy body, they swathed thee in linen bands and laid thee in
the earth.

Their hands touched thee as a thing sacred, they mourned for thee with shaken
hearts.

It was dawn, my beloved, and they came in, into my room, where I lay close to
sleep smiling, and they told me you were dead.

I smiled hearing the swallows coming and going under the eaves, and they told
me you were dead.

The earth dreamed in dews, the sheep were in the pastures, and they told me you
were dead.

O my beloved, these knew thee not.

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